

# Dear Mama,

Congratulations on wherever you are on your motherhood journey. It's a wonderful, life-changing experience. I feel like everyone tells you this when you're pregnant, but no one really understands it until after the baby is here. One thing no one told me when I was pregnant, but I wish someone had, is that it's okay if you don't find motherhood easy and immediately fulfilling.

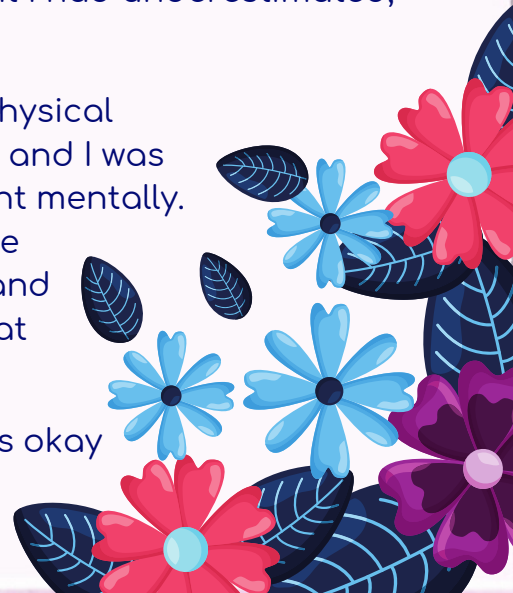
I knew about postpartum depression before getting pregnant, but I wasn't worried about it. I had a village. I had a supportive partner, family willing to help out, and friends who were due with their first babies around the same time as me. I felt like I had a lot going for me and that it should be enough, but it wasn't. I needed different kinds of help, and through my journey, I learned my needs were okay and in fact, a necessity.

After my daughter was born, I did not expect to feel as much like I'd lost my sense of self as I did during the postpartum period. I was so immersed in figuring out how to keep this tiny human alive and being sleep-deprived that I lost sight of myself. For me, being a mother could not be my sole identity and I had to figure out how to also be the woman I was before becoming a mother in order to show up fully for my family.

The best thing I did for myself was first to acknowledge and accept that I was overwhelmed and not myself. Next, I went on a search and found a therapist I vibed with and worked through parts of motherhood that I had underestimated, but turned out to be the hardest for me.

Mental health proved to be even more important than physical health. It affected my body more than I thought possible and I was only able to take care of myself physically once I was right mentally. Medication turned out to help me immensely and was the boost I needed to start seeing the positive in every day and get the motivation to create new habits that spoke to that part of myself which is separate from motherhood.

None of this is how I'd imagined my journey going, but it's okay that this is where my motherhood path took me. Today I find joy in creative outlets, some of which I share with



my daughter, some of which are entirely my own. I find immense joy in motherhood and cherish the time I have to myself and find myself a better parent when I can find time to take a walk by myself or see a friend.

I share part of my story to hopefully let you know that if you feel this way, you are not alone. No matter how you are feeling about motherhood at this exact moment, there are mamas out there who have felt the same. Take care of yourself so you can be the best for your family. You deserve it.

I wish you the best on your motherhood journey!



Rachel