



Pacific Post Partum Support Society

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Stories from Women about their Decisions Related to Medications

The stories below are based on *real* stories from *real* women who have lived with perinatal (postpartum) depression and had to make decisions about whether or not to take medications. The names and the communities in which these women and their partners live have been changed.

Joan's story

I began to experience severe postpartum anxiety and later depression when my son turned 6 months old. There were many signs leading up to this but I did not realize at the time what they were. I had a constant need to be busy and to be with other people. I was not sleeping and not eating much. Finally right before the holidays I had a complete breakdown and could not cope. I also started to experience problems with breastfeeding which I later learned were related to a thyroid issue.

The inability to cope on my own and the lack of sleep made life seem unbearable and I realized that I needed help. I went to see my family doctor and with her decided to go see and psychiatrist and finally to go on medication. I knew at that point the most important thing for me and my child was to get better. It took about 6 months of medication and group therapy to finally start to feel more normal again.

I have no regrets about what I did and would certainly do it again if needed. A mental illness is just like any other illness, if you are sick or in pain you take medication.

Bonnie's story

I had never been depressed before, but I finally acknowledged that I had postpartum depression. My doctor recommended medication. I spent a lot of time reading about different drugs. For me to make a decision I felt I needed to know as much as possible. In the meantime, I started going to a support group and then I got into some talk therapy. I also learned a lot about self care. And I started feeling better. I decided not to take drugs because I felt that what I was doing was working. My partner was supportive either way. I think if I hadn't started feeling better, I would have thought about medication again.

Val's story

I had anxiety before but never took medication for it. When my daughter was 6 weeks old I went to see my doctor thinking something was wrong with her and it quickly became clear something was wrong with me. I couldn't stop crying and had scary thoughts that would not go away. My doctor gave me a prescription for an antidepressant and I completely panicked. I was raised to believe that only "crazy" people took antidepressants. I left the doctor's office thinking this would pass and I would be back to normal. I was breastfeeding and did not want to stop. I wasn't sure I needed medication and did not fill the prescription.

Days went by and I was crying for hours. I called the Pacific Post Partum Support Society for advice and they told me about an organization called Motherisk. When I phoned Motherisk, they reassured me that the medication my doctor prescribed was safe for breastfeeding. They also said taking medicine wasn't a sign of failure but that the choice was mine. I felt desperate to get better and started taking the medication.

I am proud to say that I nursed my daughter for 9 months and that she is healthy. It took some time to get the right medication at the right dose, but medication really helped me manage my anxiety and improve my mood. When I had a second baby, I knew I might have anxiety again. I also knew antidepressants worked for me and I didn't worry about taking them. I started them much sooner which helped me feel better a lot quicker.