

While I worked, I could hear my baby crying constantly. I wanted to help but I couldn't.

Mattia started a new job while his girlfriend recovered from a C-section and experienced postnatal depression



Mattia Sitaglia is a 33-year-old Sales Support Engineer and dad of a 2-year-old son. He took two weeks of fully paid paternity leave after his son was born via emergency caesarean section. While he found the full pay helpful, he says two weeks was not enough to support his girlfriend or fully enjoy the time with his son. He felt worried leaving his girlfriend, who was struggling with postpartum depression, to take care of both herself and their child.

When my girlfriend found out she was pregnant, I searched the internet to help me understand about paternity leave. I asked my employer what was offered through work and was told I could take two weeks off – either consecutively or separately – during the first year of the baby’s life. I would continue to be paid in full during my leave. I planned to take two weeks off right after our child was born.

In February 2023, my girlfriend had an emergency caesarean section after some overnight complications in hospital.

After arriving back home, I pretty much did everything myself as my girlfriend was in huge amounts of pain from the operation and was given different types of medicines, including morphine, to cope with the pain. We assume that all the stress impacted her ability to feed the baby – she wasn’t producing milk – so we decided to try bottle feeding. But the baby wasn’t accepting it. It was so hard, and I was really overwhelmed.

We were both struggling emotionally. Those first few weeks, my girlfriend cried often and had intrusive thoughts. I tried to maintain positivity, but I found it difficult. We ended up seeing a doctor to get her some help.

I thought that when her mother came over from Italy it would lighten the load, but her mother was equally anxious. I felt I was constantly trying to keep everyone’s mood up while sorting the house and the baby, and taking care of my girlfriend. The rest of our family lives in Italy, so there was no one else around to help carry the load.

When my two weeks of paternity leave were finished, I felt worried about leaving my girlfriend with our son – she was suffering so much with her mental health. But I had to go back to work to get paid and provide for our family.

I’d been promoted during the time I was off, so I was going back to a totally new job, working from home. I tried to concentrate on learning the new role, but my mind was always elsewhere. While I worked, I could hear my baby crying constantly. That wasn’t easy. I wanted to help but I couldn’t.

If I’d had the option to stay off longer, I would have been able to support my girlfriend so much more – both physically and mentally. She was in so much pain after the delivery, on top of the postpartum depression plaguing her. I wish I could have been around longer to help her recover.

I also would have liked longer to enjoy my son. Those early days were very hard, and there was so much to do for my girlfriend, baby, and the house. The return to work was constantly on my mind – stripping away

some of the enjoyment of my son. If I had more time off, I would have taken him outside more to enjoy bonding just the two of us, giving his mother time to rest. With more time off, we would have been able to handle new parenthood, with all the emotions and practical needs, so much easier.