The Symptoms of Perinatal Mood Disorders

Depression in Pregnancy or Postpartum (PPD)
A woman with PPD might experience feelings of anger, sadness, irritability, guilt, lack of interest in the baby, changes in eating and sleeping habits, trouble concentrating, thoughts of hopelessness and sometimes even thoughts of harming the baby or herself.

In other words...
You feel overwhelmed and may question whether or not motherhood is for you. You feel guilty or that your baby deserves better; you wonder if your baby would be better off without you. You don't feel bonded to your baby. You feel angry, confused, scared; everything annoys you. You feel resentment towards your baby. You feel out-of-control rage. Or you feel nothing; just emptiness. You know something is wrong; you think you've "gone crazy." You may have thoughts of running away or of driving off the road, taking pills, or finding some way to end this misery.

Anxiety & OCD in Pregnancy or Postpartum (PPA, PPOCD)
A woman with PPA may experience extreme worries and fears, often over the health and safety of the baby. Some women have panic attacks and might feel shortness of breath, chest pain, dizziness, a feeling of losing control, and numbness and tingling. Women with PPOCD can have repetitive, upsetting and unwanted thoughts or mental images (obsessions), and sometimes they need to do certain things over and over (compulsions) to reduce the anxiety caused by those thoughts.

In other words...
Your thoughts are racing. You can't quiet your mind, relax, or settle down. You feel like you have to be doing something at all times: cleaning, checking the baby, organizing. You are worried. Really worried (all the time). You may have disturbing (intrusive) thoughts that just pop into your mind out of nowhere and terrify you (they may start with "What if..."). You are afraid to be alone with your baby because of scary thoughts or worries; you're also afraid of things in your house that could potentially harm your baby. You may check things constantly (did I lock the door? is the baby breathing?). You feel like a captive animal, pacing back and forth. You are having trouble sleeping; you're so tired, but you can't sleep. You may have physical symptoms like stomach cramps, nausea or panic attacks.
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Pregnancy and Postpartum (PPPTSD)
PPTSD is often caused by a traumatic or frightening childbirth or past trauma, and symptoms may include flashbacks of the trauma with feelings of anxiety and the need to avoid things related to that event.

Bipolar Mood Disorders in Pregnancy or Postpartum
There are two phases of a bipolar mood disorder: the lows and the highs. The low time is clinically called depression, and the high is called mania or hypomania. Many women are diagnosed for the first time with bipolar depression or mania during pregnancy or postpartum. Bipolar mood disorder can appear as a severe depression; women need informed evaluation and follow-up on past and current mood changes and cycles to assess whether there is a bipolar dynamic. In Bipolar 2, the manic episode is less apparent; the highs and lows are not as extreme, and sometimes it is more apparent to friends and families than to the individual going through the phases.

Psychosis in Pregnancy and Postpartum
PPP sufferers sometimes see and hear voices or images that others can’t, called hallucinations. They may believe things that aren’t true and distrust those around them. They may also have periods of confusion and memory loss, and seem manic. Postpartum psychosis is rare; affecting 1 in 1,000 women. This severe condition is dangerous and it is important to seek help immediately.

The Facts:

1 in 5 women will get a perinatal mood disorder. It is the number one complication of childbirth.

If you are experiencing the above symptoms seek help. These illnesses require treatment. With help you will be well again.

You didn't do anything wrong. You are not to blame.

Supporting Mamas is a 501c3 nonprofit dedicated to helping women and their families in Santa Clara County. We offer free information, resources, and support to women suffering from a perinatal mood disorder.

www.supportingmamas.org