

**Look at these photos.**



What do you see? A new mother smiling? Experiencing that rush of love for her baby and enjoying her new purpose in life? Someone that is coping well with the new challenges presented to her?



That new mother is me. What do I see when I look at these pictures?

I see myself smiling but I know that the smile is false. I see someone that is desperately trying to look normal and as if everything is fine but underneath is suffocating. Someone being stifled with the overwhelming urge to give up. I see someone that is ashamed that she can't cope and feels like she has failed at being a mother. I see a time of my life that should have been filled with joy and excitement but instead was filled with a deep black hole of hopelessness.

With help and support from family, friends, health visitors, doctors and counsellors I made it through the black hole that is post-natal depression. I am not ashamed anymore. The little baby in the photos has grown into a happy, healthy, strong-willed, clever, kind and generous 4 (and a half!) year old girl who is very excited to start school this year. I could have given up on several occasions but then I wouldn't have seen what an amazing little girl she has grown into.

Do not judge people on how they look. What is going on behind a smile can be a very different story.

Be kind, always.

