One Mother's Story of Postpartum Depression

It is hard for me to look back on my baby's first two years of life. I had put off becoming a mother for several years because of my husband's career. During that time, I could not stand to be around pregnant woman or infants. I just felt so sad that it wasn't me in that position. I felt no joy when my sister-in-law became pregnant and had a healthy baby girl. I realize now that was I was jealous.

When I became pregnant, I was happy, and very healthy. It was an easy pregnancy and free of many worries. My delivery was long, 32 hours and I was exhausted afterwards. I was excited to have a girl, who was healthy and looked like me. We came home from the hospital and settled into a routine. After two weeks, I realized she was not getting enough from breastfeeding and switched to bottle feeding. I was sleeping well, but began to feel anxious all the time. Was I feeding her right? Was I changing her often enough? What is she asking for with that cry? I bought several baby care books and read them all the time. If something wasn't like how I thought it should be, I looked in the books.

I had planned to return to work after 12 weeks, but at six weeks I became very restless and wanted to return to work. The doctor and my employer told me to relax and enjoy the baby. I found things to work on at home and began to ignore the baby. She slept well, ate well and was not a fussy baby. However, when she became fussy, I couldn't deal with her. I would pinch her or yell at her. I often just walked away and left her in her crib when she cried and I went and cried in another room. I cried often, when I found messy diapers because I was too busy to change her. I cried when my husband left for work because I couldn't go, too. I cried when I went to sleep. I just cried all the time.

I returned to work and was happier. Because I went back to work and was able to function, everyone thought I was OK, but inside, I wasn't. Everyone at work said, "Don't you just love being a mother?" and I didn't but I couldn't say it out loud. When I got home, I was mommy instead of me. My husband helped care for the baby somewhat, but left the cleaning, cooking, shopping, feeding, bathing, and organizing each night for day care the next day, to me. I was not sleeping well. I was constantly trying to remember what I didn't do or what I needed to get ready for the next day. I continued to cry often. Everyone said it was just my hormones returning to normal.

I still read the baby books for assistance. I felt I knew nothing about caring for a baby, and I felt alone. As the months passed, I felt more and more alone. I felt I couldn't do anything right for the baby when I was in charge. I was very frustrated with being a mother, and the father was not easing these feelings. I stopped talking to friends because they didn't understand me anymore. I just wanted to be alone. I did not take any joy of holding my baby or caring for her. I thought that other mothers felt only warm and positive feelings toward their babies, and I didn't feel that way. I did not love her.

When I was very depressed, I remember telling myself not to hurt her, she didn't ask for that, so I thought of leaving. I wanted to be alone, not going back to life without the baby; I just wanted to be alone. I was embarrassed for feeling like I did. I felt that she would be better off without me. I was frightened that I would never be normal and have a loving relationship with my daughter. Before I did anything really stupid, I got help.

After I got help, things changed. I fell in love with my daughter, I stopped crying, and over time, I became happy again. Today, my daughter has no baby book because at the time, I couldn't handle that. Thank God she doesn't remember anything about that time in her life. Things have changed and I am here today to be the best mother I can be.