

Breastfeeding Cafe

Connect, facilitate, nurture and empower

(Newsletter Vol 8, July 2017)

Happy 4th of July, everyone! Hope everyone enjoyed the weekend with family and friends. The weather here is quite nice, and we are getting to choose from quite a lot of outdoor activities. Outdoor activities with family and friends strengthen the bond and help us overcome a lot of struggles. In this week's newsletter, we are going to talk about how friends and family, with the right amount of support, can help us overcome many battles in life.

Postpartum depression (PPD) is one such hurdle. I have been hesitant to write about the topic for a long time now. However, I think that it is an important issue that needs to be addressed. So, today's discussion is all about PPD and the stigmas attached to it.

Research says, one in seven moms deals with postpartum depression or some other perinatal mood disorder. That's a lot of women who are facing a serious situation, many of them in



silence and without help, because there's a stigma attached to this type of illness. What does it feel like to have postpartum depression or postpartum anxiety? What are the signs or symptoms? How do you know when you have it? And if you do have it, what should you do?

You can get all our answers [here](#)¹.

Today, I am going to share with you some real-life facts related to PPD and how a community of friends and family members can help heal it. We all know that being a first-time mom is overwhelming, and it's a life-changing experience for all of us.

There are a lot of emotions that accompany the bringing of a new life into the world. In addition to hormonal changes, "baby blues" are common for new moms and can include crying, mood swings, and anxiety. PPD goes beyond the blues (which last for two weeks or longer) and interferes with the ability for a mom to live her life. Crippling anxiety, delayed maternal bonding,

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<http://www.postpartumprogress.com/the-symptoms-of-postpartum-depression-anxiety-in-plain-mama-english>

and thoughts of suicide are all possible symptoms of this illness. There's a stigma attached to motherhood... that even though it's tough, it's one of the "best times of your life". Dealing with personal depression is not convenient at a time when your whole life is supposed to be "about the child". For this reason, many women suffer silently.

We are trying to break this stigma attached to motherhood/parenting and thrive with each other's support and acceptance as a community. I myself know how a community of like-minded moms help me get through the struggles related to parenting every day. As I write about this topic today, the only suggestion I have for mothers is to reach out. Reach out to a friend, a family member, your general practitioner... anybody whom you trust and feel comfortable to share your feelings with. We know there are barriers to seeking help; but, we want to break those barriers to find a place where all worries/struggles related to motherhood are well-addressed. [Without treatment](#), PPD can last for months—or longer—and interfere with your ability to bond with your baby (which can cause problems for your child later in life) and even turn into a chronic depressive disorder that extends well beyond your postpartum months². As I write about the topic of PPD in this edition, I feel I have to talk about postpartum anxiety, which many moms start facing after childbirth. According to Margaret Howard, Ph.D., director of postpartum depression at the Day Hospital at Women & Infants' in Providence³, "Some worry is adaptive -- anxiety is a natural response to protect one's baby, and often that's expressed with hyper-alertness and hyper-vigilance." That's why, according to the Mayo Clinic, 89 percent of new parents find their minds racing: What if the baby suffocates? Or what if she slips under the water during a bath? What if someone breaks into the house and snatches her? "For most parents, this is just mental noise. They learn to dismiss it, so the thoughts stop cropping up."

But if the worries are irrational and affect the everyday affairs of the mother, we need to act immediately. "Anxiety is a problem when it overshoots reality," Howard says. As I talk about postpartum anxiety, I remember my own days when I forgot to function normally after my first child was born and was worried about her every day. We need to reach out immediately if the stress interferes with our daily routine, as it might get worse as time passes. Apart from medical help, an inner circle of supportive friends and family members is very important to swim through these difficult times. It's important to know that you are not alone in the journey, and with proper intervention, it will be better soon.

Note: [Postpartum Support International](#) can connect moms or loved ones with trained professionals. Connect with them [online](#) or by calling 1-800-944-4773.

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<http://www.upworthy.com/to-fight-the-stigma-of-mental-illness-during-and-after-pregnancy-these-7-women-got-very-real>

³ <http://www.womenandinfants.org/services/behavioral-health/meet-the-team.cfm>

Sampark:

Breastfeeding Cafe stands right with you when you need the help of a real-time place to mingle with like-minded parents and share your feelings. We feel that when we support each other as a community in our journey, the journey becomes memorable. As a society, it is time for us to get rid of the stigma and turn the narrative of constant perfect motherhood around so that women can feel unafraid to talk about the very real disorders that affect their lives. It has to be done so that, on an even broader level, women can be liberated and free from the chains of unrealistic standards. This is a goal that we should all strive towards. We can read up on PPD, share our knowledge with others, and often, simply offer a listening ear to mothers who need it. And this applies not only for PPD but also for any other issue related to parenting /motherhood.

Sheila Janakos, MPH, IBCLC, CEO Healthy Horizons Breastfeeding Center and Corporate Lactation, added further insight on this topic to share with our readers:

"Moms who pump at work and bring breast milk home for their babies are less likely to become depressed because they are still connected to their little ones and are providing something that no one else can, mother's milk."

Spotlight:

We are featuring **Lindsay Lipton Gerszt** in our spotlight this month. She was born and raised in Miami, Florida. She had a successful 10-year career in the music industry before stepping back from to begin her beautiful family. It was at this stage in her life that she came face to face with postpartum depression (PPD). She has now committed herself to raising awareness for PPD, its many faces and the path to a healthy life and family. Her commitment to PPD has included working on the important documentary *When The Bough Breaks*⁴. This work has included fundraising, filming and telling her story and helping other women tell their story.



"I have a light up sign in my office that says "normal is boring". I've never wanted to be normal or boring. What I have wanted to be was a happy wife and mother who could post "beautiful" pictures of my family on social media. By doing this I would be proclaiming to the internet world----"Look at my life! Isn't it great! See what I have accomplished! All of you who never believed that I was special look what I have and how special I am now!"

As much as I would have liked to show my perfect life I couldn't. The reason is because I don't have a perfect life and neither does anyone else. It is impossible in the imperfect world to have a perfect life. But we can be perfectly imperfect!

⁴ <https://www.whentheboughbreaksfilm.com/#/>

Let me back up a bit and explain.

My son was born in May of 2008. That was also the time that I signed up for Facebook and posted my first picture with the few Facebook friends I had at the time. I believe my first few posts I shared were of my cute pug named Randolph, an old picture of my husband and I dressed up fancy and looking young, and a picture of my new baby boy. What I did not post was that at that time I was suffering from severe postpartum depression, postpartum anxiety and postpartum OCD. I was going through an unbelievably hard time and I was truly living a nightmare. Somehow I was still sharing beautiful, happy pictures of my new, little family.

Let's really think about this...I hadn't spoken to or seen my "Facebook friends" in years. These were the first pictures of me that they had seen for at least 20 years! Why would I want them to see me as a struggling, depressed person?! It made me think. Does anyone have a perfect life? I see so many people on social media that only post how happy they are or all the fabulous vacations they are able to take. Their children are always beautifully dressed with smiles on their faces. I often wondered if they ever had a bad day. One day I was so confused because a friend told me she wanted to get a divorce from her husband. The next day she posted a picture with him telling the "Facebook world" how much she loved him. Did I miss something? What is the obsession with portraying a perfect life? Why are we hiding behind pretty, perfect pictures?

After suffering from postpartum depression for many years, I joined Jamielyn Lippman and Tanya Newbould and together we made *When The Bough Breaks*-a documentary about postpartum depression. The film is narrated and executive produced by Brooke Shields. It also shares my story with postpartum depression and my journey to recovery. When we were making the film I did not think about it coming out and everyone seeing the "real" me. At the time I simply chose to open up and share my story in hopes that I could help one person out there know that they are not alone. There is hope. There is a gate they can walk through from the darkness to the light. However, the film became so much more than that. I opened up and not only shared my story but the film showed my most vulnerable and painful moments. We interviewed my husband who cried and shared how hard my illness had been for him. We shared stories from moms who experienced some form of postpartum depression and other mothers and family members who suffered from postpartum psychosis. These brave moms, dads, husbands and children tell stories of the beauty in fighting through the tragedies and seeking peace. They embraced their imperfections and showed truth and honesty.

There is such stigma surrounding postpartum depression and postpartum psychosis. We do not want to be seen as "crazy" or as an unfit mother. We are neither of those. Rather we are mothers, fathers and families trying to work our way out of the dark. If we focus on a perfect world in pictures and worry about what others think of us we stay lost. *When The Bough Breaks* will educate, help break the stigma attached to mental illness and help moms like myself not feel so alone. I never wanted to be normal or boring. We each have a unique story to tell. Each story is never boring. I hope we all share our truth. And truth is beauty. “

Here is a link to the trailer of the documentary: <https://www.whentheboughbreaksfilm.com>

Announcement:

We have few exciting things to share :

We are proudly partnering with Createetcetra, for all of our future imaginative art projects which kids gets to do while parents mingles/work or have some ME time. Createtcetra is a creative project by Atreyee Ghosh, where equal amounts of art and imagination are poured together to make one-of-a-kind designs. There is little direction, only plenty of imagination and love to take the design through various levels. Each young designer becomes a creative maker of projects that they can proudly call their very own.

We are planning to screen the movie “When the Bough Breaks” in our community by the end of the summer to raise awareness. We are trying to create a support group of like-minded individuals to whom we can reach out at the time of need. There will be a panel discussion at the end of the screening. Professionals/caregivers working in this field are invited to join us in this panel discussion. Discussion with a member of the team (When the Bough Breaks) will take place after the screening. Parents are welcome to bring along their kids. There will be professional sitters present to take care of the kids while they play, without restrictions, both outdoors and indoors. There will also be a mother’s room to take care of the needs of moms with little kids.

Spread the word! We are looking for kid-friendly spaces where we will screen the movie so that it is comfortable for both parents and kids. Come and share your feelings with us without worrying about your kids. Because the more we talk about it, the more we progress in making the life of each mother a little less complicated. We mothers already deal with a lot. If you are a mom having experienced PPD or a caregiver or a part of a support group, please contact us. We will need help to make this effort a success. We are also looking for like-minded businesses, with whom we can partner, and sponsors for the event.

Date and venue coming up soon

Have a fun filled July.

Thanks
Tanaya