

## **Touching Hearts Touching Minds Handout #9 Baby Legs (Post Partum Weight Loss) Counseling Tool**

### **What is the key message?**

- It is possible to return to pre-pregnancy weight.
- Lose the extra baby fat before becoming pregnant again.

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Any pregnant and postpartum women.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

- If there is one thing that you could do for yourself after your baby is born, what would it be?
- How do you feel about your weight right now?
- What have you heard about weight loss after having a baby?

#### *Idea for a group:*

Advance preparation option: Clip photos of celebrity mothers just after birth from magazines and newspapers.

You have all seen the photos. Celebrity moms, holding their babies just a few months after birth, already back to their pre-pregnancy weight. Flat stomachs. Smiling and in control. Revealing dresses showing tight skin and muscles. Perhaps they are even in bikinis, playing in the sand with baby. (Option: Pass photos of post-pregnancy celebrity mothers around before discussion.)

What makes celebrity moms so successful at losing their pregnancy weight so quickly? (Sample responses: personal chefs, five hour workouts with personal trainers.)

#### **Dig:**

- Do mothers who are successful at losing weight—know more about weight loss than others?
- Do mothers who are successful at losing weight—feel differently about weight loss than others?
- What does it take to lose weight after pregnancy?



- Is it realistic to think weight will drop off as quickly as it seems to for celebrity moms? (Do you think it is realistic to think that you can lose the weight you gained during pregnancy without time and effort? With time and effort?)
- What are real barriers to losing weight after pregnancy? Sample responses:
  - Belief that weight loss isn't realistic or possible after having a baby.
  - Accepting extra baby fat as part of motherhood.
  - Perception that being a good mother means being focused only on the baby.
  - Perception that focusing on your weight is selfish or unimportant.
  - Belief (or hope) that weight will drop off magically during the first year.
  - Planning to have another baby soon so not recognizing weight loss as important or practical until after the next baby.
  - Belief (or hope) that breastfeeding mothers shouldn't be active or eat low-calorie foods.
  - Accustomed to eating more during pregnancy and unwilling or unable to cut back.
  - Eating for comfort. Parenting a new baby can be stressful and some parents reach for foods to get them through tough times.
  - Eating out of loneliness. Some moms miss the stimulation of work and friends and find food a convenient substitute that feeds their loneliness.
  - Eating because of tiredness and the belief that it will provide energy.
  - Some traditional cultural foods for postpartum women are high in fat and calories.

**Connect:**

- How does making yourself feel better help your baby?
- How would it help to pay more attention to yourself if you became pregnant again?
- How would your pregnancy been different if you had taken more time for yourself?
- How does the amount of weight you gained during your pregnancy affect how you feel now?
- How would you feel if you could achieve your weight goal?



**Act:**

What actions can you take this week to help you achieve your weight goal?

Sample responses:

- Walk with your baby in a stroller or front pack. Talk about the trees, birds and clouds. Tell your baby about the dreams you have for her life. Share your feelings about baby being a part of your life.
- Buy and use an inexpensive exercise video/DVD with music or borrow them from your local library. Let your baby watch as you dance - pick him up and gently sway to the music.
- Breastfeed! It's every mother's secret weight loss tool.
- Eat just until full. Your miraculous body will still produce all the breastmilk needed. Don't let breastfeeding become an excuse for donuts or chips.
- Feeling too tired to exercise? A brisk walk in the fresh air may revitalize you.
- Feeling lonely? Find another new mother and walk with your child into a new friendship. Or call your local hospital and join a new mothers group.
- Be realistic. Aim for a slow, steady weight gain when pregnant so the weight comes off easier later.
- Drink more water; it makes you feel full.
- Be patient. Weight gained over nine months may take that long to disappear.

