



PARENTS CENTRE

Where parenting is everything!

Ask a CBE

The Roller Coaster of Postnatal Emotions

The birth of a baby is a life changing event bringing with it an array of diverse emotions. Most notably are overwhelming feelings of love, excitement and exhilaration. How incredible to have made and grown this tiny wee human and finally getting to meet him or her!

Baby Blues - Emotions for some new mums don't always remain so upbeat. It is common, (around 80%) for women to experience what is called 'Baby blues', or sometimes referred to 'three-day blues'. This can occur in the first 2 weeks after baby is born and is a combination of a few factors: a sudden drop of those euphoric hormones produced during labour, physical changes as the mature milk comes in, broken sleep and the feelings of overwhelming responsibility. Acknowledgement that this is normal is important, and good practical and emotional support will help a new mother get through this.

Postnatal Depression - Less common but still very prevalent is post-natal depression (PND). If a new mum is having feelings of helplessness, is over anxious about baby, having trouble sleeping, has experienced depression during pregnancy, feelings of guilt, is tearful and feels alone and unsupported, these could be indicators of PND. More often family and friends will pick up that she has PND –although feeling a bit down can be normal with all the changes in her life, she appears to be like this a lot, she may have down days, but they're not one-off's, she isn't laughing at the usual jokes.

As a partner, what can you do? Firstly, ask her how she is. As simple as it sounds, it can be powerful and offers her an opportunity to off-load and express what is happening for her. Physical help can be great too; help around the house or taking baby for a walk to allow her some time-out. Organise a babysitter – you can have a few hours at a café or at the beach together and be back home in time for the next breastfeed. Suggest and organise some professional help.

For mum? Accept that you have PND. As difficult as this might be, acceptance is the key to moving forward. Also accept that it is ok, you're not a freak, and it doesn't mean you're a bad mum, it just means you're having some challenges that you might need support and help with. Be realistic, both with your personal expectations and the need for help. Join support groups, connect with your coffee group and seek professional help.

References:

www.pnd.org.nz <http://www.postnataldistress.co.nz/>
<http://www.mothersmatter.co.nz/>
<http://www.postnataldistress.co.nz/>
www.tabs.org.nz

