

Well actually, I do. But I bet it feels like the rest of the world doesn't, right? Like you should just go through this massive, life-changing experience, pick up your baby and hit the road running, right? Oh, sorry, by all means have your 8 week postnatal check first. Then you're definitely ready to go because you've been signed off already.

I bet you've stopped telling people how you ACTUALLY feel. I bet you've plastered a big fat smile on your face (or as big as you can manage at least) because that's what society expects of you. And also because those who care about you can't bear to see you any other way. You do it for them also of course. I bet you drag yourself to the baby weigh-in clinic, answer dutifully when the health visitor asks how you are. IF she really asks, mostly it's a formality really. You answer what she wants to hear, or what you think she wants to hear. That's how you live your days, 'yes fine thank you,' a smile for special occasions like putting on your Sunday best. And behind closed doors, in the privacy of your home with just your baby watching, you cry quiet tears and you wonder why. What's wrong with you? Why can't you cope like the other mums? Why do you feel overwhelmed by the little things, why is anger erupting out of you like a flame thrower? You've had a beautiful, healthy baby after all. Why aren't you grateful?

Because it's not just traumatic birth that leaves you with loads of unprocessed emotions. It's ALL birth. Yes, even the GOOD births. Although of course birth is never exclusively good or bad. Except that of course it's completely acceptable to talk about the GOOD sides of birth, how attentive everyone was, how elated you felt, how quick, how easy, how... well, wonderful.

But who wants to hear when it's not this? When you are disappointed, angry, confused, humiliated, betrayed? Maybe you can't even put a finger on how you're feeling? Maybe you convince yourself you don't have the right to criticise or to feel let down. Everyone did their best right? Your birth wasn't THAT bad right? It certainly wasn't as bad as Anne's, she almost lost her baby, it wasn't as bad as Paula's, she lost loads of blood and was ill for weeks. No, best to pretend. Even pretend to yourself if you have to, if it helps to get through another day. No one really wants to hear about birth gore, or about how down you are feeling, how emotional. No one wants to sit with you and listen and allow you to unwrap your emotions. No one really understands, and nor do you.

And how could you? No one has ever said to you that birth is a really big deal. It's intense, you are faced with situations that are alien and scary and completely outside of your comfort zone. You may have been put in situations that required you to be someone you don't feel yourself to be. Maybe you had to speak up for yourself or complain. Or maybe you kept quiet and regretted it. Maybe someone spoke to you in a tone that you didn't like, maybe someone didn't help you when you were in pain or vulnerable, or maybe you didn't get the birth you expected or wanted.

You can try and let your head tell you otherwise, but all of these ARE a big deal. All of these stay in your body and make you feel bad. But the good news is that actually (did you notice, I like that word), you can do something about it. You can start right now by acknowledging that you have the right to feel exactly as you do, without trying to fix it or apologise for it or pretend it's something else. And share this post with others so that they can start accepting and acknowledging how they feel also.

EVERYONE has emotions that need releasing.

Then you can start by letting those feelings out a little. If, with all good intentions, you have suppressed them, even without realising it, start small. To do otherwise is like releasing a pressure cooker all at once. So start journaling; what happened, how you felt, how you still feel now. Be gentle with yourself. You are probably tired, you are probably feeling overwhelmed and possibly alone. Like I said, start small, but at least start. Even a few words will help. Or start drawing or painting if that's your thing. Paint what happened, how you felt. Even if you don't think how you feel now is related to the birth, it is worth doing. You may be surprised with what comes up. Try not to judge it. It is what it is.

Above all, try to be honest, at least with yourself. This is the first step towards healing. If you still say 'I'm fine,' then make it a choice. Know that you are deciding to say that because it's easier or because that person expects it. Actually, it's OK to do that, it puts you in control of yourself and your situation. And know that if you choose to, you can also say 'actually, I'm feeling a bit low today' without having to launch into the whole story if it's not appropriate.

Also know that if you need it, it's OK to speak to your Health Visitor or your GP. That's what they're there for. They are not going to judge you for anything or take your baby away. As a former midwife I can guarantee you of that. They can refer you for counselling or other help as necessary.

Be gentle on yourself. You have done an amazing thing. You have given birth, you have brought life into the world. Please know that it's also OK to have contradictory emotions, ones you may even feel ashamed of or feel you need to cover up. It's not only OK, it's normal. And it's normal to need to talk about them.

Rachel Weber is a Healer who cares passionately about releasing emotions, particularly following birth. She believes that not acknowledging and releasing them is a contributing factor to depression, anxiety, fatigue and other physical illness. She works mostly via Skype. More information on her work can be found at www.timeandspacetherapies.co.uk

