

# PMHT Case Vignette

## **My mum has postnatal depression**

When mum is experiencing symptoms of postnatal depression, she is low in mood, she lacks energy, and feels emotionally numb. She has a mixture of feelings of sadness, anger, disconnection from others; she might even feel that I'm not hers and says she lacks an attachment with me. She sometimes questions if I am even her baby. She feels that she is a bad mum and that things are not as she hoped or thought they would be. Sometimes she wishes that she and I were dead or that I'd never been born (which makes her feel even more guilty and sad), and she struggles to function and have the energy and motivation to look after me. At times this can be about my physical care needs but often this can be about meeting my emotional care needs and about interacting with me. It can be difficult for her to show me affection or play with me and her face can be flat. Sometimes she avoids me if it feels too much and other people have to care for me. Sometimes this is planned but at other times it's not. I see her crying.

## **What it's like for me**

I might only be little but I'm getting pretty good at sensing when mum's feeling good or not. Her cuddles feel nice when she's relaxed. She looks at me more and speaks to me and strokes me gently. I get to see her face more and I like that. Sometimes she sings to me, and I feel relaxed when I hear her voice. If I could speak to her, I'd tell her that, but I can't yet. I hope she knows that when she tells me what she's doing and speaks to me I feel better for hearing her voice. Then I know that she's going to move me or we're going to do something. On days when she doesn't speak as much her body feels different and her face doesn't look the same. I don't know what to do then. I don't like it when that happens, and it makes me tense and stressed. My body goes stiff, and I can't relax and I cry more. I don't want to make her sad, but I get confused and worried about what's going to happen to me, and I don't have very many ways to tell her that I need her to help me. I need people to understand quite fast what I need. I'm little and I haven't learned to wait. It helps if people are gentle with me in their cuddles and with their voices because it helps me know that they're thinking about how to help.

When I turn my head away and don't look back at the person who's holding me it's maybe because I'm really stressed out. Sometimes I keep cry and wriggling because I don't want put down; I'm sometimes scared of being on my own. Sometimes I cry to get put down because I'm being moved about too fast, or I'm being held too tightly or because I want to see something on the other side of the room. When I get really stressed I kind of give up complaining and I just stay quiet. It doesn't mean that I'm ok, but it means I don't know how to get people to understand me. Usually, I like it when there's a big person with me. I like when they pat me, and I can feel their warmth. I actually don't mind if they don't understand me first time and they get it wrong as long as they're being kind. I know we'll start to understand each other better, together.