

Book Review

Transformed by Postpartum Depression: Women's Stories of Trauma and Growth. Walker Karraa. Amarillo, TX: Praeclarus Press. ISBN: #978-1-939807-21-2. ASIN # B00STTT334

In Walker Karraa's *Transformed by Postpartum Depression: Women's Stories of Trauma and Growth* the impact of postpartum depression and its pervasiveness in the lives of women in the United States and around the world is discussed. Karraa discusses the background, methodology, findings, and interpretations of the qualitative research she conducted on 20 women who had given birth and struggled with postpartum depression based in the United States. The real-life postpartum experiences recounted in this book offer unique insight that supplements the traditional, quantitative research data that has been collected on postpartum depression most of which has been focused on disease-based suffering rather than capturing the lived emotional experiences that surround the transformation from despair and suffering to reflection and perspective.

Karraa's research centered on women who described their postpartum depression journeys as "transformational" experiences and allowed each participant to define their experiences in their own words. Karraa discusses the steady prevalence of postpartum depression in women in the United States, as well as the lack of responsiveness by medical professionals and researchers. Karraa expresses her desire to change the way postpartum depression is viewed in the social and medical context, emphasizing viewpoints other than the medical model. In *Transformed by Postpartum Depression: Women's Stories of Trauma and Growth*, Karraa places a heavy emphasis on changing the public narrative on postpartum from one that is all about sensationalized stories of psychosis to one that broadcasts the symptoms and early identification of postpartum depression for the general public as well as clinicians. At several points during the book, Karraa highlights the need for early education and intervention during the prenatal periods by the provider so that women will be able to recognize the symptoms before they worsen, receive early treatment and reduce the stigma surrounding depression. Throughout the book, Karraa dissects the participant's interviews in chapters that mirror

the progression through the disease, such as “Before PPD,” “Ending PPD: Getting Better,” and “After PPD: I Was a Different Person.”

In each chapter, Karraa discusses the interview responses in the context of different stages of postpartum depression, while also highlighting themes that emerged among the various interviews, such as the lack of patient and family understanding of the issue, the feelings of aloneness experienced by the women, and the opportunity for growth that was often experienced during recovery. In chapter two, "Before PPD" she discusses the physical as well as psychological symptoms that are often misunderstood by the mothers and missed by their providers. In chapter three, "No One Picked Up The Pieces," she describes how the many providers women see during the perinatal period aren't assessing for current depression and are missing the signs and symptoms and, therefore, allowing the progression of the illness to affect babies, mothers and co-parents. Chapter four, "Ending PPD," gives the reader insights into these women's experiences of disclosing their symptoms and the variety of resources they used to get better.

The greatest strength of this book lies in chapter five, where the mothers talk about their transformed sense of self, transformed relationships, and transformed selves in the world. This is where hope lies. The women described healing their relationships with partners, families of origin, and friendships that were diminished by the symptoms of their postpartum depression. They moved forward in changing their careers, returning to school, and making important professional and vocational changes that would foster their newfound confidence and compassion.

Karraa culminates the book with a peer review and interviews with clinicians, such as certified nurse midwives, social workers, and psychologists, who specialize in postpartum depression, allowing them to give their own insight into postpartum depression and how women can grow through it. Many of these postpartum depression “experts” echoed Karraa’s findings and described postpartum depression as an under-researched, traumatic experience that has the potential to change a woman’s life trajectory, reframing the way a woman experiences the world, her life, and those around her.

Transformed by Postpartum Depression: Women’s Stories of Trauma and Growth by Walker Karraa utilizes interviews with 20 women and provides critical insight into the lived experience of postpartum depression. Instead of expanding on the medical model perspective of postpartum depression, around which many quantitative studies have been conducted, Karra analyzes interviews with women who have experienced postpartum depression and had positive transformations in order to get qualitative data on postpartum depression experiences. Karraa’s research focus can be instrumental in reframing the way postpartum depression is viewed in the media and by medical

professionals and can help more women identify the symptoms, receive adequate treatment, and experience a “transformational” growth. The process of recovering from postpartum depression requires the development of courage and resilience, which are both qualities that women can carry with them for the rest of their lives.

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