

ENGAGED MOTHERING: A CONCEPT ANALYSIS

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Engaged Mothering, Maternal Transformation

Purpose: The purpose of this poster presentation is to propose a definition of engaged mothering, to offer implications for practice and to describe further research.

Method: A literature search on the topics of mother, mothering, motherhood, maternal work, and maternal responsiveness uncovered twelve studies from the disciplines of nursing, psychology, sociology, feminist inquiry, and allied health. These studies were analyzed for common themes and then synthesized with the middle range theory of self-transcendence into a definition of the concept of engaged mothering.

Findings: An analysis of the research presented mothering from one of three distinct perspectives. These are: mothering as transition, mothering as work, and mothering as process. The themes on mothering as transition were that: transition is an active process, transitions influence a maternal sense of self, and in transitions the mother gains new skills and confidence. The themes examining mothering as work were: caring for and nurturing her child, teaching, protecting, and investing energy in maternal self. The themes on mothering as process were: as an intentional activity, as life changing, as continuous and transformative, and as an opportunity for developing new skills and new elements of the maternal self. The definition synthesized from an analysis of the literature and the middle range theory of self-transcendence follows. Engaged mothering is a transformative process involving the intentional use of self to nurture a child's optimal development and to create an ever-evolving maternal identity. In the transforming developmental process of transitions there are times of vulnerability that arise in the changing mother child relationship that influence well-being.

Discussion: Engaged mothering is new concept requiring refinement through nursing practice and research. Implications for nursing practice include focusing nursing care on the times of transition that create vulnerability for mother and child and assisting mothers to acquire new skills and knowledge and to develop patterns of self-care to support their transformation. Implications for nursing research include the need to examine the phenomenon of engaged mothering across a woman's lifespan and to identify those nursing interventions that are most effective in promoting maternal well-being.