

Video Transcript "UNRAVELLING EVE"

A Molloy Projects on Time Production

Produced by Joan Molloy following discussions with Action on Postpartum Psychosis members with personal experience of Postpartum Psychosis.

Postpartum Psychosis hits everybody; anyone can experience it.

"I can't cope with having a child with whom I have no bond. I know I must love him at some level".

We have people from absolutely all walks of life, all backgrounds, all social sort of economic backgrounds and a variety of cultures. I think probably we have virtually someone from everywhere in the world on this Unit.

"I just felt so different and separated from everybody else".

"I thought she would be better off without me but at that point I couldn't get rid of myself".

"I wasn't depressed". "Yes, I was suicidal but I wasn't depressed in that way". I wasn't crying; I couldn't cry".

"I couldn't really care for her, feed her and keep her warm because I suddenly felt that I couldn't do that for me.

"Did you love your baby?"

"I wouldn't have known how to answer that".

ILLNESS

"The first time I wasn't diagnosed properly. I was diagnosed with Post Natal Depression and I thought I had given birth to the anti Christ. My child, I believed, had little devils living inside his stomach which would come out at night and dance around my kitchen floor".

"I just remember looking out and all the leaves were just, you know, like a really calm wind and scintillating and twittering. I had just been having all these nice hallucinations; lots of rainbow colours; everything bright and sparkly. I thought, this is lovely, fantastic, I'm so blessed. Then by 11 o'clock at night, I was looking out, thinking it was really dark and there was a moon and it was split Yin and Yang and everything was symbolic."

"By the time I got up to London I was trying to commit suicide. I wasn't on 24 hour watch, I think I was on hourly Obs but they hadn't realised that when I asked to go for a bath I was trying to drown myself but it's harder than it looks. I remember at one point I was trying to hold my breath until I suffocated but of course, I passed out and then of course you naturally breathe again and in the meantime my Psychiatrist had assessed me but they asked me if I knew why I was there and I just nodded. Of course, he was asking did I realise I was unwell but what I thought he was asking was did I realise I was being recruited for MI 6."

"They were audible so I had lots of music; voices of famous people as well as relatives. Everything went very bright and everything was intensified hugely and my life sped forward like a spool of film and it was almost like rushing to the edge of my life and getting to, I suppose, what we would term as Heaven. My husband was called and then I was more and more irritated. I think the euphoria started to turn into this extreme tiredness and I got irritated and cross".

"By the morning I was so suicidal I tried to set fire to myself. Piled up all my magazines and my clothes and set fire to them. At which point they had to evacuate the entire Unit; call the Fire Brigade; get me out of there; tranquilise me and it was at that point they Sectioned me because I was clearly not well.

REACTIONS

"If we the people who have had mental health problems can't get over the stigma, then how can people who haven't?

Going mad, losing your mind but how do you explain it? In the middle of Boots having to use words like that and try and sum it up in a nutshell and not have any understanding. I was left on my own to cope. My mum and dad certainly know first hand because they were there every day, visiting. It's very frightening having mental health problems. She never really understood, she wasn't interested or gave the impression she wasn't interested."

"My dad was in his 70's and he had a polio injection so he could come over and change my son's nappies."

"When I told her Postpartum Psychosis What's that? So I really struggled and said, "Well, it's like losing your mind" and there was nothing back and I just felt very vulnerable".

"I went back to work after six months but I had great fear that they would take my registration away from me because of this 'fit to practice' losing my mind. I was terrified to report it, so I never told anybody at work".

CARE

"I don't think they ask enough questions about Family History".

"I was visited at home by my Health Visitor three days after the birth and she didn't see any of the signs. 24 hours later I was in A & E".

"12 instances where I could have been referred. All these warning signs that I was very ill were all missed and then the Crisis Team didn't notice any of the signs".

"You know when they do your booking in appointment they ask a couple of questions about mental health and tick the boxes? I don't think they ask enough questions about Family History and think they should be more vigilant, in the same way they are about other physical issues they should be about mental health".

"When I first went into hospital I remember seeing a Nurse in the corridor and saying, "What's wrong with me?" All I wanted was an explanation, I knew something was wrong with me but nobody told me. She just looked at me as if I was stupid. "You've got Post Natal Depression" and I thought but I'm not depressed."

"I think sometimes you're treated like a bundle of chemicals and they just want to get the balance of chemicals right and get you out. No one sits you down and explains what Psychosis is and what could have happened; treats you like a human being. Economically it's a false economy it's so much cheaper to find someone a really decent bed in a really good Mother and Baby Unit. Best way to get you better and your child and you keep the bond, get so much help. It's better for the child in the long run and society. They get you into a decent routine, they have trained Nurses, whether they are Paediatric Nurses, Psychiatric Nurses, they have Occupational Therapy, activities you can sign up for if you want to and you have your peers who have been through the same thing that you have".

RECOVERY

"Obviously the guilt after years and years afterwards is horrendous"

"I've just started to build up a bit of confidence. I've just got swept away again."

"When I was discharged from the Mother and Baby Unit they didn't tell him what to expect. Okay a bit fragile but if anyone asked me a question or decision I just couldn't do it, I was absolutely paralysed".

"They were trying to ask me everyday so many different things about what were normal to me but I didn't get back to my normal me for 18 months.

"It was the longest year of our lives you know?"

"A walk to the shops and back was a great big step and also I suppose the drugs. I wasn't walking properly anyway and they had to give me other medication. But it was like relearning to do everything again; I couldn't wait in a queue. In fact the first time I did get to the top of the road, my mom would come with me and then I couldn't wait at the Post Office, I had to come back".

RETURN

I tried to forget about it for a while, not talk about it but I kept getting flashbacks so everyday something would trigger something so actually that's why I'm here, getting involved in the Forum and support because I feel that's part of my healing too. As he's turning into a toddler, slowly I just started to enjoy I laughed with him today and then suddenly I realise, "Yeah, I do love him".

"It's like waking up isn't it?" "Yes, it is. Fantastic And then when I got better, because I got better quite quickly I came off the medication in a few weeks. It was quite miraculous the difference, I was making decisions, I could laugh, I could cry, I felt like me again".

"The first time he was three and half he said, "I love you so much mummy" in the Post Office queue, out the blue"

"And your heart stops and you think Awwwww"

"And I just like give him a squeeze and tell him I love him back"

"Yes, as you say they're special moments, they're so special and when that bond does come its amazing isn't it?"

"Yeah, you get better and you will have a bond with your child"