



My story goes back 20 years. I had the most severe type of postpartum disorder. The kind that makes a woman jump in front of subways, or murder her children. I had post partum psychosis. I was 26 when my son was born. I was very much with my partner and we are still together. I remember my son was 10 days overdue, so they induced labour. Then I remember his heartbeat going down so they had to do an emergency C-section. I also remember the anxiety I was feeling when they put the mask over my face and waking up when they were still stitching me up. I remember being very sore and the nurses wanting me to get up that night but I was in a lot of pain. It was maybe the next day or so when my husband came in the room, I saw a pink pacifier and a blue blanket in the room, I remember feeling like I was going through the pain of labour and not knowing if I had a boy or girl. I was out of it. I remember writing long letters of my ordeal, just writing and writing and writing. I went from the maternity ward to the psyc. ward. I was very scared but not knowing what was going on. I remained in the hospital for 10 days. I was coming around and they could not release the baby with me in the hospital. So every once in a while a really nice nurse would bring him to me to change a diaper, I was so scared inside. After I came out of my psychosis and went home I became very, very, very depressed. I was suicidal and didn't know it. I remember feeling that my son was so heavy and my arms felt so heavy that I was afraid I'd drop him. I was thinking inside that he would be better off with another mother, not me. I don't think I bonded with him. I cried a lot and felt very heavy in my arms and it was so hard just to get a shower at the time. I have a picture of me with my child when he was a few days old and I looked like Andrea Yates with the long greasy hair and dead look in my eyes. I overdosed twice in the following weeks. Never when I was alone with the baby though. I ended up back in the hospital. Child welfare wanted to take the baby but my husband said no, he

would look after him. So he did, for four months while I was getting better. I was in and out of hospital for those months, even as much as going back to my moms for a few weeks. All that time my wonderful husband cared for our son. He worked and then had to quit to stay home with him for awhile. After four or five months I felt better. Since my husband was not working then, he was with me while I was doing okay with our child. When he went to work again, I am sure he was nervous too, but I was better and felt a whole lot better. Having him with me for the first few months when I felt better meant so much. It took a long time for me to actually bond with our son, more than a year. I feel for those ladies who have no help when they have a very serious condition, the Andrea Yates of the world. I chose to have my tubes tied after our son was born. I didn't want to experience that nightmare again. Like I said, it was 20 years ago. Was I in perfect health after that? I'm afraid not. I have suffered from some episodes in the past 20 years, but I know now that it's not the end of the world. There is a light at the end of the tunnel, I had the worst form of postpartum and if you met me, you'd see me as a very happy, optimistic person. Mental health is so important to me, more important than physical health sometimes. There are not enough services out there. Women, especially women who have mental health issues in their family history should have access to a social worker or just an experienced person to come and check on them when they come home, to ask the questions that need to be asked to make sure the mom is well and coping. Is she showering, sleeping, know what she is doing in the general care of an infant. I was in my mid 20's and yet I never diapered a child, or even baby sat an infant before. Post partum depression I think is a secret that woman keep inside and maybe when women are pregnant they should have to go to some sort of pre-natal clinic where they learn the signs and symptoms of post partum and its okay not to feel "wonderful" once your child is born. It's ok to feel sad, or scared, or anxious, or any number of feelings and it's ok to ask for help. I think once you feel well inside, you know the difference between

well and ill. You know the signs to watch for and you learn, sometimes the hard way, to look after yourself. I took lots of cognitive therapy after I was getting better. I grabbed on any help I could get at the time. I do so to this day. I sometimes think what would happen if my overdose wasn't intervened by getting my stomach pumped. Would I of been in a vegetative state, my child would never have gotten to know me, and my husband would have had a very hard life. So if you are experiencing signs of depression, mental or physical, and it gets to a point where you "think" suicidal thoughts, ask for help, tell someone, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Maybe someday they will figure out what causes postpartum. I believe it's hormones and I know it's not a terminal condition if you get help, rest, and take things one day at a time, or one minutes at a time if you have to do that for a little while. Well that's my story. Thank you.