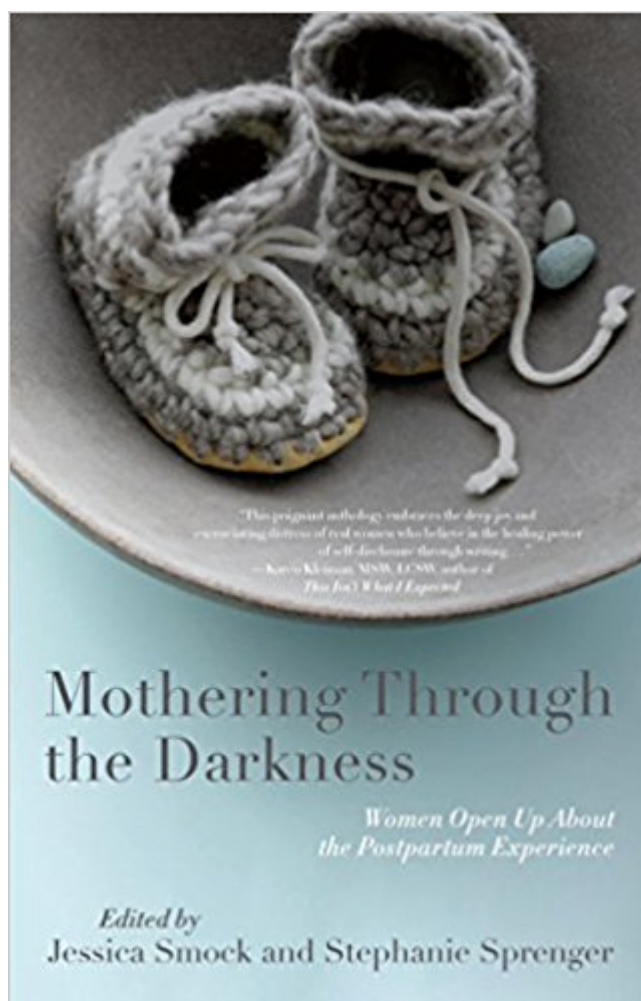


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# Mothering Through The Darkness: Women Open Up About The Postpartum Experience



## Synopsis

Approximately 1 in 7 women suffer from postpartum depression after having a baby. Many more may experience depression during pregnancy, postpartum anxiety, OCD, and other mood disorders. Postpartum depression is, in fact, the most common pregnancy-related complication—yet confusion and misinformation about this disorder are still widespread. And these aren't harmless myths: the lack of clarity surrounding mothers' mental health challenges can have devastating effects on their well-being and their identities as mothers, which too often leads to shame and inadequate treatment. In this one-of-a-kind anthology, thirty mothers break the silence to dispel myths about postpartum mental health issues and explore the diversity of women's experiences. Powerful and inspiring, *Mothering Through the Darkness* will comfort every mother who's ever felt alone, ashamed, and hopeless—and, hopefully, inspire her to speak out.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Stephanie Sprenger is a freelance writer, editor, music therapist, and mother of two young girls. Her work has been featured in *Brain, Child* magazine, *The Huffington Post*, and *Mamalode*, among other publications. She was a member of the 2013 cast of *Listen to Your Mother Denver* and was named one of *BlogHer's* 2014 Voices of the Year. She lives in Colorado with her family. Jessica Smock is a writer, educator, former teacher, researcher, and mom to a toddler son and new baby girl. She earned her doctorate in educational policy and development from Boston University last year and is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Wesleyan University. She writes about parenting, education, and

books at her blog, School of Smock, and her writing has been featured by Huffington Post, the Brain, Child website, Scary Mommy, iVillage, the Chicago Tribune, and Babble. She lives in Buffalo with her family, a Boston terrier, and a very bossy cat.

I knew this book would be excellent because of the editors' other book that I purchased ("My Other Ex" ). I was right. This is a unique and thoughtfully assembled collection of women's experiences with postpartum depression. While my lesser-known PMAD (perinatal mood and anxiety disorder ) of bipolar, peripartum onset/postpartum bipolar isn't represented, I can relate to the depression aspect of these mothers' stories. I definitely recommend "Mothering Through the Darkness" to any woman who has experienced a postpartum mood disorder so she can be inspired by moms who have made it to the other side of the darkness, and who are doing well enough to chronicle and share their journeys. That in itself is extraordinary and a cause for celebration!

Dyane Leshin-Harwood  
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If you've never experienced postpartum depression (PPD), it is tempting to write off books on the subject, thinking that they are not good investments of your time. I admit that I paused when considering whether to buy this book. I don't call what I experienced after my daughter's birth postpartum depression because it was not long-lasting and as soon as I started getting more than two hours of sleep per day, I vastly improved. But don't write off this book. Because this book isn't just for mothers who have experienced or who may experience PPD. It's for husbands and close friends, parents and siblings, doctors and nurses, pastors and counselors. It's for all of those people who interact closely with women during the postpartum period. Stephanie Sprenger and Jill Smock, editors of *The HerStories Project: Women Explore the Joy, Pain, and Power of Female Friendship* (2013) and *My Other Ex: Women's True Stories of Leaving and Losing Friends* (2014), have selected and compiled a stunning collection of essays on the postpartum experience that is desperately needed and should be part of the pregnancy literature canon, if there is such a thing. *Mothering through the Darkness* is not merely a collection of facts about what women experience during periods of postpartum depression. This is an articulate and engaging collective narrative of thirty-five essays that take the reader through a kaleidoscope of postpartum

experiences, ranging from postpartum depression, anxiety, and mood disorders as well as the lesser known post-adoption depression. Some writers sought help while in their darkest hours; others struggled through without help and lived to regret it. But all of these stories succeed in connecting the reader with the foggy inner world of the postpartum period. It is this book's ability to take the reader inside the mind of the mother that makes it a great read for those who are close to postpartum women. In the book's first essay, "Here Comes the Sun," poet Maggie Smith says, "...we all come into this world unfinished, still stitching ourselves together" (p. 13). The essays that follow uphold this same spirit of honorable incompleteness. The dignity of process and ongoingness. Each essay ends with an understanding that one is never complete, never perfect, never fully finished. Nearly every essay in this book caught and carried my full attention. They explored themes like the conflict between expectations and reality, healthy and unhealthy coping strategies, antenatal depression, and the darkest thoughts of self-harm and harming others. Their courage to write and share their stories will not only help you to recognize depression, but also to rethink how you can help a new mother who is experiencing PPD. The writers of these essays do not look away. They look directly at you. They make you see who they are. They make you see the face of the postpartum experience. And for that, I thank them.

This book has really helped me not feel alone and discouraged while suffering with ppd.

I love that you can read a story at a time, whenever you have a moment without feeling as though you have to figure out where you were in the plot... This book gives voice to the parts of motherhood that are not so easy to talk about... the sadness, the crushing despair, the anxiety, the intrusive thoughts, and the numbness that often affect women right after giving birth. This is a topic that desperately needs more attention. Though Sprenger and Smock's collection of essays represent diverse voices and experiences, the overarching message rings clear and true throughout: If you're struggling, you are not alone. Particular favorites that come to mind are the essays by Jen Simon and Alexandra DeRosas. \*Note: I received a free Advanced Reader Copy of this book.

There are moms everywhere who struggle with Postpartum Depression, anxiety, palpable pain and secret anguish behind the closed doors of homes everywhere. There are moms who are terrified at their own emotions, thoughts, and purpose in parenting. This book is needed, for all those moms who are suffering everywhere. They need to know they are not alone, and this book will offer them hope in forging through ways to get help. As I read through each woman's story, I was

captivated by the detailed descriptions they all shared so authentically. Many of them brought me to tears, as so much of it resonated with my own experience. I was surprised at my own personal response to this book. Although I was prepared to be deeply moved and saddened by the trials of so many precious mamas who went through such hardships, I was also comforted by them. I'm so grateful for these authors, who took these courageous steps to share the most difficult experience with being a mom. Their honesty will surely bless other moms who are drowning in their own darkness. They offer hope, where it is needed most.

As a mother who has recovered from PPD, and an advocate for women's rights and empowerment, I want to applaud Jessica and Stephanie for their part in shattering the silence and stigma of perinatal mood disorders. I longed for such a community of voices eight years ago when I was in the throes of darkness which started days after my son was born. Apart from books discussing the topic in a clinical way, and celebrity accounts, I found very little input from regular people who have walked the path before me. My hope is that this anthology would provide a glimmer of hope to women and their families out there who are looking to find solidarity in honest stories of struggle and healing.

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