During childbirth, many women experience high levels of anxiety because of various reasons such as intense pain or medical complications. International studies have shown that 19%-45% of all births are experienced as traumatic. This experience may lead to the development of post-traumatic stress following childbirth, which occurs when mothers relive their birth events through many different ways, such as nightmares; when mothers avoid memories of the birth; and/or have difficulties concentrating or sleeping because of birth-related experiences. In Israel, studies have shown that 21.7% - 25.9% of new mothers experience post-traumatic stress as a result of childbirth. However, little is known about the difficulties that these women experience in their interactions with their newborn. At the Ziama Arkin Infancy institute, we strive to gain more knowledge on the phenomenon of post-traumatic stress following childbirth, with the eventual goal to prevent it, and to help mothers who suffer from it to diminish their symptoms. In addition, we investigate how mothers who suffer from post-traumatic stress after childbirth can build safe and stimulating home environments for their newborns to thrive in, regardless of their personal distress.

More specifically, we investigate the following questions:

1. Can we identify before childbirth and/or immediately after birth, mothers that are at risk for developing post-traumatic stress symptoms, so that we can assist them and reduce the extent of their distress?

2. Whether and how do birth experiences influence the development of warm mother-infant relationships; and how can we revert such potentially detrimental influences?

3. Do to the high comorbidity between post-traumatic stress following childbirth and other postpartum difficulties, we strive to achieve a detailed understanding of the similarities and differences between these postpartum post-traumatic stress following childbirth and other postnatal conditions such as postpartum depression?