

cute little person. After three days I realised how untrue that was. My little bundle of joy would wake up whenever I felt the most tired. She would cry and cry till I prayed fervently for some sort of divine solution. The hardest part during all this time was the sense I had of being all alone. I had my baby, my husband and my family and yet I felt that no one understood how I felt. No one realised I felt fat and ugly and tired. I felt fatigued all the time. My back would ache and my feet would hurt. Emotions would storm within me, till I would feel that I would break. I would sit up at nights and cry and walk up and down the corridor. I couldn't explain how I felt. I felt I was a shadow of myself, no longer a whole. As though someone had taken away a part of me and I was the shell left behind. I felt such anger at times. Not at anyone in particular, but at everyone at the same time. The brunt of it was borne by my husband, who in his naive state failed to recognise post-partum depression.

My mum kept on telling me it was going to go away soon, but I felt that I would no longer feel happy; I was incapable of being happy. I would no longer fit into my old clothes, no longer be able to go out in the same care free manner or concentrate on my career like I had always dreamt of doing. The worst part was when my little girl had an upset stomach. I blamed myself for her illness. Perhaps it was my negligence or because I was not a good mum. I would pray to Allah for forgiveness. I would promise Him all sorts of sacrifice from myself if only my little girl would get better. Her upset stomach resulted in her losing all her baby fat. My heart was devastated. I blamed my depression for having this effect on her.

But children are more resilient than their parents. My daughter too recovered and began to show signs of a mischievous little person. She started to give me gentle little smiles. Just a little movement on the two corners at first and then a full-grown smile. At times she would roll on her sides and make me laugh. Sometimes she would wave her hands about as though she had a great deal to tell me. I learnt that she was doing something new every day. Every moment was etched with her journey into life, every cry was her struggle against the obstacles of life and every naughty move was her determination to have the last laugh.

As time wore on and days ran to make time for months, I realised that my little girl was truly my heart walking outside my body. All the things I felt I would hate,

such as cleaning after her or running after her to make sure she ate properly were no longer an issue. My priority was my little girl; gone was my pride, my selfishness, my dignity. For her I left myself bare and open. She was and is my little angel. I finally understood when she said 'ma' for the first time, giggled and ran away, why my parents were able to forgive me no matter how wrong I had been, why they worry and fret about me even now, why they insisted on protecting me the way they always did, why they placed their needs and wants secondary to mine and finally why no matter how much I rebelled against them, I would run to them for solace.

Watching her trying to learn how to place things in their proper order, or to learn about the do's and don't's of life, my natural instinct is to protect her. Not a day goes by that I don't pray to Allah to keep her safe and to shade her from pain. But I know that I won't be always there to protect her and my heart will break every time she gets hurt. Many times I won't be there to hold her hands or to guide her. I have to let go of her and hope that the principles and love that my husband and I will share with her, will be enough to make her journey through life an easier one. Most of all, I hope that her struggle through life, like her first breath out of my womb will be fought with courage and my

little angel will learn to pick herself up and look fate in the eye and rise above its blows.

I have realised that truly life is a cycle. I have no expectations from my little girl. I have no problem in placing my needs secondary to hers, no issues at being stuck at home with her and absolutely no regrets for not going back to work full time right now. Each new step, each new word and gesture have been a journey for my husband and myself. We are humbled by her new discoveries and by being able to see the boring details of life in a fresh new way. Little things hold so many joys and our little girl's delight at the silliest of things are a constant source of wonder for pessimists such as myself.

I know that a day will come when she will no longer be my 'lolo' or daddy's little 'moyna.' For all I know she will grow up and be busy with her life and forget about her 'ma,' but I do know this that no matter what, I will always be grateful to my baby for making me less selfish, for learning to place someone else's happiness before mine and as always enabling me to appreciate the miracle that is nature.

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