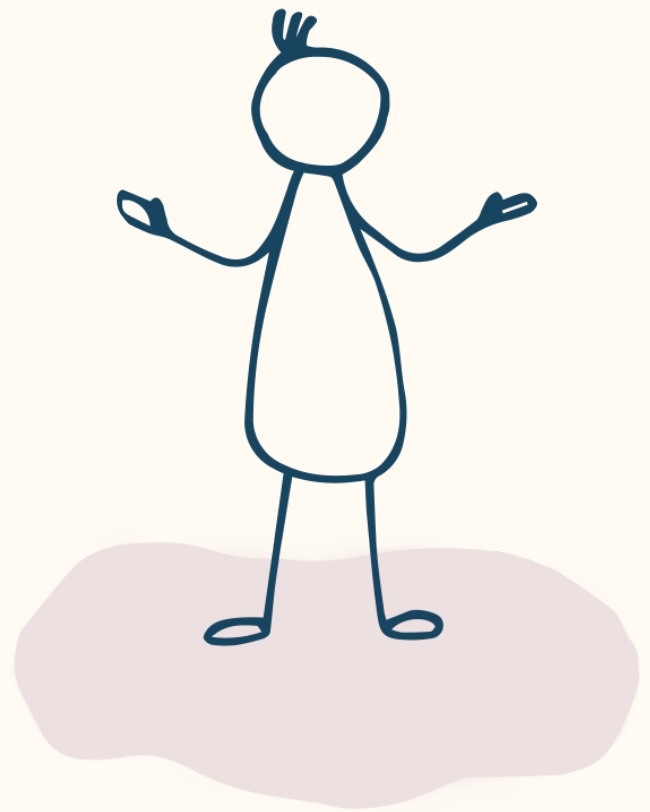


# Partners, this one's for you.

It's easy to feel helpless when mom is suffering from a pregnancy or postpartum mental health illness (clinically referred to as Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders or PMADs). You want to fix it. You want her to feel better. Though you can't speed up recovery from a mental health illness (trust us, we also wish this was a superpower that actually existed), there is still a lot you can do to help and support her.

We know this isn't what you signed up for either. You might be scared, frustrated, upset, even angry. What mom is going through is temporary and treatable, but it will take time, patience, and professional care. First, it's important for you to understand that these illnesses are very real and can happen any time during pregnancy through the first year postpartum (sometimes past the first year). They can happen to anyone including women who have no prior history of mental illness.



You need to know she is not making it up, she will not get better on her own, and it's not something she can just "snap out of" or "get over." **It's not her fault. It's not your fault either and it doesn't mean either of you are bad parents.** Please don't assume that if she looks good, she's fine. Don't assume that just because she doesn't "seem" depressed, she's not. It's very common for these illnesses to present as anxiety and irritability and/or rage.

## HERE ARE SOME WAYS YOU CAN HELP AND SUPPORT HER:

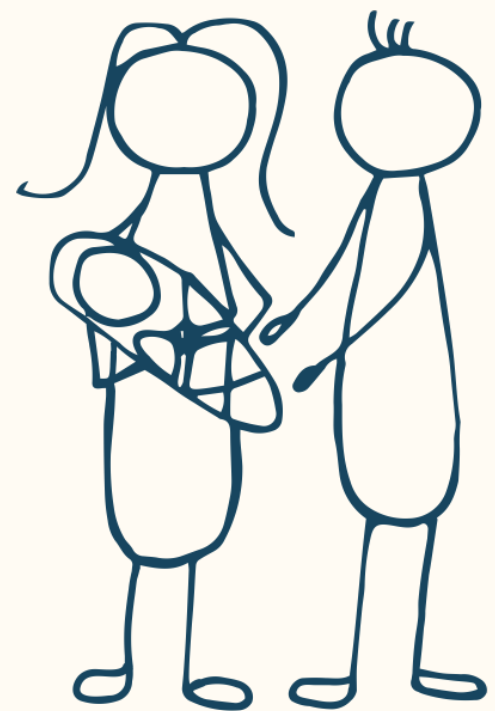
- Educate yourself about what she is experiencing. Start by checking out our [Mother's Manual for Postpartum Mental Health](#).
- Be open to hiring help (if affordable) such as a postpartum doula, baby nurse, part or full-time nanny or ask family members if they can pitch in with childcare responsibilities.
- Help her find the right therapist, one trained in pregnancy and postpartum mental health.
- Tell her this is a temporary, treatable illness, she will recover, and it doesn't make her a bad mom.
- Reassure her that you believe her and aren't going anywhere. Let her know you love her and that she won't always feel this way.

- Have patience with her because it could take weeks, even months for her to feel better.
- Support her choices (deciding to stop breastfeeding, deciding to take medication).
- Take on more of the parenting load right now (changing diapers, bathing, feeding, middle of the night wake-ups). Sit with her when she's feeling bad.
- Tell her you know she's doing all she can right now.
- Tell her the baby is loved and will be okay.
- Give her permission to do what she needs to take care of herself and help her set boundaries.
- If it's too exhausting for her to communicate with her friends, stay connected to them by giving them updates and letting them know how they can help.
- Take care of yourself too—find an outlet—a partners' group or a close, trusted friend to talk to about what this experience is like for you.

We know it could cost more money to see the “right” therapist and/or psychiatrist, but it's better to see the right person than to jump from “inexperienced” person to “inexperienced” person, which can lead to a longer recovery. **We highly recommend being part of mom's treatment** by attending at least one therapy session with her as well as staying connected to her therapist by phone. We also suggest reading [The Postpartum Husband](#) by maternal mental health psychologist and expert, Karen Kleiman.

#### AND PLEASE REMEMBER TO NEVER EVER SAY ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:

- Snap out of it.
- You're not depressed (remember, these illnesses involve a great deal of anxiety and agitation).
- All new moms feel this way. It's normal to feel this way.
- I'm tired of you feeling this way.
- You should be able to do what other moms do.
- You wanted a baby.
- You're “fine.”
- You can get through this on your own.
- This should be the happiest time of your life.
- You just need to talk to your friends, be around other moms, sign up for mommy and me classes (being around friends and meeting other moms could actually increase her anxiety, exhaust her, and make her feel worse right now).
- If you would only get your hair blown out, get your nails done, get out of the house more, exercise, get out in nature, drink more water...you would feel better.
- How long will this last? When are you going to be better?



Disclaimer: The information provided here is not medical advice. It is for education only. If you or someone you know is experiencing depression or anxiety during-pregnancy or postpartum, contact the Postpartum Support International Helpline at 1.800.944.4773. If you are thinking of harming yourself or your baby, get help right away by going to the nearest ER, calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1.800.273.8255, or dialing 911.