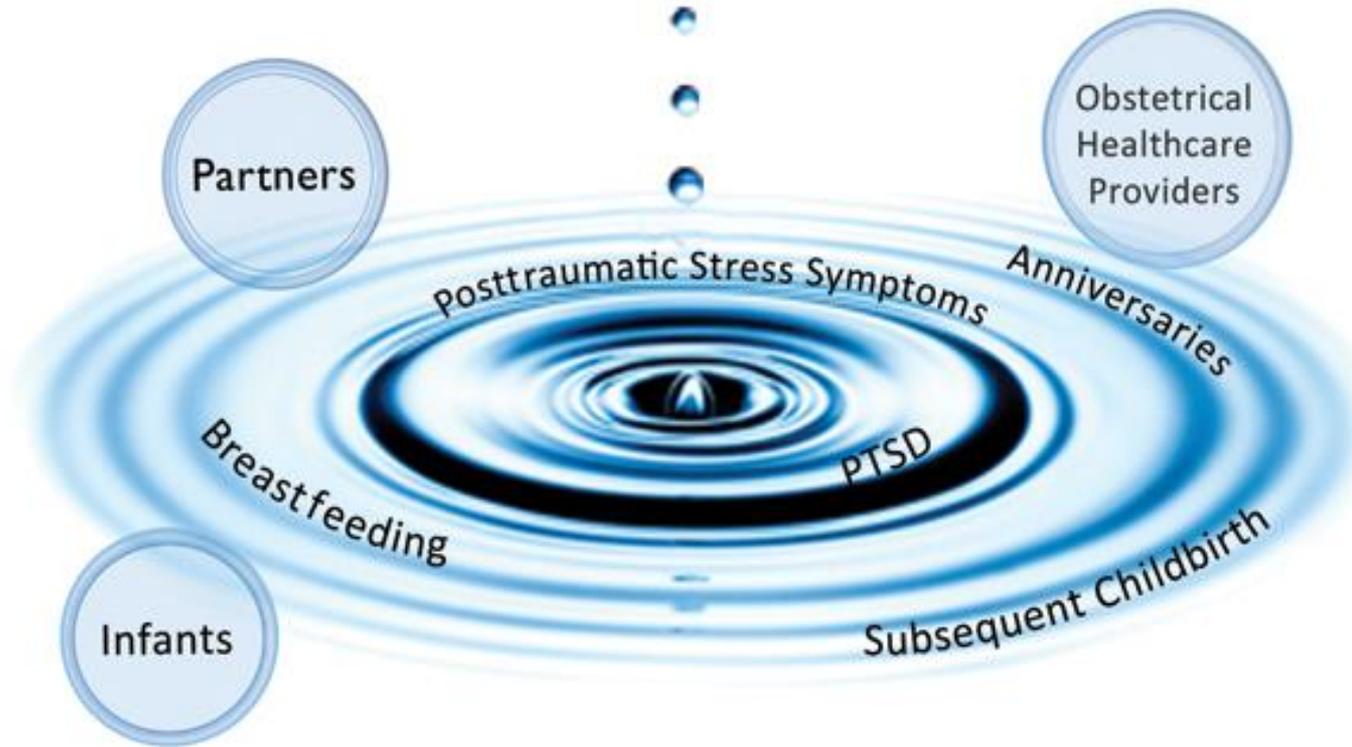


Birth Trauma: The Ever-Widening Ripple Effect

Cheryl Tatano Beck, DNSc, CNM, FAAN
University of Connecticut

- 
- The presenter does not have any conflict of interest to disclose.

Traumatic Childbirth



Prevalence

- In US 34% of mothers perceived their births to be traumatic. (Soet et al., 2003)
- In Australia 45% of new mothers reported experiencing traumatic childbirth.
(Alcorn et al., 2010)

In the UK 23% of mothers reported their births were traumatic. (Sawyers et al., 2012)

Birth Trauma in the Eye of the Beholder

In her 1878 novel, *Molly Bawn*, Margaret Wolfe Hungerford, an Irish-born 19th century romance novelist, first penned the phrase “beauty is in the eye of the beholder.”

Birth Trauma (N = 40)

Infant Death

Emergency Cesarean delivery/fetal distress

Cardiac arrest

Incompetent medical care

Congenital Anomalies

Fear of epidural

Inadequate Pain Relief

Postpartum hemorrhage /manual removal of placenta

Forceps/Vacuum extraction/skull fracture

Separation from Infant in NICU

Toxemia/Premature birth

Degrading Experience

Essence of Traumatic Childbirth

1. To care for me: Was that too much to ask for?
2. To communicate with me: Why was this neglected?
3. To provide adequate care: You betrayed my trust and I felt powerless
4. The end justifies the means: At whose expense? At What price?



I was congratulated for how “quickly and easily” he came out and he scored a perfect 10! The worst thing was that nobody acknowledged that I had had a bad time. Everyone was so please it had gone so well! I felt as if I’d been raped!







Post Traumatic Stress Disorder



After Childbirth

- The reported prevalence of PTSD due to birth trauma was 3% in community samples and 16% in at-risk samples in Grekin & O'Hara's (2014) meta-analysis.
- In Yildiz et al.'s (2017) meta-analysis they reported a prevalence of 4.0% in community samples & 18.5% in high risk groups.
- In a U.S. national survey conducted by Childbirth Connection, 9% of the sample of 1,573 women screened positive for meeting the diagnostic criteria for PTSD after childbirth (Beck, Gable, Sakala, & Declercq, 2011).

Risk Factors for PTSD after Childbirth

- Emergency cesarean birth
- High level of obstetric intervention
- Perception of inadequate care during L&D
- Premature or high risk infants
- Psychiatric history
- Prior history of sexual abuse
- Previous trauma
- Pregnancy loss

PTSD due to Birth Trauma: The Aftermath



Theme 1: Going to the
movies: Please don't make
me go!

Theme 2



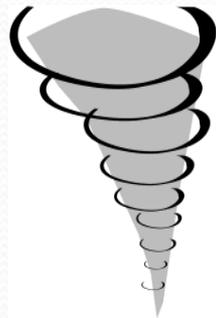
A shadow of myself:
Too numb to try and change

Theme 3



Seeking to have questions answered and wanting to talk, talk, talk

Theme 4



The dangerous trio of
anger, anxiety, and
depression: Spiraling
downward

Theme 5



Isolation from the world of
motherhood: Dreams shattered

Metaphor Analysis

“Metaphors are like a series of brush-strokes-so that no single metaphor adequately expresses the state.

(Charteris-Black, 2012, p. 213).

PTSD due to childbirth IS a mechanical robot

- Common metaphorical expressions included zombie, numb, detached, empty shell and mechanical.
- “I just felt very mechanical and detached. I just went through the motions of looking after my baby. I did what was required like a robot.”

PTSD due to childbirth IS a ticking time bomb

- Reliving of it all but also the festering anger they felt regarding their birth trauma.
- “I tried not to boil over each day, to keep a lid on it.”

PTSD due to childbirth IS an invisible wall

- “I felt as if there was a wall between this child and myself.”
- “Intimacy with my baby has a brick wall around it.”

PTSD due to childbirth IS a video on constant replay

- “The last 20 minutes or so before he was born played over and over again in my head for a year.”
- “When I’m alone that is when I watch my movies.”

PTSD due to childbirth IS a dangerous ocean

- “In a sea of pain and abandonment I relentlessly steamed through the dismal empty seas powered by my desire to care for my baby.”
- “Sometimes I describe the symptoms one has to live with is like one is constantly bobbing up and down in the sea and occasionally one’s up raised hand is seen and seldom does another person ever bother to try and reach out to ease your situation by raising you out of that water.”

PTSD due to childbirth IS a thief in the night

- “I feel I was robbed of the joy one should feel over the birth of their first child. Also the joy of watching everyone else be so excited and happy about my new baby. I didn’t enjoy or share in their emotion.”

PTSD due to childbirth IS a bottomless abyss

- “I don’t know how far I will come before I can speak about a the birth without standing on the abyss and pulling myself back.
- “I felt like I was being sucked into an abyss for a moment I looked over into an abyss.”

The Anniversary of Birth trauma: Failure to Rescue



Theme 1: The Prologue: An Agonizing Time

- Clocks, calendars, and seasons all play key roles as the anniversary of birth trauma approaches. Clock watching consumed some mothers' days and nights.

Theme 2: The Actual Day: A celebration of a birthday or the torment of an anniversary



Theme 3. The Epilogue: A Fragile State

“As hard as I try to move away from the trauma, at birthday anniversary time I am pulled straight back as if on a giant rubber band into the midst of it all and spend MONTHS AFTER trying to pull myself away from it again.”

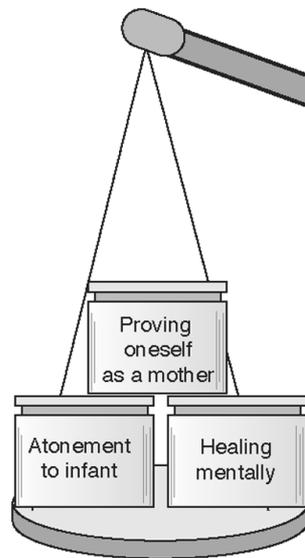
Theme 4. Subsequent Anniversaries: For better or Worse

“I can’t believe 5 years later that I feel such strong emotions and that my body responds physically. It is like the birthing trauma and the anxiety, loss and pain associated with it seem to reside in every cell of my being, with a memory capacity that serves to never let me forget.”

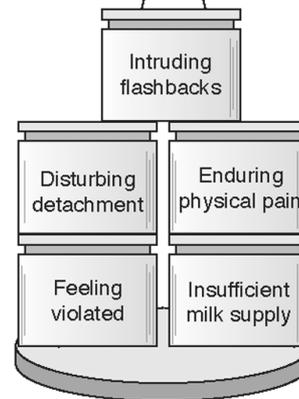
Impact of Birth Trauma on Breastfeeding: A Tale of Two Pathways

- Promoting Breastfeeding
- Impeding breastfeeding

**Promotes
Breastfeeding**



**Impedes
Breastfeeding**



MOTHER

Subsequent Childbirth After a Previous Traumatic Birth

- Theme 1 – Riding the Turbulent Wave of Panic during Pregnancy
- Theme 2 – Strategizing: Attempts to Reclaim their Body and Complete the Journey to Motherhood
- Theme 3 – Bringing Reverence to the Birthing Process and Empowering Women
- Theme 4 – Still Exclusive: The Longed for Healing Birth Experience

CE 2.0 ANCC
Contact Hours

© Jermoloube / iStock

Cheryl Tatano Beck, DNSc, CNM, FAAN, Sue Watson

POSTTRAUMATIC GROWTH

AFTER BIRTH TRAUMA: *"I Was Broken, Now I Am Unbreakable"*

264 VOLUME 41 | NUMBER 5

September/October 2016

Posttraumatic Growth

“Positive psychological change experienced as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life circumstances” (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

There are five dimensions of posttraumatic growth:

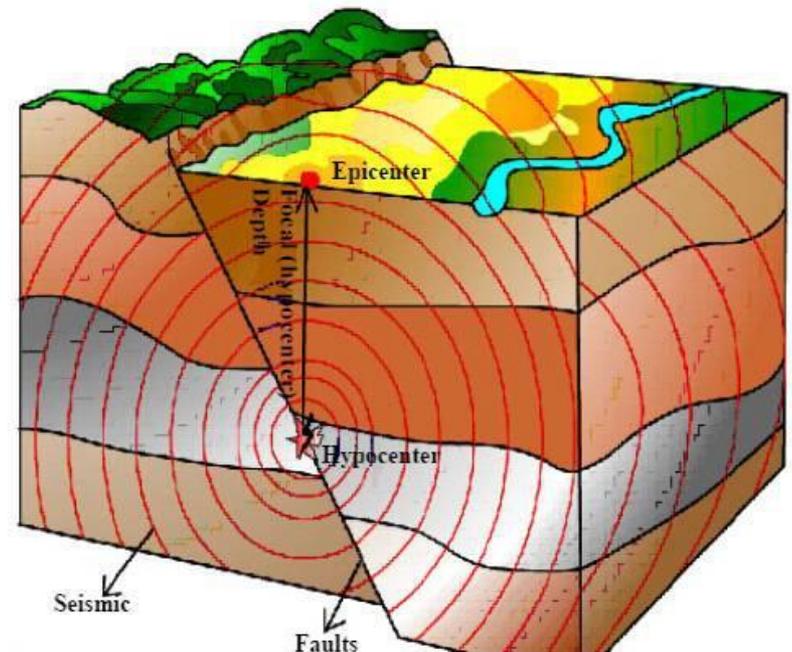
- Appreciation of Life
- Relating to Others
- Personal Strength
- New Possibilities
- Spiritual Change

Earthquake Metaphor

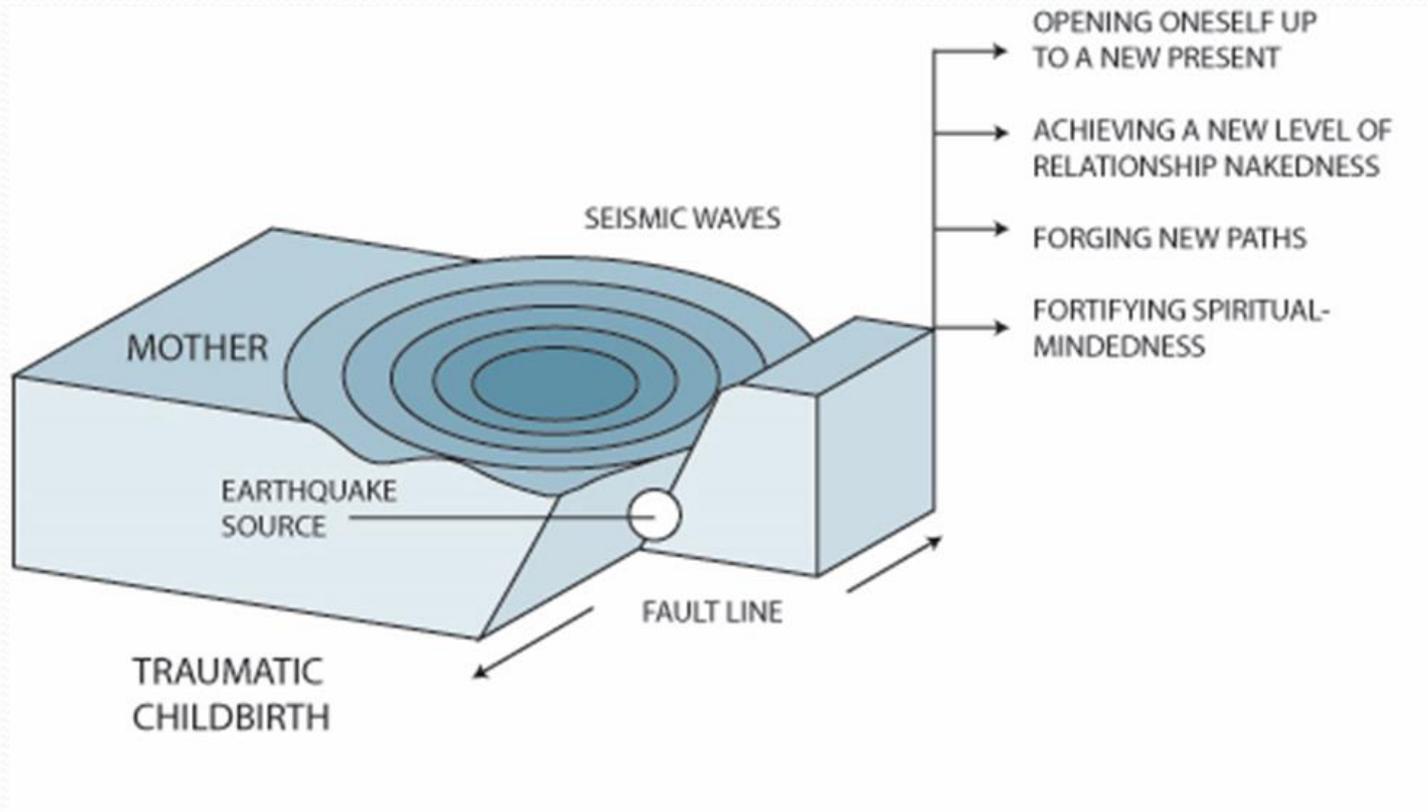
Key to posttraumatic growth is the event's ability to successfully “shake the foundations” of the person's assumptive world and to force a re-examining of them (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 1998)

These assumptions regarding the world that can be shaken include beliefs such as,

- the meaning of life
- why things that happen to people
- relationships with other persons
- one's strengths and weaknesses
- spiritual beliefs
- a person's value as an individual.



- 
- In cognitive rebuilding, an individual must give up certain basic assumptions and at the same time build new meanings and goals.
 - A re-examination of beliefs in the assumptive world is necessary and is referred to as rumination.
 - In early period after trauma, rumination takes the form of intrusive thoughts.
 - As time passes, rumination is less intrusive, and the person tries to make sense of the traumatic event and starts to rebuild assumptive beliefs.



Thank You

