

cribnotes

A scary time, but now they're safe YOU'RE GIVING FAMILIES A SAFE PLACE TO GROW

Diane was working with new moms as a postpartum doula when she gave birth to her son Louis. A few months later, she experienced later-onset postpartum depression.

I thought I was just a bad mom – I didn't think I could get postpartum depression because I know so much about it.

Due to destructive thoughts, a disassociation from reality and other troubling symptoms, Diane sought out help. She began receiving psychiatric care and medication through the Mother-Baby Program at Hennepin Healthcare.

Then, after a particularly rough patch that included suicidal thoughts, Diane decided to seek emergency in-patient care on Christmas Eve 2015. Diane spent Louis' first Christmas in the hospital.

The Nursery and Hennepin Healthcare work together to support families experiencing mental health crises, so when Diane was discharged five days later, she was connected with a social worker from the Nursery who provided home visits to support her and keep up with her progress.

Diane shares her experience in hopes that it will help other new moms experiencing mental health concerns.

How did you feel about having a home visitor, and was it helpful?

It was so helpful to have someone see me and my baby together at home and affirm that I wasn't a bad mom. It helped to have someone assess my son, too. I was afraid I had broken him somehow. It was really hard to believe that I hadn't profoundly damaged him because I had been so out of my mind. To have someone sit with me and say, "Nope, I don't see anything interesting here. I see a loving mom and a well-bonded child," was so reassuring.

What happened during the visits?

We set goals for me to work toward; she tracked my progression toward a more healthy interaction with my son, and I could see it. Someone came at one point to video us, and then she showed it to me later so I could see how I reacted to my son. To have someone come in and say, 'You seem fine,' – I didn't believe them at first. I felt a lot of shame. I thought, 'People think I'm a good mom but I'm not.' People don't talk about these types of feelings and experiences. You don't see many people on social media posting about severe parenting struggles.

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*It was a long journey.
But the reassurance, and just having
someone there, literally saved my life.*

Diane's story

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How long did the home visits last?

She came weekly or biweekly for six to eight months. It's a long-term thing – that's the idea, that the same person is with you regularly. It mattered so much just to have someone there for support.

Did you ever use the Nursery to care for your child?

No, we lived in the top half of my parents' duplex at the time, and they helped. I absolutely would have used it otherwise – the hospital made us very aware of this offering. They explained that grownups need a chance to be grownups and address grownup things, while the Nursery cares for your child.

How are you doing now?

My son and I are great now, although it was probably three years until I felt totally mentally fine. I'm working full time and just finished grad school.

You're now a Circle of Hope member. What motivated you to stay in touch?

I wanted to give back to the Nursery. Once I have more time, I want to volunteer at the Nursery, but for now I can make a gift each month, so I've joined the monthly giving program.

What do you want others to know?

The world is a hard space – it's difficult to know where you can do the most good. Everyone came from a home of some kind. If we can help people in their most intimate place, it is going to make the world better as a whole. I was lucky to have a huge support network of friends and family. There were at least 12 people I could've dropped my kid off with. It's so scary to think of people who don't have that – to think of moms who don't have support and are afraid – you can't grow in a place of fear. You have to have a sense of safety. The Nursery provides that for families.

MINDFULNESS ACTIVITY

Focus on Your Heartbeat

The heartbeat exercise is a wonderful grounding activity because it allows your child to focus on the body's sensations. Anyone can try this if they are feeling stressed or anxious about a task or project.

Ready for a burst of energy? Three simple steps:

1. Ask your child to stop what they are doing and take a break.
2. Have them stand up and either jump up and down or do jumping jacks for one minute.
3. At the end of that minute, have them place their hand on their heart and pay attention to how their heartbeat and breathing feel. They can close their eyes, tell you what they're feeling, or just simply be quiet and focus.

Tuning in to the physical body is a wonderful way to redirect focus. With this new burst of energy, your child will feel a new motivation to complete the task they were working on!



MINDFUL STRESS REDUCTION PRACTICES:

Talking about feelings

Safety is top of mind for every caregiver as children return to school, but in addition to the physical precautions we take, it's also important to care for our emotional safety too.

The pandemic has created significant stress and trauma for children. You can help your child by creating a safe and supportive space to talk about feelings.

Children may be excited about returning to school to see teachers and friends, but they understandably may also be anxious. When a child shows emotion, it's a perfect time to connect, listen, and validate their feelings to help them process the situation.

Ways to help ease your child's anxiety

- Listen thoughtfully and without judgment to let your child know you understand and accept their feelings.
- Acknowledge your child's feelings and help label them (nervous, sad, angry, etc.). You can try saying "You seem nervous."
- Help calm your child by empathizing and validating their experience. This lets them know it's normal to feel different emotions. For example, "It makes sense that you're feeling a bit scared about this. It can be hard to have such a big change from out summertime routine."
- Sometimes it can help to talk through specific concerns your child may have. This way you can help them problem solve or create a plan to make your child feel more stable/less uncertain in a healthy way.

Keep in mind that your child is doing the best they can in the moment. The most important thing you can do is listen and express understanding and empathy, so they know they have a safe place to talk about their feelings.



The world is a hard place.

You can't grow from a place of fear. You have to have a sense of safety.

Thank you for giving families like Diane's a safe place to grow.



MPR PRESIDENT:

“The choices we make today — right now — will shape who today’s children become”

Just like you, Duchesne Drew, president of Minnesota Public Radio, cares deeply about our community. He knows firsthand how important it is to have resources and support when growing up, just like you make possible for families who lean on the Nursery. Recently, he shared his perspective and a bit of his background with us.

My parents divorced when I was two, and my dad was inconsistent. So my mom had to do it all.

Some of my earliest memories are of playing at a Head Start childcare center on Pitkin Avenue in Brooklyn, New York. It was a short walk from our house. Though I didn’t realize it at the time, that Head Start center was a huge support to my mom.

It allowed her to work so she could provide for us, and it was a foundation that prepared me for kindergarten, elementary school, high school, Columbia University, Northwestern University and leading Minnesota Public Radio. I see the through line from that walk to Head Start to the life my wife and I have been able to provide our two children.

The choices we make today — right now — will shape who today’s children become. And who they become will shape the world in which we live. They can be our doctors, our schoolteachers, the owners of our favorite restaurants, the journalists who help us make sense of the world around us, the music hosts who bring us solace and hope, the neighbors who shovel our sidewalks when we’re traveling, and more.

Or they can be the people we pass uneasily on the streets and remind us that we didn’t do enough to invest in them.

Today you can provide life-changing support to families that just need a little grace at a critical stage in their children’s lives.

These parents are doing the best they can during incredibly tough times, and you can help them position their children to live their best lives.



YES!

I'll provide life-changing support to families.

Please use my gift in the enclosed envelope to provide life-changing support to families!



stronger families • brighter futures