

What your partner can do...



- Be patient
- Encourage your partner to talk about her feelings
- Accept that her feelings are genuine and don't trivialize them by telling her to "snap out of it" or "get over it"
- Try to understand her point of view
- Don't take her negative feelings or criticisms personally
- Tactfully limit visitors if she doesn't feel like socializing
- Enlist the aid of other family members to help around the house, if and when they can, including with baby-sitting
- Tell her often that you love her
- Show her you love her with cuddles and by helping with baby care and housework
- Don't try to turn every cuddle into sexual intercourse
- Don't criticize her post-pregnancy body or demand she lose weight, as she may already feel low about her appearance
- Care for the baby after work to promote your father-child relationship, while giving your partner a much-needed break
- Encourage compliance/adherence with recommended treatment
- If you are worried, encourage her to see a doctor
- Go to the doctor yourself for information and advice, if your partner initially refuses to go
- Reassure her that, with appropriate help and support, she will recover from her condition

What your partner can do for himself...

- Make sure you have some time to yourself, apart from work and family; you may need more personal time to restore perspective.
- Try to keep up important hobbies and interests as much as possible; think about you may share these hobbies and interests with your older children (e.g., taking an older child to a baseball game will support you and your child as well as give the mother some additional relief at home.)
- Talk to close friends about your feelings and concerns.
- Be kind to yourself as well as understanding of your partner by setting reasonable expectations.
- Realize that helping your partner adjust to the new baby may increase the strength and intimacy of your relationship.

What your partner can say...



- We will get through this.
- I am here for you.
- Let me know if you need anything.
- I am sorry you are suffering. That must feel awful.
- I love you very much.
- This is temporary.
- You'll get back to yourself.
(As she recovers, point out how you see her old self returning through smiling, more patience, or going out with her friends.)
- You are doing such a good job.
- This isn't your fault. If I were ill, you wouldn't blame me.

What your partner shouldn't say...

- Think about everything you have to feel happy about.
(She already knows everything she has to feel happy about.)
- Just relax.
(This suggestion usually produces the opposite effect. She is not able to relax because of the anxiety that produces physiological reactions like increased heart rate, shakiness, visual changes, shortness of breath, and muscle tension. This is not something she can just will away.)
- Snap out of it.
(If she could, she would have already. A person cannot snap out of any illness.)
- Just think positively.
(The nature of this illness prevents positive thinking. Only negative, guilt-ridden interpretations of the world around are perceived.)