

A current ethical issue that is prevalent in healthcare is the ability of nurses practicing with compassion and respect for the inherent dignity, worth, and unique attributes of every person. An example of this type of situation is on the labor and delivery unit when a pregnant mother who is an active user of drugs. According to Weber et al., “a systematic review published by Lee et al concluded that children born to opioid-dependent mothers had worse neurodevelopmental outcomes compared to children born to non-opioid dependent mothers, but note that potential confounders such as other substance use, tobacco use, and prematurity were not accounted for and could also influence these outcomes” (Weber et al., 2021). These situations can be very hard for a nurse to support or understand, we may not know the circumstance that these pregnant women are going through or the reason as to why they use. Although it may not be a good thing for the mother or the baby to have such substances in their system, ultimately the mother is the person who needs the support without any judgment. Being a new mother may be daunting for some and when they are not given the same care or the dignity that a mother who does not do drugs, can be very devastating and debilitating for a new mother. In some instances, a mother may just need a person to be there for her and support her through her journey because that may be something they have never received before, and with this, they may even be able to find the support and resources they need to omit the drugs from the picture. As hard as it may seem for someone like me to understand and wrap my head around why someone would want to use drugs, I have to step back and realize that they do not want to be using the drugs and they may have more stress and suffering in their life than I could ever begin to imagine, so the least that I could do for someone like this, is to be there for them. I think with that, it will go far for them.

Reference:

Weber, A., Miskle, B., Lynch, A., Arndt, S., & Acion, L. (2021). Substance use in pregnancy: Identifying stigma and improving care. *Substance Abuse and Rehabilitation, Volume 12*, 105–121. <https://doi.org/10.2147/sar.s319180>