

Open & honest

Reflecting back, when I looked for help I had just shut myself up in a closet to get away from my older son who would follow me around all day, my younger son would cry all day long. I had no friends or family nearby to assist me and my husband didn't like me talking about things. I felt so alone and with the constant crying from my son... all day long. He wasn't feeding properly and I didn't know how to help him. I was ready to give up and I took about eight Panadol tablets. I don't know if it was enough to do anything serious but I took them and hid from my kids in a cupboard. My husband just thought I was being lazy and dwelling on my unhappy childhood and past. All I wanted to be was a good, kind, caring and loving mum and all I could see was that I was not. So I sent my older son to my sister-in-law's for a few days while I got some help.

A support group sounded desirable for the social side of things, getting out of the house meant getting showered and dressed and getting out... Connecting. I cannot quite remember exactly how I was referred to the group, but I think it was from my GP. I didn't really know what the group would be like and couldn't imagine having anything in common with anyone. Once I got there, I realised, it was full of people from all walks of life and it was open and honest.

The interaction and support from other mums in the group was very powerful, because you really do only think that it is happening to you and that there must be something wrong with you to be feeling this way. To see that it happens to a lot of women helped me. I got along with the mums quite well and still know a few of them through mutual friends and local community groups. I didn't meet anyone particularly which I could form a long term

friendship with, but I did meet some women whom I felt comfortable talking with. I enjoyed the group, but then got a permanent part time job that meant I couldn't keep attending, but the job in itself was what I needed and gave me some time to myself, to be an individual, and have some social contact that I wasn't getting at home.

I believe both individual and group therapy for PND recovery is important. I couldn't have got through my son's first year without Karen (facilitator) coming to my home and having a home session with Terrie (facilitator) was a lifeline. I don't know what I would have done without it. The group therapy is just as important, it gets you out of the house and being able to meet other women who are experiencing the same kind of feelings that you are going through. It validates that you are not going crazy and that PND is a very real mental depressive disease. It's especially important for women who find themselves without any support from their families or partners after having a baby.

Don't be too proud to say or ask for help. If you are feeling things, see someone before your emotions run away with your head. You are not crazy and you are not alone. The moment you start realising you are losing control or having thoughts about not being a good enough mum and that you wish you had help, get it straight away. There is no shame in suffering from PND. What you are experiencing and feeling is very real and overwhelming. Any woman, who is indecisive about whether they are suffering from PND, should seek help. Sometimes we deny what is going on because we feel ashamed about our thoughts and that we really should be able to cope with being a mother.