

You Weren't Meant to Do This Alone: The Hidden Risk Factor No One Talks About

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We talk a lot about medical risk factors in pregnancy blood pressure, weight, family history. We talk far less about one of the most consistent risk factors researchers keep finding: isolation.

Not being alone in a room. Being alone in the experience with no one checking in, no one to call at 2 a.m., no one who's been through it sitting beside you.

The fourth pillar of the Architect Doula™ Framework is Connection: real, working relationships with healthcare providers, community organizations, schools, faith communities, and family support systems. Not a resource list nobody calls. An actual network that responds when you need it.

What Research Actually Says

The link between social support and maternal mental health is one of the most well-documented findings in this field.

- **Support is protective.** Research consistently identifies strong social support as an important protective factor against postpartum depression while a lack of it is one of the clearest predictors of who develops it.
- **Isolation hits young mothers hardest.** In a study on postpartum depression among younger Black mothers, many participants directly pointed to social isolation being a young parent with no built-in peer group as a major contributing factor, and researchers noted that peer support groups and “centering” groups, where pregnant people move through pregnancy together as a cohort, can help fill that gap.
- **Group care narrows disparities.** The Commonwealth Fund reports that group prenatal care — where a small group of pregnant people attend appointments and support each other together, rather than seeing a provider one-on-one every time has been shown to be especially effective at improving outcomes for Black patients with lower incomes and may help narrow racial disparities in maternal and infant mortality.

Connection isn't a nice-to-have on top of medical care. In the research, it functions almost like a treatment in its own right.

What This Looks Like in Real Life

Building real connection means naming, specifically, who's in your circle before you need them, not while you're in crisis:

- **A postpartum supports person** who checks in on you directly, not just the baby, in the weeks after birth.

- **A peer group** — other pregnant or new parents going through it alongside you, whether that's a formal group prenatal program or an informal circle of friends.
- **A community anchor** — a faith community, a family network, an organization that knows your name and notices if you go quiet.
- **A warm handoff, not a cold referral** — an actual introduction to a provider or organization, not just a phone number you're expected to call yourself while exhausted.

Why This Matters Beyond One Postpartum Period

Isolation compounds. A parent who feels alone in week one is more likely to still feel alone in month six, and less likely to reach out when something is genuinely wrong. Connection must be built before that isolation sets in which is exactly why it's a pillar of the blueprint, not an afterthought once something goes wrong.

This is Pillar Four of the Architect Doula™ Framework. Pillars One through Three were Education, Advocacy, and Preparation. Next are Leadership and Legacy.

“We don’t just prepare families for birth. We help them design a healthier future one blueprint, one family, and one generation at a time.”

Learn more or follow the work: [[**www.thearchitectdoula.org**](http://www.thearchitectdoula.org)**]**

Sources Referenced

- *“Barriers to Diagnosis of Postpartum Depression among Younger Black Mothers,” PMC*
- *“How Common Is Postpartum Depression In Black Mothers and Parents?” Healthline*
- *Commonwealth Fund, “Community-Based Models to Improve Maternal Health Outcomes and Promote Health Equity”*