



TAMING
THE Monster
Finding HOPE After
Postpartum Depression



FATHERS & **Depression**

Taming the Monster: Fathers and Depression A Guide for New Fathers

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This book is intended to be a guide and an informational resource. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment.

Always seek the advice of a qualified mental health professional with any questions you may have regarding a medical or mental health condition.



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WELCOME DAD



Everyone talks about the joy of having a baby, but it can be tough. Sleepless nights, constant worries and feeling like you must get everything right can wear you down. If you are reading this, you might be one of the 1 in 10 new dads who experience depression or serious distress after a baby is born.

You are not alone. Struggling with your mental health does not make you weak. Postpartum depression affects fathers, as well and it takes courage to face it.

I know what that feels like. My husband and I have gone through our own mental health struggles while raising our children. It was hard and there were times I questioned if we were failing. I've also spoken with dads just like you, men who love their kids but have felt angry, irritable, or withdrawn. One dad shared how he felt invisible while rocking his baby at 3 a.m., wondering if he was doing it all wrong. I hear you and I see you.

This brief guide, **Taming the Monster: Fathers and Depression**, helps you recognise signs of PPD in men and provides practical steps to improve well-being. You will find tips for mind-body exercises, reconnecting with your partner, building your support network and knowing when to get professional help.

Asking for help is one of the strongest things you can do for yourself and your family. Turn the page and start your journey toward hope, clarity, and getting back to the life and family you love.



UNDERSTANDING POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION (PPD) IN MEN

PPD is a serious medical condition that affects fathers, not just mothers. It's often misunderstood, leading to unnecessary suffering.

It's More Than Sadness

Men's symptoms can often differ from women's. Instead of intense sadness, PPD in men may present as:

- Irritability, agitation, or anger.
- Restlessness and withdrawal from family/friends.
- Fatigue, loss of energy, or feeling slowed down.

The Stigma Barrier

Many men see depression as a weakness and are reluctant to seek help. Tragically, four times as many men as women die by suicide.

Think Deeper: Recognising the signs is the first step.

Seeking treatment is a sign of strength. It's how you get back to your job, family and activities you enjoy.

Around 1 in 10 new fathers may suffer depression or significant distress after a baby's birth.



MIND-BODY CONNECTION

ACTIONABLE STEPS

Incorporate simple, powerful activities daily to manage stress and boost your mood naturally.

Sun, Sleep and Serotonin

- **Boost Your Mood Naturally**

Exposure to sunshine helps boost serotonin, a mood-regulating neurotransmitter.

Try to get at least 15 minutes of sunlight exposure daily.

- **Prompt:** Can you schedule a short walk outside during a workday to get sun exposure?

- **The Power of Exercise**

Even if you can't manage an intense routine, taking small daily steps to **become active** can really help lift your mood. A regular exercise routine is a powerful tool.

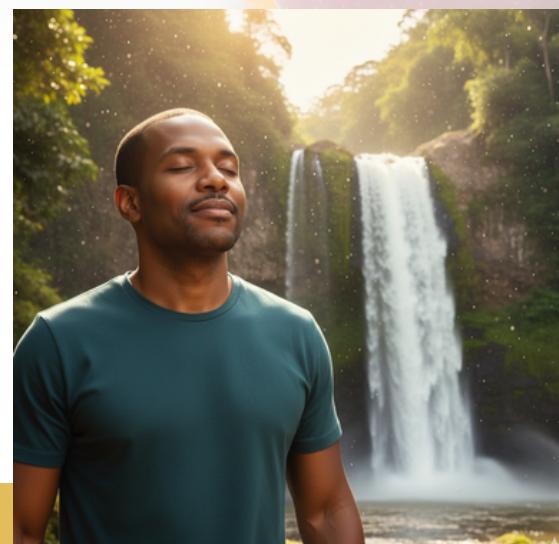
- **Prompt:** What is one five-minute physical activity you could commit to doing today?

- **Rest and Routine:**

Establish a daily routine that includes rest, healthy eating, exercise and social time

Work on a good sleep routine to manage sleep affected by depression.

- **Prompt:** What time will you put your phone away tonight to start your sleep routine?



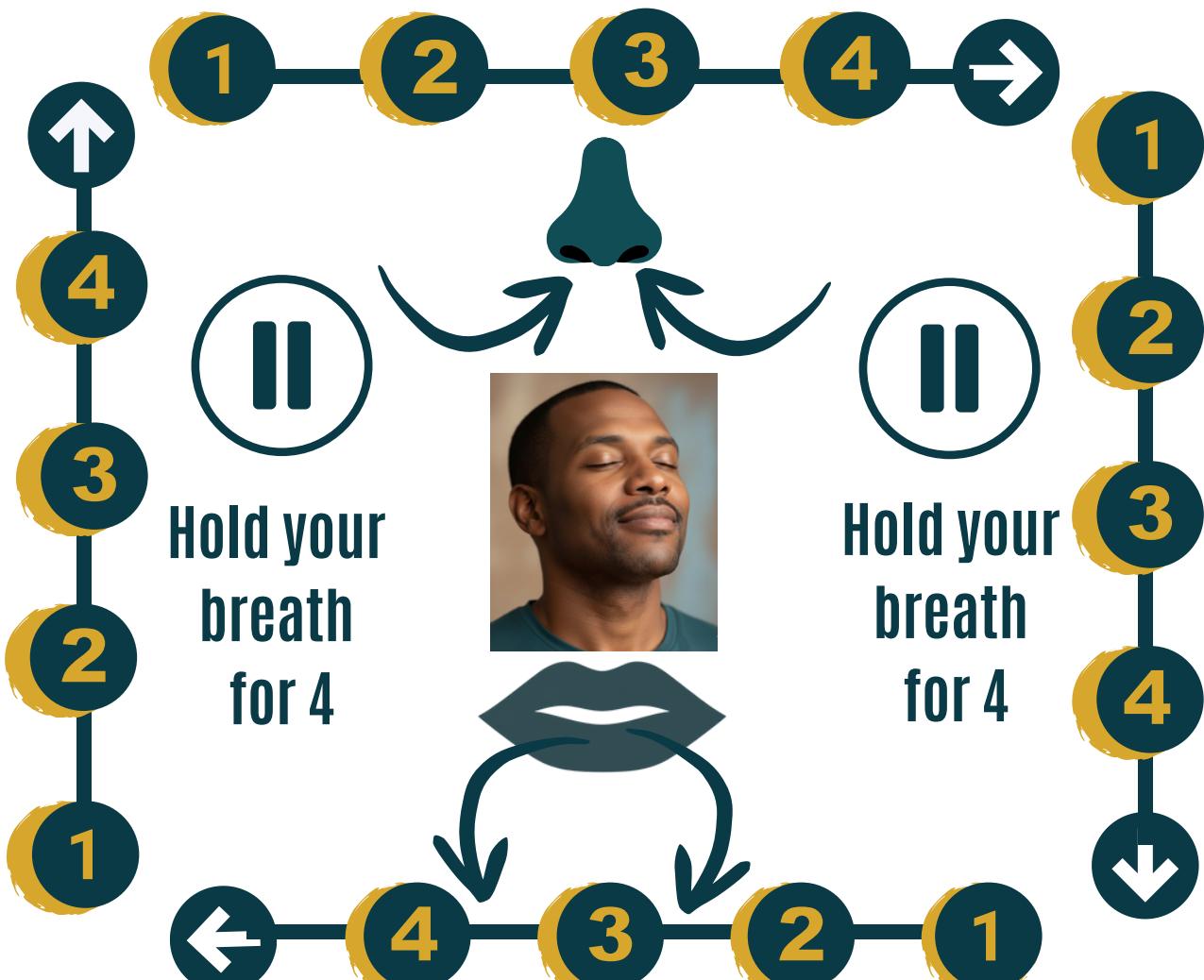
“In nature, the body recalibrates. Heart rate steadies, cortisol falls and the mind finds direction.”

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Quick Calm: Breathing Exercises

Breathing techniques quickly activate the body's rest and digest system, helping to calm the mind and reduce anxiety.

Inhale slowly for a count of 4



Exhale slowly for 4

- **Think Deeper:** Use this technique before a difficult conversation, during stressful moments, or when the baby is crying intensely.

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For Employers: Supporting parental mental health strengthens engagement, retention, team cohesion and reduces hidden costs that impact the bottom line.

PARTNER CONNECTION & INTIMACY

When intimacy fades after birth, many men feel unseen, disconnected and drift into depression

Conversational Roadmap

Honest Check-In

- Share your feelings of hopelessness, fatigue, or irritability. Acknowledge that parenting challenges are affecting you, too.
- **Starter:** "I know we're both exhausted, but I need to share that I'm feeling overwhelmed and have very little motivation lately. I need your support."

Validate Her Trauma/Pain: Acknowledge your partner's experience, especially regarding physical recovery or the effects of potential birth trauma. Your empathy is vital.



Gently Reintroducing Intimacy

- Intimacy is not just sex. It is closeness, connection, and emotional safety.
- **Mini Dates:** Prioritise your relationship by having dedicated mini-dates with your partner. This reintroduces connection outside of parenting roles.
- **Redefine Closeness:** Discuss how to be close without pressure. This could include holding hands, cuddling, or extended quality time.
- **Question:** "What feels safe and comforting for us right now?"
- **Discuss Physical Readiness:** Be respectful of the physical and emotional effects of recovery. Openly discuss timing, comfort, and desires before any physical steps are taken.
- **Question:** What are your needs for feeling safe and respected as we consider physical intimacy again?

STRENGTHENING YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM (TURNING TO OTHERS)

Social Connection

- Reach out to loved ones and socialise with friends to gain new perspectives and prevent isolation.

Community

- Connect with a prayer group or other community for spiritual and social support.

Support Groups

- Consider joining a PPD or general support group to share your journey and feel less isolated.
- SADAG runs numerous Support Groups nationwide.
<https://www.sadag.org>
- 0800 567 567



Only 50% of staff
struggling with mental
health access care.

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WHEN AND HOW TO GET PROFESSIONAL HELP

When symptoms persist, medical treatment and therapy offer real relief, restoring clarity, balance, and hope.

Get Educated

Ask your doctor or therapist for information, or look online.

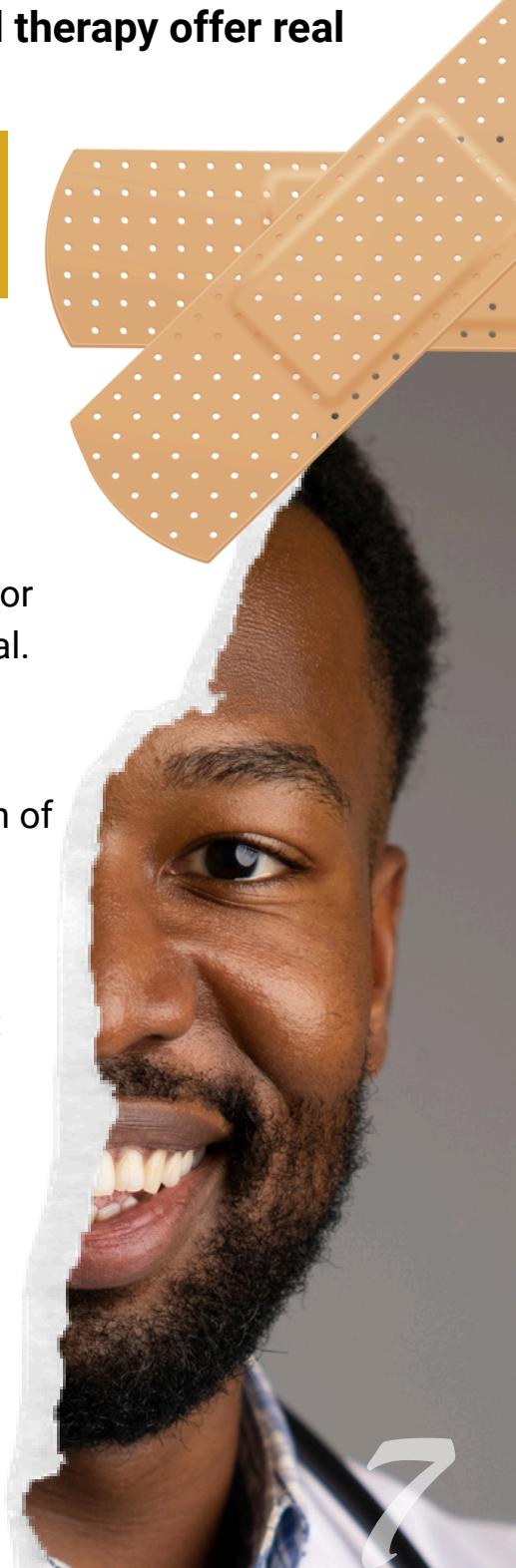
Seek Help If Symptoms Persist

- If you feel down, sad, hopeless, or lack motivation for at least two weeks, see a Mental Health Professional.

Treatment Options

- The most effective treatment is often a combination of **talk therapy/counselling** and if needed, **medication**.
- **A GP or psychiatrist prescribes medication** to help balance chemicals in your body. It may take at least three weeks to start working.
- **Psychotherapy** helps you understand your thoughts and improve coping skills.

Take the Edinburgh Postnatal
Depression Scale test (on our website)



KNOW WHERE YOU STAND

The Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS)

Dad, sometimes the strategies in this guide, like exercise, breathing and connecting, are not enough. That is okay. There are times when the challenges run deeper and recognising that is one of the strongest things you can do for your family.

The Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS), available on our website, is a simple tool that helps you spot signs of depression, not just in your partner, but in yourself. It can highlight feelings of sadness, anxiety, irritability, or loss of joy that are easy to ignore while you are busy holding everything together.

Sometimes the trauma of your past, or your relationship with your own father, can spill over into your new role as a parent. In these cases, you need extra reinforcements to build your new family and the EPDS can help show where support is needed.

Taking the test gives you clarity. It turns that heavy, “I’m barely coping” feeling into something you can talk about with a doctor or therapist. It is not a weakness. It is a way to protect yourself, support your partner, and care for your family in the strongest way possible.





TAMING THE MONSTER

Finding HOPE After Postpartum Depression

KIM VERMAAK

The Mindset Whisperer

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Kim Vermaak is the author of *Seven Letters* and *Taming the Monster of Postpartum Depression*, a powerful testament to her **lived experience** and mission to **break the stigma around parental mental health**. As a **keynote speaker** and **Mental Health Activist**, she shares raw and **honest stories** backed by heartfelt insights from mothers and fathers whose voices are too often unheard.

After battling **postnatal depression with all three of her children**, most painfully during her first pregnancy, when she had **terrifying visions of wanting to hold her baby under water**, Kim found the courage to **reach out for help**. That pivotal moment became the **catalyst for her healing journey** and her commitment to **helping others heal**.

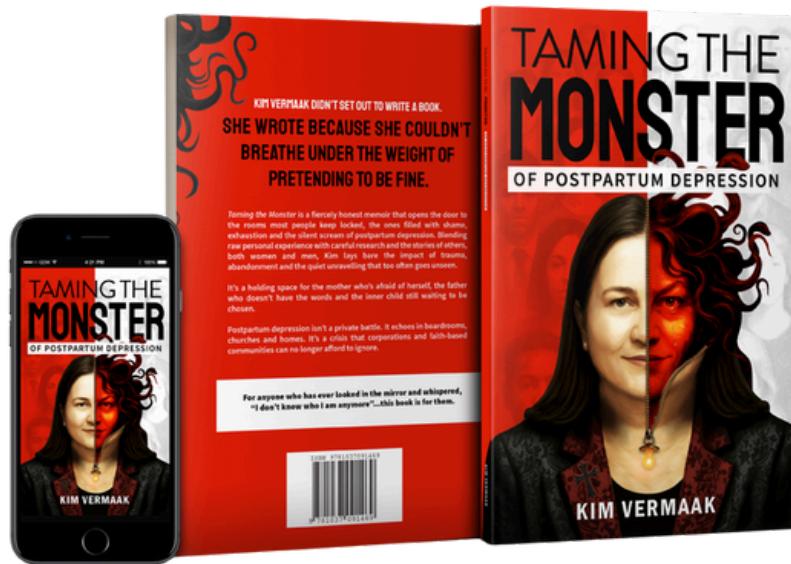
Today, Kim blends her skills as a **Mindset Whisperer**, **Book Coach** and host of the **Taming the Monster** to foster **honest conversations** about **mental health** on stages, in her writing and through impactful media, making her an **ideal speaker on postpartum depression**.

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by Kim Vermaak



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