

Daddy's postpartum depression bonding issue

My baby was perfect in every way and I was the proudest dad in the ward. Then the guilt started. This dad's postpartum depression bonding issues were real.

Not feeling bonded with my baby felt to me like a form of patricide.

Mind you I did everything to protect him in those hours and days after he was born. First, I tried blocking nurses who insisted on performing those prodding procedures they have to do. I didn't want him weighed or measured for fear that he would feel abandoned by his mommy and daddy. I asked hundreds of questions – why was he a conehead? When does he open his eyes? Should his poop be the consistency of street tar? I insisted on sleeping the night in the hospital, propped on a vinyl sofa near wife and baby bonding in ways I couldn't. All that sucking and sleeping, chest to chest, skin to skin. Mostly, I obsessed over making sure everything was perfect.

But it wasn't enough.

The baby didn't want to be near his daddy. Anything I did outside of logistical support of mommy and baby seemed to backfire on me. Anything I could do, mommy could do better. Daddy's postpartum depression set in.

Feeding, swaddling, changing, singing – all things daddy was feeling rather depressed about because mommy was excelling at them.

Then, things changed. I suddenly found my true calling as a father had more to do with the support I gave to my wife and child rather than the things I provided directly for my baby.

Where I had thought "all things are equal in child rearing," I now accept that my breastfeeding was ... well, impossible.

Never in my life had I been more useful around the house. The happiest moment of my life turned from joy to despair to relentless utility – putting together a changing table, crib and stroller in between cooking meals and washing clothes to support the major paradigm shift inspired by our new family addition. There was never a full trashcan, never an empty toiletpaper roll, never a coffee pot burner left on, and never did my wife have to cook dinner during that first month.

Relationships are rife with guilt brought on by expectations for what should or shouldn't be. But nothing compares to the guilt I felt for not feeling like I could support my newborn child enough. Only when I turned to supporting my wife did I discover my true calling as a father.

In general, the lessons learned from raising kids have parlayed to the lessons I needed to learn

about maintaining a healthy relationship with my wife. A family consists of every contributor, and without this combination of supporters, a family unit will not equate to emotional, physical and spiritual success.

Telling everyone how wonderful it is to bring a new boy into this world changed after my second born. Now, I'm honest with those who ask me how it is being a father of a newborn.

"Honestly," I tell them, "My work as a father is more about supporting my wife than it is about doing anything directly for the baby."

The best advice I ever got about relationships seems to be the same advice I received about raising kids: contribute to the cause without expecting reciprocity or expecting to do it equally. Over the course of weeks, months and years, a healthy relationship is reciprocated organically and measured in the success of the family unit.

There's a lot of talk about running businesses as "transformational" rather than "transactional". I took the same approach to running my relationship with my wife, and I've never regretted it.

Daddy's postpartum depression was real, but I overcame it through a transformative approach to supporting the greater cause of bringing in a healthy baby.