

Learning how to recognize the signs of postpartum depression was not easy for me.

I had already been depressed before my pregnancy due to life stressors. I could not differentiate the difference in symptoms or even determine when it was necessary to seek professional help. I felt alone, disconnected, misunderstood, and hopeless during my pregnancy. I did not understand how I could be filled with life yet feel empty. I remembered coming home from work at a job that I had felt unsatisfied with for some time, realizing that it did not matter how unsatisfied I felt at this point. I needed the income, not just for me but a whole other person.

My partner and I were distant. I would come home and go directly to our bedroom, and he would remain on the couch in the living room. Looking back over my life, I realize that not seeking help affected my pregnancy. By the time I was four months pregnant, I felt a sharp pain on the upper right side of my stomach. Unbeknownst to me, this was the first sign of preeclampsia which resulted in premature birth. When my baby did arrive, I was overly exhausted. I didn't know if I should clean up the house or sleep. In addition, the thought of actually sleeping made me uncomfortable because I was worried about waking up to my premature baby not breathing. Six months came and went, and maternity leave was over at the drop of a hat, and I was back to work. I never sought professional help during my first pregnancy. I feared that Child Protective Services (CPS) would be called if I shared my thoughts and expressed my feelings. Even though I wasn't mentally or physically prepared to return to work, going to work became my only outlet and, in many ways, a brief escapism from my overwhelming family obligations.





When my baby turned three years old, I noticed that I began to feel like myself again. However, at that point, I was pregnant with my second child. Now, a bit more seasoned, I learned to ask more questions and surrounded myself with experienced mothers who were able to help me navigate the legalities of maternity leave and the health care system. When I advocated for myself by voicing my concerns to my Doctor, she immediately extended my maternity leave. She continued to do so until I was ready to return to work. In addition, my doctor gave me a packet of postpartum depression resources to review, like therapy and Mom support groups. I was honestly amazed at how simple it was to get the help I needed when I spoke up about the way I'd been feeling.

Today, as a single parent, I seek regular therapy and am constantly researching community resources for myself and others in similar circumstances. I enjoy interning at California Black Women's Health Project because I embody the mission.

I affirm myself and my children through scripture. So that when the road gets murky as it often does, "I write the vision, and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end, it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Habakkuk 2:2-3 New King James Version).

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