

NM Home Visiting Bits and Bites

December 2022



Mindfulness During
Pregnancy

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Education and
Care Department
(ECECD) Updates

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Mindfulness During Pregnancy

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Why is prenatal mindfulness important? Research shows that when an expectant woman practices mindfulness, there are positive outcomes for her and her unborn child. Mindfulness can reduce stress, boost positive feelings, help prevent premature birth, and may promote healthy development. High levels of prenatal stress and depression have also been associated with low birth weight, shorter gestational age, and admission into the Neonatal Care Unit (NCU). We discuss these outcomes during the Maternal Child Health screening and they are key outcomes reported in the New Mexico Annual Home Visiting Outcomes Report.

Mindfulness, now a hot topic, is not a new practice. It has been around for thousands of years. Mindfulness can be the simple act of stilling the mind and thoughts while paying attention to the body or surroundings with purpose and focus. It may be accomplished through simple actions like breathing awareness, attention focused on one thing, or just slowing down to be more deliberate with thoughts and actions. It is an opportunity for the prenatal mom to take care of herself and in turn, take care of her unborn child. Mindfulness is a practice and it needs to be practiced again and again, day after day.

In S. Gordon's article, Kristin Rinehart, Director of Behavioral Health at the Mental Health Innovation Network stated "I remember when I was pregnant, my mind was thinking all the time—what if I can't handle childbirth; what if I don't know what to

do; what if it doesn't come naturally; what if something is wrong with my baby; what if I am not good enough; what if I have postpartum depression; and what if I can't breastfeed? Mindfulness can help a pregnant mom manage those thoughts as well as manage feelings and physical responses at that moment."

According to the NAEYC, once conception occurs and brain development starts *in utero*, the fetal environment may positively or negatively influence the developing brain. Brain growth is more rapid during this period of life than any other, with neurons being produced at an astonishing rate. The neurons then migrate to the area of the brain where they will reside for a person's entire life, beginning to form connections and differentiate brain functions. Fetuses use information—such as the kind and amount of nutrients received, the stress experienced, and the languages and voices heard—to shape their brains and bodies to anticipate experiences once born. Just two-thirds of the way through pregnancy, a good portion of the basic wiring of the brain is already completed. Stress reduction through mindfulness is one positive influence on the developing brain.

References:

Gordon, S. (2022) The benefits of mindfulness in pregnancy. Very Well Family. bit.ly/3tz6KJp
NAEYC (2017) Caring Relationships: The heart of early Brain Development. bit.ly/3Ng8uAi

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION & CARE DEPT (ECECD)

UPDATES

[Click here for the December 12, 2022 ECECD Early Childhood Community Newsletter.](#)

We recommend signing up for newsletters to keep up to date with what is going on with the department. The link to sign up is on this webpage.

ECECD has launched a new way for families to find local child care and NM PreK programs:

[In-Home Daycares & Local Preschool Near You](#) This website has several filters you may use to narrow down the search to meet family needs.

[NewMexicoKids Search](#) The interactive map will be helpful in locating NM PreK programs near your residence or workplace.

Check out the Moments Together website!

[Moments Together - For Parents of Little Ones](#) There are some great resources for parents, including information about home visiting, child care assistance, etc. The blog tab at the top of the page has interesting articles on a variety of topics that parents may be interested in.

THANK YOU!

Manager/Monitors are finishing up final Site Visits and sending out follow-up reports. We would like to thank our programs for welcoming us and sharing all the great things you are doing to support families. It has been great to meet you in person and get tours of your offices and meet the available staff.

CONGRATULATIONS!

The department is pleased to announce that **Cotillion Sneddy** of the Navajo Nation has been appointed as the new Assistant Secretary for Native American Early Education and Care. More information about her can be found here: [Cotillion Sneddy of Navajo Nation appointed as new ECECD Assistant Secretary for Native American Early Education and Care.](#)

STORY FROM THE FIELD

Your pregnancy test came back positive. Now what? You may be experiencing a wide range of emotions, from joy and excitement to fear and insecurity. All emotions are valid and are worthy of addressing. One of the best things we can do in early pregnancy is to acknowledge our feelings and learn ways to cope with this range of reactions.

In fact, the prenatal period is the perfect time to start sharpening a critical skill - mindfulness - that can contribute to the future well-being of mother and baby.

Home visitors with our First Born Socorro & More team often emphasize mindfulness practices with the families, helping new parents learn coping skills for themselves that help navigate the stressors of pregnancy and beyond and help them form strong, healthy bonds with their children.

“Mindfulness is the awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally,” according to Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn, creator of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and founder of the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society at UMass Medical School. Kabat-Zinn’s approach was first used to help patients with chronic pain. The techniques have since been used to teach people how to apply a mindfulness approach to navigating the stresses of everyday life. Home visiting programs have many tools available to assist families in incorporating mindfulness practices in their daily lives. Here are a few examples used by our team of four in Socorro:

- For many home visitors, the Facilitating Attuned Interactions (FAN) created for Erikson’s Fussy Baby Network has been hardwired into their practice with families, and mindfulness is the cornerstone of the approach. The FAN approach allows home visitors to help parents tune into what they are feeling and thinking, helping them to slow down and pay attention to their internal processes, becoming more mindful.
- Our Mothers and Babies curriculum provides concrete mindfulness skills to be incorporated with pregnant and parenting families. The program helps families to think through different situations and how mindfulness can affect the outcome. For example, this approach helps families rephrase their instinctive responses from “I feel bad and continue to let myself go down” to “I feel bad and I can bring myself up to a more positive frame of mind.”

(continued on page 3)

Elizabeth Beers, RN IMH-E

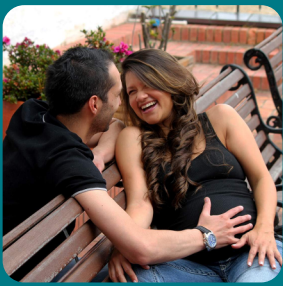
Director of Community Based Programs

Martha McGowan, LCSW, IMH III-E

Home Visitor/Infant Mental Health Provider
Socorro General Hospital, Socorro, NM



Pictured from left to right: Betty Cline, Presbyterian Socorro First Born, Baby Willa, Dad William, Mom Martha



Home Visiting Training Calendar



Previous COL Sessions, Articles, Tips, and Resources



- Mindfulness techniques have been central to educational curricula for decades, even when they are not named that way. Several of our team members taught the Free the Horses second-grade curriculum developed by Dr. Michal Popkin of Active Parenting starting in the 1990s. The focus was teaching kids, "Think clear, think bright, feel the sun in your heart just right." The goal was to change "stinking thinking" into clear, focused "bright" thinking. Taking a pause to change the weather in our brain was another effective approach.

With relationship-based home visitation, home visitors have a lot to hear and hold. Mindfulness is also important to home visitors in their own work. They need to be aware of their feelings during a visit to be present and meet the family where they are in the moment. Home visitors rely on mindfulness techniques as they go from one family visit to the next. They need to be able to leave one family and their specific needs to be present and available for the next family. This requires experience with mindfulness and a focus on our own self-care.

HOME VISITING DATES ON THE HORIZON

<p>Jan. 5</p> <p>Reflective Case Reviews (Spanish)</p> <p>1:30–2:30 p.m., via Zoom</p>	<p>Jan. 9, 18</p> <p>Reflective Case Reviews</p> <p>9–10 a.m., via Zoom</p>	<p>Jan. 9</p> <p>ASQ Training</p> <p>8:30 a.m.–4p.m., via Zoom</p>	<p>Jan. 13</p> <p>MCH Webinar #2 (How to present and administer the MCH with families)</p> <p>11 a.m.–12p.m., via Zoom</p>	<p>Jan. 24</p> <p>Reflective Case Reviews</p> <p>1:30–2:30 p.m., via Zoom</p>	<p>Feb. 3</p> <p>PICCOLO™ in Practice</p> <p>9–11 a.m., via Zoom</p>	<p>Feb. 8</p> <p>MCH Webinar #3 (MCH, data entry and technical assistance)</p> <p>10–11 a.m., via Zoom</p>
<p>Feb. 13</p> <p>Reflective Case Reviews</p> <p>9–10 a.m., via Zoom</p>	<p>Feb. 14</p> <p>Community of Learners- (Substance Use)</p> <p>10–11:45 a.m., via Zoom</p>	<p>Feb. 14, 15, 16</p> <p>Mothers and Babies</p> <p>1–4:30 p.m., via Zoom</p>	<p>Feb. 22</p> <p>Reflective Case Reviews</p> <p>9–10:00 a.m., via Zoom</p>	<p>Feb. 24</p> <p>Supporting the Home Learning Environment</p> <p>10–11 p.m., via Zoom</p>	<p>Feb. 28</p> <p>Reflective Case Reviews</p> <p>1:30–2:30 p.m., via Zoom</p>	

Visit the HV Training Calendar link above or [HERE](#) to register for sessions. Individual registration is required to receive a certificate.

SUBMIT NEWS!

To submit information to be shared in future newsletters, please send an email to: HSC-ECLN@salud.unm.edu

For more information, visit us below.



[CDD/HOME VISITING](#)



Family Support and Early Intervention Division
HOME VISITING

NMECED.ORG/HOME-VISITING

