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WHAT'S NOW!

CAUSE CELEB

After losing a close friend to perinatal depression, Lisa Hensley is spreading awareness of the illness that affects so many new parents



Lisa Hensley

"WE WANT THIS TO BE THE FIRST PORT OF CALL for all new parents," says Australian actress Lisa Hensley, patron of the non-profit Gidget Foundation. This ground-breaking organisation was started eight years ago by a group of women devastated by the tragic suicide of a close friend who suffered perinatal depression. She was subsequently nicknamed

THE FACTS

- Approximately 1 in 5 women and 1 in 10 men suffer perinatal depression; although numbers may be much higher because so many find it difficult to discuss.
- The term "perinatal depression" covers depression and anxiety both before and after birth, for both women and men.
- Symptoms can vary enormously and be difficult to diagnose, ranging from: lack of appetite, disturbed sleep, social isolation, and difficulty bonding with the baby.

"Gidget" to protect her identity. Now, in her honour, the foundation provides information and support to parents as well as training to medical staff.

"Having a baby can be the most joyous thing in your life, [but coping with a new child] is still really hard. It affects everyone—men and women," Hensley points out.

Looking back, Hensley realises she herself was affected by perinatal anxiety after the birth of her first son, Tom. She's adamant that, "talk is the first line of defence. It's not like breast cancer," Hensley explains. "There is no lump. It's not a physical thing. It's about admitting, 'I don't feel right'. That's where we break through." Having been the patron of Gidget for three years now, Hensley says her overall aim is about awareness. "We want new mums and dads not to suffer," she says. "If someone reads this, and thinks 'I'm not alone', then we have achieved something." —Jo McKay



The board meets to discuss how best to help new parents.



Gidget midwives are trained to help.



Hensley brought close friend Julia Morris on board.

HELPING THE CAUSE

WHAT YOU CAN DO MAKE A DONATION AT GIDGETFOUNDATION.COM.AU, OR ATTEND THEIR ANNUAL FUNDRAISER LUNCH: SEPTEMBER 25, AT JONES BAY WHARF IN SYDNEY. HOSTED BY JULIA MORRIS, TICKETS ARE \$120 EACH. FOR BOOKING INFORMATION, LOG ON TO THE SITE.

WHAT THE FOUNDATION DOES

- Tresillian Gidget Scholarship: each year allows one Tresillian nurse to further her training in perinatal mental health.
- Gidget Foundation Website: a point of contact for women and families affected by perinatal anxiety and depression.
- Gidget Midwives: this NSW initiative offers antenatal screening for anxiety and depression in a number of private hospitals.
- The foundation also provides information to healthcare professionals and community groups on perinatal health.