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MIDWIVES COLLEGE  
OF UTAH  
MIDWIFING MIDWIVES

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# MCU Mental Health Matters



## Symptoms of Secondary Trauma:

- Irritability
- Cynicism
- Reduced productivity
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Re-experiencing the traumatic event
- Nightmares
- Anxiety
- Despair
- Avoidance of people or activities
- Persistent anger and sadness
- Chronic fatigue or illness

## Risk Factors for Experiencing Secondary Trauma as Midwives/Student Midwives:

- Shoulder Dystocia
- Severe Postpartum Hemorrhage
- Supporting a parent through pregnancy loss or stillbirth
- Prolonged resuscitation
- Cord Prolapse
- Loss of parent or baby
- Manual removal placenta
- Traumatic transport
- Witnessing the mistreatment of a client

## Secondary Trauma and Midwives

Secondary trauma is a common experience among midwives and midwifery students. Bingol, et al found that 22.2% of midwifery students met all the trauma criteria for posttraumatic stress disorder according to the Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale (Bingöl, et. al., 2020). Midwifery is not just the sweetness of welcoming a new life into the world. There are times when birth includes life and death decisions, loss, and witnessing traumatic events. Further, some students experience significant trauma within their clinical placements associated with racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and classism.

At MCU, it is important to us that our students are able to recognize the symptoms of secondary trauma and get the support they need if symptoms arise. Some important elements of recovery following a traumatic birth include: engagement in activities that connect the student midwife with people who love and value them; building a relationship with a therapist or spiritual counselor who is a good listener and has experience with secondary trauma; building a supportive network of midwives and colleagues for peer review, support and guidance to process and learn from the traumatic birth experience; rebuilding confidence in the ability to provide exceptional care, especially when a traumatic event becomes associated with actions or inactions that are repeating in our minds as a trauma.

Recovery from secondary trauma takes time, patience and action. If we ignore the symptoms and do not seek support, we risk significant consequences including a decline in mental health, providing inattentive care to clients, and a desire to leave the profession.

**For more information on Secondary Trauma please visit:**  
**[Secondary Traumatic Stress Among Midwifery Students](#)**

**[Midwives Experiences of Traumatic Birth](#)**

**[Support for Birth Professionals: Secondary Trauma](#)**

**[Secondary Trauma: Self-Assessment](#)**

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# Social Media: Risk vs. Benefit

Pew Research Center reports that 69% of adults and 81% of teens in the U.S. use social media. Some of the benefits of social media include building connection with others, sharing accomplishments and receiving positive reinforcement, parental connection with adolescent and grown children, connection to elders, creating a sense of belonging in social and cultural groups with common interests and beliefs, feeling connected to the world at large, and building community. With these benefits there are also risks. The lack of personal face-to-face relationship can create a barrier to social norms in communication, thoughtfulness, and restraint. This sense of anonymity can lead to making statements one might not make if the person were sitting in the same room with others listening. In some cases, this can rise to the level of bullying, which may significantly impact the mental health of the person being bullied. Some common risks of social media include anxiety or depression associated with the constant influx of information about the state of the world or with the lack of response of others; a continuous need for the increased dopamine associated with positive reinforcement leading to neglect of other responsibilities; decreased sleep due to screen exposure leading to irritability, stress, and a reduced sense of quality of life; comparison of self to others leading to a lowered sense of self-worth; and reduced quality or quantity of time with friends and family in your day-to-day life.

If you find yourself wondering if you are being negatively impacted by social media, try experimenting with reducing the time spent for periods of time. It is possible to change the way you interact with social media to increase mental health and relationships. Take the time to explore the benefits and risks and develop personal guidelines to utilize what benefits you, and shed what is causing harm.

**Anxiety: Of COURSE I feel anxious! Recognizing when anxiety may benefit from additional support**  
Anxiety is a normal response to stressful circumstances beyond our control. Anxiety can relate to social interactions or settings; stressors associated with the state of the world, money, work, school, or life or be generalized. A person may contemplate treatment when anxiety interferes with their life. Treatment may include talk therapy, meditation, spiritual connection, exposure therapy, and supplements or medications. Anxiety symptoms include feeling nervous, restless, tense; a sense of impending danger, panic, or doom; increased heart rate; hyperventilation; sweating, trembling, feeling weak or tired; trouble concentrating or thinking about things other than present worries; trouble sleeping; gastrointestinal problems; difficulty controlling worry; intentionally avoiding common anxiety triggers.

For more information about anxiety, please visit: [What to Know About Anxiety](#) or [Self-Assessment](#)

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