

Resources for new dads & partners

Family members may be the first to notice something is not quite right with a new mom. If you've come to this page, you may be worried that you or someone you care about is suffering from a perinatal mood or anxiety disorder such as postpartum depression. It can be very confusing, challenging and even painful to watch your spouse, family member or friend react to becoming a parent in ways that you didn't expect. Please know that the person with depression or anxiety is not to blame for this illness and that she is just as surprised by what is happening as you are. Thankfully, perinatal mood and anxiety disorders can be temporary and treatable with support and professional help. In this section, we hope to offer you some tools that will help you support the person who is struggling, and also help you get through this difficult time.

"My family expected me to be so happy. They didn't know how to cope with my anxiety."

How to Help Mom

Postpartum Support International offers some helpful information for family and friends:

- **Help her reach out to others for support and treatment.**
- Reassure her: this is not her fault; she is not alone; she will get better.
- Encourage her to talk about her feelings and listen without judgment.
- Help with housework before she asks you.
- Encourage her to take time for herself. Breaks are a necessity; fatigue is a major contributing factor to worsening symptoms.
- Don't expect her to be super-housewife just because she's home all day.
- Be realistic about what time you'll be home, and come home on time.
- Schedule some dates with her and work together to find a babysitter.
- Offer simple affection and physical comfort, but be patient if she is not up for sex. It's normal for her to have a low sex drive with depression, and rest and recovery will help to bring it back.

Dealing with Her Anger and Irritability

- Do what you can to make sure she eats regularly throughout the day, because low blood sugar results in a low mood and frustration. Have healthy and easy snacks on hand.
- Do your best to listen for the real request at the heart of her frustration. Reduce conflict by telling her, "I know we can work this out. I am listening."
- Keep the lines of communication open. Verbalize your feelings instead of distancing from her. It is helpful to take a break if your tempers are hot, but do get back to communicating.
- If she is expressing anger in such a way that you can't stay supportive, you might say something like, "I want to listen to you. I know this is important, but I'm having a hard time because you're so mad at me. Can we take a break and talk about it later?"
- Ask her how you can help right now. If she doesn't know, make some suggestions.

Info for dads & partners

Dads & partners may also struggle with depression and anxiety when a baby is born. It can be a very stressful time for the whole family. To learn more, visit www.mhamd.org/what-we-do/outreach-and-education/healthy-new-moms/get-help/family-partner-resources or check out some of these resources:

Resources for Dads and Partners

Dads are talking about postpartum depression in a new Redbook article. Read it at www.redbookmag.com/life/mom-kids/a52561/men-open-up-postpartum-depression/

Great list of Tips for Dads and Partners at www.postpartum.net/family/tips-for-postpartum-dads-and-partners/

Book: *The Postpartum Husband: Practical Solutions for living with Postpartum Depression* 1st Edition by Karen R. Kleiman

Postpartum Dads | www.postpartumdads.org

The Postpartum Dads website was created by PSI Dad's Coordinator David Klinker as a forum to help dads and families by providing firsthand information and guidance.

Postpartum Support International hosts a free call-in forum for dads, DADS Chat with an Expert, facilitated by a perinatal mood disorders expert. The call-in forum is on the first Mondays of every month. Dads can call for information, support, and connection with other dads.

First Monday of every month

5pm Pacific, 7pm Central, 8pm Eastern

Call in number is 1-800-944-8766, code 73162#

Becoming Dad | www.facebook.com/BecomingDad

We are a place for expectant and new fathers to be engaged, educated, mentored and supported during pregnancy, as they prepare to be present at birth, the role of fatherhood and the transformational changes that they will experience in their lives as men, partners and fathers.