

Mental Hygiene of the Pregnant Woman

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Introduction

Child birth is a natural-biological process and therefore the emotions associated with it ought also to be normal, and natural. Most of the pain of labour is the pain of fear. The nature of the biologic event depends on anatomic and physiologic conditions; the nature of the emotional experience is determined by the mother's attitude toward herself, her husband, other members of her family and her child.

Now let us deal with the situation. The situation given is the Primi gravida, having fear and seeking help. If we analyse the causes for her fear, it will become easy to help her to have a normal healthy baby by developing a positive mental health in her.

The probable causes for fear of the mother are :

- A : Fear for herself
- B : Fear for the baby

A. Fear for Herself

1. *Fear of All Body Changes* : The event of pregnancy will not only have certain psychological changes but also will bring physiological changes in the body, which is a new experience for the mother which she never experienced before, leads to fear.

2. *Fear of Losing Her Good Looks* : The woman holds a 'foolish pride' about her beauty and thinks it is immortal. Because of the physiological change in her body she feels that she loses her beauty and she is no more attractive for her husband. She cannot think that it is temporary.

3. *Fear of Losing Husband's Love and Affection* : She feels that she is losing her husband's love and affection because of her body changes which may interfere her marital life.

4. *Fear of Death* : By hearing the stories from the neighbours and other experienced mothers, she develops fear about delivery. She goes to the extent of thinking that she may die during delivery.

5. *Fear of Unemployment* : The working woman who is appointed temporarily in a company or in an institution feels that because of her inability to attend she may lose her job. A film star or an athletic woman will have fear about her further chances and popularity.

6. *Fear of Operation* : She fears about operation, anaesthesia and some other procedures which she does not know.

7. *Fear of Family's Undesirable Attitude* : If the

inlaws don't like her pregnancy, because of her inability to do work, every minute she has to be careful. This condition leads her to lot of fear and anxiety. She shows it by the way of withdrawing or by overwork and punish herself by doing more work.

8. *Husband's Attitude* : The husband does not like the pregnancy which he feels an interference for their marital life. She does not know what to do ? This condition leads her to have fear.

9. *Poor Economic Status of the Family* : Anticipated expenditure because of the pregnancy and delivery will lead to fear.

10. *Inadequacy* : The mother feels "Am I capable to have pregnancy and delivery ? She may feel inadequate to have pregnancy and delivery and that develop fear in her mind.

B. Fear of the Baby :

1. *Sex of the Child* : If the family already decided to expect a male the mother feels "If it would be a female what to do ? What the family members will think ? How will they react ? All these states develop fear in her mind.

2. *Losing a Child* : She feels whether she will have alive child or not. She develops fear in her mind by this kind of fear.

3. *Fear to Have a Premature Child* : She thinks whether she will have a full term normal healthy baby or not and this feeling leads to fear.

3. (a) *Hereditary Factors* : She is afraid that some of the hereditary factors, of the ancestors should not be passed on to the child which she does not like e.g. Mental retardation and some of the diseases like epilepsy.

4. *Congenital Malformation* : She fears that her child should not have any congenital malformation like talipes, cleft plate or harelip etc.

5. *Hearing of Bad News* : When the mother hears about the bad news of child health, e.g., cord around the neck, she feels whether her child also will have the same which she thinks that it is a bad sign to her family.

6. *Inadequacy* : Fear of inadequacy to look after the new arrival will be possible.

The Role of the Nurse in Helping the Mother

Aim : The mental attitude should be one of calmness, confidence and happy expectations of the baby's arrival. The expectant mother should be kept free from worry as any added strain on body or mind may lower her resistance. She must understand that the baby's future health depends in a large part upon the

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mother's general condition during the period of gestation. Being "born well" is the right of every child and the time is coming when society will demand more or less supervision over the expectant mother to ensure the future health of the child she is carrying. One has no right to impose upon society children defective in any way because of the negligence and indifference of a prospective mother. How will she achieve the above aim? She can achieve her aims by following ways and means.

"The Nurse as an Adviser and Confident Person" (Counsellor): The Nurse as well as the Physician may be of aid in assisting the pregnant woman to make a readjustment to an entirely new situation; and that may change the entire course of her life. Many of the causes of her emotional disturbances may be kept hidden from the nurse and physician. The way she may react to her pregnancy depends much upon her previous habits of life's upon what she made of herself. If she is neurotic highly temperamental and self centered she will demand constant attention on the part of her husband and family, as well as from her nurse, and physician. The nurse will need to diagnose her temperament, to study her moods and habits if she is to deal with her vagaries and various emotional expositions. The nurse however must never try to remodel her patient's life in any respect. She must learn to adjust herself to patient. Learn to tactfully suggest and lead a refractory patient into new channels of mental and perhaps physical activity. So she should never show superior attitude towards the mother. She can suggest things by developing confidence for which she should have the following abilities.

The ability to Understand: She should be able to understand the patient's problems, feelings and her needs for that she should have adequate information about the mother, family and her past life, so that she can help.

The Ability to Listen: Patient, emphatic listening is one of the greatest assets of anyone who tried to help human beings. The very act of verbalizing one's perplexities of trying to hold them before oneself, of setting them forth before someone else often affords great relief and helps the complainant to gain a better perspective regarding her complaints. Instead of telling 'This is just your imagination' respect her feeling so that she will bring about the problems and you win in gaining her confidence.

The Ability to Guide: The nurse should have ability to guide "Do as I tell you, take it or leave it". This kind of approval should not be there. The pregnant woman should be helped to feel that she has acquired a sympathetic friend to whom she can talk about her self without hesitation.

Then she comes first time to the hospital during antenatal period or seen by a Community Health nurse, it is the duty of the nurse and the doctor to create a positive mental health so that she can have a normal delivery. If she is afraid of it, more it is better for her to get admitted in the hospital a few weeks before delivery. She should register her name.

The Role of Nurse during Antenatal Period: Obstetrical Need

1. **Ist Trimester:** She should understand the patient, find out problems and she should act as a guide to solve those problems. Besides she should give a general outline of changes that are taking place in the women during pregnancy. She should explain the process of fertilisation anatomy of pelvis and external genital organ. She should be helped to keep her mind happy by avoiding unnecessary worries.

2. **IInd Trimester:** During this period explain the growth of the foetus, bodily changes, cleanliness and certain exercises which she should carry out. She should be taught, what is quickening? She should have adequate amount of sleep.

3. **IIIrd Trimester:** During this period explanation about process of labour dilatation of Cervix-intensity of pain, how to bear, when to bear, child birth how to look after the child when to feed and what to feed should be explained. She should be oriented to the labour room, certain equipment and gadgets. If it is going to be at home, she should be taught about the things necessary. She should be advised to have sufficient amount of rest to the body and mind. *Methods she should adopt to relax are:*

1. Lying straight on the bed with pillows: hands on the sides each part of the body must fall on the body must fall on the bed and relax. 2. Sitting position-sitting on an arm chair, head on one side feet touching on the ground (45° angle). 3. Position—Arms are dropped from the bed. She should do deep breathing exercises.

Obstetrical Need and Psychological Need: During Labour:

If she is admitted in the hospital or at home the fear during labour will be alleviated in the following ways:

Explanation should be given to her what she should do. Besides the nurse and the doctor who are looking after her during antenatal period should look after her during labour so that she will feel more secure.

Dr. Grantly Dick need describes the mental status of mothers during delivery in the following way and he describes how to deal with the situation. This knowledge should be helpful in looking about the mother during labour.

1. **Ist Emotional Menace:** The time when cervix is 3/5 dilated, it is at this stage that the woman desires that somebody should be present near her on whom she can rely. She experiences more fear at this stage. She seeks hands of the nurse or doctor to hold. An intelligent nurse who has got the knowledge of mental health will deal with this situation effectively by providing support and creating a feeling of security and safe by within her. Sometimes sedation like Pethidine will be given.

2. **IInd Emotional Menace:** This stage starts when cervix dilates 4/5, she needs more help than the

prior. Here the relaxation becomes difficult. During this stage the nurse should rub the back and Lumbosacral area to relieve her distress and fear.

3. *IIIrd Emotional Menace:* This stage starts when the head presses on the perineum. This is very distressing. Encouragement to relax perineal muscles should be given. At this stage she wants something to be done. He describes the pain, tension and fear which the woman have as a cycle, fear pain, tension, syndrome which may interfere the progress.

She may start to talk irrelevant things and abuse her husband and others. Bearing it in mind that it is temporary the nurse should support her psychologically.

4. *IVth the Emotional Menace:* This stage begins when stretching of vulva takes place when there is complete dilatation of Cervix she can push down. After delivery she should be explained that she has given birth to a child, and now she can relax. She should be taught how to take care of the body.

Needs of Developing favourable Attitude towards the Mother and the Baby from her Husband and Other Family Members.

Husband and other family members should be explained well before hand during pregnancy and after delivery so that they can show a favourable attitude towards them. They should be taught how to look after the mother and the baby.

Need of Finding Resources Regarding Economic Problems

Suppose the mother is economically poor, nurse can guide her to seek help from social agencies who

can support the baby by providing baby food, cloth etc.

Need of Arranging Person to Take Up Responsibilities in Case of Working Woman (Inadequate Woman)

The nurse can find out whether there is any old lady in the family. She can teach her how to look after her baby. (But again if there is no one it will become difficult to have a servant who will not stay continuously.)

1. *Need for Alleviating Unnecessary Fear:* The unnecessary fear which the mother has by hearing stories from others should be alleviated by explanation before and after delivery.

If she goes smoothly there will be no problems. If she develops certain neuratic activity she has to be sent to a psychiatrist or neurologist for consultation.

Conclusion

A nurse by having the knowledge of mental health if she looks after the primi who is left under her care may be in the hospital or in the dormitory who is seeking her help. She has to help her in all aspects to alleviate the fear to have a normal delivery, and to have a healthy baby by developing a positive mental health within her.

Bibliography

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