

MORE THAN A MOM

MY POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION AND HEALING JOURNEY

by Stephanie



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WHY IM TELLING MY STORY

I never thought I would be the one writing something like this. When I was pregnant, I prepared for everything: diapers, feedings, sleepless nights, the normal. I did all the checklists I could find but knew if things go differently I can go with the flow. I just like to have a built plan even if nothing goes according to it. I even had the packing list ready for our first trip with the baby already made up. But nothing prepared me for what happened after the baby came.

I didn't feel like me anymore.

The baby was here and I didn't feel like the mother. I was so disconnected but at the same time cried for happiness that he was here. It was almost like I was crying of joy that someone else had a baby. That was just the start of my journey.

This eBook is my story through postpartum depression and how isolating it is, while being told to "enjoy every moment". This is also how I got to today being able to share my story, finally feeling myself.

If you're reading this you might be in the thick of it, or maybe you're afraid you're heading there. Maybe you're just trying to understand what someone you love is going through. Wherever you are, I want you to know: You're not alone. You're not weak. And you're not a bad mom.

You're human, and healing is possible.

Let me tell you how I found my way through

CHAPTER ONE

THE BIRTH WAS JUST THE BEGINNING

I had imagined a lot of things about giving birth. I thought there would be a delivery room, soft lighting, calmness. I'd seen the checklists. I'd read the blogs that said, "Create your birth plan, mama you got this."

But nothing went according to plan.

This was my first baby and I'm at my 38 week appointment at 9 in the morning. No effacing, no dilation. I still got two weeks or more to finish things up then.

9 that night Why does my lower back hurt so much? Why is my body cleansing itself? I'm thinking baby didn't like what I ate and I hadn't heard of back labor before. 12 hours, from my nowhere near having my baby, and I'm starting labor. By midnight we are at the hospital 3cm.. they are keeping me.

I was checked in to a triage room and going to be moved to a labor room.... 10 am, here I am giving birth in that same triage room. No real privacy, no sense of control, and barely enough time to catch my breath between the shock of contractions and the speed at which everything happened. I felt like I had been swept into a storm. I wasn't "empowered", I was overwhelmed. They are popping up a privacy screen so other patients can't see right up my legs. Technicians coming in to check the baby bed and machines since they never use them in that room. My husband holding up my back since my bed doesn't incline. I had an epidural and I couldn't wait. I saw my sister give birth with hers, Peaceful. My epidural did nothing. Which I don't find out for 3 years why that is. The baby is finally here though and we are all ok.

They flung the baby onto my stomach as he cried, I cried and I could not have been happier. He was finally here, I held his hand just in awe thinking this is it, our baby is finally here, our family is complete.

They took him to weigh him and bathe him, I am just staring over at him, he gets wrapped up and handed to my husband. I didn't want to hold him, I was so tired, and I couldn't be happier seeing those two together it made me so joyous, I cried again and again.

People kept saying, "Congratulations!" And "You must be over the moon!" Which might be a surprise for a postpartum story but in this moment I was happy. At least it felt like it. It took a minute for me ... 2 days to be exact.

We leave the hospital after 2 nights and begin our new journey at home. I could feel the disconnect start to happen. I didn't feel joy. I felt numb, distant. I wasn't connecting with anything, not the baby, not myself, not even the reality that I was now a mother.

I went to appointments and went shopping at target. It was just going through the motions of see I am doing outings with my baby. It all felt robotic and I brushed it off as normal. But I also didn't want to hold him, feed him or change him. My husband did it all.

We had extended family come over to meet the baby and people always told me "when you have company to see the baby that's your time to do something since you have help". So that's what I did. My husband visited and showed off the baby and I was in the office making birth announcements. Isn't this what they told me to do? What I didn't realize is how uncommon it is to just up and walk out of a room full of people who want to also talk to you about your baby. But I needed to get a task done and that's how I saw it.

It was my husband who noticed first. He saw that I wasn't sleeping, I wasn't eating and that I barely spoke. He said I looked like I was somewhere else entirely. He knew I needed help but wasn't sure what I needed or how to bring it up. To note at this time my husband was diagnosed with clinical depression so he not only could feel what was happening but he knew the signs and I am thankful for that. We would find out 2 years later that he actual was bipolar which explains more of how he could feel my emotions.

The days blurred together. I tried to force myself into routines, but everything felt heavy. I didn't recognize myself or my thoughts. I started to wonder if maybe I had made a mistake. What did I do to our lives? Why did I want this baby so bad. Look what he has done. I wondered if I would wake up and this would have just all been a dream.

That moment in the triage room was just the start. The real unraveling came after. The hard part wasn't the birth. It was surviving the days that followed when everyone assumed I was fine... and I wasn't.



CHAPTER TWO

WHEN THE DARKNESS MOVED IN

At first, I thought what I was feeling was just part of new motherhood. Everyone says it's hard. They say you'll be tired, emotionally overwhelmed. I figured I just needed time to adjust. I told myself it was hormones. Sleep deprivation. Nothing serious.

But as days turned into weeks I started to feel like I was disappearing.

It wasn't just the exhaustion, it was the emotional emptiness. I'd stare at the wall while rocking the baby wondering when I'd feel normal again. Some days I cried quietly in the shower. Other days I felt nothing. Like I was watching my life from the outside. I kept waiting for the bonding moment everyone talked about. The rush of love and instant connection. But it didn't come.

Social media didn't help. I'd scroll through posts of glowing moms with perfect swaddles and smiling babies and I'd think "what's wrong with me?" Why did it look so easy for everyone else.

I didn't tell anyone. I'd smile and say "we're doing great" when I wanted to scream. I didn't want to be the mom who couldn't handle it. I didn't want pity. I just wanted someone to tell me this was normal without me having to say my thoughts out loud.



The thoughts were the scariest part. I couldn't control them. Not violent thoughts but dark ones. Thoughts of regret and how my baby got the wrong mom. How I wanted it to just be me and my husband again. I cried seeing how cute my husband was with our son, I cried regretting having a baby, I cried for having my thoughts.

I don't know it yet but my husband is working behind the scenes with his mom to figure out what he needs to do. I'll find this out later because of a text I get that really saved me.

The text will lead to me learning this was postpartum depression. Not laziness. Not weakness. Not failure. A real medical condition that affects millions of women, even the ones who "look fine."

The darkness had moved in quietly, but naming it even in a whisper will be the first step in pushing it back.

CHAPTER THREE

ASKING FOR HELP



If there was one thing I wasn't good at back then, it was asking for help. I kept thinking I should be able to handle this. I mean women have done this forever right? It's just motherhood. Everyone tells you it's hard. You're tired, you're hormonal, you cry sometimes. So I kept telling myself it was normal even as my body and mind were screaming that it wasn't.

I was afraid. Afraid that if I said it out loud I'd be judged, and labeled. That someone would think I didn't love my baby. That they'd think I was unfit, unstable, and unsafe.

My husband though could see the truth.

He had been watching me closely, probably more than I realized and was networking with family. He talked with his mom first and she said she was starting to notice as well, seeing a lot of out of character things for me. Like I never booked newborn photos and at the time really didn't care to. Luckily because she knew I would regret it she pushed for one month photos and I'm glad she did because I love those photos.

His mom then chatted with her sister in law who talked to her daughter in law. That is when I get the text.

She told me congrats on the baby (but this wasn't just a congrats text) she then goes on with how she had terrible thoughts when she had her baby and that it's normal if I'm going through anything like that as well.

I just cried.

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I felt seen. The text wasn't long but enough for me to understand she was saying I see you and it's ok what you are going through. I broke down. Ugly sobbing because part of me had needed someone to say it first. To say what I couldn't. And then maybe I didn't have to pretend anymore. I knew I needed to tell my husband and I decided to just do a long text, get out everything where I'm not muffled by my crying while trying to explain. And that's when I learned that my husband pays way more attention than I ever gave him credit for.

The next day I made an appointment with my doctor.

I was terrified. I was sure they would think I was overreacting or worse not believe me. When I finally said the words "I think I might have postpartum depression" there was no shock, no judgement. Just a calm nod and quiet "thank you for telling me." And a list of questions that felt strangely comforting. I wasn't the first. I wouldn't be the last.

The visit didn't fix everything. It wasn't a magic solution, but it was the moment I stopped carrying it all alone.

If you're reading this maybe you're standing in the same place I was, unsure of what's normal and what's not, unsure of whether to speak up. If that's you let me say what I wish someone had told me sooner.

It's okay to ask for help. You are not weak. You are not broken. You are not failing. You are facing something real, and you don't have to do it alone.

Asking for help was the hardest and bravest thing I've ever done. It was also the beginning of healing.



CHAPTER FOUR

GETTING DIAGNOSED

The doctor didn't look shocked when I brought it up. I had been so nervous walking into that appointment, hands sweating, heart racing. When I told her, she didn't flinch, because she has heard it before.

She asked me some standard screening questions, things like:

Are you feeling more down than usual?

Are you struggling to bond with your baby?

Have you lost interest in things you normally enjoy?

Are you having thoughts of harming yourself or others?

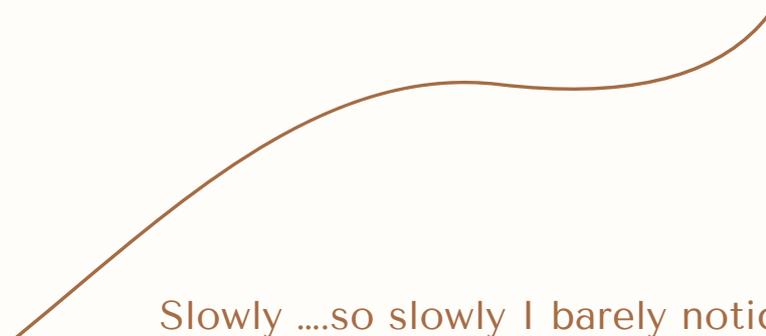
I answered them honestly, for the first time. She listens carefully. I could tell she was really trying to see me, not just check boxes.

Then she said something that surprised me.

She recommended I consider starting hormonal birth control earlier than I had planned. She explained how in some cases the hormone stabilization that comes with certain birth control can help regulate mood swings and emotional crashes after childbirth. I was planning on getting back on birth control at some point so I was ready to try it now if it might help.

So I said yes and I started.





Slowly ...so slowly I barely noticed it at first things began to shift.

It didn't fix everything. I still had bad days, still cried. Still felt overwhelmed but I also started to feel a little more like myself. The fog began to lift.

I wasn't bonding with my baby still but I knew things would take time and I was ok with that as long as I saw that progress. I know birth control isn't a one size fits all solution. For me, it was part of the puzzle that gave me the steadiness I didn't even realize I needed. It helped stop the emotional free fall i'd been trapped in for weeks.

More than anything, it was the first time I saw proof that I could feel better. That this fog, this heaviness it wasn't forever. That was everything.



CHAPTER FIVE MY HEALING PROCESS



Healing didn't happen all at once.

There wasn't a single turning point or "aha" moment when I woke up and felt like myself again. It was more like a slow, uneven climb out of something heavy, some days two steps forward and others one step back.

My husband decides to take me on a weekend trip without the baby. His hope is that this will help me get a sense of missing him, to help me see that a bond is starting to happen. Thankfully we have my mother in law who could watch him. We leave the baby and my first thought is how will anyone understand that I left my 2 month old for the weekend. How many 'she's a bad mom' views am I going to get from friends and family. I was starting to develop guilt. Which was hard to handle but also a sign that I was heading in the right direction to heal.

We listened to music on our way there which I realized I hadn't listen to since the baby was born and I love music. Why had I stopped? In the chaos I had somehow lost interest in music. I posted on social media about our trip and was ready for the bashing, mom shaming to begin. When my cousin commented saying how important it is to still have mom and dad time. I thought wow maybe I have it all wrong. I'm sure there was plenty behind the scenes talk. But I was starting to see maybe more people would understand than I thought and I was starting to miss my baby. By Sunday I was face-timing him on my way home because I couldn't wait to see him.

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Even with these small improvements it still took me almost 4 months to have a bond with my baby and a year for me to feel like myself again. I think deep down I had hoped that once I got help, things would bounce back quickly, but that's not how postpartum depression works. It lingers. It stretches and for me it healed on its own timeline, not mine.

Something else helped, maybe even more than anything else: I talked about it.

I was honest with friends, with family, with other moms. I told them what was really going on. I didn't sugarcoat it. I stopped trying to be the "strong" mom or the one who always had it together. And something incredible happened when I let go of that mask.

Other people started opening up too.

One friend admitted she'd gone through something similar but had never told anyone. Another said she had cried in the hospital for hours and thought she was broken. Another said her postpartum caused her to have no trust in her husband. We were all carrying some version of the same weight and no one had talked about it until someone did first. There are people who never experienced it and may never understand that weight and what your mind does to you and that fear is what makes people scared to admit it.

That honesty became my lifeline.



Every time I shared, I felt a little lighter. A little more connected. A little more human. I stopped feeling ashamed of what I had gone through, and started seeing it for what it was: a part of my story, not the whole story.

I had canceled plans with friends early on because I was scared they would see that I wasn't bonding but lied and said it was because the baby was being fussy and didn't sleep. I was glad I cancelled at the time but after I started talking to people about what I was going through I texted those friends and told them why I really cancelled. It felt good to be honest of how I just couldn't have people over at that time because of my own insecurities and they were surprisingly very understanding.

I didn't do everything "right". I didn't always eat well or journal or exercise or check every box in some self care routine. But I did keep talking. I kept asking for help. I kept saying "today is hard" even when it felt repetitive or unimportant.

When I told my mom, she had no idea I was going through it all and she herself had never gone through it. But she was willing to listen and be there to understand that my journey is different and has been rough. She was ready to help in anyway she could and also understood now why my husband might have been asking her if she wanted to visit the baby a lot early on.

Eventually the fog started to clear. I started laughing more, listening to music again, dancing more and having fun with my baby. I started recognizing myself in the mirror again - not just as a mom but as me.



CHAPTER SIX

THE IMPACT: FAMILY & FRIENDS

One of the hardest parts of postpartum depression wasn't just what was happening inside me it was how it reshaped the relationships around me.

Some family members didn't get it at all. They weren't cruel, just... distant. Quiet. Awkward. I could see the discomfort on their faces when I opened up about what I was going through. It was like they didn't know what to say or they didn't want to say the wrong thing so they said nothing.

Still, they showed up.

They didn't always understand, but they tried. They sent texts just to say "thinking of you" and even if they didn't fully grasp the weight I was carrying I could feel that they were trying in their own way. That I'm grateful.

Some were currently pregnant and I might of scared them a little but I was more scared of them struggling alone after because I was too scared to tell them.

Then there was others that just disappeared. Or made me feel like I was overreacting. They said things like "you just need to get out of the house".

It wasn't just unhelpful, it was damaging. For a long time I tried to justify it. I made excuses for people who made me feel small, invalidated, or invisible.

Healing taught me something I wish I had known sooner: I don't need to keep people in my life just because they share my DNA or a history.

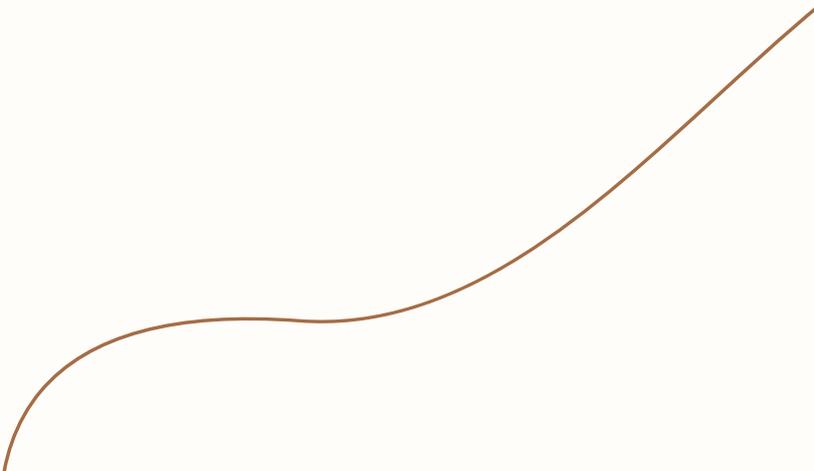
What I need and what my family needs are people who truly care. People who show up. Who listen without judgment. Who make space for hard conversations, even if they don't have all the answers. People who don't just love the version of me that's smiling and put-together, but the version that's raw and unraveling too.

It took going through something deeply painful to see who those people were.

Letting go of relationships that no longer serve your peace is never easy. It's necessary. It's freeing. I've stopped chasing approval. I've stopped shrinking myself to make others comfortable. I've learned that protecting my mental health is not selfish - it's survival. It's also one of the best things I can do for my child. And mind you this also took time. Some people I made excuses for longer than others and some it was harder to see at the time until much later down the road.

Now the people in my circle are the ones who see me. Who check in just to check in. Who don't need me to be okay in order to love me or to love my family.

That, I've realized, is enough.



CHAPTER SEVEN

WHAT I WOULD TELL MOMS NOW

If I could sit across from you - tired, overwhelmed, unsure - I'd tell you this:

Don't be afraid to say how you feel.

Even if it's messy. Even if it's ugly. Even if it scares you. Especially if it scares you.

You don't get extra credit for suffering silently. You don't become a better mom by pretending you are fine when you are not. The truth is, the strongest thing you can do is speak up.

I know how heavy it feels when you think no one will understand. I know the fear of saying it out loud and having people look at you differently.

I also know the freedom of finally letting it out and realizing that you are not broken. You are not weak. You are not the only one.

The worst thing you can do is try to battle this alone.

Motherhood wasn't meant to be done in isolation. Healing doesn't happen in silence. We need each other. We need to be able to say "this is hard" and not feel ashamed for saying it. We need people who will sit with us in the dark and say "I've been there"



You might feel like you're the only one struggling but you're not.
You might think you'll feel this way forever, but you won't.
You might think asking for help is admitting failure but really it is
choosing to survive.

If you're reading this and feeling like something is not right, trust
that voice.

Say something. To your partner. Your friend. Your doctor. Your
journal.

Anyone.

Because your feelings matter,

Because you matter,

And because you deserve to feel whole again.

CHAPTER EIGHT

RECOVERY IS NOT LINEAR

Healing doesn't follow a straight line. It's not like checking off boxes or crossing a finish line. Some days you feel strong. Other days something small can bring you right back.

Even now, years later, I still have moments that surprise me. Every year, like clock work, something comes back around, something I used to love before becoming a mom. A song. A hobby. A scent. A quiet moment that reminds me of the version of myself I thought I had left behind. When it happens, it is like meeting an old friend.

It's not that I feel broken or incomplete. In fact I feel whole in a way I never expected to after everything I've been through.

These little returns... these quite, familiar joys.. they remind me that we're allowed to still be healing even while we're happy.

That's something no one really talks about.

We expect healing to be a moment. A full circle. In reality it's ongoing. It's layered. You can be at peace and still have tender places. You love your life and still feel sadness when you think of the early days. You can smile and still carry stories you haven't told out loud yet.

All of that is okay.

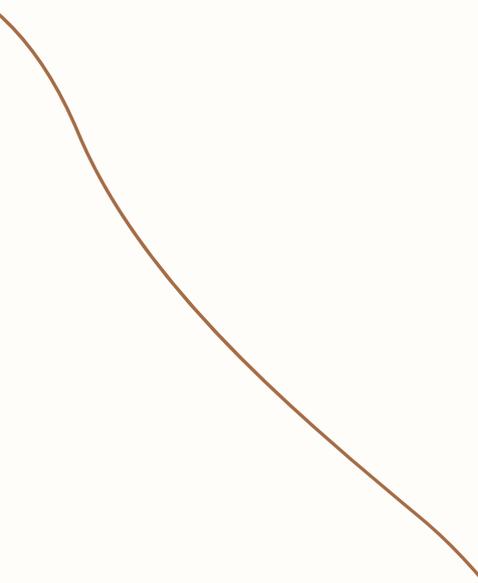
In fact, it is beautiful.

Healing isn't about becoming someone new. It's about making room for every part of you... the parts that survived, the parts that are still soft, and the parts that are slowly returning to the surface stronger than before.

You don't have to be "all better" to be okay.

You don't have to be perfect to be present.

You don't have to be done healing to fully enjoy your life.



CHAPTER NINE

YOU ARE STILL YOU

If you've made it this far, thank you for reading, for listening and maybe even for seeing a piece of yourself in these pages.

I didn't write this because I have all the answers. I wrote it because I know what it is like to lose pieces of yourself, and then slowly, quietly, find them again.

I know what it is like to feel like a stranger in your own skin.
To smile when people visit, then cry alone in the dark.
To feel the weight of loving your child and still struggling to feel okay inside your own mind.

But I also know this:
You are not broken.
You are not weak.
You are not lost - you are becoming you.

Motherhood doesn't erase you.
Even when it feels like it has.
Even when it asks more of you than you ever imagined.

The truth is: You are still you.

You are still allowed to have dreams, softness, space, and needs of your own.
You are allowed to speak up. To rest. To ask for more.
You are still worthy of love, care and support exactly as you are.



This isn't just a story about postpartum depression. It's a story about survival. About honesty. About healing in layers and about finding yourself not despite motherhood but within it.

If you're still somewhere in the middle of your own story, I hope you know this:

You don't have to have it all figured out.

You don't have to do it alone.

And even on the hardest days you are doing better than you think.



CHAPTER TEN

AFTER AND TODAY

When I was in the thick of it you would have heard a lot of “one and done”. We told a lot of people this because of what I went through. I never wanted to go to that place again. I felt like I couldn't go to that place again. Then my baby turned into a toddler and this mom was enjoying motherhood. But could I do that again? At least I would be more prepared because I know what postpartum depression even is now. But should I? It could be worse next time is all I could think.

My husband had been thinking about it as well but he felt like he could never ask because he didn't want to see me go through that again. One day he finally mentioned he had been thinking about it. I was shocked but thankful he did because we talked and I was ready to take that chance and he was ready to support whatever might happen after.

To my surprise... no postpartum depression.

I thought how can I have it will one and not the other. Made me realize how much I still did not know or understand about Postpartum Depression. Also, I got to see what it was like to have that overwhelming rush of love and bond with a baby.

This time I had to have a c-section while under anesthesia because I learned I have scoliosis in my bottom disks and that's why the epidural for my first and the spinal tap for my c-section wouldn't work.

The baby was brought to my husband in the other room and he fed and loved the baby while worried how I would mentally feel when I woke up. Yet, nothing. All love and normal tiredness, exhaustion and I couldn't be more thankful for a different experience. But I know that's not always the case.

Some will go with never experiencing even baby blues. While others will need treatment. Some will have to go through heaviness with every baby. Others might only experience it with one. Every pregnancy, birth and postpartum has there own journey. I am thankful for mine. For both of mine.

Today they are 7 and 4. The craziest boys I could have ever dreamed for. With a mom who is happy and works on herself as much as she cares for her boys. Throughout this journey I have also learned not to lose myself again in the chaos of motherhood. Being drained and unhappy is not good for me as a person, a mother or as a wife. As they say: don't forget to fill your own cup while you're filling others.



HOW COMMON?

You are not alone in this and when I say that it's because about 1 in 7 women get Postpartum Depression (PPD).

Yes you saw that right One in Seven.

When I first found this out I was shocked because how do more people not talk about it then.

PPD can touch anyone, doesn't matter your background, your strength, or your support system.



RESOURCES

IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU LOVE IS STRUGGLING, HELP IS AVAILABLE. HERE ARE SOME RESOURCES.

IMMEDIATE HELP

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE: 988 (USA).

CRISIS TEXT LINE: TEXT HOME TO 741741 (USA)

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

POSTPARTUM SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL (PSI)

WWW.POSTPARTUM.NET

MATERNAL MENTAL HEALTH HOTLINE 1-833-9 HELP4MOMS
(USA)

CONTACT YOUR DOCTOR, MIDWIFE OR THERAPIST.

SELF-CARE AND COMMUNITY

REACH OUT TO TRUSTED FRIENDS OR FAMILY, JOIN A LOCAL OR ONLINE SUPPORT GROUP FACING POSTPARTUM CHALLENGES, JOURNALING.

REMEMBER SEEKING HELP IS A SIGN OF STRENGTH NOT WEAKNESS. YOUR FEELINGS ARE VALID. YOUR STORY MATTERS AND HEALING IS POSSIBLE.

IF YOU EVER FEEL OVERWHELMED OR UNSURE WHERE TO TURN, START BY SIMPLY SAYING, "I NEED HELP". THAT SMALL STEP CAN CHANGE EVERYTHING.

THANK YOU



THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR READING MY JOURNEY AND I
HOPE IT HELPS YOU.

Stephanie

TIREDNOTTRENDY.COM

