

## An Introduction to BBB for Our Members' Partners

We hold this couples session because we know that the emotional struggles that can accompany having a baby and becoming a family affect not just women but also couples and families. As new parents you are faced with responsibilities and demands upon your time and attention that may be very different from the way you lived before. We want to share with you what we tell our group members right from the beginning.

### First, you are not alone.

Around 15% of all postpartum women experience some kind of perinatal mood disorder. It is proposed that around 10% of male partners also experience some degree of postpartum depression. And this is a non-discriminating problem. While economic status, family and friend support systems, educational level, prior mental health status, can all have an influence on the likelihood of developing mood changes, none of these guarantees that one will or won't experience such a challenge. Usually it is a combination of genetic/hormonal and personal/contextual factors that come together to create the circumstances that bring about mood changes – and this can affect any mother or father.

Everything you know about yourself, your partner, and your life together can seem to be thrown up into the air and to be falling down in random, unpredictable ways. It takes all families time to process the new world of becoming parents, come to grips with some older issues from pre-parenting times that may not have been problematic before, and come up with their own “new normal.” When there are additional emotional challenges, this journey can be more difficult and take longer.

### Second, you are not to blame.

No one chooses to have this happen or willingly creates the circumstances that can lead to a mood changes. As we all know, sometimes ---- happens!

### Third, you will get better, with help.

That's why we offer our groups. That's why Evanston Hospital offers its 24/7 Moms Hotline (866-364-6667). That's why online resources like Postpartum Support International ([www.psi.org](http://www.psi.org)) and Postpartum Progress (<http://www.postpartumprogress.com>) have such popular and helpful websites.

Throughout the five years we have been offering our groups we have found that one of the most shared feelings of our group members is isolation. When you are struggling emotionally, it can be very difficult to feel comfortable around other new mothers or other women who have not experienced this kind of struggle. Families, friends, and acquaintances may not know what to say, or understand how you are feeling. They may assume you must not be appreciating your good fortune at becoming a mother or trying hard enough to adjust to this new and demanding life stage.

When we bring together women who share the difficult feelings that can be associated with the perinatal phase, we help to create a community of women who “get” each other, who are completely non-judgmental, and who treat each other with kindness and understanding. This opportunity can be enormously helpful to our group members. No matter what the

individual story of any one group member is, someone else in the group can identify with her. Group members discover a roomful of women who understand their experience completely. If there is any "magic" about groups, this is it: an opportunity to share your story and know you will be responded to with understanding and compassion.

We at BBB are also very strength focused. We view perinatal mood struggles as an episode in the lives of our group members, one which is painful and uninvited, but not a full picture of who any woman is - only what she is currently experiencing. There is so much else to share and so much we can laugh about and enjoy together during our groups.

We hope that you will feel comfortable enough to share some of the highs and lows of the past weeks and months with us during this meeting. We understand that because you don't know us, or the others in the group, well that you may feel hesitant to speak as openly as your partners have grown comfortable doing. Share as little or as much as you wish, we are just pleased to have you join us for this session.