

# Building Workforce Confidence in Managing Intrusive Thoughts in Perinatal Care



Frances Bilbao, Clinical Psychologist

Mums Matter Psychology and Perinatal Professionals Hub  
www.perinatalprofessionalshub.com

**Not all intrusive thoughts indicate risk – but misunderstanding them can create it.**

## The Problem

Intrusive thoughts in the perinatal period are common, with **100% of new parents** reporting unwanted **intrusive thoughts about harm to their infant**. However, these are widely misunderstood. Many healthcare workers lack training to differentiate between normal intrusive thoughts and genuine risk indicators, leading to inappropriate responses and increased distress for new parents.

## Why It Matters

### System-wide impact across Australia:

- Misidentification leads to unnecessary interventions including Child Protection notifications
- Parents experience shame and avoid disclosure
- Healthcare resources are misallocated
- Critical window for support is missed

## The Intervention

**Evidence-based 1-day training program created at the Perinatal Professionals Hub which includes:**

- Understanding intrusive thoughts and OCD
- Risk assessment frameworks
- Response protocols
- Supportive communication skills
- Knowledge about medications, family dynamics and transference/counter transference

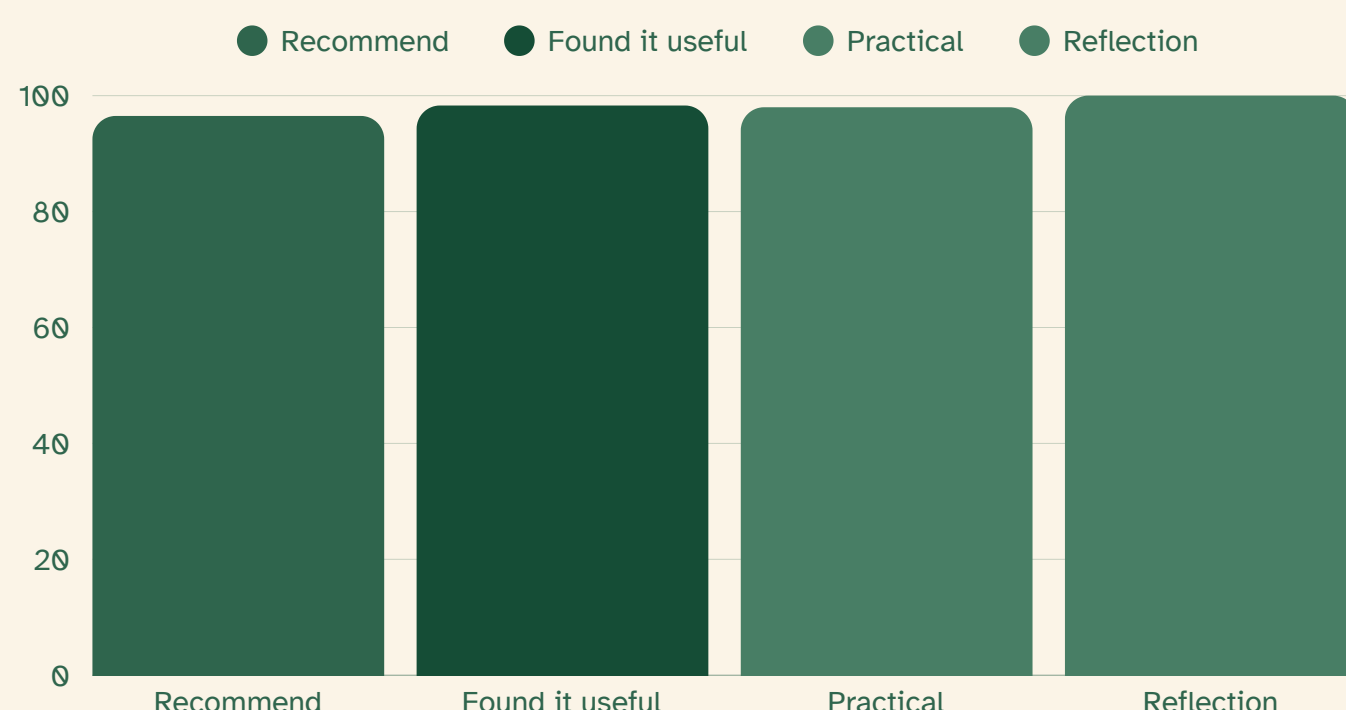
## Training Outcomes

**One hundred and thirty-eight (138) nurses and midwives from various settings** completed the program.

Of these, 96.5% would recommend the training to colleagues.

A total of 98.3% found it useful, and 98.3% reported gaining practical skills.

All participants indicated that the training prompted reflection on their current practice.



## Practice Change

**BEFORE:** Inconsistent responses, over-referral, parent and clinician distress, knowledge gaps

**AFTER:** Confident assessment, appropriate support, reduced stigma, clear pathways

## Implications

**For Clinicians:** Enhanced confidence and competence in managing intrusive thoughts disclosure and risk assessment

**For Families:** Better support, reduced stigma, improved outcomes

**For Systems:** Scalable training model for nationwide implementation

