

MUSING

When simple pleasures became luxuries

Right after I became a mother, my mother was with me the first few months, and my husband was and continues to be a huge support, yet there were many days when I felt overwhelmed by the responsibilities which came along with our bundle of joy.

It seemed like I could no longer enjoy the simple pleasures of life-- watch a film, read a book, take a long shower, relish a good meal, or even sleep. In fact, whenever I managed some free time during the day, I would just slump into my bed and snooze, from exhaustion.

I would often hold my newborn in my arms, and wonder if a day would really come when I would be able to sleep 5 hours at a stretch, dreaming of getting a good night's sleep, which I could not get until my daughter turned 4 months.

Before she was born, we could go out anytime as there was no need to worry about another person's sleep routine or feeding schedule.

After she came, things changed of course. Her diaper bag became my purse, where I shoved in my cell phone, wallet, lipstick and such, along with her feeding bottles, diapers, wipes, tissues, changing pad, extra sets of clothing, baby formula and food, a flask of water, blankets, trash bags, and what not. It was like going on a picnic, but minus the fun. A simple purse to sling from my shoulder had become a luxury then.

Sometimes, I thought of the days when I had carried books in my handbag wherever I went -- it always felt good to have a book around. But after becoming a mother, I saw my reading habit disappear from my life. I no longer carried a book around, no longer bought books online and didn't even go to the local public library to borrow!

Thinking I must start reading again, so I started downloading e-books to my tablet computer, only to realise that reading electronic books was not my cup of tea at all.

But my daughter will turn 4 very soon. And I think I am slowly going back to my old life to some extent. I have started buying and reading books once again -- and it feels so good!

I have bid goodbye to the diaper bag, thank God! Now we can also make quick outing plans, and spend time out of home until late into the night. I can now also go to the bathroom without a kid pounding on the door!

Although it continues to be a roller-coaster ride, motherhood never ceases to teach me something new every day. Yes, I often have to say no to my desire to many simple pleasures, but at the end of the day, motherhood has also done good things to me, like making me more patient and compassionate.

By Wara Karim

ASK MAYA APA

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Post Partum Depression

Maya Apa,
I am 30 years old and my wife is 25. Few days ago she gave birth to a baby boy. It was the best time of our life. But now for the last few days I have noticed she is getting irritated and worried very easily, sometimes I see her crying without any reason. She seems to have negative thoughts on everything. She does not sleep properly and always seems very exhausted. Nowadays, she does not talk to anyone at home, not even me. Maya Apa, please help me, what am I supposed to do now to get my wife back to normal again? Is she suffering from any disease?

Dear Reader,
Thank you for your question.

First of all we would like to congratulate both of you on the arrival of your baby. Lots of blessings and well wishes for him.

Reader, the birth of a baby can bring a flood of different types of emotions for you and your wife, and each and every member of your family. This is not unusual for your wife to feel sad after this sudden change because motherhood can bring excitement and joy but some fear and anxiety as well. It can result in something you and your wife might not have expected— depression. This is known as postpartum depression. Postpartum depression can begin any time during the first two months after a woman gives birth. In some cases, symptoms peak after slowly building for 3 or 4 months.

There is no definite cause for this depression but physical and emotional issues sometimes play a role. Physical causes are that there is a dramatic drop in hormones which leads to a mother feeling tired, sluggish and depressed. Physical exhaustion from a mother being sleep deprived can have emotional effects, like feeling overwhelmed in handling her newborn and she may feel that she has lost control over her life which can also lead to depression.

The symptoms of postpartum depres-



sion mainly include-

- *Depressed mood and severe mood swings.
- *Avoiding family and friends.
- *Lack of confidence on being a good mother.
- *Changes of sleep and eating patterns.
- *Thoughts of harming the baby.
- *Thoughts of suicide or suicide attempts.
- *Reduced desire for sex.
- *Difficulty in concentrating.

As postpartum depression makes it harder to function well so early treatment is important for you, your wife, your baby as well as the rest of your family. In addition to seeking doctor's help, there are also some other ways to take care of your wife, such as-

- *The most important thing is to talk to your wife. How is she feeling? Encourage her to not feel guilty about her feelings and assure her this is very normal and once she recovers this will gradually diminish.

*Make sure that she is meeting her basic needs. Ask her to eat and sleep properly.

*Try to offer help and encourage her to ask for help if she needs any. You can help bathe your baby or put him to sleep, while she relaxes

*Tell her not to hesitate to share her feelings with you, her friends and family. Remember that your support is always vital to your wife's recovery.

*Always give her some time to get some rest.

Even after taking these measures, you may feel she is not getting better, in which case you need to take her to a doctor.

Reader, a more severe form of post partum mental illness is Post Partum Psychosis. This can be sudden in onset and seen within 2 weeks after childbirth. You have look for some danger signs such as-

- *hallucinations – usually hearing or seeing things that aren't there
- *delusions – thoughts or beliefs that are unlikely to be true
- *Feeling very irritated.
- *Paranoia and suspicions.
- *Extreme excitement or low mood.
- *Severe confusion.

Postpartum psychosis needs immediate treatment as it can become bad very rapidly, thus leading your wife harming your baby or herself.

Postpartum depression and psychosis is a medical condition. It has nothing to do with your wife's character or how good mother she is, or how much she loves her baby so never let her feel guilty about her feelings. Like any other medical condition, proper intervention, treatment and care can get her to feel better.

Hope we have helped you.

If you have further queries please do ask us again.
Thank you.
Maya Apa.



Photo: Collected