Depression is one of the most common complications of pregnancy and the postpartum period, but moms face many barriers to receiving the support they need to thrive and be present with their families, friends, and work in the ways they most want. That’s where Alma comes in.

The heart of the Alma program is our team of peer mentors: moms who have experienced depression themselves and receive training to support other moms facing similar challenges. These peer mentors have had success in their own lives using the Alma skills, which are inspired by an approach called behavioral activation. The essence of these skills is that you can change how you feel by changing what you do.

Alma is not therapy or mental health treatment; it’s about empowering moms to apply simple, science-backed skills to help each other stop the downward spiral of depression. Alma can also help to connect new and expectant moms with mental health treatment and other resources.

Alma is an evidence-based peer mentoring program created with and for new moms who are experiencing depression, anxiety, and stress. Developed by a collaborative team of researchers, mental health providers, community members, and moms, Alma gives new and expectant moms the support and skills they need to navigate this new chapter in their life.

**Why we created Alma**

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**How it works**

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**1 in 5**

pregnant and postpartum moms struggle with depression.¹

**65%**

of pregnant & postpartum women experiencing depression do not get professional help.²

**al•ma (əˈlmə/ AHL-mə)**

the Latin word for “nourishing” and “kind,” and the Spanish word for “soul.” This one little word captures what we hope moms will feel when they connect with us.
The research behind our approach

The Alma program is being studied with both English- and Spanish-speaking women and community partners, informed by extensive interviews, focus groups, surveys, and an iterative development process. It is based on over twenty years of research conducted all over the world.

1996  The first study of behavioral activation (BA) as a standalone approach to helping people who are depressed is conducted.⁴

2006  BA is found to be an effective intervention for helping people to recover from depression and stay well over time.⁵

2014  A pilot study establishes the promise of training laypeople as counselors in the global mental health context.⁶

2017  BA is found to be an acceptable and effective approach to helping women experiencing depression, anxiety, and stress.⁷

2020  The Alma program is established at the University of Colorado Boulder and in partnership with community programs in the Denver, Boulder and Roaring Fork Valley regions of Colorado.

The stories that inspire us

“My depression was a very difficult time. I would’ve liked to have had support. That’s why I believe in the Alma program – because I am a mother who might help other mothers.”
– Gracia, Alma Mentor

“When you’re feeling alone and feel like you don’t have anybody there to understand you, all you need is one hand to help you up... and Alma is that hand.”
– Erin, Alma Mentor

Get Involved

Contact us at crown.institute@colorado.edu

You can also learn more about Alma through videos featuring our work with our partners at the Aurora Mental Health Center and STRIDE, Kaiser Permanente of Colorado, and Valley Settlement.

February 2020