CHAPTER 10

Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Motherhood

Pregnancy

The Biology of Pregnancy

- Egg and sperm unite in fallopian tube
- Fertilized egg travels down the fallopian tube into the uterus
- Implantation or Menstruation
- Placenta develops

Pregnancy test
Prenatal care

Physical Reactions During Pregnancy

- Weight gain
- Protrusion of abdomen
- Breast tenderness
- Frequent urination
- Fatigue
- Nausea

Individual differences
Interest in sexual activity

Emotional Reactions During Pregnancy

Positive Emotions

- wonder and awe
- social approval
- transition into adulthood
- sense of attachment
- anticipation
Negative Emotions
• change
• fears and anxieties
• self-image & attractiveness
• health issues
• loss of identity
Factors influencing a woman's response to pregnancy
➤ physical reaction
➤ planned pregnancy
➤ relationship with baby's father
➤ economic status

Miscarriage

Attitudes Toward Pregnant Women
• Situational factors
• Hostile and benevolent sexism
• People likely to help a pregnant woman
• Maternity clothes and social status

Employment During Pregnancy
Ethnic, class, and cultural differences
Combining career and children
Employment during pregnancy does not endanger the health of the pregnant woman or the baby

Childbirth

The Biology of Childbirth

Three Stages of Labor

Stage 1 (a few hours to at least a day)
• contractions every 5 minutes
• cervix becomes dilated to about 10 cm

Stage 2 (a few minutes to several hours)
• contractions and pushing move the baby farther down the vagina
• painful contractions
• progesterone levels drop
• baby is born
**Stage 3** (less than 20 minutes)
- placenta separates from the uterine wall and is expelled; estrogen levels drop

Social factors
- Childbirth classes
- Nursing care
- Presence of female relative

Cesarean section
- Safety of childbirth
- Preterm birth

**Emotional Reactions to Childbirth**
- Wide variation
- Intense joy
- Reactions to pain
- Fathers' reactions

**Alternative Models of Childbirth**
- Prepared childbirth
  1. Education about pregnancy and childbirth, to reduce fear and dispel myths
  2. Relaxation techniques and exercises designed to strengthen muscles
  3. Controlled breathing techniques, which distract attention away from the pain of the contractions
  4. Social support throughout childbirth from someone who has also attended classes, usually the baby’s father or a close friend of the mother

Family-centered approach
- Emphasis on the mother, psychological aspects of the event, family relationships
  1. Labor should not be artificially induced simply because it is more convenient for the physician.
  2. Women should have special birthing rooms to make the birth experience more pleasant.
  3. A supportive family member, friend, or doula should be present.
  4. Women should be encouraged to move around during labor and to sit upright when the child is being delivered.
5. Hospital birth practices that have no health benefits should be modified. These include routine enemas and shaving the genital area.
6. Anesthetics should not be used unless necessary or desired.
7. Health care providers must be empathic individuals who can encourage women’s sense of empowerment during childbirth.

Motherhood

Stereotypes About Motherhood
Contradictory messages of happy fulfillment, perfect mothering, and evil force

The Reality of Motherhood
Negative Factors
1. Child care is physically exhausting; fatigue is almost universal in the first weeks after childbirth. Sleep deprivation is also common.
2. Roughly 35% of infants in U.S. are born to women who are not married; father may not live in same household; mother may not have adequate income
3. Fathers help much less with child rearing than mothers had expected.
4. For several weeks after childbirth, women report that they feel leaky and dirty, coping with after-birth discharges. They are also likely to feel pain in the vaginal area and in the uterus.
5. New mothers seldom have training for the tasks of motherhood; they often report feeling incompetent.
6. Pregnant women often create a vision of the glowing baby they expect to cuddle in their arms. In reality, babies do not smile until they are about 2 months old; also, many babies are fussy, and they resist cuddling.
7. Because mothering is done at home, mothers of newborns have little contact with other adults.
8. Because the woman’s attention has shifted to the newborn, her romantic partner may feel neglected.
9. Women feel disappointed in themselves because they do not match the standards of the ideal mother, the completely unselfish and perfect woman.

Infant Mortality
Positive Factors
- Sense of own strength
- Interactions with their children
- Look at world from new viewpoint
- Develop new aspects of personality

_Motherhood and Women of Color_
- Extended families provide stabilizing influence in Black and Latina/o cultures
- Continuity of generations emphasized in many North American Indian cultures
- Wide variation of customs across cultures

_Lesbian Mothers_
- Diversity of situations
- Lesbian mothers and heterosexual mothers have similar parenting styles
- Adjustment of children raised in lesbian households is similar to that of children raised in heterosexual households
- Most children raised by lesbians are positive about their mothers' relationships
- Custody and adoption

_Breast Feeding_
- Education
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Social support
- Health benefits of breast feeding

_Postpartum Disturbances_
- Postpartum period
- Postpartum blues (maternity blues)
  - short-lasting change in mood
  - usually occurs during first 10 days after childbirth
  - experienced by about half of new mothers
  - symptoms include crying, sadness, insomnia, irritability, anxiety, and feeling overwhelmed
Postpartum depression (postnatal depression)

- more serious disorder
- symptoms include extreme sadness, fatigue, sleep disturbances, despair, lack of interest in enjoyable activities, and loss of interest in the baby
- affects about 10% to 15% of women who have given birth
- begins to develop within 6 months after childbirth
- may last for many months
- similar to other kinds of depression

Social factors

- stress
- economic status
- social support

No consistent relationship found between hormonal levels and postpartum disorders

Returning to Employment After Childbirth

Individual differences

Length of maternity leave not correlated with mental health measures except for women who consider their employment an important part of their identity

Homemakers, women employed part time, and women employed full time have similar mental health measures one year after childbirth

Deciding Whether To Have Children

Attitudes Toward Women Choosing Not to Have Children

- compulsory motherhood
- child-free women rated as lower than women with children on fulfillment, happiness and having a rewarding life
- advice from friends and relatives
- no-win situation

Advantages and Disadvantages of Being Child-Free

Advantages of Being Child-Free:

1. Parenthood is an irrevocable decision; you can’t take children back to the store for a refund.
2. Some women and men are afraid that they will not be good parents.
3. Some couples realize that they genuinely do not enjoy children.
4. Some couples are reluctant to give up a satisfying and flexible lifestyle for a more child-centered orientation.
5. Children can interfere with educational and vocational plans.
6. Raising a child can be extremely expensive, especially for children who will attend college.
7. People can spend time with other people's children and be responsible to society, even if they don't have children of their own.
8. Some couples do not want to bring children into a world threatened by nuclear war, terrorism, and other serious global problems.

Reasons for having children:
1. Parenthood offers a lifelong relationship of love and nurturance with other human beings; children can enrich people's lives.
2. Parents have a unique chance to be responsible for someone’s education and training; in raising a child, they can clarify their own values and instill them in their child.
3. Parents can watch their child grow into a socially responsible adult who can help the world become a better place.
4. Parenthood is challenging; it offers people the opportunity to be creative and learn about their own potential.
5. Through parenting, people can fulfill their relationship with their spouse, and they can become a “family.”
6. Children can be a source of fun, pleasure, and pride.

Infertility
- 10-15% of couples
- fertile and infertile women do not differ in their marital satisfaction or self-esteem
- many different reactions
- infertile women report higher levels of distress and anxiety
- caught between hopefulness and mourning
- women of color, stereotypes, and racist health care providers
- medical treatments and reproductive technologies
- many women manage to refocus their lives when infertility seems likely