

This is my story. I'm writing this out in an attempt to begin the healing process as I have been in denial about having PPD. I can relate to each of the stories in "The Smiling Mask" and now realize that I have been suffering.

My husband and I got married in July 2007. We knew we wanted to have a family, the only question was when. We started trying at the end of September 2007 and by the beginning of November I was pregnant. It happened so fast, we were both in shock, but also extremely excited.

When I was about 5 weeks pregnant, I woke up one morning and felt like something was off. I went into the bathroom to get ready for work and noticed that I was spotting. I decided not to panic, but to take a shower and finish getting ready for work, and check again. When I checked again and noticed I was still spotting, I told my husband and he took me to the emergency room. I can't say it was a very pleasant experience. I felt that the doctor who was assigned to me couldn't possibly care less about my condition. He continually told me "If it's going to miscarry, it's going to miscarry and there's nothing we can do about it." There was no reassurance, no offerings of support or compassion whatsoever. I was sent for blood work and ultrasounds, and it turned out that everything was just fine – it was just "one of those things". In the next month I had 3 more ultrasounds and doctors appointments, just to make sure the pregnancy was viable – and it was.

We were taking pre-natal classes with Sally Elliott, and at one of the first classes she asked us all if anyone was considering hiring a midwife. She explained role of a midwife briefly and advised us that if anyone wanted more information we could see her after class. On the way to the car after that class my husband asked me if I would want a midwife. I thought that would be interesting, so we went back and asked Sally for more information. She gave us the number of a lady named Sonya who we called the next day. We learned that Sonya was a Doula, a labour and birth support person. We met with her and when she explained what kind of support she provided, we were very excited. We hired her that very day.

I was given a ton of information on pregnancy, newborns and breastfeeding. I read every book whenever I got the chance to educate myself about absolutely everything I could think of. I remember reading an article on Postpartum Depression that indicated if a person had suffered with depression in the past, they are more likely to suffer from Postpartum Depression. My first thought was "oh no" because I had been diagnosed with clinical depression when I was about 15 years old. I had been on antidepressants from the age of 15 until the age of 22. I had been to psychiatrists, counsellors and psychologists. I knew I did NOT want to go through all of that all over again. So I prayed and prayed that I wouldn't be affected with PPD.

The next few months progressed normally; morning, afternoon and evening sickness, weight loss followed by weight gain, frequent trips to the bathroom, restless nights, exhaustion, frequent lower back pain – everything that goes with being pregnant. When I was 5 months pregnant it was discovered that I was anaemic and had extremely low

blood pressure, most likely due to the fact that the only thing that didn't make me nauseas was dry cereal. I was ordered to take iron supplements and try to eat more protein rich foods. I took all my vitamins, supplements and antibiotics religiously.

One Friday morning when I was 34 weeks pregnant, I wasn't feeling very good. My lower back hurt, I had menstrual-like cramps and I hadn't felt the baby move or kick very frequently. I went into work anyway since I was busy training my maternity leave replacement. When I got into the office I told her how I was feeling, and she in turn told a few of our co-workers. Everyone was concerned I was going into labour and insisted that I call my doctor to get checked out, just to make sure everything was alright. I told them they were being silly, but I called my Obstetrician's office anyway. I explained to the receptionist how I was feeling and she said she thought it would be a good idea to get checked out. She instructed me to go to the Labour & Birth Unit as my doctor was on call there that day. I called my husband and work and told him to pick me up to take me in. I told him that it was probably nothing but they wanted me to go in and get checked out anyway. I told everyone I'd be back by lunch, and left the office.

I got to the hospital and was checked into the Labour & Birth Unit where I was hooked up to a fetal monitor. After about 20 minutes, some alarms on the monitor started going off. A nurse rushed in, saw that the baby's heart rate had dropped from 130 to 70 and assumed the monitor slipped and was recording my heart rate instead. She readjusted the monitor and left the room. About 20 minutes later, the same thing happened. This time two nurses rushed in. One of them was watching the monitor, the other was trying to find my pulse. They were confused as to what was going on. It appeared that the baby's heart rate was dropping for a few minutes at a time, and then rising back up to normal. They called my doctor in who did an internal exam. I was not prepared for what he said next. "It appears you're 2 centimetres dilated, and 80% effaced. Turned out the ladies at work were right, I WAS going into labour.

He didn't seem overly concerned about the baby's heart rate dropping. He ordered an ultrasound and left to attend to a c-section. The head nurse came in to reassure us. She said that my doctor was a worry-wart and if he felt that there was something wrong I'd be going in for a c-section right now. She told me not to eat anything just in case, and a few minutes later I went in for the ultrasound. A while later the doctor came back with two nurses to go over the results. He said that they couldn't find any reason for the "Fetal Bradacardia" (a condition where the fetal heart rate unexplainably drops for a short period of time and then gradually climbs up to a normal rate) and suspected that it was most likely a short umbilical cord. He didn't think there was any viable reason to perform a caesarean at that point in time, and that I could go home. He told me to take it easy and not to return to work. I was instructed to stay off my feet as much as possible. Somewhat relieved, we left the hospital and went home.

The next morning I woke up feeling a little shaken over the events of the previous day. I made my way to the bathroom to get ready for the day. I noticed huge, bright red and dark maroon blood clots on my underwear, and more when I went to the bathroom. I immediately called Sonya to ask for advice. She told me to call the Public Health Line to

ask for advice, she didn't like the sound of the clotting and wanted me to talk to a nurse. I called the Public Health Line and was advised to go to the hospital immediately. I was in shock and denial, and I wanted a second opinion so I called Sally Elliott. She listened to my whole story and gave me the number for the Labour & Birth unit and told me to talk to one of the nurses there. I called the hospital and spoke to one of the birthing nurses. I explained the events of the previous day and the symptoms I was experiencing. She told me to wait 10 minutes, check on the clotting and call back. I did as I was told and after 10 minutes went to the bathroom again. This time there was a huge, dark red clot the size of a golf ball. I called the unit back and was told to "come in right away".

I packed up an overnight bag just to be safe, and once again my husband and I were off to the hospital. I got to the unit around 10:00 a.m. and they sent me into a room, hooked up the fetal monitor, and left. 10 minutes later the monitor started going off, the baby's heart rate dropped again. The head nurse came rushing in, looked at the monitor, ran out the door and got two other nurses. Two nurses were trying to check if the heart rate drop was me or the baby, the third nurse was doing an internal exam. Two more nurses rushed into the room and the head nurse screamed at them to get the on call doctor immediately. The doctor rushed in a few moments later, the nurses were frantically trying to relay my history to the doctor. He looked at me and said "I think we're going to have to get that baby out of you right away, how do you feel about that?" I told him that I thought it was too early, his lungs won't be developed yet. His reply was "Do you want the baby to die?". I was shocked. I didn't know what to say. At this point the baby's heart rate came back up and everyone calmed down for the moment. The doctor ordered an ultrasound and told the nurses to admit me – I wasn't going anywhere.

The nurse got my information and paperwork started, she told me to call whoever I needed to call and told me I'd be transferred into the Mother Baby Unit. The first person I called was Sonya, and then my sister. It was around 3:00 when I was wheeled to my room and waited there with my husband and my sister. I was told I couldn't have anything to eat or drink because I may still need a caesarean that night. A nurse came in around 4:00 and told me I could drink and that another ultrasound and non-stress test would be conducted later that night. Sonya came to the hospital around 4:30 with more books for me. At around 5:00 we were told that the tests would be done around 9:00 that night. So we waited.. and waited... and waited. Finally at 9:30 the non-stress test was done, and it was completely normal.

The next morning a different doctor on call came to see me. He asked if I was still bleeding and I said yes. He advised me that I would be staying in the hospital until I stopped bleeding. I asked him what was causing the bleeding and he told me, matter of factly, that it was a placental abruption. I would continue to have ultrasounds, blood test and non-stress tests until the bleeding subsided, at least a week. I was very frightened, I didn't know what was happening or why. That night I had another ultrasound and another non-stress test. The ultrasound showed fetal bradycardia, but the non-stress test was normal.

The next day I asked my nurse if my Obstetrician knew I was in the hospital. She asked who it was and I told her. She told me that he was on the ward doing his rounds that very minute and he would stop by to see me. He never did. That day I didn't see one doctor or have one ultrasound or non-stress test. I was very scared at this point – didn't anyone care I was in or why? The next morning I told my nurse that no one had seen me yesterday and asked her if my Obstetrician knew I was on the ward. She went to check the chart and noticed that they had admitted me under a different doctor's name, so no, my doctor did not know I was on the ward. I was lucky that I saw him attending to a woman in the room across the hall and I stood outside my door to be sure he saw me.

He was happy to see me. He asked when I delivered and when I told him I hadn't he was furious. He asked what had happened and I told him about the events of the previous three days. He told me he would order an amniocentesis to check if the baby's lungs were developed, and if that was the case I would be induced. He told me he would come and see me later that day. A half hour later, I was having the amniocentesis done.

It wasn't until 6:00 that night that he came back to my room. He told me the baby's lungs weren't mature enough, most likely due to my low blood pressure. I asked him what we were going to do now, and he said "I don't know". He told me he was going to do some research and talk to some other doctors because he wasn't sure what was worse for the baby at this point; to come out with underdeveloped lungs, or to stay inside me. The next day was a typical day, more ultrasounds, more non-stress tests, more fetal monitoring. My doctor came to see me in the afternoon and told me "I'm still thinking about this very carefully, I want to talk to some more people before I decide what were going to do." He told me I could go home for a few hours, get out of the hospital, have some fun.

The next day my doctor saw me first thing in the morning. He said he had decided it was best for the baby to stay inside to further develop his lungs. He said that babies aren't stupid, they're resilient. Sometimes technology is a bad thing, this could have been happening the whole pregnancy and we never would have known. He wanted me to talk to one of his colleagues that day, and after I spoke with him I would be discharged. When I spoke to the other doctor later that evening, he confirmed everything my doctor had said that morning. He added that they were unable to find any concrete reason for the fetal bradycardia, and suspected that the bleeding I was suffering from was due to the trauma of the internal examinations. I was told to take it easy, rest, don't do anything too strenuous, and when the baby is ready to come, that's when it will be born.

Over the next few weeks I became a recluse. I made my "bed" downstairs in the living room, surrounded by magazines, crossword puzzles, water, a remote control, movies – and close to a bathroom. I hardly left the couch. I was so uncomfortable, and my back hurt so much that I was getting 3 hours of sleep a night. I would fall asleep around midnight and wake up at 3:00 a.m. in a tremendous amount of pain. I would crawl around on all fours trying to relieve some of the pain – nothing helped. I had a heating pad, an exercise ball, pillows. The only thing that seemed to give me some relief was grinding my fists into the small of my back. And so this was my life for the 2 weeks.

When I was 37 weeks pregnant my husband told me I could get up and move around now, because at 37 weeks a baby is considered full term. So I would get up, go outside, water the flowers, get the mail. Nothing too strenuous, but it got me out of the house. There wasn't much else I could do because I was too uncomfortable to drive, and too out of breath to walk more than a block at a time. On a Monday afternoon I was walking to get the mail and I felt a little trickle in my pants. I stopped and thought "what the heck was that?". It stopped, so I kept walking. I got the mail, turned around and walked home when again, I felt this trickle. I walked back to the house, picked up the phone and called my sister. I asked "How do you know the difference between your water breaking and the increased vaginal discharge everyone is talking about?" She said that it was probably just discharge and I shouldn't worry about it. So I didn't. I flirted with packing my hospital bag and getting ready just in case, but I didn't. I should have known, and this haunts me to this very day.

Sometime in the wee hours of the morning I awoke from my restless sleep to go to the bathroom. I stood up and there was this gush of liquid. I ran to the bathroom thinking I had just lost control of my bladder. I changed my PJ bottoms and my underwear and went back to sleep. It continued like this for the next day and a half. Again, I should have known. My mom called periodically throughout the day, telling me I should go get checked out, I should call my Doula, I should call the hospital – do something. I refused. There was no way I was in labour, there was no way this was happening yet. I wasn't due for another month, this wasn't happening now! And even if I was in labour, I would go to the hospital when I was having contractions, and not a moment soon. I had heard too many horror stories of women whose water had broke and they were sent home because they weren't having contractions. That wasn't going to happen to me.

Wednesday came. That evening we were having our final pre-natal visit with Sonya. I went about my daily routine, changing my underwear and my bottoms as often as I stood up. I drank more and more water, I knew that amniotic fluid replenishes itself so I thought the more water I drank, it would be OK if that in fact WAS my water that broke. My husband came home from work and I told him that we should pack the bag, just in case. He asked if I wanted to call Sonya and I said "No, she's going to be here at 7:00 anyway, we might as well just wait." I partially packed my hospital bag, I was panicking, I was scared, I was in denial. My husband reminded me that I should eat something even though I wasn't really hungry.

I was standing at the counter eating a bowl of cereal when I felt the first contraction. It was 6:30 on Wednesday evening. I didn't realize it at the time, but my water had broke on Monday afternoon. It was 50 hours from the time my water had broke until the time I had felt my first contraction. I started to cry. My husband came in from outside, saw me crying, and asked what the matter was. I looked up at him and said "I just felt a contraction, and it hurt." He again asked if I wanted to call Sonya. I said she was going to be there in 30 minutes anyway, so it didn't really matter.

At 7:00 Sonya arrived, took one look at me and knew I was in labour. I told her about the events of the following two days and she was upset I hadn't called her. I told her I was in denial, and I still was. Throughout our meeting my contractions got closer together and more intense. She suggested we go for a walk around the block to speed things up. We walked around the block and I had to stop periodically because of the contractions. We were a few steps from home when I felt sick to my stomach. I remembered from Sally's class that women normally get sick during the last stages of labour. I shook this thought away thinking "There's no way, I'm not there yet, it can't happen that fast." Sonya left around 8:30 instructing my husband to call her when the contractions are 8 minutes apart and more intense. She told us to pack the bag, told me to take a warm bath, and relax.

We followed her advice. I packed most of my bag, and took a bath. The contractions were getting more frequent and stronger. The pains in my back would come and go with the contractions; when a contraction came, the back pain went away, when the contraction went away, the back pain came back. There was no relief. Around 9:30 I was in so much pain I told my husband to call Sonya to come back. By 10:00 Sonya was at our house and she knew it was time to go. We finished packing my bag, got in the truck, and we were at the hospital 10 minutes later. I was through admitting and in the Labour and Birth Unit by 10:30. I was put in the "holding area", told to change into a gown, and was checked by a doctor and a nurse. They found I was 8 centimetres dilated and rushed me into a birthing room.

I wanted a natural birth, I knew this going in. I instructed Sonya not to let me have pain medication because of the way I react to it. The nurses constantly asked me if I wanted an epidural or something else for the pain. I kept shaking my head. I was in so much pain I couldn't speak. My back was the source of most of the pain. I felt like if someone smashed me over the back with a baseball bat that would be the only way to take away the pain. I finally opted for some laughing gas to help ease the back pain. I had the gas for about 20 minutes, and then it was time to start pushing.

After 30 minutes of pushing, our son Jake Robert was born. He was a tiny little thing, weighing 5-1/2 lbs. The doctor placed him on my stomach and the first words out of my mouth were "Why is he blue?". He wasn't breathing. The nurses took him away to clean him up and he started breathing, the doctor joked that he stopped breathing because he didn't want to be named "Amos". They cleaned Jake up and put him in my arms. He was so small, so perfect. But he wasn't crying. This was of concern to the nurses who called the NICU nurses. They came into the room and assessed him. If he didn't start crying he would be going to stay in NICU for assessment. 10 minutes later he still wasn't crying, so they took him away. My husband went with Jake and Sonya stayed in the birthing room with me.

After I got cleaned up, I was shown to my room in the Mother Baby Unit. Sonya and I said goodbye and my husband and I went to NICU to see Jake. I stayed with him for about 30 minutes and then went back to my room to try to sleep. I was on such a natural high from all of the hormones that I couldn't sleep. I managed to get about 40 minutes of

sleep that night. When it was finally a decent hour, I called everyone I could to tell them about Jake. Then I went to see him in NICU.

The nurses told me that Jake had an infection and had to be given antibiotics. The nurse in charge of Jake asked me when my water had broke. I didn't want to admit it had been 50 hours, so I lied and told her "sometime on Tuesday". She counted back the hours and determined that was the source of Jake's infection. She scolded me and told me I should have come in sooner. I told her I didn't know that my water had broke, but she didn't seem to hear me. For the remainder of our hospital stay I was scolded for not coming in, I was blamed for Jake's infection. I started to feel guilty and like a failure for not knowing better.

When we brought Jake home I nursed for hours on end, he always seemed to want to eat. Whenever I put him down he would cry. I couldn't get him to take a soother, and he was always rooting for a breast. I spent hours cooped up in a rocking chair in Jake's room, trying to nurse. I was tired, I wasn't sleeping, I was miserable. But I was determined to breastfeed. Everywhere I looked, everything I read said "Breast is Best", there was no way I wasn't going to be able to do this. I would just keep trying.

A few days later the public health nurse visited. She weighed Jake and asked how things were going. I expressed concern over nursing, it was taking a long time, he never seemed to get enough. She watched me feed him but didn't see any problems. Then she examined him. She told us she thought he was tongue-tied or that he had a short tongue, and that could be the reason he was taking so long to nurse. She also said he might be expending more calories than he was consuming which would make him drowsy at the breast. Bottom line was he just wasn't getting enough to eat. So, she told me to keep trying and she'd be back in a couple of days to weigh him again.

When the public health nurse came back a week later, she found that Jake's weight hadn't gone up at all. She asked to see me feed him again. She commented that he wasn't constantly sucking like he should be, she told me he was lethargic. She asked to see my milk production, so I showed her. She shook her head and told me to go get a prescription to help my milk come in. She told me I wasn't making enough milk to feed Jake and that's why he wasn't gaining any weight. The nurse left and said she'd be back in 2 days to weigh Jake again. I was devastated. It was my job to feed my son, and I wasn't even able to do that.

I immediately went to my doctor and asked for the prescription, and prayed this would help. I called Sonya and asked for her to come help me with breastfeeding. She showed me the difference between eating and just sucking, and by the time she left I felt confident I could do this. When the public health nurse came back to weigh Jake, she found he had gained 3 ounces in just 2 days. I was thrilled – I had renewed confidence. Unfortunately, that didn't last very long.

Jake continued to take hours to nurse. One morning I nursed him for 2 hours straight, and he still came off hungry. After nursing he would scream for hours and hours. When

I did sleep I was sleeping maybe 4 hours a day, an hour at a time. I was exhausted. I was spending at least 10 hours a day in Jake's room trying to feed him. Yet I was still determined to breastfeed. I didn't want to let anyone down, and I wasn't going to be the only one I knew who didn't breastfeed. I continued to nurse, and I continued to be miserable.

My whole life revolved around when Jake would eat. I'm a very shy person and breastfeeding in public just wasn't for me. I bought nursing capes and shawls to try to make things easier. I realized that leaving the house just wasn't possible. I spent all day in bed, some days I didn't shower. It took all I had to get out of bed when Jake cried, and when I heard him cry, I felt sick to my stomach. People would call and ask to visit and I would say no, Jake needs to eat around that time. I didn't answer the phone, I didn't answer e-mails. I wanted to stay in bed and forget about the world around me. I wanted to ignore Jake's cries and let him scream in his crib, but I wanted to be a good mother. I wanted so badly to nurse that it was just unacceptable that I wasn't able to do it.

People called and e-mailed. A few people I knew who had babies around the same time I had Jake encouraged me to go to the Mom's Group at the YMCA. I refused each invitation. All I could think was "Why would I want to go to a group of perfect moms to hear about their perfect babies and their perfect lives when I'm living a perfect hell? I'd rather just stay home and be miserable by myself." Eventually people stopped calling and e-mailing me, and invitations to go out stopped entirely.

I once again contacted Sonya for help with breastfeeding. She gave me the number of a private lactation consultant and suggested that she might be better to help me. I called the consultant that day and we set up an appointment for the next morning. She watched me nurse and then showed me a better position. She examined Jake and said that yes, his tongue is short so it will take him longer to nurse, but that it wasn't impossible for him to do so. She told me that when I think Jake is done nursing, I should do the "arm drop" test on him. Pick up his arm, and let it fall. If it flops down with little resistance, he's full. If it doesn't, he needs more to eat. Never in the past 5 weeks had I noticed that Jake passed the "arm drop" test – he was always hungry. The lactation consultant left, and I felt a little bit better. Once again, this feeling was premature.

Instead of taking an hour to nurse, Jake was taking 1-1/2 to 2-1/2 hours, and despite the longer nursing sessions he was constantly hungry. I didn't know what else to do. One morning I woke up at 5:00 to nurse. At 7:30 Jake seemed to be full, so I put him in his crib. 5 minutes later, he woke up crying – he was still hungry. I was extremely upset. I rushed out of bed and grabbed Jake out of his crib and I started crying. My husband followed me into the room and asked what was wrong. I remember screaming at him "I give up I give up I don't know what to do anymore!!" He told me to go back to bed and that he would take Jake.

Later that day I broke down. I told my husband how much I hated breastfeeding. How it's supposed to be this wonderful, magical thing and it's just hell for me. He told me that it wasn't a big deal, all of his siblings were bottle fed and they're all fine. That day we

stocked our cupboards with bottles and formula. Jake took a bottle with no problem at all, and he finally passed the “arm drop” test. I expected things to completely turn around; I expected to finally be happy again. Unfortunately, things just kept getting worse. Even though breastfeeding was one of the most traumatic events of my life I felt extremely guilty for not being able to do it, I cried about it every day.

Jake continued to cry. He developed a serious case of diarrhea, was gassy, had horrible stomach pains and we could not get him to nap. We went through gripe water and ovol drops like there was no tomorrow – nothing helped. I took him to my family doctor 6 different times. Each time I was advised to switch his formula, it had to be him reacting to the formula. Finally I switched Jake to a soy-based formula. His diarrhea went away, ahha! He was allergic to milk or lactose intolerant! Fantastic. Now things will FINALLY start to get better. But they didn’t.

Jake continued to have the stomach pains, the gassiness, and now he was frequently constipated – plus he STILL wasn’t sleeping! I repeatedly took him to the doctor and was told to keep switching the formula. I had had enough. I tearfully begged for a referral to a pediatrician. I kept insisting “there’s something wrong with this kid, it’s not the formula”. After two months of doctor’s visits, I took Jake to a pediatrician. I explained all the symptoms and all the feeding problems. I was told by the doctor that Jake is gaining weight, he’s perfectly healthy, there’s nothing wrong. This couldn’t be right. I KNEW there was something wrong.

I resented Jake. I didn’t want this horrible baby who cried all the time and who wouldn’t sleep. I wanted to go away and leave him and my husband and be happy again. Then I thought about my husband being alone with Jake, and I knew he wouldn’t be able to do it. He couldn’t change a diaper very well, he couldn’t give Jake a bath. It didn’t matter how miserable I was, Jake needed me. So I hung on and stuck it out.

The day after Jake’s 3 month vaccinations, I noticed a mass of bloody mucous in his diaper. In a panic, I called his pediatrician. I got Jake in to see the doctor the next day. He took a stool sample and said he’d be in touch. The next afternoon the doctor called me. Jake had a bacterial infection in his stomach called c.difficile. This infection in the intestines causes constipation, diarrhea, gas, and abdominal pain, just to name a few symptoms. He would have to be on antibiotics for 10 days. What a relief! I kept telling myself that this was the reason for all of Jake’s bad behaviour and things will start to get better soon. Then I can FINALLY start enjoying my son.

We gave Jake the antibiotics, and after 10 days the infection had cleared. Every day I thought “Ok, today’s the day things will be good, and they will stay good”. I still couldn’t get Jake to nap. He’d cry unless I was holding him. I couldn’t put him down, so I couldn’t eat. I couldn’t shower. I couldn’t nap. The house didn’t get cleaned, supper didn’t get made. I didn’t know what to do. I bought several books on getting baby to sleep, and nothing seemed to work. The only way we could get Jake to sleep was to hold him and rock him. We would have to rock him for at least an hour, and then carefully put him in his crib. Then he would sleep. This took a huge toll. This, too, was exhausting. I

was still miserable. I told people that I was being punished for having an easy labour and delivery. It seemed that the tougher other people's labour and delivery were, the better there babies were. I resented them for it. Why was this happening to me? What did I do to deserve this? If I had gone to the hospital when my mom had told me to, would this all be happening?

I would like to tell you that I wasn't mean to my son, that I didn't yell and scream at him, that I didn't exhibit any unruly behaviour when he could see or hear me. I would like to tell you that, but I can't. There would be times at night when he wouldn't go to sleep that I would go into his room. I would repeat to myself "be calm, be calm". I would rock him and swaddle him and do everything all the books said to do. There were times nothing worked. And sadly, there were times I would yell at him "GO TO SLEEP!!" or "WHY ARE YOU CRYING!!!!". There were times I would swaddle him so tightly that I'm sure it hurt. There were times that I may have been a little rougher on him than was called for, or that was necessary at all. All these times in the past where I have lost control, I know they could have been so much worse than they were. I'm glad they weren't as horrible as they could have been. And I know that I never EVER was physically abusive towards him; however, I am forever riddled with guilt that these moments happened at all.

After a particularly horrible day, I thought about the position Jake was in when we rocked him to sleep. He was on his side. When we put him in his crib, he's asleep, and he's on his back. I had a eureka moment! Maybe I would try putting him on his side in his crib, and try to soothe him that way. It took me 30 minutes, but I got him to go down for a nap, on his own, and it was a long one. And so began the long process of sleep training. I had to repeat to myself several times "patience patience patience.. it will all be over soon, he'll learn how to fall asleep and then things will be better." And after 3 weeks, we did it. Jake could be put in his crib awake, and he would fall asleep. And again I said "NOW things will get better."

Jake was eating fine. He wasn't constipated. He didn't have diarrhea. He didn't have stomach pains. He didn't need Ovol or Gripe Water. He was sleeping. He was FINALLY a happy baby. Everything with Jake was fine. Unfortunately, things with me were not. I was still riddled with guilt and shame about not knowing my water had broke, not breastfeeding. I wanted to turn back time, to be able to do everything differently, change my mistakes. I thought I was going crazy. I still cried. When is happy coming back? When will everything go back to the way it was? When will the feeling of euphoria that I felt right after Jake was born come back?

Jake is 11 months old and doing just fine. He's a very big boy now – 26 lbs and 31.5" long. He's a happy boy for the most part, and I do my best to keep my happy face on around him. We play together, go for walks together and have fun together. We get together for play dates with other babies. We go to the park and go swimming. I do everything in my power to make sure he has a happy childhood, and has happy memories. And when I feel myself getting frustrated with a crying episode of his or a

temper tantrum of his, I restrain my feelings and make a joke of it by looking at him and singing “You’re driving mommy craaazzyyyy!!”, which usually gets a giggle or a smile.

I let myself be sad only when I’m by myself. I’m sure that no one knows I’m going through this, nor do I want anyone to know. I don’t want to be on meds again, I don’t want to see counsellors again. I’m not entirely sure why I still feel the way I do, but I’m sure it goes back to the way my labour began. If only I was smart enough to know my water had broke. If only I had just started Jake on soy formula in the hospital and not even attempted to breastfeed. Perhaps if those two things had never happened, I wouldn’t feel like this. And I know I can’t change the past by feeling the way I do, but those thoughts never seem to go away. I’m not quite ready to come right out with it, to tell people about what I’ve been going through. I’ve been living the past year waiting for “the other shoe to drop”. It seems like whenever I would solve one problem, another one was right there waiting for me. I’m still afraid, but this is step one for me. We will see how things progress from here on.