

***For a review copy of *When Postpartum Packs a Punch: Fighting Back and Finding Joy*, please contact Ken Tackett at Praeclarus Press, 603-724-7995 or ken@praeclaruspress.com.**

Postpartum Depression: ‘Been There, Here’s How I Conquered That,’ Says Author of New Book

Spurred on by her own experience, longtime journalist Kristina Cowan brings PPD out of the shadows, sheds light on best approaches to overcoming illness

Naperville, Illinois: When Kristina Cowan had her first child, she was overwhelmed—not by the joy she expected, but by postpartum depression. Up to one in four new mothers experience postpartum depression (PPD) and for many, like Cowan, it comes without warning.

Motivated by her experience, and grateful for the support she received when she asked for help with her own postpartum illness, Cowan set out to learn about the extent of postpartum depression and the most effective ways to overcome it.

For the longtime journalist, that journey birthed a book that was published in May 2017: *When Postpartum Packs a Punch: Fighting Back and Finding Joy*.

It explores how important community is to a mother or a father with postpartum depression, and how that community can help fend off the unfounded stigma associated with mental illness. Among the questions addressed by *When Postpartum Packs a Punch*:

- Postpartum depression is just one of several perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (PMADs) that can affect a new parent. What are the others, how do you distinguish one from the other, and what are the differences in treatment?
- What role does trauma play in PMADs, whether it’s associated with the childbirth itself, or something in a parent’s past experience?
- How common are mood disorders among new dads, and where can they turn for help?
- When it comes to mental health care for new parents, what is America doing right—and where do we still need to grow?
- How do other countries care for those with PMADs, and which one is leading the way?
- Mental anguish is an acute form of suffering. What good can come of it?

In Cowan’s case, she sought professional help about a month after the birth of her first child, in 2009. But not all women are as quick to acknowledge their illness, partly because so few are aware of the illness’s symptoms.

“No one is immune. It cuts across socioeconomic, cultural, religious, and any other lines you can imagine,” Cowan says. “Many are silenced by their fear of what others will

think, and the stigma we attach to mental illness. Others think they're simply adjusting to the uphill climb of motherhood.”

After sharing her symptoms of PPD with her doctors, friends, and family, Cowan discovered people willing and able to help her recover. That included other mothers who encouraged her that they too had once grappled with, and emerged from, postpartum depression.

“That supportive community was my greatest source of healing, and inspired me to learn more, and see how I could help others who face PPD,” Cowan says.

A journalist since 1996, Cowan has covered a variety of beats, including education policy and women’s issues. She has written for *The Huffington Post*, AOL, Yahoo, PayScale, Harvard University, the Kellogg School of Management, the American Council on Education, Edward-Elmhurst Health’s *Healthy Driven* publications, and *Today’s Christian Woman*.

The traumatic birth of her first child triggered a short bout of postpartum depression—and a keen interest in mental health, which remains at the heart of her writing. She resides in Naperville, Ill., with her husband and two children. Online, you can find her at www.kristinacowan.com.