

A book that details postpartum depression and the many different ways that it can present itself. The author paints a picture of her experience in dealing with getting a diagnosis of postpartum depression, seeking help and getting better.

MY BABY'S SMILE: My Journey and Recovery Through Postpartum Depression

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# **MY BABY'S SMILE**

## **MY JOURNEY AND RECOVERY THROUGH POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION**

By Beth Ann Benoliel

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## **SOMETHING IS JUST NOT RIGHT**

**I** try to recall the first time that I felt that something was a little off. I knew that I was having problems sleeping and I thought it was because I could not get comfortable. I could not lay totally flat because I was in pain and if I could roll onto my side my breasts would become so engorged and hard I cried from the pain. There was not a happy medium when it was time to go to bed. I remember asking Matt if maybe I was scared to go to sleep because I was afraid of the way my delivery went and maybe somehow this was affecting me. I just could not figure out what was wrong.

The first incident however I do remember when my sleeping pattern really became a problem was when Bradley was three weeks old. It was July 3rd and Matt had off the next day from work. It was late at night and I was still downstairs after I had nursed Bradley and he fell

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asleep. I was on the couch trying to fall asleep and every time that I had just started to doze off I would jump up out of my sleep and think that I was going to die. It had to be at least 2:00 a.m. and I finally woke Matt up and told him that he had to come downstairs with me because I thought that I was going to die. I never got any sleep that night. In fact, Matt stayed on the couch with me until about 6:00 a.m. when we finally went upstairs to try and get some sleep.

The next morning, July 4<sup>th</sup>, was my father-in-law's birthday and I told Matt that I could not leave the house. I had to try and get some sleep and that he had to go celebrate his birthday without me. Also from what I read at the time my not sleeping also was affecting my breastfeeding. I was so painfully engorged but the books I read just told me to take hot showers and rest and that this would help. My mother came over that day to watch the baby for me while I tried to nap. That did not work either as I just could not fall asleep. I ended up just laying there for about an hour before I went downstairs and got the baby from my mother as he needed to nurse.

So much for the theory that you should sleep when the baby sleeps.

Bradley would sleep at night and I would be awake. Bradley would nap during the day and I would be awake. What was going on here? That night, July 4<sup>th</sup>, I went to stay with my parents since I knew that fireworks would be going off by our house and our dog would be going crazy. All I wanted to do was to get some sleep. I packed Bradley and myself up and off we went.

At that point I had read about night nursing and I thought that it would be a perfect opportunity for me to try it and see if I got more sleep. The theory sounded good. That if the baby was right next to me in bed and when I needed to nurse him I could just roll over, maybe this was the solution to my problem. If Bradley was next to me and I just rolled over to nurse him, maybe I would not fully wake up if I did not get out of bed; hopefully I would be able to fall back to sleep quicker.

I got to my parent's house about 6:30 at night. By the time I nursed Bradley it was about 7:30 and I decided to go to bed. Yes, my bedtime had gotten to be very

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early. I would go to bed after I nursed him because he would nurse for an hour or sometimes even two. Believe me, by that time I had called everyone I knew that had nursed and asked if this was normal. I was just told that every baby was different. Well, we actually did end up sleeping. We fell asleep at about 7:30 and Bradley did not wake up for his next feeding until about 1:30 in the morning. This was now my new idea. I would sleep with him in my bed so that he would be close to me to nurse and I would not have to get out of my bed. A perfect idea! I would now try this when we got home. I figured out what my problem was and now it was solved.

The next night at home I now told Matt that he had to sleep in the other room because I was going to sleep with Bradley in our bed to nurse him that way. I love Matt, but I did not want his 250-pound body to roll over on Bradley. This was our only solution. I think that I may have been sleeping a little bit more. It was nice not having to get up and leave my bed to nurse Bradley. But in the end this only worked for a few weeks. I was always afraid that I was going to roll over on the baby; I felt like



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Bradley was up every hour to nurse; and I then told myself that I was not getting any more sleep than before. My new plan was to put Bradley back in his cradle next to the bed.

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