

Characteristics of effective peer mentorship for primiparous mothers: Qualitative findings from a peer support program

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Presented by: Brian Law

Background

- Early motherhood can be challenging¹
- Social support to manage distress²
- Few have investigated factors of successful relationship



¹Mercer, R. T. (2004). Becoming a mother versus maternal role attainment. *Nurs. Scholarsh*, 36, 226–232.

²Law, K. H., Jackson, B., Guelfi, K., Nguyen T., and Dimmock, J. (2018). Understanding and alleviating maternal postpartum distress: perspectives from first-time mothers in Australia. *Social Science & Medicine*, 204, 59–66.

Aim

WHAT???



Method

- **Participants:** Part of larger feasibility study, (A) Primiparous Mothers & (B) Peer Mentors
- **Recruitment:** Email Invitation
- **Interview**
- **Data Analysis:** Thematic Analysis



*Mummy Buddy
Program*



Participants



New Mothers

- Primiparous Mothers
- 35 or younger
- Not diagnosed with depression
- In a committed relationship



Peer Mentors

- Mothers who have had a child in the last five years
- Trained in effective communication



Results: Themes

Similarities

Nature of
Contact

Expectation
about Mentor
Relationship

Independence
of Peer Mentor



Similarities

- Similarities between New Mother and Mentor

“I think we were pretty [well] matched. Like we got along straight away like I was a bit worried about maybe not sort of jelling with each other but yeah, I think we sort of talking and I guess I identified certain things and then also her partner had identified as well so we had that triangle connection. I guess there was a mutual understanding.”

Mentor

“At first we were kind of like a stranger, but she put in a lot of effort and so did I. But like we had a lot of things in common, like her kids are going to the school that I used to go to and she lives in a similar area to where I grew up. She is not too much older than me and because I am a teacher, she asks me questions about her kids and school. That’s kind of how we developed a relationship.”

New Mother



Similarities

- Similarities between New Mother and Mentor

“On the few occasions that we did catch up it was fine, it was lovely. Shes a lovely person, I just feel that we are not similar people. Her experience was just difficult to relate to, very different pregnancies so that probably made it a little harder because I couldn’t really relate to some of the things she was going through... and she maybe picked up on that as well.”

Mentor

“I think she provides a different perspective to me. I have friends and family who are very similar to me. Whereas my mentor is probably a little bit different and she sees things from a different angle. So that’s probably the most useful thing.”

New Mother



Nature of Contact

- Characteristics of contact

“She gave birth a few days after meeting her, so I didn’t really get a chance to know her before everything started with her and she, not that we didn’t get along well, but she didn’t really want to see anybody for the first six weeks. She had her own rules in place, we communicated mostly via text messages and facebook, and that was fine but she didn’t seem as keen to keep in contact unfortunately. But I check in with her every now and then and I have met up with her twice.”

Mentor

“She has been really helpful throughout but I think she was especially helpful during the first 6-weeks or even 3 months. Like those early stages cause you are trying to figure everything out.”

New Mother



Expectation about Mentor Relationship

- Expectations of how the relationship with peer mentor will work

"I didn't wanna pressure her and ask her how is the breastfeeding going or how was she coping once her husband went back to work. I wanted to keep it general and wait for her to open up and see if she wanted to talk about it or not, but she didn't seem to want to talk. I asked her how she was doing and how her baby was and she didn't really respond much. Which is understandable, she took a long time to reply, we are all busy so. I've tried."

Mentor

"So I always initiated catch up with her. Fine. But yeah, she never really ever asked any questions or, you know, came to me with any issues or problems, which could have been just because she didn't have any. But I kind of felt like I was a little bit useless."

Mentor



Expectation about Mentor Relationship

- Expectations of how the relationship with peer mentor will work

"I mean like the personality of my mentor, she's quite laid back and relaxed. But I guess maybe I would like to feel like she was sort of in charge a bit more with things because I guess she's the one that has gone through this before and it's completely new for me so for her to have maybe have some questions to put to me or you know that maybe have made me think "okay she's someone that, you know if I'm feeling a bit lost, you know she's sort of a bit of a rock."

New Mother

"Well in the beginning there were times when it was hard to reply to each other like straightaway. Just because things might have been a little bit crazy. But we've both had an understanding of each other. We've had different challenges at different times. But it wasn't anything negative, we did have like any clash. It all went pretty well. We kind of like knew how we wanted the relationship to work in the beginning, like how we were going to contact each other. So it kinda worked anyway."

New Mother



Independence of Peer Mentor

- The importance of the peer mentor being an independent party

“She would turn to me that she would never turn to anyone around in her family, even though they were supportive. Her husband was supportive. Her mother-in-law was supportive, her mom was supportive. But there are some things that she would only tell me. Even her friend, she wouldn't, not necessarily... because there's this part of judgment, like knowing that you're from an outside perspective, they feel I think she felt more comfortable telling me than anyone else.”

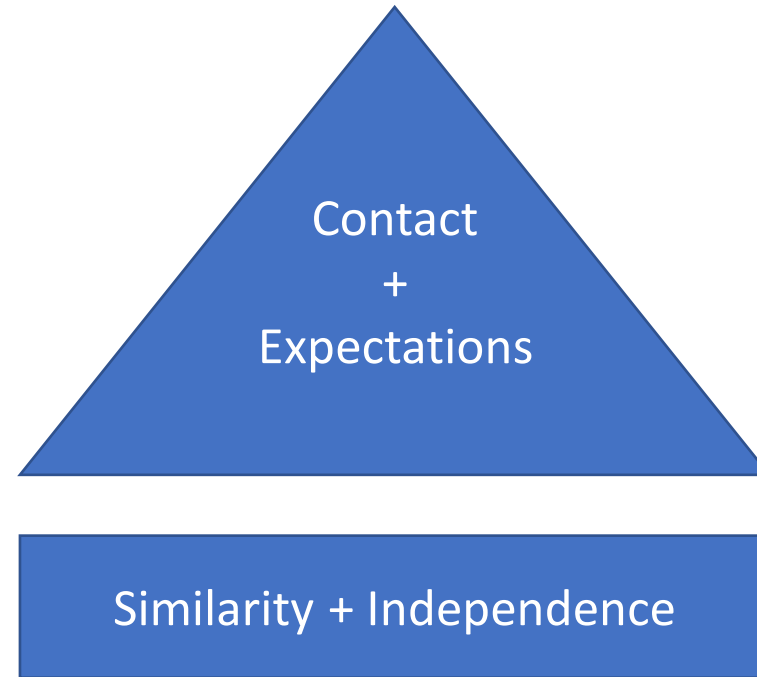
Mentor

“I really liked the independent aspect to it. Completely outside of your friendship group and your family. Just so you can, I think it would open up people more, like they are more likely to discuss something more personal with someone who does not have that (social) connection with. Some people with family groups they might feel like they would be judged, if they are asking about certain things or their friends might have one view and they might have another. I think the independence is a great aspect of the program.”

New Mother



Discussion & Potential Implications



Limitations

- Middle to High SES
- Majority were Caucasian
- Primiparous Mothers
- Low risk population
- PreCOVID19



Credits



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Thank you for listening

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