Keeping Well After Perinatal Wellbeing

THE TALKING THERAPIES UK SELF-HELP SERIES



Keeping Well After Perinatal Wellbeing

A guided self-help guide to staying on track and preventing relapse for new and expectant parents

A self-help workbook · 7 modules · about 7 weeks

TALKING THERAPIES UK

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First edition, 2026.

This workbook accompanies the Keeping Well After Perinatal Wellbeing programme on the Talking Therapies UK self-help platform. Its text is drawn from the programme and is kept current with it: whenever the programme changes, the workbook is set again.

Revision 2. This printing was set on 2 November 2026 from the programme as it stood that day.

A note on using this workbook. It offers self-help based on established psychological approaches for difficulties of mild to moderate severity. It is not a substitute for assessment or treatment by a qualified professional and is not designed for use in a crisis. The examples in it are fictional; no real person appears in them. If you are worried about your safety, or your difficulties are getting worse, the page headed “When self-help is not enough” says where to turn.

Set in Poppins and Roboto, the Talking Therapies UK typefaces.

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How to use this workbook

This guided self-help programme is designed for new and expectant parents who have completed their initial perinatal mental health support and want to maintain their wellness. Drawing upon evidence-based Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) and compassionate mind principles, the programme helps you recognise early warning signs, consolidate coping skills, and build a sustainable self-care routine. Through structured exercises and practical tools, you will learn how to navigate the ongoing challenges of parenthood with confidence and resilience. The content is tailored to the unique emotional landscape of the perinatal period, supporting long-term wellbeing for both you and your baby.

This workbook is the written form of the Keeping Well After Perinatal Wellbeing programme on the Talking Therapies UK self-help platform. It follows the programme module by module: each part of the book is one module, and each chapter is one piece of the module's teaching, set in the order the programme presents it.

Read the chapters of a part in order, then turn to the worksheets that follow them. The worksheets are the part of the work that changes things, so give them the time they ask for and come back to them as the weeks go on. You may copy or print the worksheets for your own use, as often as you need.

Most people work through one module a week, which takes the whole programme about 7 weeks. Go at the pace that suits you: a module done properly is worth more than two done quickly.

The check-in questionnaires let you see how things are changing. Complete each one when you reach it, note the date and your total, and compare it with the last.

When self-help is not enough

- If you are in danger now, or have seriously harmed yourself, call 999 or go to your nearest accident and emergency department.
- If you need help urgently but it is not an emergency, call NHS 111 or contact your GP surgery.
- Samaritans are there day and night, every day of the year: call 116 123 free from any phone.
- If you would rather not talk, text SHOUT to 85258 for free, confidential support at any hour.
- If your difficulties are getting worse as you work through this book, or you find yourself thinking about ending your life, stop and speak to your GP or a mental health professional. A workbook can be a good start, and some difficulties need more help than a book can give.

What this workbook will help you to do

- You will review the progress you have made during your perinatal journey and identify the specific tools and strategies that have been most helpful for your mental health. This module helps you build confidence by acknowledging your resilience as a parent.
- You will learn to identify your unique physical, emotional, and behavioural indicators of stress or declining mood. By catching these signs early, you can take proactive steps before difficulties

escalate.

- You will develop a personalised, step-by-step wellness action plan that outlines your triggers, coping strategies, and support contacts. This practical document serves as an accessible guide during high-stress parenting moments.
- You will explore common cognitive traps related to parenthood, such as unrealistic standards and catastrophic thinking. Using evidence-based cognitive restructuring techniques, you will learn to cultivate a more balanced, compassionate inner voice.
- You will examine the balance between caregiving duties and personal needs, learning how to schedule manageable, restorative activities. The module provides strategies for setting gentle boundaries and prioritising rest.
- You will map out your current social support systems and identify ways to strengthen community connections. You will learn to overcome barriers to asking for help, ensuring you do not have to parent in isolation.
- You will prepare for upcoming developmental milestones and potential stressors in your child's early years. This final module reinforces your personal agency, ensuring you feel equipped for the ongoing journey of parenthood.

PART 1

Reflecting on Your Journey

Celebrating progress and consolidating what works

CHAPTER 1

Welcome to Your Maintenance Journey

Welcome to Keeping Well After Perinatal Wellbeing. You have reached a significant milestone: you have completed your initial phase of perinatal mental health support. This guided self-help programme is designed to help you maintain that hard-won stability as you settle into the rhythm of parenthood. Over the next seven modules, we will use evidence-based Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) and compassionate mind principles to help you recognise early warning signs, consolidate the coping skills you have already developed, and build a sustainable self-care routine.

This first module, Reflecting on Your Journey, is about pausing to look back with kindness. It is not about judging how well you have coped, but about understanding what has helped you get through the most intense weeks of your baby's early life. By explicitly identifying your strengths and effective strategies, you lay the foundation for long-term resilience. You will learn to view your past challenges not as failures, but as evidence of your capacity to adapt and care for yourself and your child.

Throughout this programme, you will find practical exercises tailored to the unique emotional landscape of the perinatal period. Please remember that this is a flexible guide; you are the expert on your own experience. We encourage you to approach these tasks with curiosity and self-compassion. If a particular exercise feels difficult or triggers strong emotions, it is okay to pause or seek additional support. Your goal here is not perfection, but progress and self-awareness. Let us begin by acknowledging the journey you have already completed and the tools you have gathered along the way.

A NOTE

This programme complements, but does not replace, professional medical or psychological advice. If you feel your symptoms are worsening, please contact your GP or perinatal mental health team.

CHAPTER 2

Mapping Your Progress: A Timeline Approach

When you look back over the past months of pregnancy, birth and early parenthood, it can be hard to see the full picture of what you have achieved. The day-to-day demands of caring for a newborn often mean that successes feel fleeting, and setbacks can loom large. One evidence-based way to bring clarity to your journey is to create a visual timeline of key events, emotional states and coping strategies. This technique draws on CBT's emphasis on recognising patterns over time and on compassionate mind principles that encourage a kind, curious stance towards your own story.

Why a timeline works

A timeline does three things:

1. Externalises memory – rather than relying on vague recollection, you place dates and events on paper (or a digital note). This reduces the cognitive load of trying to hold everything in mind.

2. Highlights change – by seeing how your mood, thoughts and behaviours have shifted, you can spot periods of growth and identify moments when particular strategies helped.

3. Creates a narrative of resilience – when you string together the moments where you coped well, you build a story that you can return to for confidence.

Research on self-monitoring in CBT shows that regular recording of thoughts, feelings and behaviours improves insight and supports lasting change (Beck, 2011). In the perinatal context, a timeline can also help you differentiate between normal fluctuations in mood and early warning signs that may need professional attention (O'Connor et al., 2020).

How to build your timeline

Step 1: Gather your materials

You will need a large sheet of paper, a notebook, or a digital document where you can draw a horizontal line representing time. Mark the start of the timeline at the point you first became aware of your perinatal mental health concerns – this might be the first trimester, the birth itself, or a specific postpartum week.

Step 2: Plot major milestones

Add anchor points for significant events:

- Medical appointments (e.g., antenatal check-ups, postnatal reviews)
- Birth of your baby
- Sleep milestones (first night of uninterrupted sleep, introduction of night feeds)
- Therapy sessions (completion of a CBT course, first compassionate mind workshop)
- Personal milestones (return to work, first solo outing with baby)

Write the date (or week of pregnancy/postpartum) above the line and a brief label below.

Step 3: Record emotional snapshots

Under each milestone, note a short description of how you felt at the time. Use a simple rating scale (e.g., 1-10) for mood, anxiety and confidence. For example:

- Week 30: Mood 4/10 – feeling overwhelmed by impending labour.
- Day 5 postpartum: Mood 7/10 – relief after baby's first latch.

Step 4: Identify coping tools used

Next to each emotional snapshot, jot down the strategies you employed. Be specific: "5-minute grounding exercise", "called partner for support", "used 'compassionate voice' self-talk". If you tried a new technique, note it as a trial.

Step 5: Reflect on patterns

Once the timeline is populated, step back and look for trends. Are there periods where certain tools consistently lifted your mood? Do you notice clusters of low mood that align with specific stressors (e.g., sleep deprivation)? This reflection is where insight grows.

Worked example

Emma's timeline (excerpt)

- Week 12 (Pregnancy) – Mood 3/10. Felt anxious about health of baby. Coping tool: 10-minute guided breathing (CBT relaxation).
- Week 38 (Pregnancy) – Mood 5/10. Anticipation of labour. Coping tool: Talked to midwife, wrote a 'what-if' list and reframed thoughts using the ABC model (Activating event, Beliefs, Consequences).
- Day 2 postpartum – Mood 2/10. Exhaustion, intrusive thoughts about harming baby. Coping tool: Emergency contact with therapist, used compassionate mind 'soothing voice' mantra.
- Week 6 postpartum – Mood 8/10. Baby sleeping longer stretches. Coping tool: Continued daily 5-minute gratitude journal, scheduled short walks with partner.

From this snapshot Emma can see that structured breathing helped early anxiety, while compassionate self-talk was crucial during the acute postpartum low. The gratitude practice appears linked to higher mood later on.

A NOTE

Tip: If you feel overwhelmed by the amount of detail, start with a 'quick sketch' – just the major events and a single word for the feeling (e.g., "anxious", "relieved"). You can always add more nuance later.

Making it a habit

Set aside 10-15 minutes each week to update your timeline. Treat it as a brief check-in rather than a comprehensive diary. Over time, the visual record becomes a powerful reminder of your capacity to navigate challenges and a source of evidence for future therapy discussions.

Remember, the goal is not perfection but a compassionate, honest map of where you have been.

This map will serve as the foundation for the next steps in the programme, where you will consolidate the tools that have worked best for you.