

Cara Ponzini-Beck realized early on that something wasn't right. "I had just brought my baby home from the hospital and within days I couldn't sleep, was really anxious, and my heart was racing but there was nothing physically wrong."

Fortunately, Cara's husband Colin knew about postpartum depression and anxiety (PPD/A). "I didn't see her acting like she normally would in challenging situations. She was giving up when usually she would work harder." He was supportive about encouraging Cara to talk to her doctor and find a counselor. (read more here)

Cara was pretty open to the idea that something physiological was happening, not just changing hormones. She went to see a counselor on a weekly basis who she found through the OHSU Center for Women's Health. For the first few months of her recovery, Cara went on antidepressants. Looking back, Cara says that, "I'm not a medication person, but I let go of the idea that it didn't make incompetent or an incapable (mother)." Now that baby Riley is older, she has stopped taking antidepressants.

Luckily for Cara she has a large support network and didn't feel the sense of isolation or loneliness that some mothers feel. "I came to BBC because I didn't have that feeling of 'no one's here to support me.' A lot of women don't have a peer support network at all and I could have used more. I started thinking maybe I should be there for someone else; to acknowledge that this is what I went through and now I'm better. I didn't want to continue the cycle of women who deal with depression, close the book, and move on as if it never happened. We can all learn from each other."

For Cara, working with BBC has been a good experience. "It's helped me reflect on why it's so important to understand PPD/A. I keep learning from my experience so I want to be here for others. It has also brought me a sense of closure. The less ashamed we are of reaching out to other mothers, the more we will find that our experiences aren't that uncommon. If 15-20% of women deal with some type of PMAD and many still go undiagnosed, we shouldn't fear sharing our story. To spread the word about BBC and what we do and to share my knowledge of it feels really great."