



BIRTH TRAUMA ASSOCIATION

What is birth trauma?

This video is presented by the tv broadcaster Anna Williamson.

Using interviews with a perinatal psychiatrist and with parents who have experienced the condition, it looks at what we mean by birth trauma, what causes birth trauma, how birth trauma affects people who experience it, and how birth trauma can be treated.

Learning points

- Birth trauma is an umbrella term for conditions of psychological distress as a result of undergoing or witnessing a traumatic birth. It includes postnatal PTSD, which affects 4% of those giving birth, as well as symptoms of distress that don't fulfil the requirements for a PTSD diagnosis.
- Partners can also experience birth trauma.
- Symptoms typically include some or all of the following: intrusive thoughts and flashbacks; avoidance of reminders of the trauma; hyperarousal or extreme anxiety, usually about the baby; negative cognition, such as low mood or guilt.
- These symptoms can have a debilitating effect on the person's daily life. In particular, it can affect their relationship with their baby, their partner and their family. They may find it difficult to have contact with health care professionals.
- Birth trauma can be successfully treated by two therapies: trauma-focused CBT and eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing (EMDR).

Questions for discussion

- Rachel says that her PTSD symptoms affected her relationships with everyone around her. What might be the impact of a mother experiencing symptoms such as extreme anxiety or avoidance on her partner, her baby and other family members?
- Rachel talks about feeling that the difficult birth was her fault. What can health professionals do to help women realise that they are not to blame?
- Elliott talks about feeling "emotionally exhausted." How can dads and partners be better supported after witnessing a traumatic birth?

Participants

The expert featured in this video is Dr Rebecca Moore, consultant perinatal psychiatrist and co-founder of Make Birth Better. The parents are Rachel Tait and Elliott Rae.