



12 Nov 2017
 Sunday Herald Sun, Melbourne

Author: Adrienne Tam • Section: Stellar • Article type : News Item • Audience : 368,912
 Page: 30 • Printed Size: 548.00cm² • Market: VIC • Country: Australia
 ASR: AUD 24,087 • Words: 624 • Item ID: 870149449

isentia.mediaportal

Licensed by Copyright Agency. You may only copy or communicate this work with a licence.

stellar how i make it work

as told to Adrienne Tam

ANTOINETTE LATTOUF

With two beautiful daughters and a loving husband, the journalist's life looks picture perfect. But her bout with crippling postnatal depression left lasting effects that she is now sharing with others

“You’re so lucky.” “Just try to get a good night’s sleep.” “Your life is wonderful.” These are some of the comments well-meaning family and friends said to me when I was diagnosed with postnatal depression (PND). Yet all these remarks did was compound the guilt and sadness I was feeling.

When I had my first daughter, I struggled in the days after her birth to feel a bond. I put it down to baby blues, hormones and tiredness - yet the feeling continued for weeks. In hindsight, my anxiety and depression with my first daughter was mild. It wasn’t fun by any means, but I endured it. It wasn’t until two weeks after I gave birth to my second daughter that I realised I was terribly unwell. I couldn’t sleep or stop morbid scenarios playing in my mind, and that included thinking about ways my child and I were going to die. That’s not to say I was plotting to kill myself or my child, but I couldn’t stop thinking about death. Based on the work I’d done as a journalist on mental health, I was able to tick off the symptoms in my head. I knew I had PND and needed help. I was fortunate to have a GP who helped me.

It can be really difficult to broach the subject of PND with family and friends, especially when you are from particular ethnic communities or cultural backgrounds. Coming from a Middle Eastern community, where family is revered, it’s an expectation that motherhood is something you will



Antoinette's advice for coping with postnatal depression

- 1 Visit a trusted general practitioner for help.
- 2 Research organisations such as the Gidget Foundation and the Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia (PANDA) to see what help is available. PANDA helpline: 1300 726 306.
- 3 Exercise and get some sunlight – endorphins and melatonin are hormones that affect your mood.

really love and be good at. When I told relatives about my PND, they tended to say, “We escaped war. We saw death and murder. You have no reason to cry.”

There was also scepticism because PND is an invisible disease. I looked fit and young, so there wasn’t as much empathy as I would have liked.

People have asked me how I feel about being so open about PND, including the fact that I didn’t love my children immediately and it took a while to

form a bond. At first I was apprehensive, but I think my children will be proud that I was brave enough to talk about something that isn’t glamorous. I think it is important to share my experience with others so they know that they, too, can turn their life around. ★

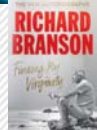
Antoinette Lattouf is an ambassador for the Gidget Foundation, which provides support for expectant and new parents; gidgetfoundation.com.au. Perinatal Depression & Anxiety Awareness Week is November 12–18.

STELLAR PICKS

★ things to try this week



WATCH DC Comics’ answer to Marvel’s *The Avengers* brings together Batman, Wonder Woman, Aquaman, Cyborg and The Flash in the long-awaited **Justice League**. Will the Man of Steel himself make a cameo? Find out in cinemas nationally from Thursday.



GO The MCG’s Yarra Park will be transformed into a collision of art, entertainment and food as **Taste of Melbourne** takes over. Enjoy gourmet picnics, food stall-filled laneways and delicious drinks from local artisan producers. From November 30 to December 3.

READ Almost 20 years since Richard Branson’s *Losing My Virginitiy* was published, his new autobiography **Finding My Virginitiy** shares updates on his life and career, as the entrepreneur marks 50 years since he started his first business. Out now, \$35; penguin.com.au.