

Dear Mama,

Imagining waking up every single morning, drowning in sadness. For months you looked forward to the birth of your baby, but now that they're here, the sight of them leaves you utterly panicked and in tears. You love your family, but you're emotionally unable to connect. Everyday tasks now become suffocating, and you no longer recognize yourself. That's what it was like for me. My name is Katryce Pedro, and I'm going to be sharing my experience with postpartum depression.

I had my children 10 years apart. And that ten years made one hell of a difference in everything from my pregnancy to the delivery but mainly my postpartum journey. When I had CJ (my oldest) 14 years ago, it was an easy experience. However, my experience with Ashton (my youngest) was anything but easy, especially after he was born.

The scariest part about postpartum depression is that it takes a while for you to realize what's happening. The first day we got home from the hospital, I sat on the couch in tears and pain, holding my baby, feeling powerless. With every pregnancy, in the first few weeks, after the baby arrives, it's normal to have highs and lows because your hormones are trying to readjust themselves. So I just assumed my bad days were normal, post-pregnancy hormones. But after 120 bad days of crying and shutting myself in the house, it was very apparent to those on the outside that something was definitely not right.

My family checked on me constantly and was very concerned about my well-being. They all encouraged me to speak with my doctor because they thought I was dealing with a bit of Postpartum Depression. I did a bit of research on the symptoms of PPD, and I was dealing with quite a few of them.

No matter how similar things looked on paper, I just couldn't wrap my mind around the thought of me dealing with depression. My denial was mainly due to the negative stigma surrounding mental health in the African American and Latino communities. So to accept the term "depression" made me feel like I was admitting that something was wrong with me.



I struggled with postpartum depression for 7 months before I finally decided to see a doctor. I was told I had “a cocktail of things going on,” including depression and anxiety. I asked if we could try a more natural approach before resorting to medication; my doctor recommended getting dressed every morning, joining a support group, lots of fresh air, and being around family. So I did just that. Except I created my own support group, The Funny Momma, that used laughter as a main tool to normalize the realities of motherhood.

I was lucky enough to heal naturally. By the time Ashton was 1, I was 100% myself again. But everyone is not that lucky. Some cases are so severe that ignoring the signs that I refused to acknowledge can have lasting effects that change postpartum depression into long-term depression. If you're feeling helpless and down after your baby is born, speak to someone about it. Your mental health is just as important as your physical health. It would help if you learned how your mind works, what it likes when something is off, and exercise it daily. And sometimes, you may need help figuring those things out. And that's 100% ok.

Mama, you are strong!
Mama, you are tough!
Mama, you are brave!
You got this!



Katryce