

battling the baby blues

A *Fit Pregnancy* editor experiences, and recovers from, postpartum depression after the birth of her first baby. > BY KIM ACOSTA



Kim and her daughter, the aptly named Hope

fOUR WEEKS INTO MY NEW ROLE as “mother,” I had a terrifying thought. It dawned on me that I might never emerge from the tearful, confused, sleep-deprived state I had been in since we brought our newborn daughter, Hope, home from the hospital. I couldn’t shake the crushing feeling that my baby might not survive because of my sheer ineptitude.

Those first few weeks home, I spent every day feeling lost. I couldn’t eat, I couldn’t sleep, and I cried a lot, which is unlike me. I constantly had a pit in my stomach; I felt like Hope wasn’t getting what she needed from me because she would cry. The idea of giving both of us time to get acquainted or simply accepting that sometimes babies cry was not on my radar.

Despite my inner turmoil, on the outside I acted as if everything was normal. Around me, people would discuss their day, movies, politics—regular topics of conversation—and I couldn’t believe they were talking about such mundane things. I wondered why no one could see that I was in crisis. At the same time, I tried to ignore how I was feeling and kept everything inside.

Eventually, however, I told my mother-in-law what I was going through. Because my depression seemed pretty severe to her, she recommended I talk to my doctor and/or a therapist.


Her words were hard for me to hear, but I took her advice and called a therapist recommended by my pediatrician. I started going to weekly talk therapy sessions, taking the antidepressant Lexapro and getting three-plus hours of uninterrupted sleep at a time. I also opened up to friends who were new mothers; although none of them had postpartum depression, or PPD, it was helpful to share stories with them. After about two months, the idea of caring for Hope no longer terrified me, and finally I started feeling like myself again. The therapist helped me see the immense pressure I had put on myself and Hope.

The day Hope giggled for the first time, I understood what all the new-baby fuss was about. I could almost feel my heart expanding with joy. I felt thankful that I had found the courage

Kim Acosta, OVERLAND PARK, KAN.
Kim’s tips for dealing with postpartum depression:
 >> Read *Beyond the Blues: A Guide to Understanding and Treating Prenatal and Postpartum Depression* by Shoshana S. Bennett, Ph.D. (Moodswings Press). It will help you and loved ones better grasp what you’re going through.
 >> Have the courage to tell someone—your spouse, friend, mother or doctor—how you’re really feeling. You are not to blame, and you are not alone.
 >> Believe that things will improve. There are safe, effective treatments for postpartum depression. For more tips, go to fitpregnancy.com/lifeafterbirth and postpartum.net.

to get help finding my way back to “me” again. About five months later, when my daily life felt manageable and with my doctor’s consent, I weaned myself off the Lexapro.

On April 10, 2007, my husband Rich, Hope (then 20 months) and I welcomed the newest addition to our family, Gabriel Bruce. I didn’t expect to get PPD again, but when Gabe was about 3 months old, some of the symptoms returned. Taking care of both Gabriel’s and Hope’s needs overwhelmed me. I cried a lot, and dreaded the days without help from my mom or mother-in-law.

I called my doctor, got back on medication, and started seeing a counselor who specializes in postpartum issues. I am also going to a PPD support group this time. Gabe is 10 months old and I’m feeling much better and am able to enjoy both of my children more. The combination of the medication, therapy and the support group all help. It’s a long process, but getting it out in the open and taking care of yourself is essential to taking care of your family. 

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