Case Study: Your New Client

Kaylah is 28 years- old and is in a committed live-in relationship with partner, 30-year-old Devon. Devon is employed by the post office and works increasingly long hours including weekends. They have a 2-month-old son named James and a 2-year-old son named Donovan. Kaylah worked part-time for a small, local restaurant supply company, really enjoyed her work and was looking forward to a promotion and moving into a full-time position when her job suddenly ended last year. The company closed because of lost revenue due to the pandemic. Kaylah discovered that she was pregnant with her second child a month after losing her job. The first pregnancy was planned, and the second pregnancy was not. The family identifies as African American.

Kaylah has struggled with anxiety and depression since late adolescence and was initially referred to a therapist by her obstetrician shortly after discovering that she was pregnant with her 2nd child. During a prenatal appointment, she had expressed concerns about feeling overwhelmed and not ready to be the mother of two. She also had anxiety around another pregnancy during the pandemic. She indicated that she had felt frightened, isolated from her extended family and unsupported when her first child was born. Although Kaylah accepted the referral from her obstetrician, she chose not to engage in therapy at that time stating that her partner did not believe in it feeling that it is intrusive and does not pertain to the Black experience.

 Kaylah had a traumatic labor and delivered her second child, James, by emergency c-section. He is currently 2 months old, and Kaylah is frustrated that he is fussy and wakes so often during the night. She states that it is difficult to get so little sleep herself and then have a full day with a baby and an extremely busy 2-year-old toddler who does not listen to her. She states that her mom told her that she is spoiling the baby by holding him so much and said that if she feeds the baby more during the day, that he will sleep longer during the night. Kaylah has started putting cereal in the baby’s bottle and trying to let him “cry it out” more. She feels that this is not working and that she must be doing something wrong.

Kayla is also concerned that her two-year old, Donovan, is not bathroom trained. She blames herself for being so tired and lazy during her last trimester of pregnancy with James that she did not start the process. She indicates feeling embarrassed that Donavan is so big, verbal and still in Pampers. Kaylah says that most of the kids in her family are potty trained shortly after they start walking. She says that having Donovan still in diapers makes her feel like she has two babies and like she has not been on top of things as a mother. She indicates that the training process has become so stressful that Donovan cries and resists when he sees the potty. She says that he is becoming increasingly angry towards her.

Kaylah indicates that Donovan has slept in the bed with her and his dad from birth up until the last couple of weeks when his dad decided that it is time for him to sleep in his own room. She says that Donovan cries and returns to their bed each night. She feels that each time this happens, her partner is judging her.

Kayla indicates that while she is fortunate to be able to stay home with her children, she feels isolated and misses having time to herself and her own income. She says that she feels unsupported by her partner, Devon, but understands his unavailability because he is working so hard to take care of the family. She indicates that she needs to talk to someone because she is unhappy, frustrated, and unsure of what to do about so many things. Devon is unaware of her decision to engage in therapy.