

# An interdisciplinary approach to perinatal anxiety and depression

## CASE STUDY

Jade is 27 years old and gave birth seven weeks ago to her first child Oscar. She has been in a relationship with Tom, Oscar's father for five years.

To her surprise, she found pregnancy really challenging. Social media kept showing "picture perfect" images of other "glowing" women experiencing the happiest times of their lives. She had been looking forward to being one of them, sporting a "perfect round bump", but instead she found her changing shape made her feel awkward and uncomfortable, and like she was just fat.

This made her very self-conscious, particularly as she felt no-one could even tell she was pregnant until right at the end of her pregnancy. It worried her so much she would even cry about it. She made sure not to let anyone know how upset she was though as she wanted to keep up appearances and look like a happy "normal" expectant mum.

As her due date came closer, she started to feel really scared. She had heard other mums talk about this being the happiest times of their lives, but she didn't feel that way. Jade didn't feel excited to be having her baby, even Tom was more excited than her.

During her pregnancy Jade felt anxious about the big transition, thinking about all the things she would have to do as a mother and questioning how she would cope and wondering if she would be a good enough mother. She sometimes confided these thoughts to Tom, but he would say "don't be

silly, you will be amazing. It is normal to feel scared".

Jade often felt anxious about all sorts of things, overthinking scenarios with friends and family, sometimes not sleeping due to the worry. This anxiety became worse while she was pregnant.

When she had her first appointment with the midwife Jade was given a raft of pamphlets and information about the birth. Her thoughts started to spiral out of control and she felt very scared.

Once Oscar was born the challenges kept coming. He wasn't a good sleeper. When her maternal child health nurse asked her how he was sleeping, Jade told her he was good because she didn't want the nurse to think she was a bad mum. Jade constantly felt inadequate but was too scared to tell anyone. She didn't even want to ask too many questions. When she did pluck up the courage to ask about something, she often felt that she didn't get the right answers, so she decided it was easier to just get on with it.

Jade felt like a failure. She wasn't happy and wasn't enjoying the whole baby experience at all. She felt ripped off and asked herself "Why can't I be like other mums?"

Hear directly from Jade in this video produced by COPE

<https://www.cope.org.au/thetruth/pregnancy/>