

Perinatal Wellness: A Program For Perinatal Women



Rachel LaRue, OTD/S

Faculty Mentor: Kendra King, OTR/L; Site Mentor: Julie Brady, OTR/L, PCES, CLC



West Coast University, Center for Graduate Studies, Department of Occupational Therapy

Description of DCE Site

Specializes in maternal and women's health, as well as infant and pediatric OT/PT.

Mission Statement: "We can help you address the many needs that come up as a new, or even seasoned parent."

- Private Clinic located in the San Pedro area that offers in home services
- Services offered: Lactation counseling and infant feeding, pediatrics, pelvic floor therapy, parent wellness

Identified Needs

1. Mental Health Services
2. Social Connection
3. Professional Referrals

Literature Review

Themes:

- **Stress** → Stress significantly impacts breastfeeding mothers, contributing to lower physical and psychological health, preventing goal attainment, and leading to neurotoxic changes in the brain (Mazor-Karsenty, 2020; Belleau et al., 2019; Sponsellar et al., 2021)
- **Social Experiences** → Breastfeeding is the primary occupation of about 81% of new mothers up to six months post-partum. This decreases social participation of mothers' and may contribute to experiences of social isolation. (Lee et al., 2019; Schmidt et al., 2023; Sponsellar et al., 2021)
- **Role Transition** → Role transition is a key challenge for mothers postpartum and occupational therapy can support adaptation to new roles, routines, and habits in motherhood. (Pollari et al., 2022; Sponsellar et al., 2021)

Guiding Theoretical Frameworks

- MOHO aids OT intervention planning in perinatal mental health care, while the flexible Lifestyle Redesign program effectively supports women with stress-related and mental health disorders. (Graham, 2020; Pyatak et al., 2022)

Learning Objectives

By the end of DCE, the doctoral capstone student:

1. will understand the role of OT in perinatal well-being through scholarship as well as observing and interviewing perinatal care providers
2. will develop a 6-week program for perinatal mothers addressing overall well-being
3. will implement and evaluate the program for perinatal mothers

Program Description & Implementation

Primary Focus Area: Program Development

Implementation:

- **Weeks 1-6** → Research and understand the role of OT in perinatal care
- **Weeks 3-10** → Develop recruitment brochures, recruit participants, create program
- **Weeks 7-12** → Implement program, administer pre- and post- program evaluations
- **Weeks 12-14** → Analyze and present findings

Be Well: A six-week program offering weekly, group based, occupational therapy addressing the cognitive, social, psychological, physical, and spiritual aspects of perinatal well-being

Objectives:

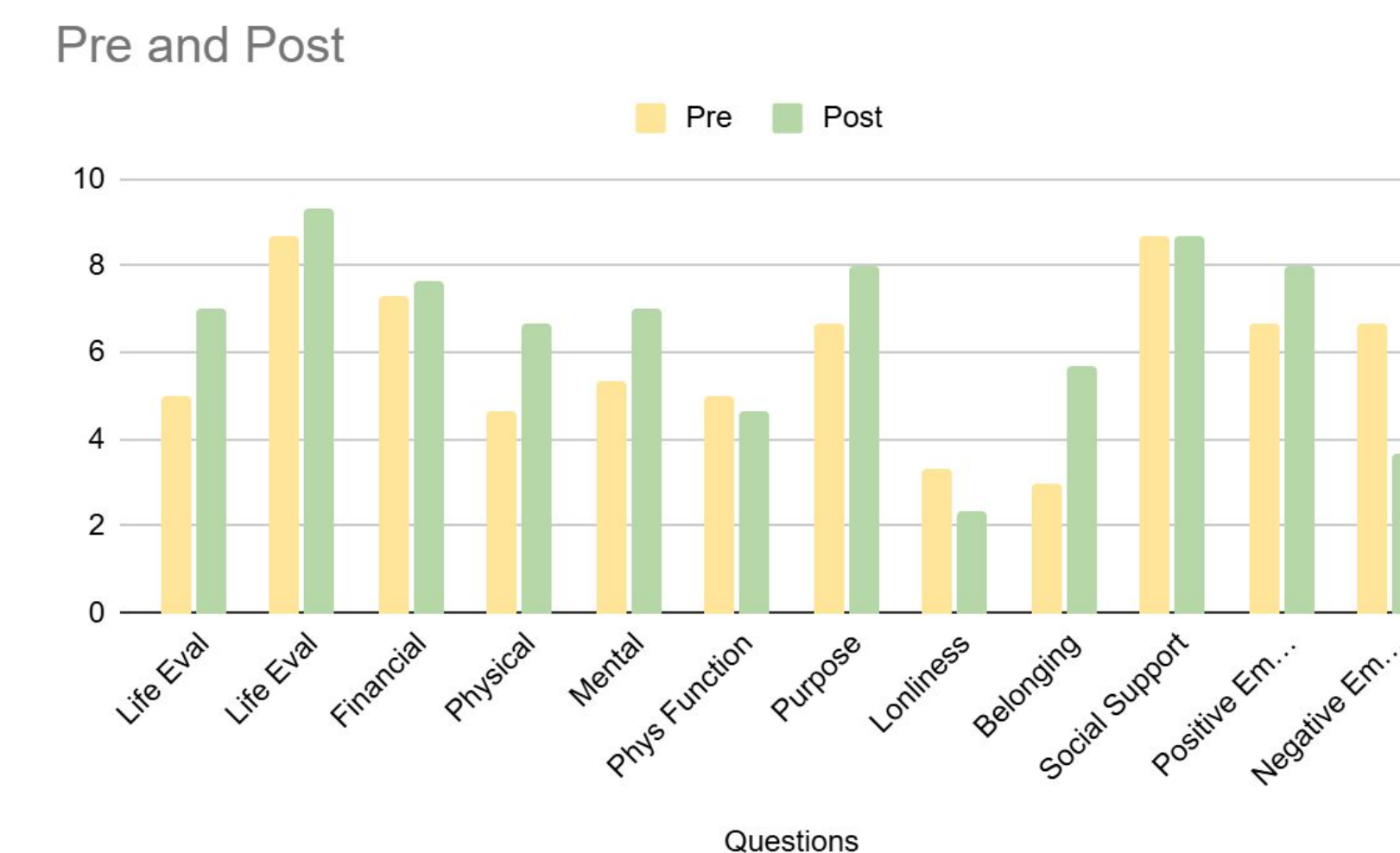
- To provide education regarding perinatal well-being
- Integrate lifestyle management techniques to support positive perinatal well-being
- Foster social support for perinatal women

Session Timeline: Check-In/ Sharing: 10 minutes Education: 20 minutes Lifestyle Management: 20 minutes Sharing: 10 Minutes	
Week 1	Intro to Occupational Therapy & Positive Identity
Week 2	Social Well-Being
Week 3	Psychological Well-Being
Week 4	Physical Well-Being
Week 5	Spiritual Well-Being
Week 6	Program Reflections and Re-Assessment

Evaluation and Outcomes

Evaluation Measures

Intake/ Debriefing Questionnaire
Well-Being Assessment
Observational Data



Outcome Measures

Well-Being Assessment

- WB Scores increased 17.3 points on average pre to post
- Greatest increases in the domains of Life Evaluation (5), Physical Health (6), Mental Health (8), Affect (13)
- $t(2) = 0.11$, $p > .05$, no statistically significant difference

Qualitative Data

- Perceived challenges shifted from emotional and mental distress to concrete experiences such as "increased mental load" and "continuous transitions"
- Increased comfort in time spent away from child and going on family outings
- Social support and lifestyle management techniques were identified as the most valuable components of the program

Scholarly Deliverables

- Be Well Program Protocol
- Six Lifestyle Management Technique Education and Implementation Worksheets
- Recruitment Brochure



Discussion and OT Implications

Discussion

- The program demonstrated improvements in well-being, emotional balance, and participants' overall comfort with key stressors of motherhood
- The program integrated science-based education and practical lifestyle strategies to foster personal growth and social connection

OT Implications

- Findings highlight OT's role in supporting perinatal well-being
- Findings underscore potential for expanding OT services to meet the needs of the perinatal population

Future Directions

- Larger sample size
- Increased diversity of participants (Prenatal women, stage of postpartum, age)
- Extending program length and weekly duration

Acknowledgements

My deepest gratitude to Professor King and Julie Brady for your continuous support and encouragement throughout the entirety of my DCE. A special thank you to my family and friends; your belief in me and my ideas has been a constant source of strength and inspiration.

References

