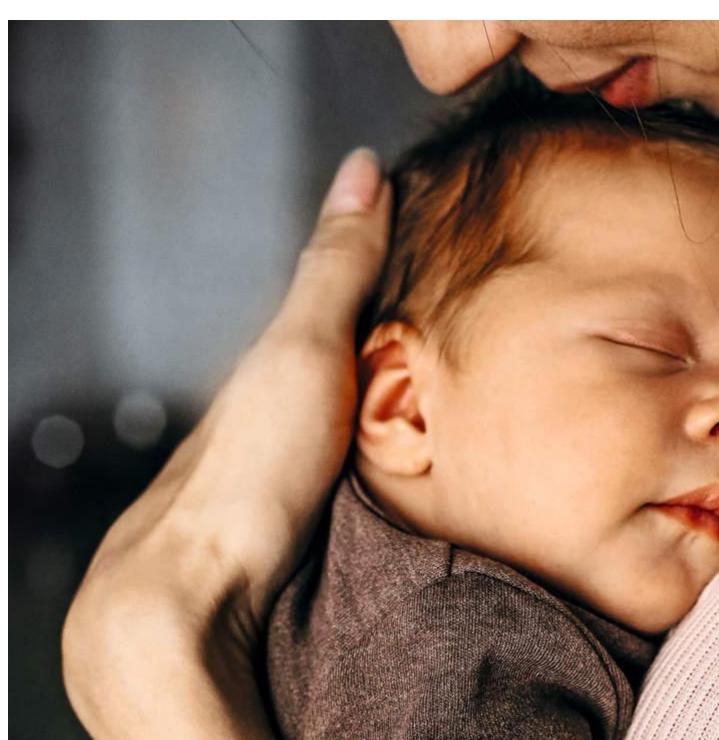
# Matrescence: How Motherhood Changes the Mind and Body [B1]

Un nuovo movimento invita a riconoscere la transizione alla genitorialità, caratterizzata dai cambiamenti fisici, psicologici ed emotivi che donne e uomini sperimentano durante questa fase della vita, denominata 'matrescenza' nel caso delle donne.



We all know that adolescence is a difficult phase of life, when our hormones fluctuate, our bodies change and we form a new sense of identity. But what about new <u>parenthood</u>? The term 'matrescence' was <u>coined</u> in the 1970s by medical anthropologist Dana Raphael and it refers to the developmental phase of new <u>motherhood</u>. Just like adolescence, matrescence is a phase when women go through intense physical, psychological and emotional changes. More recent research shows that the brains of new fathers experience similar changes.

#### A GLOBAL MOVEMENT

While adolescence has been widely studied and discussed for decades, new parenthood is only now getting the attention it deserves in the medical community and society. This is thanks to a global movement that recognises it as an equally difficult and important phase of life. The movement has resulted in an increased number of support groups and other resources for new mothers to help women and men transition into parenthood.

### **TOTALLY NORMAL**

Society often presents <u>pregnancy</u> and early <u>parenthood</u> as a glorious phase of life. However, up to 20 per cent of women suffer from postpartum depression, and many others from anxiety, psychosis and other mental health problems during early <u>parenthood</u> in particular. Experts say it's important <u>to raise awareness</u> of how common this is, so that women and men don't feel <u>isolated</u> or afraid to express openly how they feel and get the help that they need.

## **CHANGES IN THE BRAIN**

Women's bodies change radically during <u>pregnancy</u>. Naturally, they are psychologically impacted by these physical changes and by the hormonal fluctuations that occur during the development of the foetus. In 2016, a scientific study by researchers at the Autonomous University of Barcelona discovered that women's brains also change during <u>pregnancy</u> and that these changes are still present two years after giving birth.

## **MATERNAL BONDS**

The researchers did brain scans on <u>first-time mothers</u> before and after <u>pregnancy</u>. They found that <u>pregnancy</u> alters the size and structure of regions of the brain involved in understanding the thoughts, feelings, <u>beliefs</u> and intentions of others. Two years after giving birth, the changes were so evident that a computer algorithm could use them to identify which women had been pregnant and which

had not... However, a growing body of research is observing this type of plasticity in first-time fathers, too. They also experience the cognitive, physical and emotional demands of caring for a <a href="mailto:newborn">newborn</a>.

## **Glossary**

- coined = coniare
- **deserves** = meritare
- to raise awareness = aumentare la consapevolezza
- **isolated** = isolate
- first-time mothers = madri alla prima esperienza
- **beliefs** = credenze
- **newborn** = neonato
- parenthood = genitorialità
- motherhood = maternità
- resources = risorse
- **pregnancy** = gravidanza