

My Road to Recovery from Post Natal Depression

In 2009 I gave birth to my beautiful son. After just a few weeks the health visitor started to notice that my mood was dropping very quickly. I felt so low and just wanted to sleep all the time. All of a sudden I didn't want to leave the house and I couldn't stop eating junk food. I would hide the food from my partner and couldn't wait for him to leave the house and my son was asleep so I could shut the curtains, put on the telly and eat until I was too sick to continue. Then just felt so guilty all the time.

So the doctor started me on antidepressants which I took on and off without much belief that they would work. They also put me on the waiting list for counselling, which I really needed, but warned me the waiting list was roughly 2 years long. I just felt awful and it didn't help that I had this beautiful bundle of joy who I was supposed to be over the moon about. So I would lie and tell people that I was fine and I hid it really well.

When you have a child so many people have an opinion on what you should do and how you should do it and if you don't have the confidence in yourself to just be a parent then it can really affect you. If one person had an opinion about parenting that I hadn't done myself, I would feel like I was neglecting my son. I would tell myself that I was a terrible mother and that I was useless and worthless and the downward spiral would continue from there.

In 2010 I had reached such a low place. When I tried to tell people how I had been feeling they didn't believe me because in their eyes I was a great Mum and was coping really well. So I started to secretly harm myself by taking tablets or cutting myself and one day I went a step too far and took too many tablets.

After a short stay in hospital I felt so guilty and felt like I could never go home. How could I face a child that could have potentially lost his mother because I couldn't handle life? Obviously this made me feel even more guilty and I could see I was going to spiral downwards again.

One day I felt like I was going to harm myself again. I had tried to calm myself down and distract myself but I just wanted to make the world disappear. I searched online for someone to talk to and found Mind. I spoke to a very friendly and calm project worker at the Western Vale Centre who asked me to pop in. I had a really warm welcome, a cup of tea and was made to feel safe and listened to. I told the project worker everything, and the things that came out I didn't even

realise I felt. We worked together to make a step by step plan to recovery and started to implement small changes that were achievable. Before long I started to feel better.

I met lots of people with lots of different stories at the Mind Centre and it was really nice to feel that other people knew what I had been through and that I wasn't being judged. They helped me find the confidence to talk to my partner and tell him everything and make him take me seriously and we ended up paying for me to have Cognitive Behavioural counselling which has changed my life. They helped me see that the antidepressants could work for me if I was on the right ones and took them properly, which in the end they did. They also helped me with looking at other aspects of my life that I might need support with such as keeping up with bills and my education, which took a lot of pressure of me when I was low. But mainly they helped me to not feel so embarrassed, ashamed and guilty about having depression.

It was a long journey to total recovery and I can't say I know what the exact cure for my Post Natal Depression was. All I know is it has been an amazing feeling for the last year to say that I am not depressed anymore. I do know that visiting the Mind centre was the initial turning point to feeling better.

Now, I don't listen to everyone's opinions about parenting. My son is so healthy, clever and happy and I am so proud of him. And now I can recognise that I am a good Mum and have done a great job. Don't get me wrong there is a lot of parenting advice out there that is useful (and some essential) but I know now that every pregnancy, birth, child and mother is different and that's OK.

Since then I have finished my degree in Psychology with the Open University. My partner and I are stronger than ever and are engaged to get married next year. We have also just had a beautiful baby girl and this time I have no signs of depression, which is an amazing feeling. But I know I wouldn't have got here without help from Mind, so thank you.

And just a note to anyone who lives with Mental Health issues: I remember what it feels like to think 'what's the point?' and want to give up, but just try to remember that tomorrow could be the day that you start to feel better. And with help and support from organisations like Mind you really can get better and start to live the life you've always wanted to.