

Map Postpartum Scaling



A map for assessing parent's beliefs, assumptions, and expectations about postpartum adjustments.

When to use this process: This process can be offered when you discuss postpartum adjustments with parents.

Scaling

Much like the scaling you would use for assessing beliefs about the intensity of labor, you can start by painting parents a broad picture of the first six weeks—operating on less sleep than usual, adjusting to life as a parent and changing dynamics in your relationship with your partner, having a sore bottom and perhaps sore nipples, fluctuating hormones, etc.

Ask parents to imagine the most intense part of the first six weeks postpartum on a scale from 0-100. Zero is no intensity, and 100 is “*I can't take it anymore!*” Where do they imagine themselves at the most intense part of those first 40 days?

When they give you their number (i.e., 85), ask them what they imagine happening at an 85. Perhaps they see themselves lashing out at their partner, or getting frustrated because the baby won't stop crying. Validate their thoughts, and then use your solution-focused dialogue skills to invite parents to imagine what is one small thing that might help them cope with an 85. Validate their ideas, perhaps asking what else could be done to cope, or sprinkling in your own ideas if it seems appropriate.

Some parents may need realistic and compassionate mentoring to help them get a better understanding of the intensity of postpartum. For example, the couple who believes that they'll each have two hours of free time per day may need to learn about how free time tends to come in shorter snippets with a new baby, and explore what they might do if they had one hour to themselves...or thirty minutes...or fifteen minutes! Guide them in imagining what they could do that would be restorative in some way with a short amount of time. This kind of mentoring helps parents connect with reality without being too confrontational.

You can also bring out the "Birth Fairies" and talk about what parents might need to do if the "Postpartum Fairies" show up and bring them an 88 instead of an 85. What kind of resources—internal or external—might they need to tap into if postpartum is just a bit more intense than they imagined it would be? What else might they need to do to cope?

This process creates an opportunity for assessing parents' expectations and helping to educate parents about the pieces of postpartum adjustments that may surprise them. There is a great deal of focused mentoring and new learning that can happen in just a short amount of time with Postpartum Scaling.