

branches & blossoms

Where strength branches out and joy blooms

CCYSB YOUTH SUICIDE INTERVENTION & PREVENTION SERVICES

MAY 2026

The Hidden Work of Care: Burnout in Pregnancy & Postpartum

When people talk about maternal mental health, the focus often lands on depression or anxiety. Less often discussed is **burnout**—a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion that builds over time when demands consistently exceed available resources.

Burnout doesn't always look dramatic. It can be quiet, gradual, and easy to dismiss. But left unaddressed, it can significantly affect mood, relationships, and overall well-being during pregnancy and postpartum.

What Is Burnout in the Perinatal Period?

Burnout is not simply being tired. It is a deeper depletion that comes from **chronic strain without adequate recovery**. In the perinatal period, that strain may include:

- Round-the-clock caregiving
- Physical recovery from pregnancy or birth
- Sleep disruption
- Constant decision-making
- Emotional labor (soothing, anticipating needs, managing routines)
- Pressure to "get it right"

Over time, this accumulation can overwhelm the nervous system.

Common Signs of Burnout

Emotional

- Feeling detached or numb
- Irritability or short temper
- Loss of joy or motivation
- Feeling "checked out"

Cognitive

- Difficulty concentrating
- Forgetfulness
- Decision fatigue
- Negative thinking patterns

Physical

- Ongoing exhaustion
- Headaches or body tension
- Sleep that doesn't feel restorative

Relational

- Withdrawing from others
- Feeling resentful or unsupported
- Increased conflict

Burnout can look similar to depression, but it is often driven by **overload**, not just mood.

What's Inside:

Burnout in Pregnancy & Postpartum

Helpline & Crisis Resources

When The Body Keeps the Score: Physical Symptoms of Maternal Stress

A Moment For You: Pause & Reset



Scan to learn more about
Suicide Intervention &
Prevention @ CCYSB !

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Burnout in Pregnancy & Postpartum

Why Burnout Is So Common Right Now

Modern parenting environments contribute to burnout in several ways:

- Smaller support networks (“doing it alone”)
- High expectations from social media
- Limited parental leave
- Financial stress
- Lack of consistent childcare support
- Cultural pressure to appear capable at all times

When expectations are high and support is low, burnout becomes more likely.

Burnout vs. Depression: Why It Matters

Burnout and depression can overlap, but distinguishing them can guide support:

- Burnout often improves when **demands are reduced and support increases**
- Depression may persist even when circumstances improve

If you’re unsure, it’s okay—you don’t need to label it perfectly to seek help.



What Actually Helps

1. Reduce the Load (When Possible)

This may include:

- Simplifying routines
- Lowering expectations
- Delegating tasks
- Saying no to nonessential commitments

2. Increase Support

Support may look like:

- Asking for specific help
- Connecting with peer groups
- Seeking therapy
- Accessing community resources

3. Build Micro-Recovery Moments

You may not get long breaks—but small resets matter:

- Sitting in quiet for 2 minutes
- Drinking water without multitasking
- Stepping outside briefly

4. Name What’s Happening

Simply recognizing “this is burnout” can reduce self-blame.

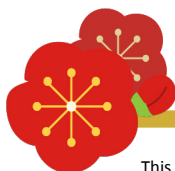
When to Seek Additional Help

Consider reaching out if:

- Exhaustion feels constant
- You feel emotionally disconnected
- You’re struggling to meet daily needs
- Burnout is affecting safety or bonding

A Closing Reflection

Burnout is not a personal failure. It is often a signal that **too much is being carried without enough support**. Awareness is the first step. Adjustment is the next.



Helplines & Crisis Resources

This newsletter is for educational and supportive purposes, not a substitute for mental health diagnosis or treatment. If you experience suicidal thoughts, thoughts of harming your baby, or severe symptoms, please contact emergency services, go to the nearest emergency department, or call 988 / crisis line immediately.

National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Call or Text

988

Chat: <https://988lifeline.org/chat>

National Maternal Mental Health Hotline

Call or Text

1-833-TLCMAMA

(1-833-852-6262)

Postpartum Support International (PSI)

www.postpartum.net

1-800-4PPD (4773)

When The Body Keeps The Score: Physical Symptoms of Maternal Stress

Mental health doesn't only show up in thoughts or emotions—it often shows up in the body. During pregnancy and postpartum, many parents experience **physical symptoms of stress** without realizing the connection.

Understanding the body's role in mental health can reduce confusion, fear, and unnecessary self-criticism.

Why Vulnerability Increases

Stress can appear as:

- Headaches or migraines
- Muscle tension (neck, shoulders, jaw)
- Stomach issues or nausea
- Changes in appetite
- Heart racing or chest tightness
- Fatigue that doesn't improve with rest
- Dizziness or shakiness

These symptoms are real—not imagined—and they are common.

When Physical Symptoms Cause More Anxiety

Sometimes, physical symptoms lead to additional worry:

- "What if something is wrong medically?"
- "Why do I feel like this all the time?"

This can create a cycle:

stress → physical symptoms → worry → more stress

It's important to rule out medical concerns—but also to recognize when the nervous system may be contributing.

Supporting the Body Gently

You don't need complex strategies. Start with basics:

Breathing

Slow exhale breathing can calm the nervous system.

Movement

Gentle stretching or walking can reduce tension.

Hydration & Nutrition

Basic needs support physical stability.

Rest

Even brief rest periods can help reset the system.

Medical Check-Ins

Always appropriate if symptoms feel concerning.

Why The Body Reacts This Way

The body has a built-in stress response system designed to protect you. When the brain perceives stress, it activates:

- Increased heart rate
- Faster breathing
- Muscle tension
- Heightened alertness

This is helpful in short bursts—but during chronic stress, the body can remain in a prolonged activated state.

In the perinatal period, this system is already heightened due to:

- Hormonal shifts
- Sleep disruption
- Responsibility for a vulnerable infant

The Mind-Body Connection

Mental and physical health are not separate systems. They are constantly interacting. For example:

- Anxiety can increase muscle tension
- Sleep deprivation can increase pain sensitivity
- Chronic stress can affect digestion

Understanding this connection can help shift from fear to curiosity.

When To Seek Support

If physical symptoms:

- Are persistent
- Interfere with daily functioning
- Increase anxiety
- Feel unexplained

...it's appropriate to speak with both a medical provider and a mental health professional.

A Closing Reflection

Your body is not working against you.

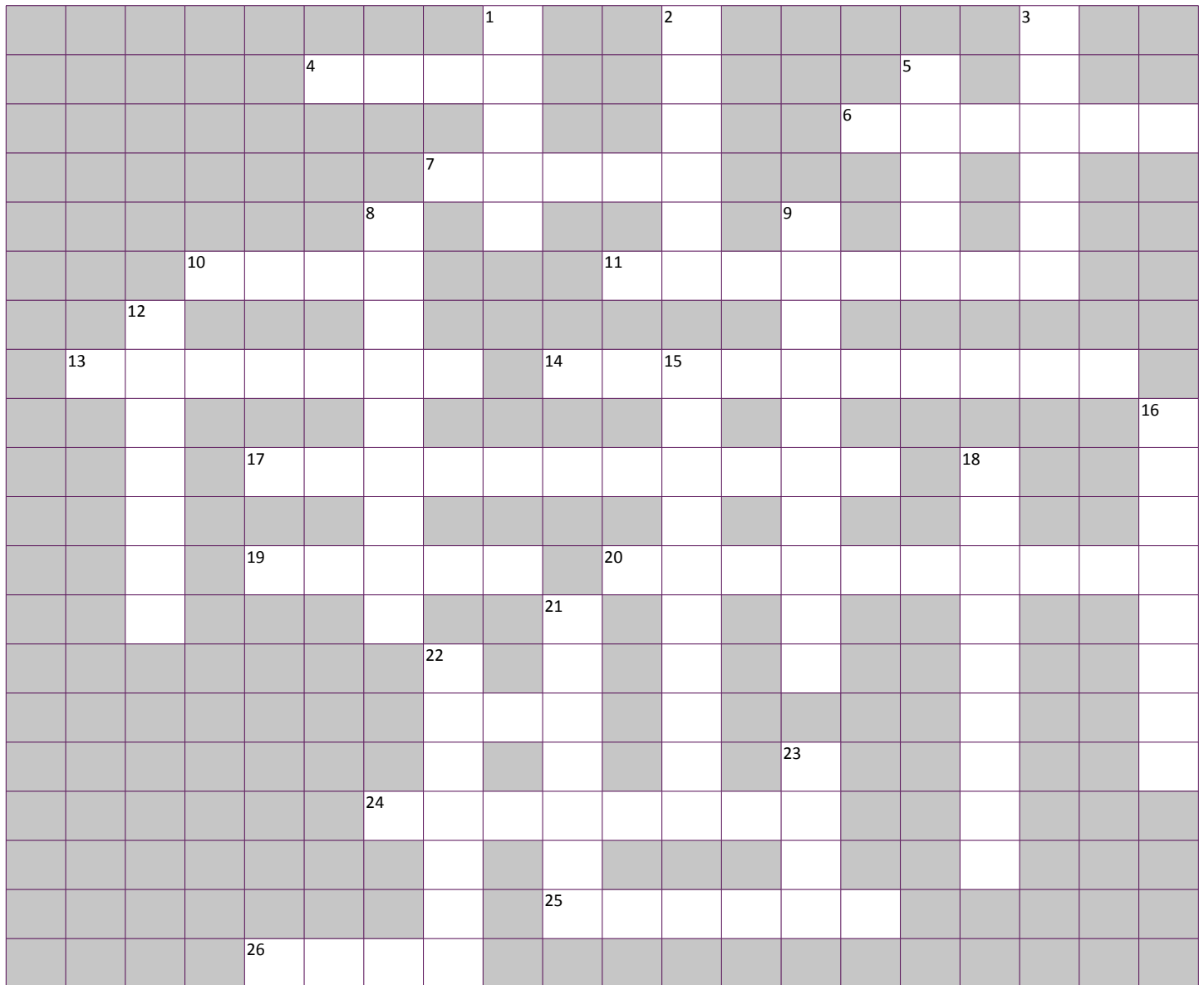
It is responding to stress in the only way it knows how.

Learning to listen—not fight—can be the beginning of relief.



A Moment For You: Pause & Reset

Pause. Breathe. Take your time. As you complete this crossword puzzle, notice your breathing, pace, and thoughts. There's no rush - this is your moment to pause and reset.



Across Clues

4. Attention, kindness, and support given to yourself or others.
5. A feeling of protection and security.
6. Belief that someone or something is reliable.
7. To reduce speed or move with more intention.
8. The process of healing or returning to stability.
9. Help, encouragement, or assistance from others.
10. Allowing feelings or experiences to exist without fighting them.
11. Gentle awareness of the present moment.
12. A fresh start or intentional pause to begin again.
13. The ability to adapt and recover after stress.
14. The ability to wait or continue gently through difficulty.
15. Positive change or development over time.
16. A sense of comfort, relief, or reduced strain.

Down Clues

1. A symbol of care, compassion, and emotional warmth.
2. Soft, kind, and not harsh.
3. The capacity to move, think, or engage.
4. A short stop or mindful break.
5. Noticing thoughts, feelings, body sensations, or surroundings.
6. Kindness toward suffering, in yourself or others.
7. To care for, encourage, and help something grow.
8. A sense of closeness or belonging with others.
9. Inner capacity to endure or keep going.
10. Inhaling and exhaling; a grounding tool.
11. The process of becoming more whole or well.
12. A steadier place between demands and needs.
13. Time to recover, recharge, or be still.



PEARL will be a rolling admission group held at the Carroll County Youth Service Bureau every Wednesday 10 – 11 am. A licensed therapist will lead the group with the support of a peer support specialist. Medicaid and private insurance accepted. Referrals can be placed by contacting the Referral Coordinator at 410.848.2500, option 0. For more information on PEARL, please contact Bobby Jarrett, LCPC at 443.244.8657 or rjarrett@ccysb.org.