



## **Dads Key In Weathering Postpartum Depression**

Reprinted from the Calgary Herald - January 15, 1989

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"Fathers can play a key role in helping their partners cope with postpartum depression," says Joan Stauffer, assistant co-ordinator of Calgary's Post Partum Support Service. "A woman is very vulnerable after having a baby and he is her main support," says Stauffer. "And men need support, too. Especially first-time fathers who don't know what to expect, who are trying to support their wives and cope with their own feelings."

### **Stauffer suggests many ways a father can help his partner:**

- o Encourage her to talk about her feelings and show that he understands or is trying to understand
- o Set visitation limits by telling friends 'no' when she doesn't feel like company.
- o If friends or family offer help -- such as volunteering to clean house - accept.
- o When friends offer to babysit, say 'yes'. Parents need time away from a baby.
- o Tell her he loves her, don't assume she knows it. Many women feel unsexy and unlovable and need to know their partners aren't going to leave them.
- o Pick up the slack with chores.
- o Be physically affectionate without asking for sex. Stauffer adds that men also need to look after themselves. She says they should:
  - o Take time for themselves other than at work.
  - o Find someone to talk to.
  - o Continue to follow some of their own interests.
  - o Be aware of their own needs.

The Post Partum Support Service hopes eventually to offer a support group for couples. It now holds a father's night, where postpartum depression and ways of coping are discussed. Co-ordinator Honey Watts notes that when parents make taking care of themselves and their relationship a priority they have more energy to care for their child.