

# Non-judgemental

I was diagnosed with PND, eight weeks after I had my son in 2009. As a baby, my son suffered from reflux and colic and would pretty much cry all day, only sleeping for 20 minutes at a time. A good day was 45 minutes. He had to be held up-right all the time, to stop the pain of the reflux, and he would cry for five to six hours every night. The whole time I felt like I was drowning, I could barely keep my head above the water. I couldn't cope anymore with a screaming baby and my three year old daughter that needed continuous attention. I found it hard to sleep and I would constantly have nightmares. I also couldn't handle any sort of noise... at all, I stopped listening to the radio because of all the talking, and for about two years, I stopped watching TV. It felt like I had woken up one day and did not know who I was.

When my son was 12 weeks old, I was admitted to a mother baby unit for what was supposed to be two weeks. It ended up being two months. During that time, I learnt how to look after myself again, as well as my son and daughter. Things were still hard after I got home. After being in the mother baby, I was not at all in the mood to go to any meetings. I was referred to the Mother to Mother group through my local community and support service, and I also received a call to ask me to come to a session when I felt up to it.

After two weeks, I went and shared my story in what I found to be a non-judgmental environment of women who had been

through similar experiences as me. It was an open space to admit the things that I thought people were never allowed to say, things like... "I love my children, but I hate being a mother". We could talk about things openly such as medication and the helpful and not so helpful effects it can have on us. We learnt that self-therapy was important; we need to look after ourselves so we could look after our children.

I believe it's important for mums and dads to know and be aware that they don't have to suffer in silence. It's important to remember that some dads can suffer just as much as mums, there is help available and that it's not going to be like this forever. There is always a light at the end of the tunnel. Mothers who feel helpless and like failures need to know that there is support. Above all, reassurance that there is someone out there that knows what they are going through, and who can be there to help and offer guidance.

I think if the local community can offer some support for new mums in anyway, whether it be a doctor's appointment, regular counselling, some childcare or just someone to talk to, it would help in so many ways. It may just help mothers find some inner peace and comfort again, for themselves and their families.