One Mom’s Story

First Baby - **“I felt like I wasn't giving her what she needed.”**

My daughter was an unplanned pregnancy, but her father and I were happy and excited about her.

My daughter was two weeks overdue, and I was huge. I was in labor 27 hours before having a c-section. After the surgery, I could barely get out of bed. At one point, my incision came open and we had to go back to the emergency room.

My daughter was hungry all of the time and had to be fed every two hours. She wanted more milk than I was producing. I felt like I wasn't giving her what she needed. It was difficult emotionally and physically. I was exhausted.

Eventually, I found the support I needed from others to help me get through this difficult time. I also was able to get some extra sleep, which made a big difference.

Second Baby - **"I felt like a horrible mother."**

My son was a planned pregnancy, but it happened sooner than expected. I was excited about the baby - and worried too. Since my daughter's birth, my husband and I had both returned to school, but because of morning sickness, I had to drop out. I think my depression started during my pregnancy because I was dreading the long nights ahead and having sole responsibility of caring for the baby.

My son was a perfect baby, eating and sleeping on schedule. It was great. But I still had all of the child care responsibilities because my husband worked nights and slept during the day. I also had a toddler running around. I was trying to go back to work, and I was exhausted.

I took the baby to the doctor for his six-month checkup and broke down. His doctor suggested that I take antidepressants and see a counselor. My husband, however, said people who take medication are weak, so I decided I could handle it myself.

But I couldn't handle it. Instead, I became very depressed. I felt like a horrible mother. I wasn't playing with my daughter, and I wasn't enjoying my son. I didn't want to get out of bed. I was even threatening suicide. I cried all the time.

At my one-year appointment, my doctor asked, "Is everything all right?" I started crying and told her how bad I was feeling. She listened carefully to what I was saying and took my difficulties seriously.

Overcoming Depression - **"I knew that I had to do it for myself."**

My doctor said I had postpartum depression and that antidepressants and counseling would help me feel better. The doctor and staff were very supportive and helped me develop a care plan that day.

In the beginning, I was afraid to admit I needed help. But I now realize postpartum depression doesn't mean you're a weak person or a bad mother. It means you're a person with a physical ailment who needs treatment to get better.

Counseling helped tremendously, and the medication regulated my moods. Getting help was absolutely necessary for me and for my children. Today, I enjoy my family so much more. I am more independent and confident in myself and my abilities as a mother and a person. I have a positive outlook on the future.

If you are depressed, have faith in yourself. It doesn't mean you're a bad mom, and seeking help doesn't mean that you are weak. Talk to your health care provider, because this can make a big difference.

***Source: A Nebraska mother granted HHSS permission to share this story.