

Rachel's fiancé's relationship was struggling before his ex-Wife had Post-Natal Depression (PND). They also both worked hard to save what they had when her Post-Natal Depression developed.

What education if any did you have regarding Perinatal (during pregnancy) or Postpartum Depression?

NONE - I HEARD OF THE BABY BLUES BUT HADN'T EVEN HEARD OF POST NATAL DEPRESSION.

What advice could you give to new father that would have helped you during the illness?

STICK BY HER - GIVE HER SUPPORT - TELL HER YOU LOVE HER - LET HER KNOW SHE ISNT GOING MAD AND ISNT ALONE - DONT WALK AWAY - HELP AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE WITH THINGS SHE CANT FOCUS ON AT THE TIME - LET HER KNOW ITS SOMETHING SHELL COME THROUGH IN THE END - MAKE SURE SHE ALWAYS KNOWS HOW MUCH YOU AND THE BABY LOVE HER.

Did you suffer your own depression and anxiety during your wife's depression?

NO.

Did you seek counseling or family support during this time? If yes, what is your honest view of couples' counseling? Was it helpful and why?

NO.

What physical/emotional/changes did you witness your wife go through during the illness? What are some signs for other fathers to take notice of? Did your wife display any symptoms of depression and anxiety before baby?

RAGES, CRYING A LOT, LISTENING TO HER BELIEVE HERSELF AS A FAILURE, LACK OF ENTHUSIASM, ANGER - NO BEFORE THE BABY, NO.

How did your relationship with your wife change? How has your marriage grown stronger?

PND CHANGED HER AND OUR RELATIONSHIP NEVER RECOVERED - NEITHER OF US WERE THE SAME PEOPLE AFTERWARDS.

Looking back, do you view this as a positive experience that strengthened your family? What positive experiences came from this crisis?

HER HAVING PND STRENGTHENED ME AS A PERSON AND MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY CHILDREN - IT FORCED ME TO SPEND MORE TIME THAN I THOUGHT I COULD WITH MY CHILDREN AND BECOME THE FATHER I THOUGHT I COULD ONLY DREAM OF BEING - DESPITE US NOT EVER RECONCILING, I AM NOW CONFIDENT THAT MY CHILDREN ARE CARED FOR BY AN INCREDIBLY STRONG WOMAN.

Did you have any preconceived ideas of fatherhood? Of motherhood?

I KNEW IT WOULD BRING STRESS BUT NEVER REALISED HOW MUCH - I KNEW WE WOULD HAVE SLEEPLESS NIGHTS - I THOUGHT A MOTHER'S INVOLVEMENT WOULD BE MORE THAN SHE WAS CAPABLE OF.

Did this experience help you take a second look at your own upbringing and your mother and father's struggles, as new parents?

LOOKING BACK, I COULD SEE HOW MUCH STRESS I HAD PUT MY OWN PARENTS, THROUGH! I ONLY REALISED WHEN I BECAME A PARENT WHAT A BRILLIANT JOB MY OWN MOTHER HAD DONE BRINGING UP MYSELF AND MY TWO BROTHERS.

How do you think your role as a father in 2010 is different than that of your own father?

I DON'T DRINK. MY FATHER IS AN ALCOHOLIC AND PLAYED A VERY STRICT ROLE IN MY UPBRINGING. WE WERE BROUGHT UP IN A CITY SURROUNDED BY VIOLENCE, DRUGS AND CRIME. THIS IS NOT SOMETHING I WANT FOR MY OWN CHILDREN. I SPEND MORE TIME WITH MY CHILDREN, I LISTEN TO THEM AND STRIVE TO BE THE FATHER HE NEVER WAS.

Has your experience changed your relationship with your extended family (e.g.: mother-in-law)?

THESE PEOPLE ARE NO LONGER IN MY LIFE.

How can we educate men/partners in a more effective way regarding PPD?

LET THEM KNOW WHAT IT IS AND THAT IT IS A POSSIBILITY. ENCOURAGE THEM TO BE PREPARED AND TO SEEK AS MUCH AS HELP AS THEY CAN.

How do you know you're now both thriving?

WE BOTH HAVE NEW PARTNERS AND HAVE MOVED ON AS INDIVIDUALS. WHEN I VISIT MY CHILDREN SHE SEEMS HAPPIER AND STRONGER AS A WOMAN. WE BOTH HAVE BRILLIANT RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUR CHILDREN AND RESPECT EACH OTHER FOR WHAT WE EXPERIENCED.

Dino, Rachel's ex-Husband...thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this interview...why do you think it is important that you do so?

I would hope that my answers assist in helping other families who are suffering with Post-Natal Psychosis (PNP).

Can you tell us how your ex-wife's PNP first started?

She cried all the time, started arguments for no reason, over the smallest things, going off wanting time alone, she concentrated on herself, lost interest in me as her husband and our newborn baby.

Did either of you have any knowledge of or understanding of PNP before your daughter was born?

No, none.

What symptoms of Post Natal Psychosis did Rachel first display? In your opinion, what were the worst?

This question is hard, we both found what we experienced very difficult in very different ways. I found waking up during the night and 'taking over' as soon as I got in from work, very stressful and tiring. My ex wife left the house at every possible opportunity and refused to help as often as she could. She became suicidal, part of me thought at the time she may have been attention seeking, and this made me feel confused. The situations we found ourselves in made me angry. I was tired and stressed due to my employment and felt she should have done more. I didn't understand how she was

feeling, and neither did she, this caused a barrier between our communication as a couple.

How did this affect both your relationship, and Rachel's relationship, with your newborn baby?

I formed a great bond with my daughter because of the amount of time we spent together. My ex wife's relationship with our daughter took a long to develop - possibly up to 18 months before she formed the initial bond.

Do you think Rachel had enough support, from professionals, her family and yourself?

She had support from all her friends and family but because they had lack of knowledge and experience of PND it wasn't easy to deal with. Professionals didn't play a large role in supporting her at all.

Did the medication Rachel was prescribed appear to help? If so, in what ways? If not, how so...

Not really, she became reliant on them and was still on them when we divorced. They also increased her feelings of being suicidal.

Did you feel that you had 'lost' your wife?

Yes. She had completely changed and was no longer the woman I married.

Do you feel you received enough support, as the husband and father during your ex wife's depression?

Honestly, no, not at all.

How did Post Natal Psychosis, affect you, as the father and the husband?

As her husband, it destroyed every form of communication between us altogether, but as a father it helped bring a stronger bond between me and my children. I spent more time with my daughter, as I wouldn't have, if duties had been shared.

How has PNP changed you, if at all, as a person?

If I saw it again, I would run.

How has it changed your ex wife?

She wrote a book about her experiences which shows the strength she had to recover. She is still reliant on other people's support and the medication she was originally prescribed. PNP completely took over her life, not only having it and recovering from it, but then sharing her experience. She is no longer the person she was and lost a lot of the characteristics I originally fell in love with. I found myself faced with a person I knew nothing about and had never seen before. She became self obsessed and cared only about herself. She forced me away from her, and removed herself from our marriage, seeking attention elsewhere. She refused to talk to me, to open up to me, or to be close to me anymore. I don't think I'll ever see the person she was again.

Has it changed your relationship or Rachel's, with your children?

Yes, if it had never happened, we may not have all been as close in the first few years of our daughters life, and she looks at our daughter so differently now.

How has the experience affected you as people?

Because of PNP we divorced. We now lead separate lives and will never see each other the same again. We still have a good friendship and both put our children first in all situations. We both feel that had Rachel never got post natal psychosis our lives together would together have taken a very different course.

Can you look back on what happened, positively?

On a positive note I have managed to build great relationships with my children and Rachel has managed to write a book and tell the world about her experience. I think it has given us both, as individuals, strength to overcome what the future holds, but I don't think our marriage was strong enough to overcome such a traumatic experience at such a young age.

Below is Rachel's response of her ex-Husband's interview. Our team asked if she would be willing to include it after his honest and raw responses as it truly shows people what forgiveness and acceptance looks like:

I've come far enough to know that what Dino said - despite that it still hurts – is true!

I used to be so defensive, but now I understand how much more strength it takes to accept what he says and what I was!

If we all sugar coat the truth, then it will never be wholesomely revealed!!

I am so glad the Angels guided me to you!!

xx

Rachel Day

Author of "Strangers In My Mind: Living with Post-Natal Psychosis"

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We hold each of these courageous men and Dads in love and hope and gratitude for sharing their lives as they have with us.

Thank you, Thank YOU, THANK YOU ~ Elita, Carla & Tania