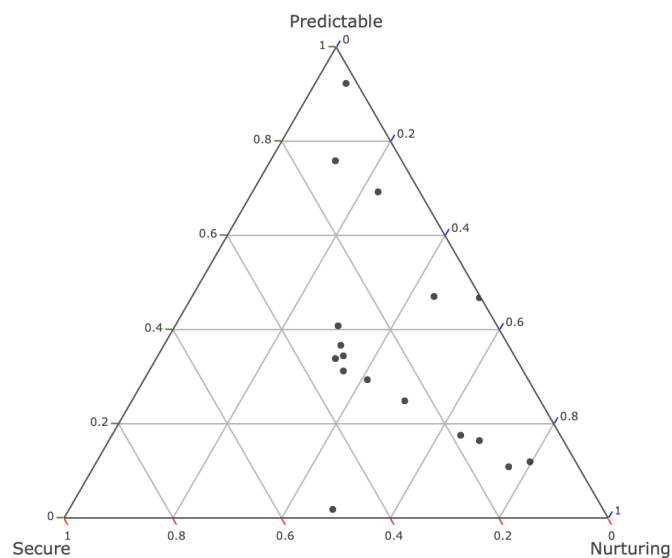
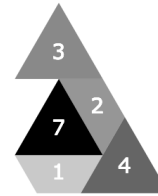


# Maternal Child Health Domain: Women/Maternal Health – 22 Stories

## Homelife\_Pos

The family's homelife felt...

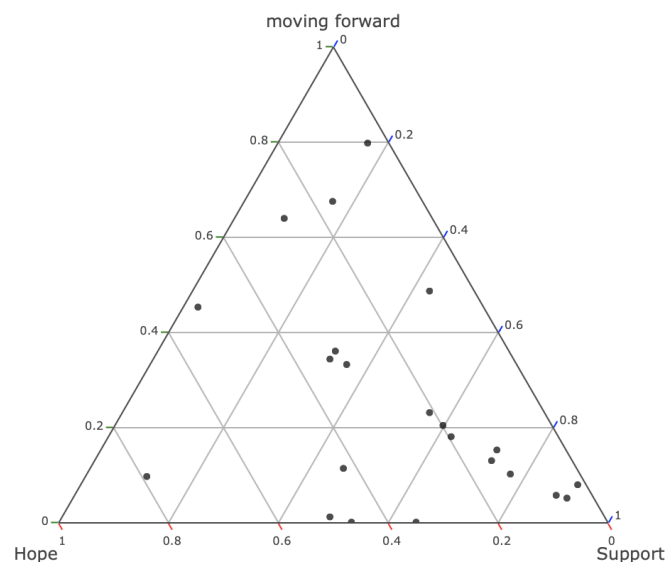
- Secure
- Predictable
- Nurturing



## Things got tough

In the experience you shared, when things got tough, what helped the family get through?

- Hope for the future
- Gritting my teeth and moving forward
- Support from others



### **Battle with postpartum anxiety (566)**

About a month after returning to work from maternity leave for my third baby my struggle with postpartum anxiety came to a head. My husband and I work hard and stretch ourselves to avoid needing daycare for our (now) two younger children who aren't in school. We rarely have a day together as a complete family. When returning to work, I found things busier than I'd left them and staff turnover was at a high. Besides falling back into a work routine, catching up on the countless emails and mandatory educations, I was working hard to pump milk for my baby at home. Breastfeeding has always been the easier of the "tasks" that having a new baby brings for me but I do feel like my commitment to providing milk caused me to sacrifice sleep and self care time as well as became an obstacle to adjusting to being a working mom of three. I felt very little support from my employer and all of this contributed to the worsening of my postpartum anxiety. I'd been looking forward to returning to work and seeing purpose and progress in my days but instead I felt isolated and stressed. This anxiety and sleep deprivation has caused a drop in my milk supply. I do believe that having more time than the "maximum" 12 weeks of FMLA allowed by my employer would have helped me to deal with my anxiety before facing the added stress of returning to work. I also believe that more support and advocacy for my commitment to pump milk for my baby would have alleviated some anxiety. Families would greatly benefit from some type of paid maternity leave program also. I wish so badly I wouldn't have had to use all of my vacation time for maternity leave because when just returning to work, a sick day or a day with a child sick would mean no pay. I would love to see Kansas advocate for families and their best interests in the future and strongly believe we would see physical, financial, emotional and mental health increases as a result.

### **Help and Support Matter (567)**

I am currently breastfeeding my third child. I think that it has taken this many tries to get it right. I am the only person that I know who has done the breastfeeding thing. With my first, I did not seek help and end up pump exclusively for 9 months. With my second, I did seek help and things went good for a few months. When I went back to work, I didn't feel like I had a great support team, so I did not pump there like I should have and my supple started to suffer. I had to start supplementing and eventually stopped breastfeeding much sooner than I wanted. Now, with my third son, I feel that things are going great. When I struggle in the beginning, I got help. I have recently gone back to work and am happy to say that I finally work for a company and have a manager that is fully supportive of my breastfeeding. I can see my son and I going through this breastfeeding experience way past a year.

### **Postpartum return to the working world (2343)**

After we had our daughter we were so happy to have time at home with her but returning to work was quite difficult. I had drained my only savings (a retirement plan from a past employer) to be able to take an extended 9 week maternity leave. Finding affordable and trust worthy daycare was difficult, I struggled with postpartum anxiety, depression and some postpartum medical complications. I was able to have my daughter with me at work for a while but that became challenging as well. Despite much support from family and friend I felt isolated and like I was never doing well enough at any of my many roles and responsibilities. I wanted to return to work, I find great joy and fulfillment in it but none of the decisions I made during that first year seemed like the right ones and financially it was all very stressful.

### **A Hard but wonderful road. (2517)**

My daughter was 15 years old and 7 months pregnant. That was such a hard time but we worked together and her son is now 7 years old, she finished school and became a CNA while finishing High School. She is a wonderful mother.

### **Turning Pain into Purpose, Family Healing, and a Bright Future. (685)**

After years of suffering, due to substance abuse, divorce, and depression, I learned to love myself again with the help of [RECOVERY HOUSING], [POVERTY PROJECT], and a few champions from local service agencies like Court Services and The Health Department, that believed in me, and empowered me, today I have 2 years, 7 months, and 26 days clean, I am out of poverty, and I have joint custody of my teenage son and daughter. I am working 2 amazing jobs, and I am giving back to my community. My pain has given me, my purpose; to help others by sharing my experience, strength and hope, through coaching my local [POVERTY PROJECT] group, and training others on ACE's Science and Resilience, creating a trauma aware, informed and resilient community. My family is thriving. The chaos and stress of poverty and addiction, has been lifted off not only me, but my children as well. For the first time ever, they are both getting straight A's, excelling in school and in sports. As a whole, we are the happiest and healthiest we have ever been. Our family is healing, and our future is bright!

### **Colic (764)**

When my daughter was born she had colic really bad. We have never experience that before so it. Was really ruff on us. We both had postpartum.

### **Finding resources for new moms (2804)**

I attended a fair at LMH because I am expecting a baby. We are first time parents and have no idea what to expect! I was able to connect with many different groups about support as a pregnant mom and then what I could access when I have my baby. It is so wonderful that our community surrounds new parents with support. It truly takes a village.

### **Breastfeeding even with breast cancer (2495)**

I was diagnosed with brain cancer while pregnant. I had a wonderful family physician who helped me find care and facilitated breastfeeding after delivery with surgery and radiation.

### **Pregnant (2702)**

I remember when I was a first time mom and even though the baby was planned and I was excited my hormones were really messed up and I was just sad all the time and I didn't feel good. I didn't want to tell anyone because I thought something was wrong with me for feeling this way. When I finally did talk to the doctor about this she put me on an anti depressent and it changed everything, I just wish I had done it sooner. When I got pregnant the second time I started out on medication and it made the pregnancy so much better.

### **Hardships of young parents (1525)**

I had my first child at 19, the second at 20, and the last at 22. My husband was 17, and 19 when we had our children and 18 when we were married. I was 21 at the time of our marriage. In the beginning, we were both working a minimum wage job, barely paying the bills. Well, in reality, we were not paying bills. We acquired credit cards and anything that couldn't be purchased, got charged. That was the start of the debt. We had state health insurance for the pregnancy and birth of all three children. Without WIC and food stamps, we would not have been able to feed our family. We then decided that one of us needed an education beyond the HS level, so my husband went to [TECHNICAL SCHOOL]. I had gotten a better job and was able to support him, while he went to school full time. We no longer had the state insurance, nor WIC, nor food stamps. However, I was working 60-70 hours a week in order to maintain the lifestyle we wanted, with him not working. I was working second and part of third shift. I never saw my children or husband, and when I was home, all I wanted to do was sleep. For financial gain, my relationships started to suffer. It has taken 10 years to find an appropriate balance between work, bills, and family time. Having kids at such a young age you don't really have the skills needed to raise children, so you are learning as you go.

### **My daughter's journey (2731)**

My daughter was born at 39 via c-section. We were expecting a healthy baby but when she was born she was struggling a lot and had to be flown out to Wichita and later to Colorado. She was diagnosed with a severe heart defect and a genetic syndrome. Our family spent 5 months in ICU with her out of the state until she passed away. My family feels frustrated that since we live in a small town in Kansas the OBGYN never detected anything during pregnancy, normally what she has is detected at the 20 week scan. She also had to be taken away from us and flown out somewhere else to get the care she needed. I wish we had better OBGYNS, nursing care and specialists to help children closer to home. As well, more available of therapists and psychologists to help with the grieving process.

### **Life line during postpartum depression (1799)**

I suffered from postpartum depression with my second child. Living in southwest Kansas is really hard because there are no support groups to help with this issue. I tried online forums but it was not until I joined a Learn and Play group in my town in Liberal Kansas, that I felt the support I needed. It is easy to feel isolated and in the group I found other moms to talk with and a safe place for my baby to play and learn and we felt a part of a community. I told my Healthy Steps Specialist that Learn and Play has become my life-line! Since it is provided free of charge, my single income family could afford to attend.

### **Working towards goals (1285)**

Working with family, mom is pregnant and recovering addict. Working in numerous programs and taking all steps to have healthy pregnancy and baby

### **Transportation needs (1185)**

I am currently pregnant and I have a lot of doctor appointments, classes and other children to take care of and currently I don't have transportation which makes everything harder. To be able to ride the public transit you need have a bus pass which you get downtown, I don't have a way to get there. I have insurance which sometimes I can rides to appointments through that but I wish there were more transportation resources available for people who don't drive.

### **my experience with miscarriage (1998)**

A few months ago, I had a miscarriage. It was it at the beginning at the 4th month doctors said baby had stopped growing at the beginning weeks. I felt that should have been explained better and been checked out since the beginning and told this earlier. I am no scared to think about future pregnancies, I was not connected to any resources about bereavement.

### **New baby (2651)**

I was struggling with postpartum depression after my first child.

### **Getting It (225)**

It was really different to just function day-to-day after the birth of my child. I felt so isolated and I didn't know how to ask for help. As my baby girl got older and I started to find a flow, it got easier. Then, I was out of the fog enough to see that I had a lot of support. I learned to verbalize what I needed. I feel like I'm getting this parenting thing most day.

### **Changes (1332)**

When I had my second child I had only been married a little over a year and was working on blending our family while working and adjusting to a new marriage. After the baby I was depressed and I struggled with being a new mom and with my marriage and I just wanted things to go back to the way they were before. Looking back I realize I was probably suffering from postpartum depression but no one talked to me about this at the time.

### **Living with a parent with mental illness (980)**

One of the most impactful times in my life was my senior year of high school. It was a few months before I was due to graduate and my mom started to go into a Manic Episode, as she has been diagnosed as bi-polar shortly before learning she was pregnant with me. During this episode her anger and aggression was so bad that she forced me to leave her house by bringing my belongings to me at my work one day. In one interaction shortly after this to give her the house key back I thought she was going to grab at my throat and choke me so I pushed her away and tried to leave before things got worse. Luckily I was able to stay with a close friend during this ordeal but I feel it has had a lasting impact on my life because it changed the trajectory of my future. Rather than going to college as I had planned I instead went to work so I could move out and live on my own. I am fortunate that I had other supports in place and was able to thrive in adulthood at the age of 18. I do my best to keep the relationship with my mom on good terms but there are times that I feel others do not understand her mental illness and don't understand why I don't cut her off. It's a hard place to be in but I do my best to help keep her mental health in a good state to limit the times we have altercations.

### **In the gap (684)**

As a non profit administrator and small business owner, my husband and I can't find affordable health insurance. Our High Deductible health plan premium was \$2200 per month for our family of 5. With a \$13,000 deductible, one third of our income would go to health care expenses before we received any benefit from our plan. We now have a 13, 15 and 17 year old living under our care without health insurance.

### **Searching for a Medical Expert Within My Financial Means (1846)**

My story is one that initially seems broad but is very much applicable to what I see others go through in our community and extended family members' hardships in the area. I would hope that it resonates with people around the country as well. To begin, my husband is a teacher and I am a stay-at-home mother to our 7 children. My husband is paid little which is not surprising when considering how low the pay scale is on average for jobs that are available in rural Kansas. Our family is on governmental health insurance (i.e., Medicaid). An example of an ongoing medical need in our family is that one of my sons has extreme ear issues and has undergone 2 ear surgeries so far. I find myself internally struggling with having Medicaid. At times, it can feel like a lack of independence being so reliant on it. Other moments, I feel great and confident in my family and I being able to receive quality medical care when it's needed. It's a constant tug-of-war between despair and hope in our yearning for both independence as well as good health. I would love my husband's wages to increase, but at the same time, realize that this becomes another financial dilemma since he would then have to purchase health insurance through his work and the costs of this would reduce his paycheck down to what he currently receives. I have many thoughts on several other topics of need in rural Kansas (e.g., post-secondary education, employment opportunities, incentives for large families, population decline), but felt that sharing the above account of struggling for good health care that empowers families takes precedence in order to spark conversation on positive change in our state.

### **Future without answers (Futuro sin respuestas) (555)**

I'm pregnant and I'm very young to be a mother, I have a lot of fear and I hope I can tell my story to many. I am a single mother and I don't know how to handle all of this. It's a very difficult time for me and I'm afraid. Estoy embarazada y soy muy joven para ser mamá, tengo mucho temor y espero poder contar de muchos. Soy madre soltera y no se como afrontar todo esto. Es un tiempo muy difícil para mi y tengo miedo.