Mothers and Babies Course
Instructor’s Manual
Thoughts Module

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Thoughts Module

Class #5: Thoughts and My Mood

Class Outline

I. Announcements & Agenda (10 min)

II. General Review (10 min)

III. Personal Project Review (10 min)

IV. Relaxation Exercise (15 min)

V. New Material (60-75 min):
   a. What are thoughts? (10 min)
   b. Helpful thoughts and harmful thoughts (20 min)
   c. Do different thoughts affect our mood? (15 min)
   d. Types of harmful thought patterns (20 min)

VI. Personal Project (5 min)

VII. Feedback and Preview (5 min)

Goals for instructors:
- Define thoughts & Discuss the importance of thoughts
- Ensure participants understand the connection between thoughts and mood
- Identify helpful and harmful thoughts
- Identify different categories of harmful thoughts
- Help participants see that we can, and often do, change the way we think
- Help participants understand how our external reality (e.g., activities) and internal reality (e.g., thoughts) both contribute to our personal reality
- Motivate participants to want to learn how to manage their thoughts (internal reality) so that they can improve the quality of their lives and their babies’ lives

Materials needed:
1. Participant manuals
2. Pens, Dry erase board, or chalkboard to present material to class
4. An enlarged reality management chart (similar to p. 3) (optional)
5. Pleasant Activity cards, 1 set for every 2 people (optional)
6. Copies of CES-D or other mood questionnaires (optional)
7. Evaluation/feedback forms (optional)

IV. RELAXATION EXERCISE

Recommended exercise: “Relaxing with Distraction” (Ramos et al., 2002, p. 11). Alternatively, Instructors can ask participants to choose an exercise from the manual.
V.A. New Material: WHAT ARE THOUGHTS? (10 Minutes)

Overview
Identify thoughts and discuss how thoughts are related to mood.

Key Points
- Discuss the reciprocal relationship between thoughts and mood
- Thoughts = self talk, as if we were having a conversation in our mind
- Our thoughts can affect the way we feel
- Thoughts can affect our bodies (e.g., negative thoughts can cause tension)
- Thoughts can affect what we do
- It is possible to change the way we think. In many ways it is like learning a new language, a new way of talking! The first thing we need to do is be able to identify (hear) our own thoughts.

Participant Manual
p. 5.3

Rationale
Increase participants’ understanding of what thoughts are and how they affect their mood.

Information

Step by Step

Step 1: Define thoughts.
Suggested Wording
What are thoughts?

Elicit response from participants and make sure that it is clear that thoughts are things we tell ourselves. If participants share thoughts they are having, you can write them on the board.

Step 2: Help identify thoughts related to their pregnancies
Suggested Wording
Please turn to page 3 in your books. Here is a woman who is pregnant, just like you, and she has a lot of thoughts about being pregnant. What kinds of things do you think she is telling herself?

Elicit responses from the participants. Make sure to allow space for women to talk about both positive and negative thoughts. Highlight the idea that we can have many thoughts at the same moment and that we pay more attention to some thoughts that to others.
How do you think these thoughts affect her mood?

Highlight the connection the participants see between thoughts and mood.

*If we pay attention to burdensome thoughts our mood tends to get worse.*  *If we pay attention to the positive aspects of our lives, our mood tends to improve.*
V.B. HELPFUL, HARMFUL, AND BURDENSOME THOUGHTS (20 min)

Overview
Talk about the difference between helpful, harmful, and burdensome thoughts and how they affect mood.

Key Points
- Helpful thoughts help improve mood
- Harmful thoughts worsen mood
- Both helpful and harmful thoughts affect us emotionally and physically
- It is important to understand how the different thoughts we have can affect our mood

Participant Manual
p. 5.4

Rationale
To help participants begin to categorize thoughts as helpful, harmful, or burdensome.

Information
It may be helpful to ask participants to give examples of thoughts they are currently having, as a segway to talking about “Helpful vs. Harmful/Burdensome Thoughts.” During pregnancy, it is common for women to have a variety of thoughts. We cannot assume that they all view this as a joyous event. Pregnancy and childbirth can be very stressful, and we need to create a safe environment where women can bring up concerns they have regarding pregnancy, childbirth, and being a mother.

Here are some of the thoughts women have shared with us:

- “I’m getting fat and ugly.”
- “I just found out I’m going to have a boy. I’m not sure if I want a boy.”
- “The world is so unsafe, how can I bring up a child in this world.”
- “I don’t enjoy sex, but my partner keeps pressuring me.”
- “I’m afraid I’m going to hurt the baby if we have sex.”
- “It’s so amazing to have a baby who is half me and half my partner.”
- “How can I be a good mother when I had such a bad childhood?”
- “The baby keeps me from sleeping.”
- “I’m afraid to give birth, but I worry that if use the drugs I will be a bad mother.”
- “Will my body ever be the same?”
- “Who is going to take care of my other child when I give birth?”

Typically we talk helpful and harmful thoughts. There are also thoughts that are factual, such as “I don’t have a lot of money,” “it hurts when my baby kicks me,” or “I’m bloated”. These thoughts can be categorized as burdensome because they are true and difficult to change. But, if we only focus on this aspect of our lives, our mood will get worse.

Women and Trauma. When you ask participants to share their thoughts, some of them may begin talking at length about negative life experiences. For participants with significant trauma histories, it may be important to gently summarize what they are saying. You can do
this by saying something like “let me see if I understand, one of thoughts you are having is ______” or “it seems like it was very difficult for you when you were younger, and it leads you to believe ______.” Let’s see if we can help with that thought.” You can then write the thought on the board and then talk generally with the whole group about how earlier experiences affect our lives and the way we think about ourselves, other people, and the world and how important it is to understand the way they affected us so that now we can make changes in our lives and in our children’s lives.

In some cases, you may suggest to a participant that it seems very important that she speak more about her experience and that perhaps you can meet with her after class to figure out how to best help her. Later you will decide whether you can provide support through a brief meeting or whether a referral is more appropriate.

**Step by Step**

**Step 1: Help participants begin to think about different thoughts.** Because this exercise may lead participants to talk at length about difficult experiences they are having, group leaders may want to provide structure to prevent flooding (individuals becoming emotionally aroused and sharing in length and in a disorganized way prior traumatic experiences—see “Information” section should this occur).

**Suggested Wording**

Now that we have talked about what thoughts are, let’s begin to categorize some of the thoughts you may be having. Before we start, we want to share some of the thoughts other participants have had. For example:

- “My body hurts, pregnancy sucks.”
- “I can’t believe there’s a life inside me.”
- “I don’t know if we can afford another child.”
- “I’m not sure if we’re ready to become parents.”

So as you can see, it’s normal and natural to have different types of thoughts during pregnancy. It is a time that can be both joyful and very stressful because of the changes you are experiencing both physically and emotionally.

**Step 2: Introduce the activity.**

**Suggested Wording**

On page 4, you see the picture of the same woman. This time we would like you to imagine that you are that woman, and think about some of the thoughts you are having related to being pregnant and becoming a mom. Below are two columns. One column is labeled “helpful thoughts.” Under that column, write down thoughts you are having that make you feel good, happy, or hopeful. The other column is labeled “burdensome or harmful.” Write down thoughts in this column that make you feel stressed, drained, worried, sad, scared, or angry. Do you have any questions?

Answer any questions. Give the participants approximately 5 minutes to write down 2-3 thoughts under each category. We recommend that instructors walk around the room to see how the participants are doing and to answer any questions.

**Step 3: Process the activity.**

Ask participant to share the thoughts they wrote down and the reason(s) they categorized them as a helpful vs. harmful thought. Remind participants to share only those thoughts that they feel comfortable sharing. You can write those thoughts on the board. Talk about what makes the thoughts helpful, harmful, or burdensome. The key here is just to focus on how the participants identified and categorized thoughts. Later we will talk about how those thoughts affect mood.
V.C. HOW THOUGHTS AFFECT OUR MOOD? (15 min)

Overview
Conduct an interactive activity that highlights the connection between what we think and how we feel.

Key Points
- Engage the group in an active discussion about Violet and Mary’s days and highlight the following points:
  - There are many different types of thoughts that one can have in any given situation.
  - These different thoughts can affect how we feel, either by bringing our mood up, down, or leaving it the same.
  - We have some control over what we think.

Participant Manual
p. 5.5

Rationale
To help participants understand how their thoughts about a particular situation can affect their mood.

Information
This is the second story about Violet and Mary. See class 2 for a description of the first story and things to consider before doing the exercise.

Step by Step

Step 1: Introduce the vignettes.
Suggested Wording
Let’s look at the cartoons on page 5 in your books to see an example of how thoughts can affect our mood. Violet and Mary have both recently gave birth, but now that their babies are born they are not sleeping very well. Both babies have colic, and they cry for almost two hours before they go to sleep at night. Their babies’ colic is a real problem. It is part of their external reality. In the beginning their mood is at a 3 because they are tired. But Violet and Mary have different reactions to the problem.

Step 2: Discuss story.
Suggested Wording
Let’s begin with Violet. Violet feels very bad that her baby has colic. When her baby cries she feels that she is being punished. She thinks it is very unfair that her baby is difficult. She wonders if the baby is doing it on purpose. She begins to think about her baby in a negative way. She sometimes thinks her baby is spoiled, difficult or fussy. She also worries because she thinks she should be able to get her baby to stop crying. She begins to think of herself as a “bad mother.” She begins to feel angry with herself and with her baby, and because she is in a bad mood, she stops going out with her friends. She begins to find it
hard to be affectionate with her baby the rest of the day because she still feels resentful about last night.

Now let’s look at Mary. Mary is also upset that she has a colicky baby, but she wonders how she can help her baby. She tries to figure out what is wrong and how she can help. Although her baby keeps crying, she believes that at least by holding her baby, she is showing the baby how much she cares and that must help a little.

**Step 3: Process story.**
Here are some questions to stimulate discussion:

- At each step of the story, why do Violet and Mary’s mood change?
- How would you rate Violet and Mary’s mood at each step in the story (participants can circle a mood rating on their pictures)
- How do you think their thoughts affected their mood?
- How do you think their thoughts affect their relationship with their babies?

**Step 4: Connect the stories to the participants’ lives.**

*Suggested Wording*
As many of you already know, all babies cry. Babies cry because it is the way they talk. Sometimes we are able to figure out what they need, and we can help them. Sometimes, we cannot figure it out or what they need and that can be frustrating. When babies have colic, like in the stories, nothing really helps them, and this is very difficult. It would be normal to think like Violet did that there is something wrong with the baby or with her, but the truth is that both Violet and her baby are just in a difficult situation. You may find yourselves in difficult situations too and at these times it will be important not to take it personally. Just because a baby cries does not mean that you’re a bad mother or that you have a bad baby. The way we think about the baby crying will affect our mood and how we interact with our babies.

It is also important for us to remember that the babies will grow up. They will learn words to tell us what they need, and we will teach them ways to deal with difficult feelings. It will get easier. We can also make it easier by getting help from other people. We will talk more about this in the next session.
V.D. TYPES OF HARMFUL THOUGHT PATTERNS (20 min)

Overview
For participants to become aware of their harmful thought patterns, those that affect their mood states.

Key Points
- Different types of harmful thought patterns exist.
- These harmful thought patterns affect our mood in a negative way.
- It’s important to recognize these harmful thoughts and be aware of how they affect us.
- By learning what types of thoughts we have, we can better understand how to modify them in a helpful way.

Participant Manual
pp. 5.6-7

Rationale
To learn to recognize harmful thought patterns.

Information
If there is not enough time, group leaders can decide to do this activity during the next session because the next session has less material to cover.

It may be useful for group leaders to use props when reviewing the different types of harmful thought patterns. For example, a coffee mug and filter can be brought in to illustrate the concept of a negative filter, dice can be used to illustrate pessimism and a sticker label can be used to illustrate labeling. Leaders can point to a picture in the room and explain how some people make only focus on the imperfections (negative filtering) instead of seeing the entire picture. This is similar to being in any situation and focusing only on the negative aspects of the situation and therefore blind to the positive aspects that exist.

Step by Step

Step 1: Review the harmful thought patterns.
Suggested Wording
We’ve been talking about how thoughts affect mood. Next week, we will talk about how we can change the way we think to improve our mood, but before we do that, it may be helpful for us to learn more about different types of harmful thoughts. Harmful thoughts fall into different categories.

If you look on pages 6 and 7 of your books, we have listed some of the common categories. Let’s go over a few of them.

Pick the categories that you think are most pertinent for group members and review these categories.

Step 2: Have group members identify which category their thoughts fall into. If you have written group members’ thoughts on the board, pick a few and then ask people which category the thought falls into. Otherwise, you can have group members share thoughts
from page 4 in their books and figure out which categories it falls into. Sometimes, a given thought will fall into more than one category.

**Alternative Exercise**
Play a game, have participants form two teams and then play a game like family feud. One of the group leaders can play the game show host. This leader reads one of the phrases below and then participants try and decide which category of harmful thoughts it fits under. The first participant to guess the correct category gets a point for her team. If neither participant gets it, it goes to the next person on their team.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thought:</th>
<th>Category of harmful thinking:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I have to be the best mom in the world.</td>
<td>- All or nothing thinking + Should</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The party is going to be really boring so why bother going.</td>
<td>- Negative fortune telling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My partner seems very upset today, maybe I did something wrong.</td>
<td>- Mind reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. My baby is crying. I am a bad mom.</td>
<td>- Negative filter (ignoring the positive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. My child doesn’t help me. He/She is lazy.</td>
<td>- Labeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Yes, I came to group today, but it’s no big deal.</td>
<td>- Not giving oneself credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I’m sure I will have a bad delivery.</td>
<td>- Pessimism, negative fortune telling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I did not get the answer first. My team members will think I’m stupid.</td>
<td>- Mind reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. If we lose, it will be all my fault.</td>
<td>- Blaming oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I yelled at my child. I’ve ruined her forever.</td>
<td>- Exaggerating</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Class #6: How to Give Myself Good Advice

CLASS OUTLINE

I. Announcements & Agenda (10 min)

II. General Review (10 min)

III. Personal Project Review (10 min)

IV. Relaxation Exercise (15 min)

V. New material (60-75 min)
   a. How to give myself good advice (30 min)
   b. Harmful thought patterns and their antidotes (30 min)

VI. Personal Project (5 min)

VII. Feedback and Preview (5 min)

Goals for instructors:
1. Help participants see that they can make changes to their thoughts
2. Review harmful thought patterns
3. Help participants use antidotes to challenge harmful/burdensome thoughts

Materials needed:
1. Participant manuals
2. Pens, Dry erase board, or chalkboard to present material to class
4. Copies of CES-D or other mood questionnaires (optional)
5. Evaluation/feedback forms (optional)

IV. RELAXATION EXERCISE

Recommended exercise: “Using mental images to relax” (Ramos et al., 2002, p. 10). Alternatively, Instructors can ask participants to choose an exercise from the manual.
V.A. New Material: HOW TO GIVE MYSELF GOOD ADVICE (30 min)

Overview
To help participants increase positive self talk.

Key Points
- We can learn ways to talk back to harmful thoughts to improve one’s mood.
- We give good advice to others; we can also give good advice to ourselves.

Participant Manual
p. 6.3

Purpose
Learn ways to talk back to harmful/burdensome thoughts.

Step by Step

Step 1: Reinforce participants’ ability to identify their thoughts.
Suggested Wording:
Over the past week, you have all begun to really focus on what it is you are telling yourselves. This is the first step in learning how to change the way we think.

Give specific examples of thoughts participants have identified in the last class or during the homework assignment.

Step 2: Introduce the “Giving Advice” Metaphor.
Suggested Wording:
Look at page 3 in your books. Imagine the woman in this picture is your friend, and imagine she tells you “I’m not going to be a good mother. I won’t be able to take good care of my baby.” What do you think you would say to her?

Facilitate a group discussion about all the things the group may say to her. Make sure to ask how they think her thoughts would affect her mood.

When they are done ask them this question: Now imagine that you are this woman, and you had this thought. What do you think you would tell yourself?

Begin a group discussion about how even though we know how to help others it is sometimes difficult for us to help ourselves. We often know the right things to say, but don’t say them to ourselves. Talk about why this might be.

Some key issues to discuss:
- Women are socialized to be caretakers, helpers, to listen to others.
- We learn these skills from a young age. However, we are not taught to apply these skills to ourselves. Part of this may be cultural.
- Another part may be in the way we were raised. Many women are raised to pay
attention to how others are doing at the expense of how they are doing. We need to
realize that we need to also care for ourselves. Mothers are the trees of the family. If
the tree is not cared for, it will not bare good fruit.

**Step 3: Have women practice giving advice to themselves.**

Ask participants to pair off. If they did the optional project of writing harmful/burdensome
thoughts on the index cards, they can use those cards now. Otherwise, take a couple of
minutes and have participants write one burdensome/harmful thought on a card. Let them
know they will be sharing this thought with their partner.

Once the cards are ready, have the participants swap cards, so now they have their partner’s
card, and their partner has their card. They will now take turns reading the cards (which are
really their partner’s cards), but they will pretend that it is their card. The person who does
not read the card, will give advice on how to handle the thought (this means that each
participant will really be giving herself advice.

As this exercise is occurring, circulate among the group, clarify the exercise, and help
participants who may be stuck to really focus on helping “their friend.”

**Step 4: Process the exercise.**

Have participants talk about what it was like to “give themselves advice.” Did they have the
answers when they felt the problem was not theirs? If they did not have answers, you can
highlight the importance of getting support from a friend when you feel “stuck.” Sometimes
the best advice we can give ourselves is to get help.
Overview
To teach participants how to challenge harmful/burdensome thoughts using their antidotes.

Key Points
- Go over the list of harmful thought patterns and their antidotes.
- Review the ones that are most applicable to participants.

Participant Manual
pp. 6.4-6

Information
Patterns and their antidotes are provided on pp. 4-6. Instructors may not have time to review all of them and should choose the ones most relevant to the participants.

In some cases when participants strongly adhere to a negative thought, it may be important to dig a little deeper and determine where they think that thought came from, such as from their childhood. You may need to highlight the connection between early childhood experiences and beliefs about themselves, other people, and the world. Participants need to become conscious of this connection and recognize that things are different now from how they were when they were children.

Step by Step

Step 1: Introduce the concept of antidotes to harmful thought patterns.
Suggested Wording
*We have been talking about how to give ourselves good advice when we have thoughts that stress us out or cause us to feel sad, scared, or angry. But sometimes this can be hard to do. It can help us if we have specific strategies or ways that we can challenge specific types of thoughts. We call these strategies antidotes. If you have an infection, you can use an antibiotic to stop the infection from spreading. When we have harmful thoughts, we can use an “antidote” to help them from spreading and ruining our mood.*

Let’s go through some of the antidotes to our thoughts.

Step 2: Define and identify the antidotes to the harmful thoughts.
Suggested Wording
*First, does anyone have a harmful thought they would like to share?*

Have participants either share thoughts from their cards or other thoughts they had while doing the optional project. If you were circulating around the room and noted that people were stuck on a specific thought, you might ask them to share the thought with the group, so that everyone can think about the possible antidotes to that thought.

Once a participant has shared a thought, go through the following steps:
1) Identify which harmful thought pattern the thought falls into. Thoughts may fall into more than one category.
2) Have participants talk about how the thought falls into that category.
3) Have another participant read the antidote to the thought pattern.
4) Have an open ended discussion where participants give advice based on what the antidote suggests.

Go through more thoughts and use more “antidotes.” Talk about how at first it can be difficult to use antidotes, but with practice it becomes easier. Highlight how they can practice this skill with their children and pass on the ability to challenge harmful/burdensome thoughts.
Class #7: Fighting Harmful Thoughts that Affect My Baby

CLASS OUTLINE

I. Announcements & Agenda (10 min)

II. General Review (10 min)

III. Personal Project Review (10 min)

IV. Relaxation Exercise (15 min)

V. New material (60-75 min)
   a. Passing on patterns of thinking (20 min)
   b. Parenting: helpful and harmful/burdensome thoughts (20 min)
   c. Coping with challenging situations with my baby (20 min)

VI. Personal Project (5 min)

VII. Feedback and Preview (5 min)

Goals for instructors:
- Help participants see the connection between themselves and their baby’s thoughts and mood interaction
- Review harmful thought patterns
- Help participants identify how thoughts can shape their and their baby’s internal reality
- Motivate participants to want to learn how to manage their thoughts (internal reality) so that they can improve the quality of their life and their baby’s life

Materials needed:
1. Participant manuals
2. Pens, Dry erase board, or chalkboard to present material to class
4. Copies of CES-D or other mood questionnaires (optional)
5. Evaluation/feedback forms (optional)

IV. RELAXATION EXERCISE

Recommended exercise: “Using breath to relax” (Ramos et al., 2002, p. 8). Alternatively, Instructors can ask participants to choose an exercise from the manual.
Overview
Help participants understand how the way they think will affect how their children think.

Key Points
- Children learn patterns of thinking from their parents.
- The way you think about your children and yourself affects how you are with them, and this in turn affects the way your children think about themselves, you, and your relationship.

Participant Manual
p. 7.3

Information
In the first year of life, young children form important attachments to primary caregivers, and they begin to learn to regulate emotions. These are two of the primary tasks of early childhood. By regulate emotions, we mean that children learn how to deal with difficult feelings like hunger, anger, and fear. They learn to do these things through their interactions with their primary caregivers. The answers to the following questions are so important to their development: Will you take care of me? Will you hold me when I am uncomfortable or upset? Will you come when I cry? Will you come back when you leave? Through positive interactions with caregivers, children form secure relationships and learn ways to deal with difficult feelings. These interactions also form the basis for the way children begin to think about themselves, their relationships, and the world. If someone comes for me, then I am important, worthy. The world is not a scary place. I can turn to my mom, and she will protect me. If I am hungry, someone will give me food.

Most mothers want to be there to help their children. However, sometimes their experiences or thoughts can interfere with the way they are with their children. The goal of this session is to talk both about the helpful and harmful thoughts that may interfere with the mothers’ ability to serve as safe attachment, consistent attachment figures.

Young children are very attuned to their parents’ emotions. They interpret their world by the emotions attached to the words that are spoken around them. If their mothers are depressed or are experiencing a lot of harmful thoughts about being a mother or about their child, children will be exposed to a lot of negative emotions, which will affect the way they begin to think about themselves. As children develop language, they will also internalize the words that their mothers say. They will hear what their mothers say about themselves and what their mothers say about them and over time the mother’s words may become the children’s words and the children’s internal reality. This is the intergenerational transmission of harmful thinking that we are seeking to prevent.

Step by Step
Step 1: Discuss the intergenerational transmission of thought patterns.
Suggested Wording:
During the past two classes, we talked a lot about the types of thought patterns we have,
and how different types of thoughts can affect our mood. But we have not yet talked about how we learned to think these ways.

How do you think we learned to think the way we do? For example, if I say “I’m stupid,” which is an example of labeling, how did I learn this?

Begin a discussion of how we learned to think the way we think. Key points to highlight include:

- We learned by experiencing how others, like our parents or siblings, treated us.
- We learned by taking in the words that other people have said to us.
- Early experiences often shape the way we think about ourselves, others, and the world.

Step 2: Talk about breaking the transmission of harmful thought patterns.

Suggested Wording:
As mothers, we have the opportunity to teach our children different ways to think than we were taught. What would you like your children to learn to think about themselves, your relationship, and the world?

You can write three columns on the board: 1) beliefs about themselves, 2) beliefs about their relationship with you, and 3) beliefs about the world and then elicit participant responses.

Step 3: Talk about how they will teach their children to think in helpful ways.

Begin a discussion about how they will teach their children the things they want them to learn. Highlight how they will serve as role models for their children in a similar way that their parents served as role models for them. So, if they want to make changes in their children’s lives and thought patterns, they may need to make changes in their own way of thinking first.
V.B. PARENTING: HELPFUL AND HARMFUL THOUGHTS (20 min)

Overview
Help mothers identify helpful and harmful thoughts they may have related to being a parent.

Key Points
- Identify helpful and harmful thoughts related to being a parent.
- Talk about how these thoughts are related to our childhood experiences.
- Talk about how we might challenge harmful thoughts, so we can provide our children with a positive experience.

Participant Manual
p. 7.4

Information
It is important during this exercise to acknowledge and normalize any fears or anxiety participants may share about becoming a mother.

As participants talk about how they want to parent their children, they begin talking about discipline strategies. Views of discipline for different cultures should be taken into account. One useful way of discussing discipline is by talking both about what they want their children to learn and how the discipline strategy will affect their relationship with their children. In addition, you can highlight that if the child has a positive and loving view of their relationship with his/her mother, physical discipline is less likely to be necessary. If participants bring up using corporal punishment, it may be important to talk about the guidelines of what is considered acceptable discipline in the U.S. versus child abuse.

Step by Step

Step 1: Identify harmful and helpful thoughts related to being a mother.

Suggested Wording
As you think about becoming a mother, a variety of thoughts may go through your head. In the previous exercise, we talked about how the way we think gets passed on to our children. We want to pass on some of the thoughts we have but not others. So, it is important that we be aware of our thoughts, so we can make changes and teach our children healthy ways of thinking.

Let’s take some time and write down some of the thoughts we have related to being a mother.

Write two columns on the board, one titled “healthy thoughts” and the other titled “harmful thoughts.” Then ask participants to think of some of the thoughts that they may have related to being a mother, and write them down. If they need an example, you can share that a harmful thought might be “my children won’t listen to me and won’t respect me” while a helpful thought might be “I can’t wait to teach them how to cook.”
Step 2: Talk about how these thoughts may affect their children. Elicit and open discussion about how these thoughts (helpful and harmful) may affect the way they interact with their children and the way their children learn to think about themselves, their relationship with their mothers, and the world.

Step 3: Talk about how we can challenge the harmful thoughts. Have participants use the antidotes to challenge some of the specific harmful thoughts they have related to becoming a mother.

Note: At the same time that you help the women challenge harmful thoughts, you need to acknowledge that becoming a mother involves many changes not all of which are positive. You give up many things (including sleep); you just hope that you get many things in return.
V.C. COPING WITH CHALLENGING SITUATIONS WITH MY BABY (20 min)

Overview
Help participants identify times when they may be more likely to have negative thoughts about their children and develop a strategy for dealing with these situations.

Key Points
- Young children cannot easily express what they need.
- It can be exhausting to be the parent of a young child.
- We can learn specific strategies for coping with times when we feel frustrated and angry with our children.

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Step by Step

Step 1: Discuss potentially stressful situations participants may face with their babies.
Suggested Wording:
On page 6 in your books, we have listed four situations that mothers often find stressful. Go over the list of stressful situations.

- Baby is crying and you don’t know what to do
- Baby won’t sleep at night
- Baby doesn’t want you to leave the house
- Baby has a temper tantrum when you say no.

Step 2: Talk about participants’ reactions to these situations. Have group members pick a situation to discuss. Ask them to imagine being in that situation. You may choose to have them close their eyes while you describe a situation in greater detail. For example, you might say “imagine that it’s 3 o’clock in the morning, and your baby wakes up and starts crying.”

Ask them what their immediate thoughts and reactions are. If participants have difficulty sharing their thoughts or reactions, you can ask them how they think Violet or Mary would react in this situation.

Make sure to highlight that negative reactions are normal. No one likes to hear a baby cry or be faced with a temper tantrum.

Step 3: Talk about how they might cope with this situation.
Suggested Wording
On page 6 of your manuals, we have listed steps that may help you deal with difficult situations. Let’s go over the steps and see what you think.

# 1: The first step is to try to figure out what your child is trying to say through her
behavior. This sometimes means putting our own reaction on hold while we try to focus on what is going on with our babies and answer the question “what do you need.” (For example, when we are so frustrated that we feel like yelling or crying, we sometimes need to take a deep breathe and say, ok let me see what you need, so I can help you, you’re not just doing this to annoy me.) Babies do not cry to be annoying or because they are spoiled. They cry when they need something, when they are tired, needing attention, hungry, wet, in pain, or worried. To help our babies we need to figure out what they need.

Pause and elicit participants’ reactions to this step.

Instructors can also refer back to the colicky baby example from Violet & Mary’s Days in Class 5.

# 2: The second step is to label the problem and the feeling the baby might be having. While we may not always be able to guess what is wrong, many times we know what our babies need. By giving words to the problem you help teach your babies language that they can use in the future. We also help to calm ourselves down. For example, when we say “oh baby you’re tired.” We’re telling ourselves my baby is tired and needs sleep that is why she is crying. Having this thought is very different from thinking that I have a baby who will never stop crying.

# 3: Next you will determine what to do based on what the problem is. So if you think your baby is hungry, you will give her food. If you think your baby wants attention you will give her attention. Sometimes you will not be able to give your baby what she wants. At these times, you may be able to help your baby by putting this in to words. For example, if your baby wants your coffee and tantrums to get it you might say “oh baby you really want mama’s coffee. But coffee is for big people not little people. I’m sorry but mama can’t give you coffee.” While this may not immediately stop the tantrum, it will teach your baby important lessons about life, including that mama understands what she wants but cannot give her everything.

# 4: Things don’t always work perfectly. Sometimes we guess wrong about what is wrong. Sometimes we have to try again. When this doesn’t work, it is important to go to step 5 and get help and support.

Step 4: Practice using the steps.

Have the group choose a difficult situation and practice using the steps to think about how they might cope with this situation. Talk about how using this process helps them to change the way they are thinking and their possible interactions with their babies.
Class #8: Thoughts I Want to Teach My Baby

I. Announcements & Agenda (10 min)
II. General Review (10 min)
III. Personal Project Review (5 min)
IV. Relaxation Exercise (10 min)
V. New material (60-75 min)
   a. What kind of thoughts I want to learn to teach my baby (20 min)
   b. Thinking about your future (20 min)
   c. Thinking about your baby’s future (20 min)
VI. Personal Project (5 min)
VII. Feedback and Preview (5 min)

Goals for instructors:
- Review thoughts module
- Help participants think about the types of thoughts they want to teach their babies
- Help participants begin thinking about their and their babies’ futures

Materials needed:
1. Participant manuals
2. Pens, Dry erase board, or chalkboard to present material to class
4. Copies of CES-D or other mood questionnaires (optional)
5. Evaluation/feedback forms (optional)

IV. RELAXATION EXERCISE

Recommended exercise: “Teaching your child to relax with you” (Ramos et al., 2002, p. 15).
Alternatively, Instructors can ask participants to choose an exercise from the manual.
V.A. New Material: WHAT KIND OF THOUGHTS I WANT TO LEARN TO TEACH MY BABY (20 min)

Overview
Focus on thoughts the mothers want to teach their babies.

Key Points
- Review the key points of the thoughts module.
- Mothers play an important role in helping shape their babies’ thoughts and internal reality, which can have an impact on the mother’s and baby’s mood.

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Information
This handout may be difficult for participants to understand at first, so it may be helpful to briefly review the healthy management of reality model.

Instructors may want to use the illustration on this handout to convey the main point of this exercise, which is what you say and how you talk to your child influences her/his perception of themselves and their mother.

Step by Step

Step 1: Review the basic concepts of the thoughts module.
Suggested Wording
This is the last class of the thoughts module. We have been talking about the kinds of thoughts we have, and we found out that some thoughts are healthy and more positive for our mood, and some thoughts are more harmful for our mood. We’ve also talked about some of the ways to try to get rid of these harmful thoughts, by using some antidotes and thinking about what kind of life we want to have for ourselves as mothers and for our babies. Is there anything else that you remember from this module?

Elicit discussion

Step 2: Review key concepts covered on the handout. Have participants take turns reading the main points. Have them discuss what each of the bullet points means to them. Highlight what participants have said during previous classes.
VI.B. THINKING ABOUT YOUR FUTURE (20 min)

Overview
Help participants understand that they can actively shape their future by shaping their internal and external reality.

Key Points
- When we identify what we want in the future, we can think in ways that help us achieve our goals.
- When we identify what we want in the future, we can plan to do things that will help us achieve our goals.

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Information/Alternative Exercise
It is important to realize that some women may be more limited in the goals they set because of social, economic, or cultural factors. It is helpful in these instances to give examples of women who faced similar challenges and were successful in their goals.

Step by Step

Step 1: Help mothers identify their ability to shape their own future, set goals.
Suggested Wording:
We’ve been talking a lot in the past 4 weeks about how thoughts can be harmful or helpful to your mood at any given moment. Do you think that the thoughts that you have can also affect your future? How?
Elicit discussion.

Step 2: Engage in an exercise to think about the “future past.”
Suggested Wording
We want you to be able to think and plan for your future. Let’s do an exercise that helps us do this. First, close your eyes, get in a comfortable position and take a few deep breaths. [Do this for a couple of minutes until participants are relaxed and focused]. Now, I want you to look into the future. Today is _______ [date & year]. I’d like for you to fast forward your life to 5 years from now, the year of _______. [Ask each question & provide about a minute for participants to visualize their answers.]
- What do you see yourself doing 5 years from now?
- What kind of life do you want to have for you?
- What do you NOT want for yourself?

After asking the questions, have participants come out of the relaxation activity and either 1) write down their goals (wants and don’t wants) on p. 4, and/or 2) verbally discuss this activity.

Step 3: Recognize that mothers can set their goals and shape their lives by changing/molding/managing their internal and external reality.
Suggested Wording
From this activity, it’s clear that we all know that we have a particular life in mind for us. You know what you want out of life and what you do not want out of life. So the question becomes how can you make this happen?

Elicit discussion

**Step 4: Recognize that one can be active in managing one’s reality.**

*Suggested Wording*

By taking this class, you’ve been learning that you can shape your life by figuring out, for example, that doing pleasant activities can help make you and your baby feel better. In the same way, to have the life that you want, you can also start by doing the things to make that future happen. You have 5 years to make this happen. What are some of the things you need to do now? What are some of the things that you need to avoid?

Elicit discussion, and write on board relevant points.

*What do you need to start doing right now to reach your desired goal? If you don’t change directions, you’ll wind up where you’re headed.*

*The main thing to know is that if you feel good about yourself and your life, then probably, your baby as she grows up, will be good too, and more secure in her life. Do you think that’s true? [Briefly discuss this.]*

**Step 5: Identify obstacles to being active in one’s life.**

*Suggested Wording*

*There are things you think and things you do that make it more or less likely that you will act to achieve your goals. What are they?*

**Step 6: Identify obstacles to being active in one’s life.**

*Suggested Wording*

*Is there anything that would prevent you from having the life that you imagined? What are some of the roadblocks? [Answers: time, money, lack of energy, lack of partner - write these on board and problem solve with participants; this would also be a good time to review the thoughts and mood module, e.g., harmful thought patterns & antidotes].*

*Can anyone think of a way to get overcome some of these roadblocks? [Help group to problem solve.]*
V.C. THINKING ABOUT YOUR BABY’S FUTURE (20 min)

Overview
This activity is similar to Activity V.B. (above) but focused on how mothers play an active role in shaping their baby’s future.

Key Points
- Thoughts can help the mother to shape her baby/child’s life in ways that are healthier for both mother and baby/child.
- Identify different life goals, and ways to shape their baby’s future (e.g., do’s and don’t do’s).

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Step by Step

Step 1: Help mothers identify their ability to shape not only their own future but also their baby/child’s future.
Suggested Wording
We just talked about the different ways that you can shape your future, by doing some of the things that need to be done now and avoiding things that may not be very helpful. Review some specific examples in previous discussion. Because you have this important person coming into your life, you also have a role to play as a mother, and can not only shape your own reality but also help your child to shape hers/his.

Step 2: Engage in relaxation exercise to think about the “future past.”
Suggested Wording
Let’s go through the relaxation exercise again, and this time, you’re going to focus on your baby’s future. First, close your eyes, get in a comfortable position and take a few deep breaths. [Do for a few minutes until participants are relaxed and focused]. Now, I want you to look into the future. Today is ________ [date & year]. I’d like for you to fast forward your life to 5 years from now, the year of _________. [Ask each question & provide about a minute for participants to visualize their answers].
- How old will your child be?
- What do you see her to do 5 years from now?
- Is she in school? Is she able to read, write?
- Does she enjoy school?
- What kind of life do you want to have for her to have?
- Who are the people in her life?
- What role does each of these people play in her life?
- What are some of the things that you want for your baby?
- What are some of the things that you do NOT want for your baby?

After asking the questions, have participants come out of the relaxation activity and 1) write down their goals (wants and don’t wants) on p. 5, and/or 2) verbally discuss this activity.
Step 3: Recognize that mothers can help shape their baby’s lives by helping her manage her internal and external reality.

Suggested Wording

From this activity, it’s clear that as mothers, you want the best for your child. [Cite examples from discussion]. How can you help assure or increase the likelihood for this life will happen for your baby?

Elicit discussion.

Step 4: Recognize that mothers can be active in managing their baby’s reality.

Suggested Wording

In the previous activity, we talked about the things that you could do to help realize your ideal future. Now, can you think of ways that you can help to make your baby’s future happen? Remember, you have 5 years to make this happen. What kinds of things do you want to teach your baby? To make this happen, what are some of the things you need to do now? What are some of the things that you need to avoid?

Elicit discussion, and write on board relevant points.

Step 5: Identify obstacles to being active in one’s life.

Suggested Wording

Is there anything that would prevent you from having the life that you imagined for your baby? What are some of the roadblocks?

Elicit answers: time, money, lack of energy, lack of partner. Write these on board and problem solve with participants.

Can anyone think of a way to get overcome some of these roadblocks?

Help group to problem solve. If support is an issue, instructors can also provide a preview of the next section, on the connection between people and mood relationships.

Alternative Exercise

An alternative to doing Activity V.B. and V.C. separately is to do both activities together. This would help to clarify that the mother and baby’s lives will be intertwined (during pregnancy and postpartum). There are ways to mold both mothers’ and children’s realities separately. Instructors can follow one of the exercises above and add “you and your baby” instead of just “you” or “your baby.”

Another way to do the exercise is to have the participants stand up side by side and begin to think about the kind of life they want for their baby and the things they can begin doing now to ensure that their baby has a promising future. Tell the participants, “We are now going to take one step at a time, with each step representing one year of your baby’s life. We want you to think about what things you want to do during each year to ensure your baby meets her/his goal that you have for her/him. Before beginning, imagine that you have your baby in your arms and think about what she or he looks like.” Then have participants take the first step, in which their baby just completed her/his first year of life. Begin to describe all the physical and emotional changes that participants can expect their baby to have. During the next step, remind the participants that their child is now walking and holding their hand. Repeat this procedure for each of the next 3 steps until the “child” reaches 5 years of age.