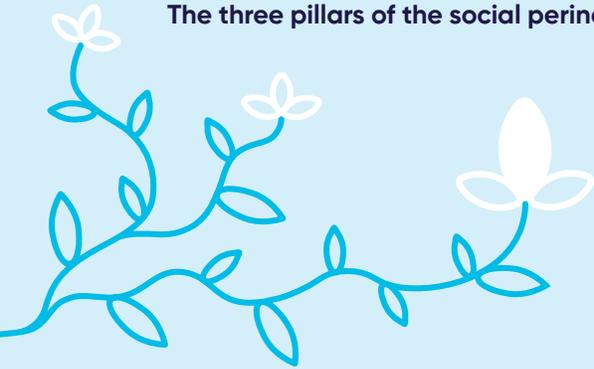


Portage/empowerment

The three pillars of the social perinatal care approach explained



The social perinatal care approach

Social perinatal care is based on three pillars of intervention that best support parents and their children in vulnerable contexts. **Interdisciplinarity, portage/empowerment** as well as **proximity work** – all strongly interconnected – are the essence of La Maison Bleue's model of care and daily interventions. These pillars reflect a responsiveness to the diverse needs of families during the perinatal and early childhood?

“What I appreciated about La Maison Bleue is that they saw my strengths as a mother rather than focusing on my weaknesses. I'm glad they recognized my strengths because I know I'm trying every day, but for others to see it too, it's so rewarding.”

– A mother followed at La Maison Bleue.

What is portage/empowerment?

Portage/empowerment are complementary components along the same continuum of our intervention approach. **While portage provides support to a person** whose energies are heavily affected, **empowerment helps to recognize and actualize the person's strengths** so that he or she can regain control over his or her life.

Without portage, empowerment cannot take place because the physical and emotional availability is simply not there. **The same intervention can be based on both portage and empowerment.** The premise of this intervention pillar is that parents have the capabilities to care for and nurture their children.

Distinctness:



Portage

- Supports parents so they can, in turn, support and care for their children.
- An adaptation of the support level throughout the follow-up, based on the family' needs and challenges.
- A supportive environment provided by all team members.



Empowerment

- Supporting a person in the recognition and actualization of their strengths so they can gain control over their life.
- Valuing and developing parental skills.
- The belief that a person can overcome obstacles, especially if given appropriate support and grow from them.



Portage/empowerment

- An intervention approach where staff accompanies the client on their journey while supporting them in achieving their goals.
- Interrelated principles that involve both portage and recognition to meet the complex needs of families in vulnerable situations.

Why choose portage/empowerment?

Portage/empowerment is based on the principle that vulnerability factors can impair the individual's ability to take full advantage of the resources needed for personal health and well-being, and in turn, to have control over one's life. Like **interdisciplinarity and proximity work, portage/empowerment** is particularly beneficial when working with vulnerable and marginalized populations. The difficulties associated with complex life contexts can act as a burden on people's health and well-being. By supporting them to carry some of the weight, families can better tap into their energies and capitalize on their strengths.

Benefits to the person or family being followed

- Having access to a safe space to express your needs and challenges while being listened to;
- Feeling competent to care for your child;
- Being better prepared to appreciate the strengths and qualities of your child;
- Benefiting from interventions that are adapted to your reality.

Benefits to the team

- Building on the knowledge and lived experiences of families to intervene more meaningfully and effectively;
- Better appreciating and leveraging the strengths of the person being cared for;
- Strengthening the relationship of trust with the person or family being cared for;
- Feeling supported by the social perinatal care team when your own intervention capabilities are affected.

Professional approach

promoting portage/empowerment

- Encourage families to share their experiences of suffering and hardship and **engage in active listening**;
- Intervene by leveraging the strengths of individuals, **reinforcing what they do well** and involving them in identifying achievable and realistic goals;
- In all circumstances, maintain an attitude of **non-judgment and acceptance** of families;
- Encourage active participation from participants during group workshops, for example by inviting participants to **share experiences**;
- **Recognize personal limitations** and engage the rest of the team in situations beyond personal capabilities;
- View crisis situations as an opportunity to **build trust**.

Organizational factors

promoting portage/empowerment

The organization has a role to play in promoting portage/empowerment. Here are some actions that can be taken:

- Promoting internal and external communications of **acceptance and non-judgment** towards families with consideration to their strengths and challenges. Avoiding using terms that may decrease families' abilities to act or diminish their own perceptions of themselves;
- Setting up patient/family-partner committees to **give voice to those concerned**;
- Designing the clinical space to make families feel comfortable while **promoting person-centered interventions**;
- **Fostering a climate of trust** among team members and partners by encouraging casual situations that allow them to be authentic with each other;
- Ensuring that people involved in team coordination activities also receive the necessary **support in difficult situations**;
- Providing **opportunities for reflection** on ethical issues.

Read more

La Maison Bleue (2020). Le portage et l'empowerment à La Maison Bleue. [Capsule vidéo](#).

La Maison Bleue (2016). [L'empreinte de La Maison Bleue: Fondements et guide de pratiques](#).



Other summary sheets to read



Social perinatal care



Interdisciplinarity



Proximity work