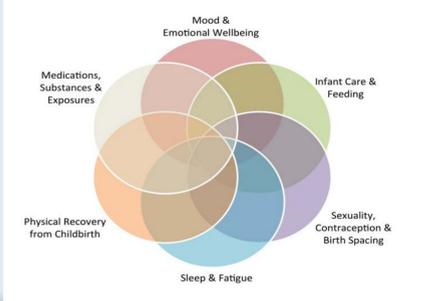


# Great Beginnings: Research on New Mother Classes

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## Research

### Introduction:

In the Boston area, there were new mother classes that were very popular and life-long friendships were made through these classes. Mothers learned so much and a great spirit of community was fostered around the classes

This nurse researcher wanted to capture what was so POSITIVE about these classes and investigate anything negative

Other hospitals, in many locales in the USA offer new mother classes. Often they are unattended or minimally attended. Mothers are NOT returning

What was the MAGIC that was happening in Boston? Why were these classes popular? How could this magic be repeated in other areas of the country?

### Significance:

The postpartum period is a challenging time for new mothers as they have many needs often overlooked by healthcare. New mother classes can provide much needed information and a support system of women who have similar concerns. But do these classes meet the needs of new mothers?

### Goal of this research:

To delve into the thoughts and opinions of women that attended new mother classes and additionally highlight the perspective of the facilitators who taught them

## Methods

**Design:** Qualitative descriptive research study focused on New Mother Classes

**Setting:** The mothers interviewed were primarily from the Boston area and had taken a "Great Beginnings" series of new mother classes. Facilitator interviews were from Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and California

**Participants:** There were 15 mothers and 10 facilitators interviewed & identified from a criterion-based snowball sampling from the community. Mother interviews were face-to-face and took place in the home, place of employment or coffee shop. Facilitator interviews took place by phone. Digitally recorded semi-structured interviews of approximately one hour were conducted. Data was transcribed and content analyzed. Theme development. Multiple strategies were used to ensure trustworthiness of the findings, including member checks and bracketing. Human Subjects Research Protection through Widener University IRB. Results were shared with participants.

## Themes

### New Mothers Needs

Emotional Upheaval  
Physical Recovery  
In need of a teacher  
Sleep Deprived  
Breastfeeding Issues  
Was I doing it right?



What new mothers said about the postpartum period:

- Challenging, Hard, Wanted it to be easier
- Overwhelmed
- Isolating
- Anxiety producing
- Wanted mommy friends
- Lack of practical knowledge
- Feeling Useless
- First in family or friends to have children
- Discouraged, Low mood

### Structuring "Great" Classes



- Keep the babies all around the same age
- Eight week classes, 8 mothers & babies
- Charge for them –so mothers return weekly, not drop-in
- Each class lasts 2 ½ hours
- Set the stage for mutual sharing and interaction-create a safe place to share
- Balance class between mothers' needs and content
- Let mothers do the work, teacher gets out of the way once trust is established
- Make the room comfortable: bouncy balls, changing table, baby scale

## Themes

### What mothers said about the classes

- The other moms provided connection, offered support, provided advice, reassurance & commiseration
- Needed information
- Made me realize that every mom had issues with their baby
- I was not alone, the feelings are normal
- A safe and fun place, I looked forward to going
- Beginning of our friendships together
- Learned how to sing and interact with the baby



- "Life Saving"
- Gave plenty of new ideas
- Could breastfeed openly

### Facilitators' Perspective

Teacher as Facilitator:  
- Let moms be the ones to answer each others' questions and decide what they need to talk about  
-Allow mothers to take over  
-Offer information but encourage mothers to share

Loneliness of working solo:  
-Develop support from other new mothers teachers  
-Attend continuing education

Engage the mothers:  
-Bucket of questions  
-Admit when you don't know an answer

Nurture the mothers  
Let the mom know they are accepted  
Use open body language  
Validate what they say  
Listen to their lived experience,  
Draw out the best and hear the worst, then build rapport from what was said  
Ask: How are things going? How can I help? Offer tissues  
Let mom know: it is OK to ask for help to ward off being overwhelmed  
Expose & accept the vulnerability as normal  
Gentle and well-placed humor  
Consider using music  
Develop trust, Start on time



## Themes

### Create Community

Teachers: Use your influence! Encourage mothers to get together outside of class

Ask: Where are you meeting up for coffee on Friday?  
Where are you going to lunch after class?  
What park are you meeting up at?

Have the mothers tell each other: "You need to come," "All are included," "We want you there"

- Mothers in the study identified that "they all needed each other"
- Five years later moms were still getting together for girls night out, Sunday brunch, sharing photos
- Encourage moms to share phone numbers and social media
- Everyone wants to feel they "belong"



## Conclusion

Nurses can provide new mother classes that nurture and promote trust during this important time

Mothers can find other mothers to help them learn together in developing their new mother skills. New mothers classes can help mothers survive & even thrive

Structure classes to promote positive feelings, trust, sharing of information & provide a safe environment. Spend time on the mother's needs before addressing the baby's. Step back once the dynamics of the class are established by having the mothers lead. Encourage and empower mothers to answer each other's questions & provide their suggestions

Structure the classes for 6-8-12 weeks long. Have the mothers pay something to get them to return, keep'ing the members consistently coming. No drop-ins

Facilitators of the classes can encourage new mothers to get together outside of the classes by suggesting the mothers meet at public parks and malls, getting together for coffee or lunch. This creates community and a sense of belonging—so needed during the postpartum period. State: All are welcome and need to come