

# SEX & PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

## SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

### DAY 1 | MAY 1, 2024

#### PERSONAL STORY

### SPADURA: Turning Poison Into Medicine With Comedy

*Dahéli Hall (she/her)*

A short performance of the one woman comedy show, SPADURA, followed by a talk-back.

#### KEYNOTE

### Kink: A Liberating Practice for Parents

*Sabia Wade (she/they)*

So often, the role of parenting takes over the individual identity of the parent. The discussion of sexuality is tabled, and forms of sexuality, including kink, become even more taboo as life centers on the role of parenthood and less on personhood - which for many has included a history or interest in kink. For long-time kink lovers - we know the principles of kink go beyond sex and apply to many different parts of our lives. In this conversation, we will choose not to separate kink, personhood, and parenthood. Instead, we will discuss what kink actually is (a practice of love, boundaries, and nonjudgment), kink principles, and how these principles foster positive relationship building, bodily autonomy, and liberation for all.

#### Learning Objectives:

1. Identify and describe kink, kink principles, and the benefits of each principle;
2. Discuss how to incorporate kink principles into their lives and work with parents, intentionally.

#### PRESENTATION

### A Beautiful Mess: Shapeshifting Sexuality & Care for the Birthing Body

*Pamela Samuelson (she/they)*

The profound systemic disregard for the sexual health of birthing bodies from pregnancy through postpartum and well beyond is a massive failure of care - and nothing about it is inevitable.

How is it not just possible but imperative that we, as providers and caregivers, recognize and support the somatic realities of transforming sexuality through pregnancy, birth, and postpartum? How can we best hold our people through these changes, and educate and care for our patients and clients during this vulnerable time? How can we shift the culture of care to truly include and normalize sexual health as a vital aspect of full-spectrum healthcare?

#### Learning Objectives

1. List cultural elements that affect the inclusion and prioritization of sexual health within healthcare;
2. Identify somatic changes during pregnancy, birth & postpartum that commonly affect sexual health;
3. Propose concrete actions to center trauma awareness and the embodied agency of our patients and clients in our care.

## PRESENTATION

### Sexual and Gender Development

*Emily Prior, MA (she/her)*

During this breakout session, Emily will discuss the variables involved in sexual and gender identity development. Emily will also cover some of the varied ways in which these identities are expressed and how best to support clients, family members, peers, and friends in their identity expression. This presentation takes a bio-psycho-social approach to sexual and gender development.

\*\*This session is offered for those who desire to establish a foundational, general orientation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity/Expression (SOGIE).\*\*

#### Learning Objectives:

1. Identify the variables involved in gender and sexual development;
2. Explain how attendees may support themselves and others in their diverse identity expressions.

## PRESENTATION

### Who Am I and When Did This Happen?

### The Postpartum Pleasure Journey

*Aiyana Davison BS, BSN, RN, WHNP, CNM (she/her)*

The expectations society has for birthing people after having a baby are often unrealistic and not widely discussed—especially surrounding sex and pleasure. This leaves many new parents without the basic information that could transform their experience or at least offer some grace as they rediscover themselves and navigate their new family. While preparation for every situation may be unrealistic, a basic understanding of the body, the mind, and the impacts of external factors

may lend to directed support and the grace needed as one is traveling along this journey. This presentation will cover the nuances of the fourth trimester and how to support postpartum sexual pleasure.

#### Learning Objectives

1. Describe the core components that impact postpartum pleasure and sexual health;
2. Identify 3-4 ways in which birthing people can continue and/or re-introduce sexual pleasure during the postpartum period/fourth trimester.

## PANEL

### Sex Positivity

*Moderator: Dr. Bianca Laureano, PhD, MA2, CSE, CSES (she/they/Dr.)*

*Panelists: Jamila Dawson, LMFT (she/her), Bridgett Khoury (she/her), La Shonda Lipscomb (she/her)*

The theory and application of sex positivity may vary across disciplines but generally seek to reduce stigma and shame around sexuality and encourage a diversity of sexual expression. During this panel, sex educators will help birthing professionals define sex positivity for themselves and explore ways to respond to the needs of the individuals and families they serve. Participants will learn how to respond to common questions about sexuality in an affirming and sex-positive way.

#### Learning Objectives:

1. Identify common challenges to achieving sex positivity;
2. Define sex positivity for themselves.

## PRESENTATION

### Sex after Abortion

*Dr. Bianca Laureano, PhD, MA2, CSE, CSES (she/they/Dr.)*

When considering the continuum of reproductive and perinatal health care, abortion is and must always be included. However, individuals experience barriers to accessing appropriate education and care for their needs post-abortion. Creating safer spaces for individuals to experience sexual health at all points along this journey is fundamental to holistic perinatal mental health care. This presentation offers insight into common questions people have about sexual expression and activity post-abortion and integrates the framework of sex positivity to guide birth workers on how to engage with the community.

#### Learning Objectives:

1. List three common questions people have about sex after abortion;
2. Explain how a sex-positive response to questions about sex and abortion is vital.

## PRESENTATION

# Mothers of the Mushroom: Returning to the Sacred Hoe Way

*Mikaela de la Myco (she/they)*

A transformative journey into the powerful teachings of psilocybin as they support birthing people on their path to reclaiming sensuality amidst the challenges of motherhood.

Drawing from the wisdom of indigenous cultures and modern research, we'll bridge traditional practices with contemporary insights, creating a safe and nurturing space for exploration. Join us as we pave the way for a more compassionate and holistic approach to sensuality reclamation and motherhood transformation with sacred earth medicine.

### Learning Objectives:

1. Compare psilocybin to pharmaceuticals as gestational and postpartum aids;
2. Describe and list outcomes of psilocybin mushroom use in postpartum people.

## SHARED LEARNING

# Integrative Storytelling and Wisdom Sharing

*Anna King, LCSW, PMH-C (she/her)*

During this interactive session, conference attendees will exchange challenges and successes in their journey while supporting perinatal clients with diverse sexual identities, expressions, and health needs. Opportunities for personal self-reflection, journaling, peer-to-peer discussion, and storytelling will be offered to allow participants to reduce stigma, shift thinking, develop new language, and begin integrating day 1 material into their practice through shared learning.

### Learning Objectives:

1. Explain the importance of supporting the sexual health and well-being of perinatal clients;
2. Discuss gaps in knowledge and opportunities for affirmative care related to the sexual health of expectant and postpartum families.

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## DAY 2 | MAY 2, 2024

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### PERSONAL STORY

## Pregnancy and the Village

*Jessica Daylover (she/her)*

“It takes a village” is a cliché thrown at expecting mothers and birthing people all the time. And it’s true, it does require a village to sustain pregnancy and early parenthood (and beyond) in a healthy way. Yet many of us, especially birth workers, are drowning inside prejudices we’ve never even questioned (oftentimes because we aren’t even aware they exist) about intimate relationships, the key to a healthy and holistic perinatal journey, etc. A fish doesn’t know it’s in water; Jessica is here to introduce us to the water so that we can make the birthing spaces we hold safer and more expansive for families than they ever were before.

### PANEL

## Non-monogamy and Perinatal Mental Health

*Moderators: Melissa LeSane, LMFT (she/her) and Anna King, LCSW, PMH-C (she/her)*

*Panelists: Jessica Daylover (she/her), Mitra Karimi-Taleghani, LCSW, CYT (she/her), Melissa LeSane, LMFT (she/her), Wayne LeSane (he/him)*

Due to mononormativity (societal norms to practice monogamy), families that do not resemble the nuclear family (such as non-monogamous relationship structures) are often invalidated, unrecognized, and stigmatized. Panelists with both lived and professional experience in navigating non-monogamy during pregnancy and postpartum will help to educate providers on expansive definitions of family and deconstruct societal beliefs around the nuclear family structure. Attendees will learn how to create opportunities to invite diverse family structures to co-exist along the reproductive spectrum and learn the unique challenges and supportive facets of the mental and sexual well-being of non-monogamous expectant and postpartum families.

### Learning Objectives

1. Define non-monogamy and polyamory and incorporate common (and affirmative) terms when speaking to families about their intimate relationships;
2. List the common myths and misconceptions associated with non-monogamy and how they influence bias in care;
3. Name the unique challenges and supportive facets associated with perinatal mental health for polyamorous families.

## PRESENTATION

# Keeping Couples Connected: Barriers and Interventions for Sexual Satisfaction in Postpartum Couples

*Brianne Hughes, LMFT, CST, PMH-C (she/her)*

It is not uncommon for couples to experience changes to their sexual connection in the postpartum. This presentation will explore various barriers to sexual satisfaction for postpartum couples, and address supportive interventions for their sexual well-being.

### Learning Objectives

1. Identify 3 barriers to sexual satisfaction for postpartum couples.
2. Describe 3 interventions for postpartum couples to increase sexual satisfaction.

## PRESENTATION

# Navigating Intimacy and Sensuality Through Pregnancy and Postpartum: Unveiling the Intersections of Sleep, Communication, and Societal Stigma

*Dr. Sydney Curls, PT, DPT (she/her)*

This presentation will explore the layers of intimacy and communication during the sensitive pregnancy and postpartum phases. Dr. Curls will share how sleep disruptions during the perinatal period can impact sexual well-being, confront the stigma surrounding sexuality and motherhood, and address the oft-neglected topic of sexual pleasure during this life stage with communication at the center of our strategy to improve the perinatal sexual experience. Attendees will walk away with a holistic understanding of the relationship between sleep, communication, and societal attitudes, empowering them with knowledge and resources to navigate the challenges and celebrate the joys of pregnancy and parenthood. Through promoting a culture of truth, understanding, and acceptance, we will aspire to contribute to a more supportive and informed society that honors the sexual and emotional health of birthing people during pregnancy and the postpartum period.

### Learning Objectives:

1. Identify the relationship between sleep and sex in the perinatal period;
2. Explain how societal stigma around sexuality and parenthood impacts interpartner communication about sex;
3. List at least three techniques, resources, or strategies available to support perinatal sleep, sexual pleasure, and interpartner communication.

## PRESENTATION

# What to Expect When He's Expecting: A Presentation on Transmasculine Reproduction

*Vann Jones (he/him)*

In this workshop, we will engage in an expansive conversation about transmasculine reproduction, equipping attendees with up-to-date, evidence-based, non-judgmental information on transgender bodies and what they are capable of. The content will cover the history, science, and experience of transgender reproduction, and will touch on transgender parenthood and areas of research that need further funding and consideration.

### Learning Objectives:

1. Analyze the history of transgender medicine, as well as the effects of hormones on the body's sexual anatomy;
2. Discuss the unique experience of transgender pregnancy and the need for trauma-informed care and allyship.

## PRESENTATION

# From Functional to Fun: Supporting the Non-Birthing Partner's Sexual Experiences

*Janelle Watson, LMFT, PMH-C (she/her)*

Sex after baby can be tough to navigate. While there are many changes occurring in the birther's body, there are also changes happening within the non-birthing partner and the relationship dynamic as a whole. For the non-birthing partner, there isn't always direct access to support regarding these changes. Their concerns are often dismissed or deprioritized. This workshop aims to support the notion that there is room for everyone to have their questions answered and needs addressed. Providers will have an opportunity to gain a better understanding of how to engage in conversations with and about non-birthers, including the ways this new stage of life may impact their sex life.

### Learning Objectives:

1. Identify three ways to incorporate non-birthing partners into the conversation about postpartum care.
2. Describe/facilitate an activity aimed at non-penetrative sexual connection.

## PRESENTATION

# Perinatal Loss, Fertility, and Sexual Well-Being

*Elyse Springer, LMFT, PMH-C (she/her)*

During this presentation, Elyse will explore ways to support individuals and couples with their sexuality while navigating the perinatal spectrum from fertility and infertility to perinatal loss and bereavement. At the conclusion of this presentation, clinicians will gain a greater understanding of the importance of sexual well-being as a pillar alongside sexual health, sexual justice, and sexual pleasure.

### Learning Objectives:

1. Describe the difference between sexual health and sexual well-being in the perinatal population;
2. Analyze common clinical themes in the perinatal population that interfere with sexual well-being;
3. Identify 2 clinical strategies for sexual well-being to employ with clients navigating the perinatal spectrum, including fertility, infertility, perinatal loss, and bereavement.

## PRESENTATION

# Mood Killers & How to Fix Them: Assessing Psychosocial Stressors Impacting Perinatal Sexual Health

*Catharine McDonald, LPC, PMH-C (she/her)*

This presentation looks at the complex interplay between psychosocial stressors and sexual health during the perinatal period. Participants will explore the nuances of assessing and addressing sexual wellness, including strategies to evaluate and support sexual health at intake, identify impactful stressors, and craft personalized plans for pleasure and intimacy post-birth. From navigating societal messages to understanding the intersection of birth experiences and intimacy, this session offers insights and practical approaches to enhance sexual wellness for birthing individuals and their partners with considerations for intersectional obstacles.

### Learning Objectives:

1. Assess sexual health at intake with new clients and after birth;
2. Identify at least three psychosocial stressors that influence sexual health for birthing people & their partners;
3. Create pleasure & intimacy plans with clients for peripartum sexual wellness.



## SHARED LEARNING

# Integrative Storytelling and Wisdom Sharing

*Catharine McDonald, LPC, PMH-C (she/her)*

During this interactive session, conference attendees will explore insights gained and begin to apply new skills to their practice. Participants will engage in collaborative problem-solving to develop their skills in adapting practice materials, workflows, and client interactions to integrate sexual health in perinatal mental health care and wellness planning.

### Learning Objectives:

1. Revise and adapt intake forms for sexual inclusivity and diverse family structures;
2. Analyze a case vignette to identify barriers in care, opportunities for supportive and affirmative care, and referral options.