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Have you ever felt weighed down by depression or stress? For new moms, post partum depression has the potential to derail a whole family, but with your support they are finding the courage they need to face it.

Mission Spotlight: Nora's Story



Nora* fought back tears at her five-day-old baby's first check up. This was her third child, so she knew the first weeks and months after birth would be stressful, but she did not expect to feel so hopeless.

"Nora's baby was perfect, but it was clear to me right away that Nora herself was struggling," says Dr. Sharlene Selvaratnam. "She had a deep sadness and uncertainty in herself that suggested post partum depression."

Nora had a very complex and stressful life. In addition to adjusting to life with a new baby, her husband was unemployed, her mother had been diagnosed with cancer, and the family was in the process of being evicted from their apartment. She had not had time to pay attention to her own health which included asthma, obesity, and clinical depression.

"As we focused together on her baby, Nora began to open up about herself, and found the courage to seek help," said Dr. Selvaratnam. "She worked with me on her medical issues, and, as she gained confidence, agreed to meet with my colleague and psychologist Dr. Tracey Mohr during one of our regular visits."

"Seeking behavioral health treatment can be very hard do," says Dr. Mohr. "The perceived stigma of 'mental illness' is still common. Some patients never take that initial step. But when it is introduced in the context of primary care, from a provider you already trust, it becomes easier."

With the support of both her doctor and therapist Nora was able to take control of her life. Relief from post partum depression gave her room to pay attention to herself with healthier choices that included exercise, better nutrition, and close attention to her asthma medication. As she felt better physically she was able to exercise and lost much of the weight that was both physically and psychologically weighing her down. She and her husband both became more engaged in raising their three children, and she bravely faced the challenges as her mother continued to battle cancer. Finally, this fall they were to secure a new apartment.

"I am proud of Nora and all that she has been able to achieve," says Dr. Selvaratnam. "Post partum depression has the potential to completely derail a family, but because it was identified early she was able to meet and conquer it."