

## A Different Practice in Prenatal Care: Mellow Bumps

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**Abstract** – In our country, birth preparation classes are routinely opened in prenatal care and more and more pregnant women are participating in these classes day by day. However, these trainings generally evaluate the pregnancy, birth and postpartum period from a physical perspective, and therefore focus more on the physical health of the mother and the baby. Mother-infant interaction, which begins with the onset of pregnancy and continues until the baby is 3 years old, greatly affects the development of the child's competence and coping skills, which will affect lifelong learning, behavior and health. Psychological negativities experienced during pregnancy can have bad consequences not only for the woman but also for the baby. Poor mental health during pregnancy can lead to deficits in the baby's emotional, cognitive or behavioral development. In addition, the mother's mental health is an important factor affecting parent-infant attachment. Pregnancy is one of the special periods when women need psychological support the most. Mellow Bumps is a group-based intervention that uses psychological and practical techniques to reduce anxiety and improve well-being in pregnant women. It was developed as an alternative application that emphasizes attachment, especially targeting parents who are at high risk of encountering negative consequences due to the problems they experience. Its use is becoming more widespread day by day as an alternative application that can have a positive impact on mother-baby interaction by contributing to psychological well-being during pregnancy.

**Keywords** – Midwifery, Prenatal Care, Pregnancy, Mellow Bumps, Psychology

### I. INTRODUCTION

Among health care indicators, maternal and infant health is a parameter with global priority. To improve this parameter, countries organize birth preparation class training programs starting from the pregnancy period. These training classes include interdisciplinary training on different subjects. In our country, training is given in birth preparation classes to help women get information about the pregnancy process, labor, birth and postpartum process, and to prepare for parenthood. These training programs include interdisciplinary subjects. However, it includes more topics related to the physical health of the mother and baby. Applications for women's psychological health remain quite limited [1].

Mother-baby interaction begins with the onset of pregnancy and continues until the baby is 3 years old. This interaction significantly affects the development of the child's lifelong learning skills and coping skills. Psychological negativities experienced during pregnancy can have bad consequences not only for the woman but also for the baby [2].

The number of pregnant women experiencing negative situations regarding their psychological health is constantly increasing. While the rate of pregnant women considered to have poor psychological health was 10% about 20 years ago, this rate has doubled to 20% in recent years. Risk factors that may negatively affect psychological health include; There are variables such as high-risk pregnancy, fear of birth, daily life including home and work, access to social support and

socioeconomic status. Poor psychological health of the mother during pregnancy may lead to a deficiency in the emotional, cognitive or behavioral development of the baby. In addition, the mother's mental health is an important factor affecting parent-infant attachment [3].

Social distress and negativities in parents' mental health can have long-term negative effects on children's psychological, social and educational processes. Exposure to stress during pregnancy has detrimental effects on the development of babies' stress regulation systems. This may lead to adverse events in neurological and physical health [4].

Pregnancy is one of the special periods when women need psychological support the most. Psychological health practices, which are limited to prenatal preparation classes, are supported by face-to-face or online programs in different countries. Mellow Bumps is one of these applications [5].

In this review article, it is aimed to examine the Mellow Bumps application by scanning the literature.

## II. MELLOW BUMPS

Pregnancy is the period when parents are most open to support. Parents should have the ability to access this support when they need it. One of the organizations that provides this support is Mellow Parenting. Mellow Parenting is a charity that supports parents and children around the world by providing evidence-based psychological interventions during the prenatal and postnatal period. The application is mostly aimed at parents in social and psychological difficulties who may have difficulty accessing prenatal support. The aim of the organization is to ensure father/partner participation in the program, to overcome barriers to prenatal support, and to create a safe and accessible atmosphere to facilitate access to such training. One of the programs of this organization is Mellow Bumps [5].

Mellow Bumps aims to reduce anxiety and improve well-being in pregnant women using psychological and practical techniques. The program is a group-based intervention program. The program is based on psychological theories such as attachment, social learning and cognitive behavioral therapy. The focus is on improving parent-child relationships. The program aims to reduce the mother's prenatal stress levels, explain the baby's social interaction capacity during the

newborn period, and strengthen the interaction and harmony between mother and baby. The program helps parents reduce social isolation, increase confidence, and provide parents with more support resources to help them when their baby is born. Mellow Bumps program is a program supported by attachment theory [2], [5], [6].

The program provides support to identify potential sources of stress and work on how to manage problems, sources of positive social support, and factors that prevent them from being good parents. The program offers 2-hour prenatal group session and one 2-hour postnatal group session per day for seven days. The program is started between 20-30 weeks of pregnancy. The postnatal session is done when babies are between 6 and 12 weeks old. During one of the prenatal sessions, fathers and/or partners are invited to attend the session. The session content of the program is shown in the table below [2], [5], [6], [7], [8].

Session	Content
Pre	Meet and Greet: Visit the participants at their home
1	Reassuring Participants: Creating a safe environment; dispel false myths about motherhood; normalize reactions to the baby; reduce maternal stress.
2	Strengthening acceptance of participants in groups: Motivating participants to eat healthy and exercise; to further investigate how parents might respond to the baby; reduce maternal stress.
3	Addressing past interventions or support for parenthood: understanding the baby's brain development during pregnancy; reduce maternal stress.
4	Providing participants with opportunities to explore issues that may affect their future based on their bad experiences: exploring and discussing their communication with their baby; strengthen sharing between participants and supporters; reduce maternal stress.
5	Trip or activity
6	Planning future support for mother and baby; establish a lasting connection with participants, evaluate and conclude the group; reduce maternal stress.
7	Optional: session involving fathers/partners

Mellow Parenting has highlighted the importance of continuity of support during pregnancy during critical periods such as the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, he has suggested online strategies for some programs within his organization. The Mellow Bumps program has also turned into a program that can

also be conducted online. In this respect, it seems that it has become an easily accessible format. Although studies on Mellow Bumps programs were conducted with small sample groups, positive results were achieved. Particularly in qualitative studies, the intervention format was found to be acceptable, the instructor support was positive, meeting other expectant mothers positively affected socialization since it was a group-based program, and at the same time, in a study conducted in our country, it was reported that it increased emotional well-being and mother-baby bonding, another study implemented with the online method. In the study, it was observed that it reduced stress, increased trust, mother-baby bonding and improved socialization in most mothers [5], [6], [9], [10], [11].

### III. RESULTS

Giving more attention to physical health in routine education programs may cause problems related to the mother's stress management during pregnancy to be ignored. In this sense, Mellow Bumps offers a different approach from the routine content of prenatal education programs. No fundamental problem regarding the validity of the intervention has been identified in the studies found in the literature. Considering the benefits of the program, it may be recommended that midwives support such different practices more and direct pregnant women/parents to these groups.

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