



> Of making myself even more vulnerable than I already am. Truth be told, I cried when I wrote those previous sentences. I knew I was afraid of something, but I didn't know what.

I know there's going to be a part of me that's terrified of seeing a positive pregnancy test. But it's not because of fear of postnatal depression returning. People say that having a child is like ripping your heart out and watching it run around. And it couldn't be more true. When our daughter was first born I refused to let my heart go. I didn't want anyone else to have it for fear of it breaking. But I've done it once and it was the best thing that's ever happened to me. I might be sacred of my wife getting pregnant again, but I have to open my heart and allow it to be filled with the love that comes with being a father once again.

Ross is a 27 year old married father from South Wales with a daughter, Isabelle, 18 months. He started blogging about life as a parent after suffering from postnatal depression

MORE INSPIRATION

READ Becoming a Dad: How Fatherhood Changes Men by Bruce Linton
VISIT isablog.co.uk to follow Ross' parenting journey

THE STAGES OF FATHERHOOD

Bruce Linton is a family therapist in California, US, who supports fathers at fathersforum.com. Through his practice he's found four stages of fatherhood.

1 The first stage of fatherhood I call the emergent phase, when something arises within us, a realization that we need other people. Understanding our dependency is the doorway to recognizing how dependent and vulnerable our children are, especially in the early years. We realize we need our band of brothers, our family, our close friends.

2 The second stage is the attachment stage when we let all the pieces

of our new experience come together. This stage we need time to get to know our wife as a mother and experience all our feelings over the next few months.

3 The third stage is the affiliation stage. The dads in my groups and workshops feel an affiliation with other men, which supports the fathers' internal growth. It normalizes a lot of the anxieties we have in the early years of parenting, and we see that we're not alone in our experiences in the transition to fatherhood.

4 The fourth stage is the community stage. I see that happening when our kids are four years

or older, when they are in kindergarden, pre-school or reception. As dads we begin to feel concerned about the environment, education, global economics. "This world and what goes outside of me is affecting my child." The dads in my groups talk about this a lot: they are no longer focused on themselves but on a bigger world. The fourth stage marks the birth of a new humanism within us as men, where we reclaim our emotional lives that are often cut off in the modern, industrialized, fast-paced, self-interested world. Instead we feel part of a bigger community and develop a sense of our responsibility towards the coming generations. This stage gives a deeper meaning to our lives.