

# SUPPORTING SOMEONE STRUGGLING WITH PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

## **A quick "To Do" and "Not to Do" guide for partners.**

This infographic is largely based on the book "The Postpartum Husband: Practical Solutions for Living with Postpartum Depression" by Karen Klein. See the book for more information.

### **Fast Facts**

**Postpartum Distress (PPD) includes depression, anger, grief, anxiety, trauma and more.**

**PPD is a medical conditions that impacts the way a person thinks, feels and acts.**

**It is not something someone chooses, their fault or a sign of weakness.**

**PPD lasts longer than 2-3 weeks.**

**If you and/or your partner think something is wrong - it likely is.**

**If you're worried talk to your family doctor or other mental health professionals.**

**[www.rootedsupport.ca](http://www.rootedsupport.ca)**

The information on this handout has been researched and compiled by Registered Psychologist, Kristin Romanoski. If any part of this document is altered, the information can no longer be relied upon as information provided by a Registered Psychologist. If you're unsure, please feel free to contact Kristin directly. © 2020



# Do Not Say...

You should feel happy because the baby is healthy.

Get over it.

It's your problem, figure it out.

I have to work late.

Don't worry.

I miss the old you.

Just exercise or dress up.

This is just a phase.

You just need to....

You chose to have a baby, this is what you get.

You don't need help, you/we can figure this out alone.

All mothers feel this way.

"I love you" (they may not believe you).

"You're a good mom/dad" (it can feel condescending).

What I need matters too (it absolutely does, when someone is ill their ability to meet your needs will suffer - be patient and know it will get better with help).

You're beautiful (condescending, they may not see it right now).

# Do Say...

I know you're feeling terrible.

You're doing all the right things (therapy, talking about it, support, asking for help, medication, etc.).

I'm not going anywhere.

Good moms/dads can feel terrible.

It's okay to make mistakes.

I know how hard you're working.

Let me help with that....

Baby will be fine.

I'll do the laundry, dinner, bath, floor, dishes, etc. today.

Talk to me, I can listen without fixing.

You rest, I can do it.

I want to spend time with you, let's make a plan.

I want to be with you.

I know you're doing your best.

Can I come to the appointment with you?

What do I need to know to understand how you're really doing?

Can I just sit with you?

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# Important Things for Partners to Know

PPD is not fair, made up, laziness, bad parenting or something someone will just 'snap out of'.

PPD is not your fault or about you being a bad partner.

The more supportive you are, the smoother recovery will be - your role is important.

Your partner might be struggling even if they look like they're fine - people with PPD often "suffer in silence".

PPD does not mean that people will hurt themselves or their children. Scary thoughts **that are unwanted** are not acted on.

People with PPD are fit to care for their children.

Resisting can make things worse. Ways of resisting include: denying something is wrong, getting mad, acting out, trying to compete for attention, personalizing how they feel, disengaging, walking away or acting on the need to fix everything.

It's really hard to be around someone who feels bad - take breaks, remind yourself its PPD, try to remain neutral and take steps to take care of yourself.

The following situations are **emergencies**. Your partner needs urgent help and should not be left alone:

- Talking about **wanting** to hurt themselves or someone else, preoccupation with death, "my children would be better off without me."
- Bizarre thinking, hallucinations, delusions, severe paranoia.
  - Noticeable withdrawal from all social contact.

# HOW YOU MIGHT BE FEELING

## **Tired.**

*Rest when you can.*

## **Worried**

*Be involved in treatment, ask questions and get answers.  
Talk to others and find partners who have experienced the same.*

## **Frustrated**

*Do you have support?  
Is your frustration impacting your reaction?  
Are your coping skills constructive?  
Give yourself permission to be frustrated...things are not what you thought they'd be.*

## **Angry**

*Remind yourself you're angry at the situation and not your partner.*

## **Confused**

*Get information, know your partner will recover with help.*

## **Resentful**

*Fair enough, now regroup and get back on track.*

## **Ashamed**

*Choose important people and share, secrecy reinforces shame.*

## **Misunderstood, Attacked, Walking on Eggshells**

*You are trying and your partner may not see this.*

*Pay attention to the illness.*

*Take care of yourself.*

*It will get better with help.*