

Kristyn's Courage: A Mother's Legacy for her Daughters!

We connected with Kristyn after she purchased our book, and after hearing her courageous story, we asked her to share her experiences to help other mothers.

She is a testament to the strength of a mother, having battled this illness three times and continues to have a positive outlook and places her children's happiness first. The beauty in her story is the teaching of advocacy she demonstrates. She is not ashamed and speaks freely about her illness. Please cheer her on as she destroys the mask and continues to be a role model for her daughters!

Thank you for choosing to share your story Kristyn, why do you think it is so important?

I wanted to share my story because people need to know. PPD is nothing to be ashamed of. It's an illness; that if treated appropriately can be stabilized. Unfortunately, there is no 100% cure, but we all have to stay strong and FIGHT!

What were your symptoms like?

My symptoms revolved around resentment. I resented my baby. I resented my husband for making me pregnant. I wanted to leave. I, to this day, think my depression started showing itself in my third trimester. During that time I had anxiety. I was anxious that I wouldn't know what labor was. I was anxious about bringing this baby home. I was anxious about breast-feeding. I was anxious about being a mother. I ended up seeking counseling before my daughter was born. It helped with the issues I was having at that time, but I had no idea what was about to happen.

Right before I had my daughter, I had a plan. I had decided that I didn't want to be a mother or a wife, so I was just going to leave. I had decided that I would have this child, and when we were discharged from the hospital, I was going to go home, pack my bags and leave. I wanted nothing to do with that life. Fortunately, for me I ended up with an emergency C-section. So, I was unable to do pretty much anything. I was in so much pain. Then I decided that after the six to eight weeks I would leave.

How long did you suffer before seeking help?

Eight weeks. I suffered alone in silence for eight weeks.

What did you do in order to get help and why do you think it was so important for your family?

At my eight week check up I told my doctor that I thought something was wrong. I said "I don't like my baby, and I don't want her. I want to run away and never come back." This was important for my family because it was my way of finally standing up and saying, "I'M NOT OKAY!"

I was doing strange things. I refused to be left alone with my daughter. If I was going to nap, I would remove everything from my room that had anything to do with a baby. I removed the bassinet, the receiving blankets, diapers, wipes. I would set it out in the hall and pretend I wasn't a mom. I was just the person that I was missing so much. I would also shower. Every time my daughter started crying, I would run and have a shower so I didn't have to listen to it. Thankfully, my husband was home during this time to take care of her. I would shower five to six times a day.

I also HATED my daughter. I was so mad at her for "RUINING" my life. I knew I needed help. I knew that it wasn't right for a mother to feel this way about her child. I just, for the life of me, couldn't figure out why I was feeling this way.

I was started on an anti-depressant immediately. I started Celexa 10mg. I noticed a difference quickly. I also called the Postpartum Depression help line here in Saskatoon and started attending the local support group. I LOVED the group. It was the second outing I took my daughter to all by myself! This was a HUGE accomplishment considering she was already three and a half months old. It was so refreshing for me to find people that knew what I was going through. I felt safe, and at home. I started looking forward to the "homework" assignments that we had.

What proactive steps did you take with your second pregnancy, that were different from your first knowing more about Postpartum Depression?

My second pregnancy was AMAZING! I continued on medication, although, I switched from Celexa to Prozac. I knew that there was NO way I was ever going to be off my anti-depressant. I had a long talk with my family doctor, and we decided to make the switch.

I knew that Prozac was the only medication that had been studied on pregnant women, and that there were no side effects on the babies.

I also TALKED! The minute I was diagnosed with PPD, I told two of my best friends in the world, Cari and Tania. Both of these women had children the same time I had my oldest daughter. Our kids were born within three weeks of each other. So, I had friends going through the same things I was going through; had support from women who I could bounce my feelings off of.

I am also very open about my PPD. I'm not afraid to talk about it. I'm not ashamed of it. I was proud that I was healthy and happy to be having my second daughter.

I delivered my Heidi on October 4, 2007, 22 ½ months after having my oldest daughter Halle. 20 months after being diagnosed with PPD. Now, I would like to say that I was "CURED" we were a happy family with these two great kids! But my anxiety started creeping up on me when Heidi was three months old. I told my husband, who was very supportive. Since work was always one of my refuges, I started picking up a four-hour shift, once a month. It was great. I was enjoying myself. My husband had taken time off work, and we were going to have the year with the girls together.

When my Heidi was eight months old, I discovered I was nine weeks pregnant. I honestly felt that my world had stopped spinning. I was devastated. I took to bed for two weeks. I felt so alone, I knew I was struggling with my own feelings about being a good mother to my kids, and didn't know what to do.

I had to go back to work full time three days after finding out about my pregnancy so I would be able to qualify for another mat leave. I hit rock bottom. I was so depressed. At my first prenatal appointment I told my doctor that I didn't want the baby. She asked me first if I was depressed, or if we needed to make an appointment for a D&C. I told her that it was the first time I had been out of my bed in the past 2 weeks. She immediately referred me to a psychiatrist. I was lucky to get in within the week.

After months of sessions and medication changes, I was up to 60mg of Prozac and almost put on Lithium, which is a mood stabilizer commonly used for Bipolar Disorder, I delivered girl #3 on December 29, 2008. Isobel.

What lessons have you learned from your healing that are positive for your family?

The lesson that I've learned is, everything will be OK.

Yes, I have guilt. I have so much guilt, but you know what, my girls were babies. They won't remember the worst of me. That's my burden to carry. And yes, some days it's heavy. Some days I feel like I'm being pulled down and I'm grasping to hold on.

I take a step back and remember. I remember how I felt and I look at my girls. How beautiful they are. How strong they are.

It's going to take us time to heal. My husband has been supportive in his own ways. He is the greatest dad in the world. He has put up with a lot from me, but he's still here and we're working on it.

I know that everything will be OK!

How has this experience helped you in other aspects of your life?

I'm more open. I don't hide my feelings anymore. It's like I took off that mask and destroyed it.

What words of encouragement can you offer for mothers who are suffering right now?

YOU CAN DO IT!

The results won't be immediate, but if you work they will come. I'm a living example. My Halle will be five in a few weeks, my Heidi turned three a few weeks ago, and my Isobel will be two at the end of December.

I'm still on my meds. Currently I'm on 20mg of Celexa. I've been up to 60 mg. I know I will never be off them. When my kids ask what they're for, I tell them "They're Mommy's Happy Pills."

You will have bad days, I'm not going to lie. There will be a few of those, but when you get through them and get out of the dark place you will be able to appreciate everything you have.

Everything will be OK!