POST NATAL DEPRESSION:

- can be seen as a way of coping with a situation that is overwhelming and stressful

Factors which lead to such a situation include:

Biological factors:
- lack of sleep because of waking to the baby
- poor nutrition due to pregnancy, breastfeeding, or not eating well
- sensitivity to hormonal changes in pregnancy and birth (women with this usually have severe PMT and nausea during pregnancy)
- not enough exercise due to tiredness and having a small baby

Psychological factors:
- having high expectations of motherhood
- having to be perfect
- anxiety about the baby's health or well-being
- having intrusive thoughts about harm to the baby
- unresolved issues from own childhood such as abuse, neglect or poor relationships with parents
- distress about the pregnancy or birth
- grief due to loss of a previous baby (miscarriage, abortion, death, adoption) or someone close has died, especially parent or partner.
- negative thoughts about self or situation

Social or environmental factors:
- isolation and loneliness
- lack of unconditional support
- high expectations from others
- stereotyped roles of mothers
- low status of motherhood
- loss of recogntion in society
- financial stress
- relationship difficulties
- communication difficulties
- overwork and stress

The presence of these factors can cause some people to want to switch off or shut down in order to cope - this is the psychological equivalent of wanting to put your head under the blankets for a while and make the world go away. If the situation goes on for too long or this is the main coping strategy that a person uses it can become depression

Depression is a condition that has psychological and physical symptoms. Most people simply slide into a depression without realising it.

Symptoms:
- depressed mood, feeling low
- guilt
- disturbed sleep or insomnia
- loss of enjoyment in life
- feeling anxious, fearful and panic
- tearfulness/weepy
- poor concentration

If you have these symptoms they are likely to effect the way you behave:

Behavioural effects:
- tiredness
- extremely active or lethargic
- feeling guilty or blaming others
- can't be bothered doing things
- overanxious about baby
- want to give up
- can't cope with baby or normal routine
- talkative or withdrawn
- under-eating or over-eating
- don't care about appearance
- don't care about anyone
- feel suicidal

If you have these sorts of behavioural effects is likely that you will develop symptoms of depression. Depression then becomes a viscious cycle which starts as a way of coping with an overwhelming or stressful situation and ends up becoming part of the problem. **The way out of depression is to interrupt the cycle and find other strategies for coping.**