

What women think during their first pregnancy

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Pregnant women who perceive having had a well-balanced relationship with their parents during their childhood will experience fewer difficulties in the transition to motherhood, as opposed to women whose relationship with their parents was characterized by unresolved anger or rejection – reveals a new study conducted at the University of Haifa.

The study also found that women who tend to deny negative experiences in early childhood relationships expected to experience a relationship with their future children characterized by less warmth compared to other women who participated in the study.

The research, which was conducted by Ora Gazit under the direction of Dr. Miri Scharf, examined 160 Jewish women in the last trimester of their first pregnancy who live with their husband or partner. The researchers examined the expectations, thoughts and emotions of the pregnant women regarding themselves as future mothers and their future relationships with their babies – based on two approaches related to identity building.

The first focuses on the way people perceive their early childhood relationship with their parents and how this is reflected in their thoughts, perceptions and behavior during their lives. The second focuses on existing differences between people whose motivation is derived from an aspiration for success and those who are motivated by an aspiration to avoid failure.

The results of the study revealed that women whose early childhood relationships with their parents were characterized by rejection and unresolved conflicts, expected to experience a high measure of separation anxiety, thought their child would be more demanding of them and thought they would set a lot boundaries, compared to other women in the study.

Among women who described their early childhood relationships with their parents as being characterized by rejection but who had difficulty recalling many of the events representative of this relationship, the study found a majority had positive thoughts about their impending motherhood and towards their unborn child. However, in comparison to the remainder of the women in the study, they expected to develop a less warm and close relationship with their baby.

The women who had a balanced view of their early relationship with their parents had the most optimal expectations towards their impending motherhood. They expected to feel a low level of separation anxiety from their child, thought childrearing would be easy and that their relationship would be characterized by warmth.

In addition, the study found that women who were characterized by wanting to advance and reach set goals were positive and more optimistic, in comparison to women who were characterized by abstention and concern with self-defense, security and responsibility. According to the researchers, women in the first group thought they would be more fulfilled in parenthood, saw themselves and their child in a more positive light, thought they would be more productive and warm as mothers and expected to have good communication with their child.

"The results of the research show that there is great importance in evaluating thoughts, perceptions and feelings about parental identity during pregnancy. Such an evaluation will enable early identification of

women who are concerned they will have difficulty contending with parental roles and offer them tools that will help them adapt better to the transition to motherhood," summarized the researchers.

Source: University of Haifa

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