TIPS FOR POSTPARTUM DADS and PARTNERS

Pregnancy and postpartum mood and anxiety disorders affect the whole family. Here are some tips that might help you along the way. Remember that you will get through this with help and support. There is no magic cure, and sometimes recovery seems slow, but things will keep improving if you stick to a plan of *healthcare, support,* and *communication.*

COMMON SYMPTOMS of PERINATAL DEPRESSION & ANXIETY:

- Feeling overwhelmed, exhausted and insecure
- Crying spells, sadness, hopelessness
- Anger, irritability, frustration
- Repetitive fears and worries

TAKING CARE OF YOUR STRESS AND EMOTIONS:

- Ask for help, information, and support for yourself. Call 1-800-944-4PPD.
- Develop a support team for your family. Ask for help. Say YES when they offer.
- Take time for yourself. Talk to your partner to arrange a good time to be away.
- Talk to other families who have come through this.
- Spend time with your baby to develop your own confidence.

HOW TO HELP MOM:

- Reassure her: this is not her fault; she is not alone; she will get better.
- Encourage her to talk about her feelings and listen without judgment.
- Help with housework before she asks you.
- Encourage her to take time for herself. Breaks are a necessity; fatigue is a major contributing factor to worsening symptoms.
- Don't expect her to be super-housewife just because she's home all day.
- Be realistic about what time you'll be home, and come home on time.
- Help her reach out to others for support and treatment.
- Schedule some dates with her and work together to find a babysitter.
- Offer simple affection and physical comfort, but be patient if she is not up for sex. It's normal for her to have a low sex drive with depression, and rest and recovery will help to bring it back.

DEALING WITH HER ANGER AND IRRITABILITY:

- Help her keep track of eating regularly, because low blood sugar results in a low mood and frustration. Have healthy and easy snacks on hand.
- Do your best to listen for the real request at the heart of her frustration. Reduce conflict by telling her, "I know we can work this out. I am listening."
- Keep the lines of communication open. Verbalize your feelings instead of distancing from her. It is helpful to take a break if your tempers are hot, but do get back to communicating.
- If she is expressing anger in such a way that you can't stay supportive, you might say something like, "I want to listen to you. I know this is important, but I'm having a hard time because you're so mad at me. Can we take a break and talk about it later?"
- Ask her how you can help *right now*. If she doesn't know, make some suggestions.

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