
The Beacon

Guiding You through the Process of Change

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Post-Partum Depression: Not just Baby Blues

Right after the child is born- the post-partum period may be a difficult period of time in the mother's life. For a mother, your lifestyle changes completely. As a new mother you may feel that giving birth is a miraculous experience. You begin to play your day around the new infant and work to weave him/her into the fabric of your family.

At the same time you will be tired after the delivery; tired from a lack of sleep and broken sleep; overwhelmed with the new infant. You may have doubts about your ability to be a good mother. You will experience changes in your work and home schedule. You may experience a sense of loss of who you were before the baby was born. You may feel less attractive and feel jealous of your friends who have more free time and you may feel like you need to be a perfect mom but don't know how.

An example is Vivian, who worked as an executive in an insurance firm before her daughter was born. She waited to become pregnant until she was thirty-five. She decided to take six months off to be with her child. One day she found herself sitting on the couch in the middle of the afternoon, still in her pajamas and needing a shower. Dishes were in the sink, dirty laundry overflowed the hampers and she did not clean the house for two weeks. She felt anxious and irritable. She had not had a good night sleep since her daughter was born two months ago. She did not feel like eating and her spouse complained that she never cooked anymore. He was angry with her for not being in "better control". Her parents, usually a support for her, were in Florida for the winter. She felt isolated and alone.

During the course of psychotherapy, we talked about her need to sleep when her daughter slept instead of trying

to do the housework and exhausting herself. We talked about her unreasonable need to be perfect which helped her to feel less pressured. Her husband attended some of the sessions to better understand what Vivian was going through. He began to help her with night feedings and cleaning the house. They made plans to hire a baby-sitter so they could go out on Saturday nights to have time to themselves. We talked about her own mother's depression and how it affected her as a child.

The process of psychotherapy helped Vivian to get back on her feet. She began to enjoy her daughter more. Her relationship with her husband improved. She contacted her old friends. Her life became more enjoyable. Psychotherapy helped Vivian to work through her post-partum depression and helped her to bond to her daughter and firm up her relationship with her husband.

Books for mothers:

Overcoming Post-Partum Depression and Anxiety by Linda Sebastian.

This Isn't What I Expected: Overcoming Post-Partum Depression by Karen Kleinman.

Nurturing the Family: The Guide for Post-Partum Depression by Jacqueline Kelleher.

Down Came the Rain: My Journey through Post-Partum Depression by Brooke Shields.

The Mother-to-Mother Post-Partum Depression Support Book by Sandra Poulin.

By Naomi Neuwirth, LCSW

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