



Me, myself and PND

By Kate Silcock



Having lost myself at some point between my first pregnancy and maternity leave with my second, what started as baby blues and tiredness seemed to snowball into postnatal depression (PND), postnatal anxiety and a constant invasion of deeply unwanted and intrusive thoughts.

Although I had experienced anxiety prior to having my two children, nothing prepared me for PND – I felt numb and, on some days, hollow.

There were times on particularly tough days that I felt utterly empty. My husband recalls me having a constant vacant look in my eyes and without me realising it, the person I was ‘pre kids’ had completely disappeared. I had no idea how to be me (the person screaming inside) and raise and be responsible for two children.

The things I had once loved to do – running, socialising, reading, watching live music, (I could go on) – now felt like a chore, felt like something I should be doing rather than wanting to do, and it all felt like another opportunity for the self-doubt and irrational side of my brain to kick start.

And so I stopped. I stopped doing what I loved.

I lost all interest in doing things other than with my children. I wanted to escape the world and it just be me and my two daughters. I wanted to be with them at all times to ensure they were safe, but, conflictingly, I was also crying out for a break.

Having a supportive family meant that I did get to have a night off every now and again, but even then I worried. What if people thought I was weak? What if the kids missed me? (They were ten minutes away having a sleepover either with their grandparents or aunts!) What if something bad happened? What if people think I’m a bad mum? And, as strange as it sounds, when I did get a

break it would often be hindered by the fact that I would spend the entire night panicking and dreading the morning when I would have to collect them and do it all again.

I continued to trudge on. As that’s all I could do. I could feel myself slowly becoming more lost, but I did what so many do and kept it in, kept it under a tight wrap, behind a smile, a joke, a tidy(ish) house, kept my children well presented, washed my hair, put mascara on, that way no one could judge me, or say I wasn’t coping (because no one who’s struggling washes their hair and wears make-up, right?).

I struggle to pinpoint the exact trigger of my PND; it may have been when I was asked (repeatedly) ‘Did you not fancy breast feeding?’ (they had no idea of how hard I tried or wanted to). Or maybe it was when another delightful lady suggested I visit the doctors with my eight-month-old baby as ‘she seems to have a terrible cough – you probably shouldn’t be out with her’. I wanted to scream and cry that the only reason I was out, was the fact that she would only sleep in her pram when being walked and that she had been awake since, what felt like, her birth. Instead, I muttered ‘will do thanks’, and then continued to be furious with myself and her all the way home.

Or, it may have been when my two-year-old decided to go to the toilet in the middle of the supermarket. Phenomenal timing. Oh, and the fact that I was planning a wedding with two little ones probably didn’t help.

Who knows? It could have been a multitude of triggers, but I’ve accepted that it doesn’t matter. I did get it and, on some days, I still feel the weight of it.

For me, the biggest misconception is that I naively believed PND was solely when you didn’t bond with your baby and, because of this, I struggled for a long time thinking it was just me. I was just anxious. I was just tired.

And then I broke.

The most difficult part of ‘breaking’ as I called it, was the guilt. The constant berating myself for not being able to shake it was relentless. I had two healthy and happy children, yet I couldn’t enjoy them or, as a matter of fact, enjoy anything. I kept thinking of those unable to have children and those that have suffered heartbreak and I hated myself for feeling the way I did.

I still don’t feel ‘pre kids me’ and I’m not sure if I ever will (or if I’d want to). However, the fact that I’m beginning to live in the moment and get back into the things that inspire and motivate me, as well as accepting that it’s okay to be a mum AND to spend the time finding my true self again, are all welcome steps towards the sunshine.

If you would like to read more from Kate, you can follow her blog on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter @aliceinworryland.