

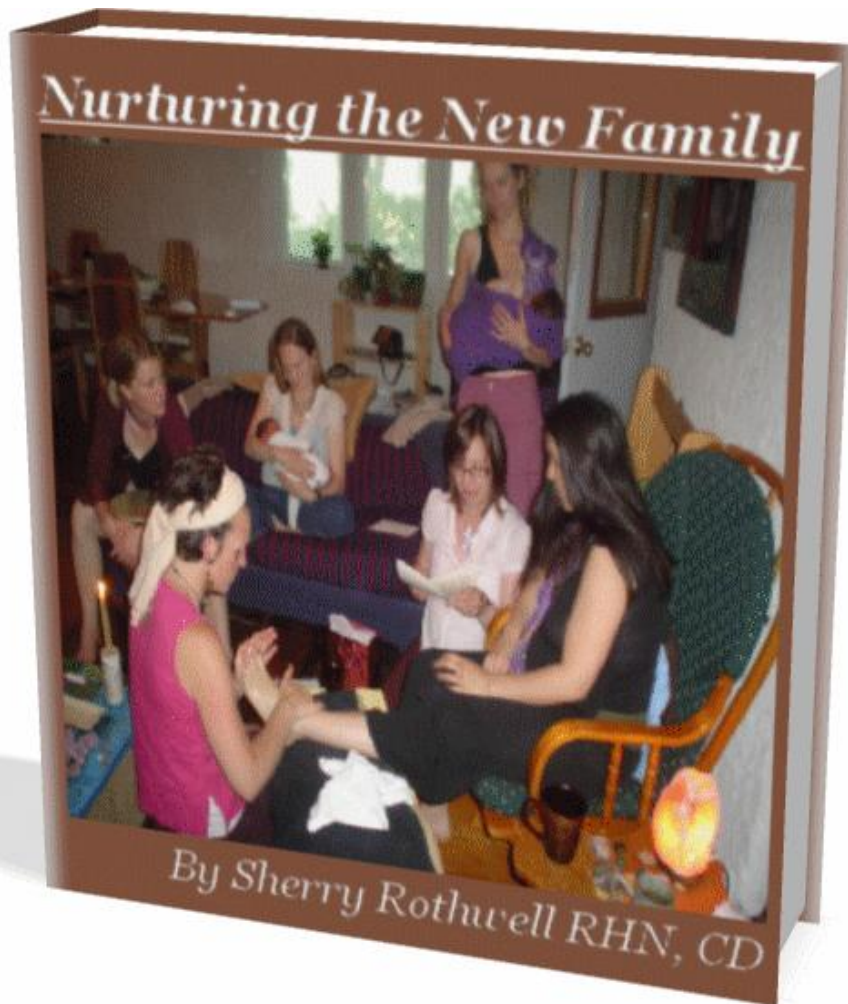
Nurturing the New Family!

Rediscovering Motherhood



Nurturing the New Family!

Rediscover motherhood while learning the secrets of postpartum rejuvenation, so that you can increase your vitality, beauty and health through giving birth and raising a child!



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About the book and what the women are saying....

Rediscover motherhood while learning the secrets of postpartum rejuvenation, so that you can increase your vitality, beauty and health through giving birth and raising a child!

Nurturing the New Family is about how and why the community can come together to nurture new families, and how pregnant women can cultivate greater self nurturing practices to embark on motherhood in a more empowered way.

Over 200 pages of practical ideas that will help you step into motherhood in a beautifully empowered, inspired and sacred way.

This book will enable you to...

- Communicate and get your need for nurturing met throughout pregnancy.
- Savour the whole experience of becoming mother-by cultivating a magical and memorable experience!
- Learn why yoga can help you flow with the energy of birth and explain to your partner how he/she can manage *their energy* to help you allow yourself to stay open and unbounded throughout pregnancy, birth and postpartum.
- Learn how to set up the postpartum experience so that you become blessed with more beauty, vitality and greater health each time you give birth.
- Prevent postpartum 'blahs' by creating a container for the kind of postpartum experience that builds your energy and allows you to focus on little more than simply bonding with your baby.
- Become emotionally prepared for motherhood and have your most sacred needs validated and held.
- Learn how to care for your body postpartum to prevent depression, heavy bleeding, diaper rash, colic and mastitis etc.

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You'll love this book if you are

- A mother or mother-to-be who longs to be honoured, celebrated and upheld in your transformation from Maiden to Mother!
 - A father who wants to ravish your pregnant partner with love and support and understand the secret longings of the beautiful woman who is carrying your child!
 - A friend who wants to bless that special pregnant woman in your life with greater support, conscious care and nurturing!
 - A doula who wants to add nurturing practices to the care that you currently offer to new families.
-



"The Nurturing the New Family book pretty much changed my life (and I secretly wish everyone who ever knew me would read it so they'd know how to support me right now and I'd never have to ask). I loved every page. I am SO grateful. I've also done the one-on-one nutritional support with Sherry that has been deeply and profoundly healing in more ways than I ever could have guessed when we started out. Thank you, thank you, thank you!"

Carrie Klassen, founder of Pink Elephant Academy for Entrepreneurs www.pinkelephantacademy.com



"What a beautiful way to translate your beliefs and knowledge with others.....so many pregnant women don't even know this is available to them! I love your soul and I know you will inspire many to do the same for others....have you realized the magnitude of your contribution to the world? If you are able to make one pregnant woman at a time feel embraced and celebrated for her accomplishment of motherhood, you will start changing the world, one expectant

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mother at a time!

"Helen Soderberg New York, NY
www.mommy2mommyonline.com

Why I wrote this book.....

The inspiration for this book comes out of my desire to see pregnant woman and mothers nurtured during the childbearing years. What I have noticed in my own life, and in the life of many mothers, is that while we selflessly give and nurture our families day and night, we are often left feeling alienated, exhausted, unsupported and un-nurtured.

Given that the present day culture minimizes the significance of pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood, is it any wonder that we feel this way?



"This is a beautiful gift from your sacred goddess self to us all. The flow makes me feel that this is all the training ever needed in another to being fully present and in service to the family of a new one coming in. I well up with tears because of its depth and beauty Sherry. And all so commonly felt among us. I feel you are sharing in simple perfect words, all that I have wished to impart to others for community birth. Bless you and thank you! You have covered lovingly and beautifully everything. If someone wants to be trained as doula this is all they need to start and then just be with the moms. If you are granmama, auntie, sister, man, mom this is a must read book. I want all my people to read it! Well done." Carole Perez Montanari Sagaponack, NY

I know what it is like, because I've been there.....

Having navigated pregnancy and birth twice, and having had two very different experiences in the postpartum (on account of differing levels of engagement by my community), I have come to believe that nurturing and community support are essential

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elements in the health and well-being of all new families. Not only in the unfoldment of the new mother, but also in the continuing life story of the child. While we have all heard it said that "It takes a Village to Raise a Child", we must also remember that it is the child who will go on to raise the world!



"This book was wonderful and beautiful and I am so excited to give this to as many people as I can think of." Kerri Glendinning Edmonton, AB

What's wrong with the way things are?

Today's parents are not only expected to be the sole providers for and bare 100% of the responsibility of raising young children, but at the same time they are expected to make a meaningful and significant contribution to society.

But where have all the Grannies, the Aunties, the Grandfathers and the Uncles gone? Have we forgotten that our children's children will go on to serve all of humankind in continuation of life on the planet? That they will one day be the leaders and decision makers in a future that will affect society at large? Are we not all responsible for all of our relations?



"Sherry Rothwell's book, Nurturing the New Family, is a one-of-a-kind, generously informative and truly pioneers a new childbearing paradigm. This is a must read for anyone who has gone through pregnancy and childbirth without the proper support, for anyone who sees themselves as stewards of the next (healthy!) generation and for those who need half-an-excuse to find, accept and generously receive care while they are helping the human species to

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continue. I LOVED reading this book and can recommend it highly."

Beth Martens, Archetype Coach

www.BethMartens.com

What if there is another way?

This book explains why it is in all of our best interests to support young families by raising the next generation in community. It offers many ideas for how we can create not only great beginnings for the new mother and baby, but also a child friendly world as well!

This book is as much acknowledgment and validation for motherhood as it is chock full of uplifting and inspiring encouragement. It offers realistic, creative and tangible ideas for nurturing all aspects of lives including our relationships, our babies, our partnerships, community and self care!



"I just wanted to offer my support for such an inspirational piece of work that comes from the heart. It is beautifully written and weaves the journey of birth and motherhood into the fabric of life- it really is a tribute to your gentle sweet love of humanity. I have observed you many times as you immersed your sweet Jasmine in unconditional Mother Love and this book is a

testimony to you as a mother. All you have written comes from your experience and truth as a Wise Woman/ Mother/ Doula/ Healer- well done dearest Sherry, this is indeed a gift to mothers babies families and communities all around the Earth Mother!"

Janice Bass, Midwife, New Zealand www.communitybirth.net

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In this book you will discover...

- Special Ways that the Community Can come together to Honour and Celebrate the New Family
 - 24 Ways You Can Nourish All the 8 Aspects of Your Sacred Self!
 - Why Yoga is both an act of Self Care and an Essential Practice for Childbirth
 - How Holistic Doulas can Nurture and Hold the Space for your Experience of Pregnancy and Birth
 - Easing the Postpartum & Bonding Experience through Ayurvedic Food Customs
 - The 42 Day Sacred Window and how Father's can nurture moms into greater health, youth and beauty!
 - Postpartum Therapies ie: The BabyMoon, Moxibustion, Bellywrapping, Mother Baby Roasting etc.
 - Preparing a Peaceful Postpartum Sanctuary: 32 Ways to Ease into Motherhood!
 - Many Creative Ways to Create more Community in Your Life!
 - And more!
-



"What a treat to read your beautiful book. It is wonderful and such a gift. Blessings on this birth Sherry. An enlightened entity indeed."

Ronda Rice Kauai, HI

WHY THIS BOOK IS UNLIKE ANYTHING YOU'VE READ BEFORE....

- This is not about what to eat in pregnancy, but rather about nurturing all aspects of your self not only for the sake of your own and your baby's well being, but also to establish your self care rhythms before the baby comes.

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- This book is a gentle reminder of how important it is to continue to cultivate your interests and pursuits as an individual woman, even while fully embracing the role of the mother.
 - This book is not about your changing body and developing baby, but rather about honouring you, your embarkation into motherhood and your transformation as a woman!
 - This book is as much for Doulas, Midwives, Friends, Family, Partners and the extended community of a pregnant woman as much as, if not more than for the pregnant woman herself!
 - This book is about how contributing to pregnant women ensures a brighter future for all of us and about the power and responsibility that we have as mothers!
-



"I so appreciate the tone and content of what you are saying here. The deep importance of pregnancy and birth and the crucial task of mothers is often ignored in our society. It feels good to read your words- its like a fresh breeze! I loved the part on teas and infusions, I learned a lot!"

Niko Palmer Edmonton, AB

www.BlossomingBellies.ca

Take a peak into the content.....

Intro

In the intro I share why I feel that nurturing is a required component of the health and well-being of new families-not a luxury. Through my first birth experience I discovered that the modern practice of midwifery has changed- thus creating a void. While modern midwives continue to offer a much more humanistic approach to childbirth, the days of the community midwife – the one who knows you and your family in an intimate way, has become somewhat of a cultural rarity with the recent professionalization of midwifery. Pregnant women however continue to have an inherent need for the inclusion of a wise women or a circle of experienced women, to guide or mentor them

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through the mysteries of both pregnancy and birth. This role can be filled by experienced women in our own community or facilitated by holistically minded and experienced doulas.

Chapter 1 My First Postpartum Story

In this chapter I share the trials and tribulations of my first post partum experience and how it led me to the path of serving as a Doula. It seems that collectively as a culture we have forgotten what new moms and newborn babies need-and how to provide for them as community. Along with allowing the medical profession to displace our loved ones in the birthing experience, we also unknowingly let community slip through our fingers thereby losing the family centred birth experience. I propose that it is now time to reclaim community supported childbirth and cultivate a village to raise our children. We can begin doing that by contributing to pregnant women and new families.

Chapter 2 The Heart of Embracing Family Life

As much as each individual woman can cultivate great self-responsibility and self-care, pregnant women also have an inherent need to be honoured, celebrated and nurtured through pregnancy and birth as a rite of passage. During this profound time she offers her body, mind, soul and heart to the community as a vessel of pro-creation, thus ensuring the continuance of humanity. In addition, the nature of the child she raises has far reaching impacts on what the future will look like for all of us. One thing that we can be sure of is that this child will effect and make a contribution to this world. Whether that contribution is positive or negative, rests on the child's life experience. By working together as a community to allay any external stresses in the lives of pregnant women, we can help to create a contented child who feels at home and safe in his/her world.

Chapter 3 Community Coming together to Nurture the New Family

In this chapter I share many concrete and specific ways that the community can contribute to pregnant women and uphold the new family during the postpartum

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experience with love and reverence.

Chapter 4 Motherhood as a Bodhisattvic Path

In this chapter we exploring the path of motherhood as a spiritual practice. While it doesn't look or feel anywhere near as idyllic or romantic as the ashram, the moment we conceive a child, the bodhisattva is born within us as mothers. The process of being aware as we conceive, gestate and open our wombs to the creative force- the all that is, becomes our attunement as woman healer- giving rise to the higher functioning we need to mentor our children into their vast potential and greatness. As we choose to offer ourselves up to mother in awareness, we consciously raise the consciousness of our children, and ultimately we generate the enlightenment of humanity as a whole.

Chapter 5 Sacred Acts of Self Care for the Pregnant Woman

Many women find themselves ill prepared for the demands of the experience of mothering. In this chapter we explore the importance of adopting rhythms around self care, along with 32 ways to nurture one's self during pregnancy. At some point or another, we all hit a place of futility where we find ourselves drained and feeling uninspired as mothers. We discover the mantra "It is not up to me to meet all my child's needs, but it is up to me to see that all my children's needs are met" and explore the possibility that we don't need to compromise. Instead we can seek higher solutions and find consensus in the seemingly endless conflicting desires that we have as mothers to serve our children and yet remain true to ourselves.

Chapter 6 Prenatal Yoga- A Practice in Self Care in Preparation for Giving Birth

In this chapter I share 6 reasons why I believe that yoga is hands down the best self care and preparation for childbirth.

Chapter 7 Nurturing Mama- Expanding the Masculine Heart

Pregnancy is both time for a man to deepen into his masculinity, and for a woman to

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deepen into her femininity. A father's role in conception, pregnancy, and birth are very often underestimated in our culture, yet Father's play an integral role in conception, birth, and parenting. In this chapter I share ways that parents can deepen in their relationship as preparation for parenting and how masculine strength can assist a woman to ground and open more fully into her feminine essence in preparation for childbirth and motherhood.

Chapter 8 Holistic Doulas- Nurturing Pregnancy and Birth

In this chapter I share the benefits of hiring a Doula to assist with the birthing experience and highlight the importance of choosing one that is holistically minded so that pregnant women can get not only the education they need to navigate the politics of childbirth- but to be fully nurtured throughout pregnancy and the postpartum. Nurturing can go a long way to providing pregnant women with a positive embarkation into motherhood, regardless of their birth outcome.

Chapter 9 Cultured at Birth

Babies acquire their inner ecosystem as they descend through the birth canal. Mother passes on her own gut flora (for better or for worse) to her baby. The state of mom's flora has the potential to either promote healthy digestion, immunity and mental capacity or it can compromise her baby's health from birth (causing a lot of unnecessary pain and suffering for both). In this chapter, a checklist is provided to highlight symptoms that may indicate an imbalance of microflora in the mother or father. Additionally, I outline 8 steps that parents can take to restore their microbial balance in preparation for the birth.

Chapter 10 The 42 Day Sacred Window

In Ayurveda, it is believed that postpartum women are to be nurtured and cared for by extended family with proper post partum food, daily massage, and nothing to do but care for and bond with their baby after the birth for 42 days. It is believed that, women

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who are cared for in this way will become rejuvenated, increasingly energized, more beautiful and healthier than they were before giving birth! On the other hand, they have also observed that if new mothers are not cared for and are expected by their community to just get on with the daily tasks of life; that they will in fact age faster and experience a loss in vitality in the postpartum. In this chapter we explore how postpartum is facilitated in other cultures and how we can best incorporate these traditional ways for mothers and babies in today's world.

Chapter 10 The Babymoon

The Babymoon in a way corresponds to the 42 day Sacred Window. It refers to the special care we take as parents to bask in the afterglow of the birthing vibes and the beauty of bonding with our baby. Just as we have a honeymoon after getting married by secluding ourselves and taking out special time to bond with our partner, we can also intentionally create a babymoon with our new baby. In this chapter we explore how we can create sacred space in our homes, our lives and our community to welcome the new baby.

Chapter 12 Nourishing the Postpartum Woman with Food

In this chapter we explore the best type of foods to meet the needs of new mothers and how to best prepare them for her – foods that are warming, moist, sweet, oily, mineral rich and easy to digest. We end the chapter with instructions on how to prevent digestive troubles in the infant and how to support colicky babies to heal.

Chapter 13 Fathering in the Postpartum

This time can be especially delicate for parents and conflict can often arise. While in the postpartum, mothers continue to desire a protective masculine presence, they do not want fathers to take the lead in the decision making around what is best for the baby. This chapter is an appeal to fathers hold the space for moms to rise up and to acknowledge that she is intrinsically equipped to know instinctively what will best serve

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her own and the baby's well being. It also ask mothers to be patient as fathers also rise up to the challenge of becoming a strong unwavering and solid presence- able to weather the storms of her emotion without needing to "fix her", solve her problems or offer advice.

Chapter 14 Preparing your Post Partum Sanctuary

In North American culture, women are expected, to not only to recover physically and emotionally from childbirth in a short period of time, but they are also expected, to simultaneously and solely care for their baby without breaks, support and community life. At no other time in history, have women been expected to do so much, with so little help. In this chapter, I provide a checklist of 18 preparations and practises that make for an easeful transition during the postpartum, plus creative ways to get help.

Chapter 15 The Un-Nurtured Woman

In my observation and experience, if women do not receive some kind of postpartum nurturing, a complication will eventually present itself in the postpartum, thus enabling the mother to receive the help and attention that she truly needs and desires in the first place. These complications are an unconscious way of getting her needs met. In this chapter I share my own personal experience with this phenomenon and explore 7 reasons postpartum women are deserving of special treatment. We look at creative ways that any woman can re enact this time in her life to heal from past abandonment during this most sacred time in her life. We finish this chapter by looking at another benefit of great postpartum rejuvenation for papas- a juicy vibrant mama! We take a peak into how to keep the passion alive in parenthood.

Chapter 16 Co-creating and Cultivating Community

It seems to me that we have become far too fragmented from one another and that a return to some degree of responsibility in one another's lives on a daily basis is called for, now more than ever. While we all cannot or choose not to move into an intentional

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community, coop or eco village, in this chapter we explore ways to cultivate more community in our every days lives and contemplate how we can create a more child friendly world. We end this chapter with a full circle look at the potential and benefits of re creating multigenerational communities.

Chapter 17 My Second Postpartum Story

In this final chapter I tell the story of my second postpartum experience showing the contrast between having a typical North American postpartum vs. a holistic one filled with love and community. I share how together with my circle of woman friends, we have created a community and culture of nurturing birth and how anyone can do the same in their circle, one mother-baby at a time.

"I just wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed your book! I couldn't sleep the



"I have to tell you how grateful I am that you followed spirit's prompt to put this all together. It is timely, so necessary. I see many truths that emerged in my own life experiences. I can also attest to the wisdom, nourishment and deep peace that pour forth from this time in our lives. I was also encouraged to just "get on with it" around week 2, like was all this really necessary?

But it was and it is. It would be wonderful if more people knew about these safe-guards of maternal, baby, family, community health. Some of my favorite parts are about how we can have a kid moon, or do something special even long after the birth of our children. This is so important, and valuable, for those who at the time did not receive the proper nourishment and acknowledgement they deserved. This is a wonderful gateway into the world of sacred pregnancy, birth and beyond, relationship healing and community building. Years of personal experience as a mother, witnessing as a doula and support to friends and clients as well as many hours of research have gone into this precious resource for all. I will definitely direct friends and family to this labour of love, in the hope of inspiring all to honour and support the budding families in our midst.

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With humour, compassion, insight and inspiration, Sherry gives recipes for not only herbal infusions, but peaceful beginnings. Thank you Sherry!

Emily Rivers -Mother of 3, Freebirther, Yoga teacher and Lover of Life

"I just wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed your book! I couldn't sleep the other night and stayed up till the morning finishing it because I couldn't put it down. I love how real and down to earth you present your materials and opinions, it made for a good read. It also got me really thinking about hiring a post partum doula after this little baby is born. Not necessarily because I feel I "need" one. But because I think I deserve the sacred time with my new family".

Alana Nichols Edmonton, AB

"Awesome! I LOVED it!!!!!! I am so happy to see someone devote a book to the community, the pregnant woman and new mama needs! I especially liked your juxtaposition of postpartum after Isaiah and postpartum after Jasmine's throughout the book. My two favourite sections were mama as Bodhisattva and the topic of self care. Thank you for writing this!"

Jocelyn Gallagher Vancouver, BC

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Intro

The inspiration for this book comes out of my desire to see women nurtured through the experience of becoming a mother and throughout the journey that continues to lie ahead. It is so unfortunately prevalent, that at time when so many women selflessly give much more of themselves than ever before in their lives, that they often also feel the most alienated and unsupported by their families and their community.

Having personally navigated pregnancy and birth twice, and having had two very different and nearly opposite experiences (on account of the different level of engagement by my community)-I have come to believe that nurturing is a required component of the health and well-being of new families-not a luxury. Whether or not a new mother feels nurtured and cared for during this delicate time in her life, has consequence not only on her health, but in her ability to open her heart to motherhood and fully receive the child into her world. I am of the opinion that how a new mother is nurtured (or not), has the potential to impact whether she will go on to perceive her new role of being a mother -to

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be a burden or a blessing. I believe that the degree to which her child feels entirely loved, at peace and safe in the world is at stake- on the account of how many human hearts are deeply invested in that child.

And please understand that I am not speaking of a biological love - as in the instinctual *feeling* or sense of loyalty that most of us naturally feel towards our friends and family - but love, as in the moving hands and hearts *in action* toward the well-being of one another. I wonder what our world look like if we all felt a sense of responsibility, at the micro level, to contribute to a child's world or to the birthing of a new family?

A message to the community....

We live in a world where it is considered the norm that parents alone be exclusively responsible for their own children. It is even rare to find a grandparent that feels any sense of responsibility in raising their once removed offspring. How is that?

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It is widely accepted that elders, regardless of tribe, assume significant roles as teachers and caretakers of the young by raising them in the Native American traditions.

Sound idealistic or maybe like too much work? For some, exploring the possibility that we might all be responsible for raising the children in our communities and extended family can feel like a lot of pressure in a world already laden with much time poverty and personal burn out.

I get that because I've felt it too. I think that the root of this feeling stems from having lost our inherent feeling of connection and responsibility to our community. We have replaced interdependence with one another for dependency and reliance on the system. We no longer need each other to account for basic needs- yet our emotional need for connection, contribution and to be contributed to remain strong. While we might not be able to or feel compelled to recreate the villages of the past, the truth is that there is much that we can do to reclaim community by simply starting from the beginning- at birth.

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Rest assured though, that I won't really be *asking* anything of you, anything that you are not uniquely compelled to contribute. My hope is that any action that you take small or momentous in service to a new family, will be both a natural and easy expression of your care... coming entirely from the place of your own inner inspiration! Take what serves and leave what doesn't on the shelf.

In lieu of the all or nothing mindset, I ask that you embrace the ideas within this book from the place of both/and, where you can BOTH have your cake AND share it too!

A message to the mamas.....

As a mother of two, and as a holistic doula, I have wholeheartedly embraced pregnancy, birth and postpartum, as a soulful journey and as a rite of passage in my life and I hope to inspire you to do the same.

Whether you are a mother-to-be, a new mama or a fully seasoned one, I hope that your exploration into this book will be a breath of fresh air and an inspirational resource

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that will guide you to honour your mothering journey with the deep and conscious attention that it deserves. I also hope that you will take a moment to appreciate, respect and have reverence for the amazing gift that you are to the future of humanity- you have allowed your body to be a vessel and received the great honour of nurturing and stewarding the life of another soul- I can't think of anything that holds greater value.

Consider just how incredible you are for having dedicated at least one aspect of yourself in service to your child's well-being 24hours a day, 365 days a year, decade after decade!

Somewhere in all that time though, I do hope that you will remember to carve out as much time as you need, to cultivate and nourish the other aspects of your being as well and give yourself permission let the Grandmas, Sisters, Aunties, Cousins, and Friends serve you too!

A little back round about me....

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Let me begin with a quick overview of who I am and what I have been up to in the past 11 years in relation to motherhood and childbearing. I think it is important to share this with you to help you understand where I am coming from, and the lens through which I perceive motherhood in the modern context. As a mother, I have given birth to two children and as a *very part time* doula, I have assisted with 13 homebirths and 4 hospital births (3 planned, 1 transfer), including prenatal and postpartum care. I have also often been informally involved in nurturing many more women to one degree or another, by offering prenatal/postnatal nurturing including massage, moxibustion and other forms of TLC.

Over the years I have served in whatever way I could best facilitate the new mamas' needs—from cooking a meal to doing laundry to hosting mothering circles, mother blessings and offering counselling in nutrition and other matters of health and healing.

On a weekly basis it is not that uncommon to find me

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sharing some much needed health information over the phone with a friend who is feeling too overwhelmed to research her concerns for herself or her child - to offering birth and nutrition consulting on a professional basis through my online courses, “on land” classes and health coaching services here from my kitchen in sunny and friendly Manitoba!

Since 2002, I have been teaching women how to create a an uninterrupted birth so that they can express uninhibitedly, their full birthing capacities both from my living room couch and online through a course that I co developed called `Expect the Best When You are Expecting (www.OnlineChildbirthClasses.org). I have undertaken a self-directed study of the nature of physiological birth and of birth in other cultures while being continually on a pursuit to gain greater insight about how we can mother more joyously - despite the fact that conscious mothering can sometimes seem an insurmountable task - in a culture where mothers most often feel alone, overworked and exhausted.

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I have had first-hand experience of what it is like to give birth and become a mother in North America. After my first birth, I was sure that *something* had been missing from my experience of both pregnancy and of birth. Yet at the time, I didn't quite yet know what that something was. I spent many hours as a student of midwives (and other birth professionals) travelling from my hometown of Winnipeg, Manitoba to as far as Hawaii, Vancouver Island, North Carolina and most recently Nashville. I took these journeys to learn from women who I believe held something I knew I wanted for myself- something rich and meaningful that I wanted to bring back home to share with the women in my life and in my community.

What I later discovered was that, there is this whole realm of honouring and celebration that cultures and communities past used to bestow on pregnant woman!

This honouring often included special foods, customs and sacred ceremonies to mark childbirth as a woman's rite of passage. I learned that as a doula I was uniquely positioned to serve new mothers with the nurturing care,

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celebration and honouring that our ancestors once did (and that certain cultures still do!).

When I was first pregnant with my son Isaiah, I didn't understand the purpose of hiring a doula. My first impression when I discovered a pamphlet put out by some local doulas was that I didn't need a doula- because I had a midwife. Sure, I could understand why someone might hire a doula for a hospital birth, but I couldn't see why I would want to invest in a doula service for my homebirth.

I assumed that I had no need for a doula because I assumed that my midwife would fulfill this role because at the time I did not understand the modern context of midwifery which is not nearly as conducive to nurturing as it once was.

I wasn't aware at the time that the modern practice of midwifery no longer carried the community spirit and nurturing care, in the way that I imagined it *should be* and the way that I thought it was from my research about how women once attended other women in birth before hospitals became the norm. I had read [Spiritual Midwifery](#)

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by Ina Mae Gaskin and The Natural Pregnancy Book by Jill Aviva Romm. So naturally, I just assumed that my midwife would fit into my naive mental picture of what I thought a midwife was supposed to be! While my midwife did wear Birkenstocks and had a beautiful natural grey stripe adorning her long black hair, there were certainly no family dinners and definitely no mother blessing (a special women`s gathering to celebrate the mother and birth as a rite of passage) as part of her services!

Today, most modern midwives attend 4 births or more a month. Can you imagine how many mother blessings a midwife would have to attend every year if she were to make herself a part of each client`s circle or community? It wouldn`t even be fair to ask.

While the modern midwife continues to be a very nurturing presence, she can no longer fulfill the scope of nurturing needed by the new family. Today, midwives continue to offer a much more humanistic approach to childbirth, but the days of the community midwife - the one who knows you and your family in an intimate way has become

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somewhat of a cultural rarity with the more recent professionalization of midwifery.

While midwives in the modern context generally do not offer nurturing therapies, or facilitate ceremonies as part of their services, pregnant women continue to have an inherent need for the inclusion of a wise woman or a circle of experienced women, to guide or mentor them through the mysteries of both pregnancy and birth.

This is especially true of first time moms. Without this kind of mentorship or sisterhood, many women find themselves feeling as though some unnamed element of the experience is missing. With childbirth being such a significant event in the life of a woman, it naturally calls for a ritual or ceremony of some kind to mark or honour it as a memorable experience.

When this doesn't happen, many women whom I have spoken to, myself included have felt a sense of aloneness. Could we not all benefit from the presence of nurturing and

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experienced women, as we journey through, pregnancy, birth and early motherhood? Would it not be ideal if that someone had walked the path themselves?

Today, I recommend holistic doulas as an incredible resource and a nurturing support for the family, no matter where they decide to give birth (and you`ll soon learn why in an upcoming chapter about holistic doulas).

FYI: My unofficial use of the term "holistic doula" can be used to describe any nurturing doula who is adept at using natural therapies to remedy the discomforts of pregnancy and birth and one who uses nurturing postpartum practices such as massage, moxibustion and herbal infusions, etc., in the postpartum care she offers. She need not be certified with any particular organization, but she should have a working knowledge of natural remedies, a nurturing presence and practice in the wise woman tradition (as per Susun S.Weed in Healing Wise from the Wise Woman Herbal series).

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The Wise Woman Tradition is the best Blueprint I know of for the safe and responsible use of natural medicine:

www.susunweed.com/Article_Spirit_WiseWoman.htm

Holistic doulas will also facilitate a mother blessing by gathering together supportive women friends and family members to celebrate the mother to be and to raise the energy and intention for a straight forward, easy or even ecstatic birth experience!

During my first pregnancy, having read *The Natural Pregnancy Book* by Aviva Jill Romm, I knew about *mother blessings* and I wanted one. However at the time, no one in my circle of friends knew about this custom. I felt too shy to ask for my needs to be met because I was afraid to impose on other people.

If I could do it all over again, I would certainly hire a holistic doula to facilitate a mother blessing or at least prenatal and postpartum nurturing! It is well worth the investment in your own and your baby's future well-being

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to hire the doula who is the perfect match for you. We will be learning lot more about the mother blessing custom later in this book.

And then there is weaving the story.....

Many times after the birth experience, women often feel a sense of elation and accomplishment like never before in their lives. But, they often have no one to share it with - no one with whom to “weave” the story, to witness and acknowledge their journey. *Weaving the story* refers to sitting in circle with the women whom have had the honour of witnessing our birth. Each woman holds a sacred piece of the birth story from her unique perspective.

As much as we want to hear the birth story from the birthing mother, *she* also wants to know what we perceived and sensed about the birth as well. She is curious to discover the parts of the story that she may not have been aware of while she was between worlds in the altered state of consciousness that labour is.

After the birth, many women also feel as though the whole

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world is different, yet they watch perplexed as everyone around them continues to go on as if nothing miraculous has occurred!

Women have an inherent need to weave their birth stories with and among women. They desire to be witnessed and sometimes to ask questions, especially when they don't understand why the birth turned out as it did. For many women, it can be too intimidating to weave the story with their midwife, especially if they don't want to share their disappointment or if they want an outsider's objective opinion about why the birth may have played out as it did.

Sometimes, we just want to know if someone else out there experienced the bliss and elation that we did! Nothing feels better than sharing our joy and excitement with someone who shares our enthusiasm. This is one of the greatest contributions of the doula or the community is to be the witness and weaver of the story.

....and now I am honoured to have the opportunity to weave my postpartum stories here with you and share the

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wisdom and insight I have gained through both the joys
and the hardships of modern motherhood!

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Chapter 1

My First Postpartum Story

After the homebirth of my son Isaiah, my husband returned to work 3 days later, and I was left completely alone with my baby for the first time. My midwife had recommended that I lay in bed for 8 days to avoid needing stitches to repair a small tear. I was instructed not to get out of bed, except to shower and go to the washroom. ``No stairs``, said my midwife as she walked out the door! ``Yeah but``, I thought, ``the laundry is downstairs``.

While 8 days may seem like a long time, receiving these instructions was a monumental blessing, because it ensured that I experienced a *babymoon* at a time in my life when I didn't even know what one was; never mind understand the physiological health and bonding benefits of embracing this special time of mama baby bonding.

While I will go into more detail about this later, a babymoon is essentially a special time period set aside for mother to bond with her baby. From a purely physiological standpoint, the babymoon (close proximity and relaxation)

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enables the optimal expression and release of the hormone oxytocin for feelings of love and bonding- in addition to the hormone prolactin that makes for uncomplicated breastfeeding.

While I was happily high on life force and basking in the hormonal afterglow of the babymoon, I was also HUNGRY. Not only was I *not* supposed to be up and about working in the kitchen anyway- but with a newborn in arms, I could do little more than eat the raw vegetables and fruit that my husband washed and cut for me each day before he left for work.

At another time in my life, ample raw veggies and fruit might have been an excellent and optimal form of nutrition (like if I was doing a cleanse!) but after birth, not only did I find them terribly unappealing, but they were lacking in the warm, grounding energetic qualities that I needed. Plus, being swollen and having torn, I was afraid to go to the bathroom. The last thing I wanted was fruits and vegetables to keep things going!!

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Later I learned from the Ayurvedic tradition of medicine that postpartum foods should be naturally sweet, warming and oily. These types of foods best serve to replenish and nourish a postpartum mother. From experience, I can attest to this ancient wisdom with my innate and instinctual desire for cooked foods in both of my postpartum experiences. While I had spent hours cooking and freezing food ahead of my birth, none of it was actually appetizing to me (except for one particular meal, a traditional Indian dish of Baked Beans!).

I would also later come to discover that “leftovers” are also not recommended to nourish postpartum woman because of the downward energy of the “soon to be” composting food- at a time when women need to have their spirits uplifted, not dampened.

While my husband attempted to cook and prepare food for me after work, I just didn't feel nourished. I must admit, he wasn't the world's best cook at the time either (although he is much better now)! Neither of us had any idea of what kind of food would best nourish me. Before my official

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training in holistic nutrition I had no knowledge of the food traditions of Ayurveda and Chinese Medicine which effectively point to the particulars of a nourishing postpartum diet.

So where were the women when I was hungry?

Well, my mother did come by the house a few times during that initial 8 days and while she happily and generously cleaned and tidied up the house, what I REALLY wanted and NEEDED was food! Again, just like I felt that it would be too imposing to ask for a mother blessing, I also felt afraid to ask my mother to make me food for 8 whole days. So, I remained hungry and helpless and afraid to ask for help!

There was no one in my life who understood what I was going through or even knew that I would be in need of anything- never mind know WHAT I needed or how to provide for it.

Then to make matters worse, on the ninth day (my first official day out of bed) my husband came home from work

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and asked “*Where is dinner and why is this house such a mess? I thought that you are supposed to be a housewife now?*” (said it with a look of incredulity). I could have killed him....but instead I just tore a strip into him like any sane women would do, until he lowered his head and ran away with his tail between his legs! Ahem.....

Now I have to say that my husband hates it when I tell this story because he says it makes him look like such a jerk!

Yet I have to tell it because it so beautifully illustrates the prevalence of a common cultural mindset and societal projection of new moms that is just plain ridiculous, impossible and unfair!

As a culture we seem to have forgotten what new moms and newborn babies need-and how to provide for them. Now think of all the roles that a new mama has to play in this culture: housekeeper, cook, mother, wet nurse and often provider- but remember they often have to do it with little or no sleep and with only one hand! I believe that

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postpartum depression (while also having unaddressed nutritional/physiological aspects) is primarily a problem of a culture that lacks nurturing. We could pretty much put any person in the position of a new mom and the chances of that person becoming exhausted, overwhelmed and depressed is highly likely!

And if you have never experienced being responsible 24/7 for a newborn, while simultaneously cooking, keep a home and having the baby in your arms the whole time, then how could you know? There is just no way to prepare someone for this.....much like birth it can only be experienced to be understood.

In fact, I have heard women of an older generation say “Why would I want to give birth at home when the hospital will provide nurses that serve me and bring me meals in bed.” Can you blame them? I totally get it. While women who choose to birth in the hospital these days no longer get to stay for a week, this comment is quite “telling” isn’t it? It is also probably why our grandma’s, mother’s and aunts have no idea what we need in those first weeks

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postpartum. Their women friends and family never supported them either- because they didn't have to. This is one of the not often mention side effects of institutionalized birthing. Along with allowing the medical profession to displace our loved ones in the birthing experience, we also unknowingly let community slip through our fingers and lost the *family* experience. I propose that it is now time to reclaim the community and cultivate a village to raise our children starting by contributing to pregnant women and new families.

Now back to my story.....

After Isaiah's birth I found myself becoming more and more fascinated with the world of natural childbirth and how I could make a difference for other moms and provide for them the things I wished I could have for myself. Along the way I become a doula.

After my inspiring but very conventional doula training experience, I was fortunate to discover an advanced doula training course offered by Whapio Diane Bartlett of the

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Matrona Midwifery School in the United States.

I literally found myself in tears while reading The Matrona website(www.TheMatrona.com)! I was so happy, excited and relieved to find a birth education that matched my intention to serve women at the level of heart, philosophy AND intellect. I was seeking a teacher who taught birth physiology- a science I had come to know and love.

The study of birth physiology concerns itself with how birth in a healthy woman unfolds safely and easily when there is no outside interruption of her experience. It seeks to explore the elements of birthing environments that enable a woman to feel safe and uninterrupted and asks that our birthing practices come into alignment with physiology- rather than demanding that the birthing woman's body unnaturally adapt to the culture's birthing practices. The physiological birth sciences are brought to us in layman`s terms by physicians Dr. Michel Odent, obstetrician and author of Birth and Breastfeeding and Dr. Sarah J, Buckley MD and author of Gentle Birth, Gentle Mothering. Their work contrasts the uninterrupted birth experience,

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with the study of how birth complications arise from a **disturbed** birthing environment. They describe in detail both what “disturbing” looks like and what to do instead. This is an absolutely fascinating and practical science that both parents enjoy and often gives fathers a much stronger sense of what their natural role is in birth- and how to best facilitate their women to open to the process.

Very soon after finding Whapio’s work, I found myself on an airplane to Holden Beach, North Carolina with a friend to learn from this super friendly and very eccentric looking midwife who would turn out to be not only a vibrant, down to earth and generous woman, but also a top-notch and engaging teacher! She met us with amazing southern hospitality in a way that I had never experienced before.

Whapio shared a whole new perspective of doula care with us that emphasized *nurturing* as opposed to *educating*. Her teachings affirmed “*meeting women where they are at*” and nurturing them in the way that *they desire* to be nurtured. At the heart of her philosophy is teaching midwives how to truly be “*with women*”.

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While she stressed that the experience of being nurtured should look different for each woman based on her uniqueness and preferences, she had noticed that there was a correlation between birth complications and a lack of nurturing (on all levels of our being) prenatally. This insight really resonated with me. It seemed apparent at least in my mind, how *human* it is to create little dramas and traumas, as unconscious ways of getting our needs met.

Naturally, these behaviours would also translate into our birth experiences. She taught us to notice, “*As we live, we give birth*”.

Whapio’s unique perspective has deeply informed my current way of being with pregnant women. While I still offer lots of education and information for the purposes of: informed consent, to allay unfounded birth mythology and to empower women, my doula services over time became a lot more hands on than just educational ‘birth talk’.

While at a birth, I essentially do little more than “witness”

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and “hold the space” for a woman to birth *in her own way*, the majority of the work that I do as a doula is done prenatally and postnatally. If you are a doula and reading this book, you will likely find many ideas and ways to expand your practice in becoming an even more holistically minded doula. I hope it will breathe new life into your vision for how you care for women.

In my experience, it is so much more fun to be with a pregnant woman focusing more on her journey and process, and less on her *birth plan*. And for the pregnant woman herself, it feels so great to be upheld and honoured in this way!

While a pregnant woman can read and get informed about childbirth, she cannot give nurturing to herself in the same way that we can give it to her. We all know that a massage feels so much better when someone else is giving it! Few women would say “no” to the nurturing therapies in this book and many more would be overjoyed to receive a massage or a nourishing meal or have you bestow a mother blessing upon her! You may be the only person in your client’s life that is *holding her* in this way. As a doula, you

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have the vast potential to contribute monumentally to the well-being of new families. Without further adieu, let us get the heart of why this book was written.....

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The Heart of Embracing Family Life

This book was written not only with pregnant women in mind, but equally for fathers, sisters, aunties, grandmothers, doulas and midwives as well. It is as much a call for inspired action to the communities that support and uphold each pregnant woman, as it is a guide to assist pregnant women themselves to harness the special window of greater health that be cultivated through the metamorphosis of maiden to mother. As much as each individual woman can cultivate great self-responsibility and self-care, pregnant women also have an inherent need to be honoured, celebrated and nurtured through each of the feminine rites of passage. It is through this profound time that she offers her body, mind, soul and heart to the community as a vessel of pro-creation, thus ensuring the continuance of humanity. In addition, the *nature* of the child she raises has far reaching impacts on what the future will look like for all of us.

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One thing that we can be sure of is that this child will effect and make a contribution to this world. Whether that contribution be positive or negative, rests on that child's life experience.

I have to reflect for a moment and confess that I carry some fear about the possibility that the community could receive this call to action begrudgingly. Who am I after all, to suggest that there may be a more conscious way that we can care for new mothers, new babies, and the new family?

It is my sincere hope that this book be received as a gentle nudging and not as an attack on the present cultural milieu. I want it to be known that I fully trust that the lack of care that goes into new families on behalf of the majority of communities and extended families, has everything to do with *just not knowing* of the need or how to provide for it.

I also want to share that while there are many inspiring ideas in this book for how we can rise up as a community and honour new life, my intention is to inspire action, not

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enforce it! Given the delicate nature of the new mother and the openness of the baby, it is best that only those who truly desire to give freely, spend precious and sacred time with the new family. I sense that many young women reading this will become very turned on by the ideas herein and may feel inspired to make a difference in this way. I know that if someone had brought these ideas to me before I had had children, I would have been very excited to honour a new mother and baby like this!

And if you have never given birth before or if you have a desire to conceive a child, you might be very excited about the possibility of having these practices and nurturing therapies bestowed on you in the future. Or if you are done having your own children, you might look especially forward to blessing your own daughter, granddaughter or nieces in this way!

I want to especially appeal to the friends and extended family of mothers-to-be and new mothers, to consider if volunteering your time towards her care and nurturing might be an inspiring and authentic way for you to give

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back. Many moms just don't have the financial resources or means to hire a holistic doula to take on this role for them. Yet, with a supportive community, many hands make for lighter work!

And you don't have to be a doula or a holistic therapist to offer a pregnant woman *hands on healing* and *nurturing ways*. These ways belong to all people and they are simple. It is not about doing it right, but rather it is about the love and attention with which we do them that matters. And if you are a family member getting a forward of this book from a pregnant woman, you have got to know that this woman has a lot of faith and trust in you to be willing to put herself on the line like that. Consider what it would feel like to ask for nurturing support and honouring care and ultimately be ignored or outright rejected in the asking!

As mamas, that is a possibility among many responses that we must be willing to risk. It is no simple task to ask for our needs to be met in a culture that values independence above all else! On a more personal note, I would like to acknowledge my amazing mother who read and edited the

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first draft of this book, which originally started as a 40 page report! Along with her generous editing skills, she gave me heartfelt feedback exclaiming that she was sorry that she didn't offer this kind of support and care to me, she exclaims that she just didn't know and wished that she had! If my mother had been an insecure person, she could have taken my words personally and created a story of guilt out of it. Instead, she just claimed her feelings and shared them with me. My mother is the perfect example of why this book is so important. Our family does want to do this for us. If only they knew what it is that we need and desire! *We help create a peaceful world and a sustainable future when we contribute to pregnant women and new families.*

By working together as a community to allay any external stresses in the lives of pregnant women, we help to create a contented child who feels at home and safe in his/her world. It is well known that mother's who are "stressed out" circulate stress hormones to their babies. This stress has the potential to create pathways in the baby's brain that can set him or her up to be on autopilot for feeling

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unsettled, emotionally fussy or withdrawn.

Just as we can unwittingly “wire” our children for stress (if not addressed and healed, this pathway or pattern can continue throughout the child’s life and well into adulthood), we can also consciously wire our children for high self esteem, self love and success! Dr. Bruce H. Lipton, author of The Biology of Belief dedicates a whole chapter in his book on parenting called “*Parents as Genetic Engineers*” where he explores the impact that our parenting has to program our child’s unconscious mind, and how it impacts their behaviour throughout the lifetime.

Anyone who spends time around children should be aware of this fact and relate to them accordingly. We help create a peaceful world when we help create joyous pregnancy, ecstatic birth, peaceful gestations, gentle births and loving communities for all children.

While we cannot as a community choose for the mother how she will choose to birth her baby, we can as family and

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as the extended community contribute to a peaceful beginning for each new soul. We do this by honouring the sacred vessel that birth's new life - that being the mother who owns the womb that nourishes the growing baby.

By caring for the mother very consciously, we do have some influence on how she will treat her child and how that child will treat his/her fellow man and eventually care for the planet. If we care to leave our planet peaceful and intact for future generations, one such way of doing so is to make it our own business to see to it that we will one day live in a mother and child honouring world! **Mothers are Sacred.** If we are inspired by this and it is of our choosing, we have the opportunity to uphold each pregnant woman with great reverence and thus make her well-being *our business* by serving in whatever way we feel authentically called.

We do this not only to honour her, but also to ensure that this new baby, a valued member of our community and society, has a stable momma and a happy home to be born into. By our conscious care of budding and new families, we create a new future for humanity. The greater the care

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we offer to new mothers, the greater the care and consciousness they can give to their newborns as we in return offer our gratitude and nurturing to help mother's refill their cup.

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Community Coming together to Nurture the New Family

When women begin to “show” this commences a great time for the community to begin to honour her. Words of loving encouragement, random surprise meals, and snacks delivered to her door, inspired comments about her beautiful glow, a baby shower and mother blessing are all simple gifts that the extended community can offer to a pregnant mother.

A mother blessing is much different than a baby shower in that the focus of the celebration is to honour the mother’s transformation from maiden to mother. It is celebrated as a sacred rite of passage. In contrast baby showers, are focused on bringing the community together to celebrate the new baby. The former is mother centered and the latter baby centered.

Other ways to celebrate the mother's glowing and growing beauty is to spend time pampering her. Give her a

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pedicure, a massage, a belly cast and/or belly mehndi (traditional Indian art of adorning the body with henna “paint”) to honour her beautiful and changing body. Or buy her a gift certificate to obtain some of these services from someone else! You may want to gather her friends together to split the cost of hiring a holistic or Ayurdoula (www.SacredWindow.com) - a doula trained in Ayurvedic ways to support the mother and baby to ensure that the mother's needs will be met in the postpartum (more on holistic doulas later).

Tell her your own and your friend’s empowering stories of pregnancy, childbirth and mothering. DO NOT share horror stories. These can make for lasting impressions and even worse, self-fulfilling prophecies! Let's be sure to impress the mother with a positive vision of her future!

The third trimester is a time for the woman’s closest of friends and women family members, the ones *who support her birthing choices and mothering philosophy* (well wishers only please!) to come together to rally their support and prayers for her to experience an ecstatic, joyful and timely

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birth experience, via a mother blessing.

A Mother blessing is a rite of passage and a powerful way to celebrate, honour and bless the mother to be. Have each of the guests bring a potluck dish with extra portions to be frozen for the new family for later. Depending on the number of guests, there could be days or weeks of prepared meals at the family's fingertips!!

Another great idea is to go around the circle of guests and request that each guest make an offering in service to the new family, e.g., childcare, a fresh meal, housecleaning, taking the dog for a walk, taking the laundry home and bring it back folded! One person can write down *who* has offered *what*, and collect each person's phone number.

This person can take on the job of being a liason between the new mother and her community! This way the mother does not have to coordinate the care herself.

The Internet is a good resource for mother blessing rituals that can be tailored to your personal spiritual beliefs.

Many offer ways to honour the mother with no particular

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religious flare. You might want to sing traditional birth songs, offer poems or blessings or other creative activities such as creating “birthing prayer flags” a lovely idea which came from my dear friend and wonderful artist Chantey Dayal (visit www.chanteydayal.com).

Traditionally, prayer flags are used to carry ancient Buddhist prayers, mantras, and powerful symbols to energize a spiritual vibration. Chantey shared with me how she and her sister cut out squares from the top of a shower curtain and had each guest artfully decorate one. The squares were threaded via a ribbon to be hung in the birthing space or where ever the mother wants to put it. I have since used squares of beige fabric and decorated them with sharpie pens, finally attaching the squares to a ribbon with safety pins. What a wonderful way to symbolize blessings and the intentions that the mother holds for the birth and for her embarkation into motherhood.

For more ideas on how to throw a mother blessing see the resources section in the back of this book.

At the end of the third trimester, mothers continue to

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benefit from your heartfelt time and attention. Consider offering to help her do a deep housecleaning in preparation for the baby; or an energy or space clearing of the stale energies in her home (ie: fan a sage bundle, especially in corners and around door frames). An infusion of good energy in the home can be “called in” via spoken intentions by a spiritually minded friend or family member. Being that a mother is so open in pregnancy, it is not recommended that she herself clear spaces of negative or stale energies.

Send her off to a day spa and gather her girlfriends to transform her home into one that is clean, clear and infused with positive energy.

Continue to offer her back rubs, foot rubs, gifts of wholesome snacking food or herbal infusions made with love (see the appendix for how to make herbal infusions).

Could she use a wholesome meal delivered to her door, with no expectation of hosting a visit? What about

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babysitting her other children so that she can refuel and continue to give of herself? Maybe she could use a gift certificate for a non-toxic cleaning company (work with her partner to get her out of the house for a much appreciated surprise)!

Send her an anonymous self-care package to acknowledge her profound gift of mothering to the world!

Nearing the end of pregnancy, mothers will begin to nest and should consider taking to bed early (you never know when labour will start and tired moms often find it very difficult to manage the intensity of labour).

While we want to give new moms and mother's-to-be lots of attention and care, we also don't want to overdo it. While some women bask in gifts of affection, others feel uncomfortable in the spotlight, so we must attune ourselves to their needs. While offering our support to momma, we also want to intuit when the best support is just to hold the space for her to "be."

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At some point, she may tire of the doting and would prefer not to talk about her due date and how big she is getting. She might want to forgo having her belly “talked to” or rubbed and may just want to be related to as a woman. However, it is likely that if you are reading this book, that you are an intuitive person who would just naturally know how to gauge when to give more and when to practice restraint.

As well, once the baby is born, many mothers have complained to me of how their families unknowingly caused them much stress and anxiety due to surprise visits, visits that lasted too long or even worse, ones where the new mother herself was expected to entertain the guests!

While I get that extended families do not consciously intend to burden the new mother, we must remember that we will have our time later to welcome and embrace the new baby. We must acknowledge the significance of the first 6 weeks after birth as being a special window in which baby’s *essential need* is to bond with *the mother and the father*.

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In my observation, even the baby's physiology seems to express this. For the most part, a newborn will avoid eye contact with anyone outside of the parental unit. For this reason, we must ask the parents when *they feel ready* to share their little "bundle of joy" with us. The extended family can best attend to the new family by being close by and available to help, without insisting to hold the baby or to be entertained in any way. For many of us, what I am saying is to state the obvious, but I know of at least two new mothers whose extended families did in fact expect them to pass their babies around and to make dinner for them within the first 3 days postpartum! Not only is such a situation over stimulating for a newborn, but it also interrupts bonding and is in fact a health concern for new mothers that can lead to postpartum complications.

The surest sign of overworked or stressed mothers is the tendency to develop mastitis (a breast infection) or to continue bleeding heavily. Both are symptoms that force mothers to get back into bed and recuperate their energy.

This sacred window of time and babymoon is not only essential for bonding, but it is also necessary to complete

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the physiological and psychological transition from the pregnancy state, back into the state of non-pregnancy. This does not happen in a few days, let alone overnight! Many moms feel as though they are still in an altered state of consciousness for many weeks after the birth- they need plenty of time to rest and rejuvenate!

We must also remember that babies' immune systems are just developing and that while the baby has natural immunity to the germs carried by the parents and to those in the home that he/she gestated in, the baby is not immune to germs carried into the home by outsiders.

Just to be clear, in no way am I trying to instil fear, but rather just a generous dose of consciousness around what may or may not be in the baby's best interests. When we come into the home of a newborn, we must be very careful to wash our hands first thing when we enter, and to abstain from coming over in the first place if we have a cold, flu or other infection.

Some new moms, do not feel comfortable yet with others

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holding their babies, so don't be offended and don't worry - your time will come! In the meantime, it is in the best interests of the new family that mother's preferences be honoured, even if we feel that she is being unnecessarily overprotective. That is not for us to decide. Our greatest concern should be for the mother's well-being, which extends as the baby's well-being too. We must consider the mother and baby as a unit, for they are interdependent and intertwined, both emotionally and physiologically.

Finally, one more aspect that requires our deep consciousness as a community is the importance of skin-to-skin contact for the new baby and mother. This requires mother to remain topless and baby naked, to facilitate optimal bonding and plentiful breast milk. To interrupt this time is potentially devastating for some new mothers when they are just establishing breastfeeding, a practice that is essential for optimal long and short-term health for both mom and baby. Some mothers feel very shy about breastfeeding in front of their community and family- so we must be very sensitive to this and do our best to make sure

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that our presence is not causing the mother to feel inhibited in any way.

As well, some parents choose to have a “*lotus birth*” which means that they allow the placenta to detach in its own timing. Since this practice challenges accepted norms, many parents do not feel compelled to have to justify why they are doing so. They often prefer to have no visitors at all until the chord detaches naturally. A lotus birth is said to complete the transfer of prana or chi (life force) and to benefit the child’s immune system. Some parents have shared that their lotus-birthed babies seem to be calmer and more settled than their other babies. They feel that there may be something comforting to the newborn with having their “twin” (placenta) close by until nature takes its course.

The best time and the best way to support a new mother is to ask her how you can best serve. Do not assume that she will ask for her needs to be met, even if you have shared your willingness to be of help! Many women who would benefit and appreciate support often do not feel

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worthy to receive it and will say things like “oh no that’s ok, you don’t have to do that,” when they would really like to say yes!

And some women have a hard time giving up control of how things are managed around their homes, so it may take some fine tuning to find out what it is that a pregnant woman really needs.

In my experience, I find that it is best not to say “*do you want me to.....?*” but rather more effective to say “*I would love to....., do you mind if I go ahead and.....?*” The second way of asking implies more joy in the work for you. This gives the new mother the impression that her needs are not imposing on yours, but that you are offering to be of service because you really want to- not because you think you should or have to.

Tending to new mothers comes best from a sincere heart. Offer to do those things for her, that will also bring you joy. We need not be everything to everyone. If you have no desire to do her laundry, but see that it needs being done,

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e-mail her friends and let them know that you went to her house and saw that the laundry needs catching up on. Let them know that while you cannot attend to it, you thought that someone else might feel joyfully compelled to want to contribute in this way! Asking for support on behalf of the new mom is as much love and care as doing the work yourself. We all benefit when we take it upon ourselves to see that those we care about get their needs met!

If we all perceived our friends needs and chose to see ourselves as responsible to get their needs met, and they perceived our needs in the same way- there would be a lot more needs getting met in this world!! That is one of the reasons that I wrote this book! I feel a sense of responsibility in seeing that pregnant women and mothers of young children be supported and upheld by their communities. I see a need and I am meeting that need in a way that feels most authentic and natural to me.

I just know that you also will find your own authentic expression of service and community too!

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So, if you know a pregnant woman or mother of children young or old, please honor and celebrate her nurturing spirit so that she can embody it more fully with your help! Uphold her.

If you feel so called and inspired I charge you to give a new family joyfully of your time, energy, and attention!

When we give to mothers, we give to children. What children are given, they reflect back to us and re create in the world. I hope you will love and honour a mother and her child very soon in your own special way!

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Motherhood As a Bodhisattvic Path

Now that You are Pregnant.....

Have you ever thought of yourself as a Bodhisattva? As you carry your beautiful Buddha belly have you stopped to acknowledge that you hold the *future of humanity* in your sacred womb and gentle heart? While we all know what a Buddha is, few people have heard of a bodhisattva.

“The term Bodhisattva refers to someone on the path to awakening. The Mahayana has conceived them as having renounced the ultimate state out of pure compassion towards all beings, and can therefore refer to anyone en route.”

A bodhisattva has also, as the Buddha, attained enlightenment, *but* she has decided to forgo her own experience of nirvana (heaven) in order to remain in compassionate service on the earth to help others to also

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attain this bliss. The bodhisattva is concerned with the future of all humankind.

As a mother, have you acknowledged the archetypal energy of the bodhisattva as she is manifesting through you right now?

Yes you, you are a bodhisattva on route. Not only are you *awakening* through motherhood, but in a very real tangible and obvious way you have given up your body, your personal whims and your time, plus decades of your life to bring forth a new soul. You do this as much for the future of humanity as you do for the new soul that comes in. You are both a vessel of compassion and of generosity!

The path of motherhood can be viewed as a spiritual practice. Your children will awaken you to all of those aspects of yourself that you have been able to suppress or ignore until now.

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Do you now think of yourself as a peaceful, spiritual, compassionate and conscious person? Once you have your child, your interaction with the child will show you *where you are not* these things. It is easy to be these things when we can remain in a sense separate from another to some degree or walk away willingly from a relationship if we choose to, but you can't walk away from a child (or at least few women ever choose to make that choice).

A child's authenticity can turn our faults inside out, so that we wear them for all the world to see. Parenthood is a spiritual practice all right, but it doesn't look or feel anywhere near as idyllic or romantic as the ashram.

Pregnant Women Have Great Responsibility

Few stop to ponder the irony that many people will go into debt for wedding expenses (most of which is to entertain and impress others, but only lasts for one day!) and then go on to bemoan the price of paying for the gentle midwifery or holistic doula care that leads to upholding the

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sanctity of one of the most precious and significant days of their lives, the birth of their own child!

How much time and energy are you willing to invest into creating a beautiful and sacred journey of pregnancy and birth? Surely, our babies' births have at least as great of significance as celebrating the love and commitment between two lovers! **Have you wondered how you can infuse greater consciousness into this sacred rite of passage as you prepare to partner with the creator to bring a new soul to the planet?**

What mission does your child have in the conscious evolution of the planet? How will you ensure that your child's first experience of the world, namely his or her birth is one where he/she feels welcomed and embraced?

While this is not a book about birth, I have listed some excellent resources to help guide you toward those mentors who can help you prepare for the most conscious and gentle birth experience possible for you and your baby.

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We are coming to an age where we can no longer assume ownership of our children, as though they belong to us like property. They do not belong to us for we are only the steward or guardian of their earliest experiences in life. Rather, they belong to themselves and to the creator who has entrusted us with them. Our children have been given to us in good faith that we will search deeply for the truth of how we are to best facilitate their well-being and purpose in life.

We must acknowledge that how we gestate, birth and parent our children impacts how they will go on to experience life. What first impression do you want your child to have of what it means to be human? What kind of birth experience do you want for this child? How will your child's first embarkation with life mark his/her soul? What patterns are being wired in your baby's brain even now while in the womb?

As conscious parents, we must begin to ask ourselves how our actions, feelings, experiences, and intentions are

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affecting our womb baby. *"Parenting begins before conception."*(Carista Luminare-Rosen)

Our Birth is Significant for Life

It was once thought that the newborn does not feel pain and that their amnesia about their own births meant that we need not concern ourselves with how they feel during the process. Research has long proved that this premise is untrue. *"The truth is, much of what we have traditionally believed about babies is false. We have misunderstood them and underestimated their abilities. They are not simple beings, but complex and ageless-small creatures with unexpectantly large thoughts."* David Chamberlain, Ph.D.

In fact, the field of pre and perinatal psychology is telling us that the moment of a child's birth has great significance for the rest of their lives, setting up unconscious patterns that play out again and again, to call our attention to their need for healing and resolution.

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While pregnant women hold the continuation of humankind literally in their wombs, they also hold the key to the future of world peace.

Whether our children are harmed or unharmed is carried forward into the way they live their adult lives. While all of our dysfunctions as the result of our past traumas can be healed at any moment in time, it is better to be born gently and peacefully so that we can each bring our gifts to the world with ease, rather than in the insecurity and pain of the trauma that masks our potential in fear. The level of consciousness through which we focus our attention on gestating, giving birth, and mothering truly makes a difference!

During the birth process, we transform at the cellular level and become the archetypal bodhisattva. A bodhisattva according to the Mahayana is a fully attained being who forgoes nirvana in order to remain in this world and help others attain enlightenment. Compassion for others remains a higher priority than one's own personal

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liberation.

The moment we conceive a child, the bodhisattva is born within us as mothers. The process of being aware as we conceive, gestate and open our wombs to the creative force, all that is, becomes our attunement as woman healer-giving rise to the higher functioning that we need to mentor our children into their vast potential and greatness.

Parenthood is a spiritual path and awareness is the practice. As mothers, we have great honour and great responsibility. The consciousness and tone with which we conceive, gestate, birth and parent our children, becomes the fabric from which they create their very lives.

We come to conscious awareness through mindfulness, although it often looks different for the householder.

“Householders are challenged to watch our natural attachments to our children and let them be manifest in their fullest and purest sense. It is a goal to revision this attachment with eternal eyes, not just with temporal sight”.

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(Jeannine Parvati Baker).

On the spiritual path of parenthood, we do not go to the ashram or to the monastery. We instead make our homes a Sacred Space and the practice most often looks like rocking the baby, kneading bread, washing dishes and sweeping the floors.

We sit in awareness a few minutes at a time, rarely longer, with little hands just begging to pull us off the meditation mat (if we have time to sit at all)! We breathe deeply when we notice our self about to rote respond to the discomforts, whining or misbehaviours of our children; instead we stop in that moment of awareness and we respond to a child, rather than to a behaviour.

We know that our relating to them comes first and that right action follows, never the other way around. We are connected so deeply to our children that we feel their pain to greater degrees even than we feel our own; and our love for them is eternally unconditional.

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The actual process of opening to give birth is a gateway for complete transformation on all levels of our being.

Inherent in this transformative process is the awakening of dormant capabilities that give rise to expanded states of being and self-empowerment that include knowing just *how to raise this child.*

We come back to relating to our children (our attention is on the relationship, not on the behaviour), just as we come back to our breath. This relating informs our way of being with our children.

As mothers, we give up the freedom to live by our impulses, yet what arises in its place, is awareness and expanded states of being that could not be experienced by any other means or path!

No other practice but motherhood could conjure up the sensation of a heart beating inside our wombs or the experience of feeling love again as though for the very first time; and even again with the subsequent birth of each

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next child coming thereafter.

From feeling the life force move through our *yonis* (Sanskrit word for vagina) as we give birth, to the awe that comes with seeing our babies for the first time outside of our bodies and simultaneously getting that, *it was this baby that we nurtured in our womb for nine moons!*

There are so many altered states of consciousness inherent in co creating, carrying, and birthing a child; right from the time of conception and before that, as a women's climax coaxes the sea-Men into her watery depths.

The whole journey of Motherhood is an altered state of consciousness that is informed by the birth process; just as the birth process is informed by *who we are, that life is.*

The altered states that we experience are unique to motherhood; there is no other path by which to attain such incredible states of being and awareness.

As pregnant women and mothers who have taken great

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care to nurture the souls that gestate or have once gestated within our wombs, we are privy to the very sacred task of mentoring the evolved souls who come to us disguised as children. Yet in the modern context of motherhood, we are often not acknowledged nor celebrated. Rarely are we apprenticed and finally initiated into the bodhisattvic path of service called motherhood.

Mother as bodhisattva, is a very real, honouring and empowering archetypal image in which to view motherhood in the modern context. The path no longer chooses us, for today we have the freedom to choose *not* to mother a child. Let us acknowledge one another and ourselves for putting aside our own personal nirvanas, to instead merge in service for the highest good of our children, and subsequently for our planet.

As we choose to offer ourselves up to mother in awareness, we consciously raise the consciousness of our children, and ultimately we generate the enlightenment of humanity as a whole.

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Sacred Acts of Self – Care for the Pregnant Women

Many women find themselves ill prepared for the demands of the experience of mothering. Never before in our lives has it been our personal responsibility to meet *every need of another person*, let alone all day and night without respite! This lack of personal space and precious alone time can be very suffocating for many new mothers. In my personal experience, I can attest to the difficulty of this.

While we all experience it at different times during motherhood, inevitably there will come a time when we will ask ourselves if we are well suited for the task of mothering! Some women find it hard to spend 24/7 with a baby and for other women (like me) we find ourselves more challenged during the toddler years dealing with the *will* of the child.

Again some other women find babies and children a joy, but teenagers... not so much. At some point or another,

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earlier or later, we all hit a place of futility where we find ourselves drained and feeling uninspired as mothers.

In my personal experience, having been a working stay at home mom now for 11 years (and counting), I have come to realize the consequences of a lack of personal self-care.

When I don't get my own needs met, I find myself impatient and uninterested in my children. I notice that I just want to get away!

Just by the virtue of having that desire I know I *should*, and *DO need to* get away for everyone's benefit! We all know the saying that goes, "*When momma ain't happy, ain't nobody happy!*"

It is especially painful to feel myself withdrawing from my children, because underneath my deep desire to be alone, I sense that I am painfully missing their innocent beauty and joy. What hurts the most is that I see that they are suffering in the question of my disconnection.

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When motherhood starts to lose its joy, it is undoubtedly time for a break *momma!* If you don't do it for yourself, then do it for your kids! They want a content happy mom, not a mom who is always there in terms of close physical proximity, but never really present or truly happy, in consciousness.

Do whatever it takes to get your needs met. If you are really feeling the grey skies and feel immobilized, try imagining your own daughter “following in your footsteps” on her journey in motherhood. You don't want her to suffer the same, do you?! So forge the way and clear the path for her so that she does not martyr herself to motherhood under the guise of your example!

Give yourself your own best advice! If you have a son, modeling self-care for him is essential too. Certainly, you also want *him* to find a strong, capable self-caring woman to mother your grandchildren now *don't you? :)*

Because of the way we most often give birth in this culture

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(routine intervention or the management approach), many new mothers are robbed of the hormonal birth cocktail that can make the whole baby “24/7, *attached at the boob and at the hip thing*” much easier! In both of my birth experiences, I experienced the oxytocin high and kept it going by breastfeeding on demand for two years and continued to breastfeed but instating some limitations well into both of my children’s fourth year of life.

This hormonal high essentially made motherhood very easy for me to mother blissfully. That is, up until the time I stopped breastfeeding “on demand” and eventually did set some boundaries around it.

If you didn’t get this hormonal high, you may find it harder to just flow with your baby. If this is true for you, take it easy on yourself, you are doing the best you can with what you’ve got to work with. And what more can we do than our best!?

In a very real sense there are many forces working against our intention to mother consciously and lovingly. We have

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“artificial living” arrangements in which we live in alienation instead of community. Most women who do not go back to work, spend literally every moment of each day with the same little person or little persons, 24/7. Now it doesn't matter with whom we chose to spend 24\7 with, we would eventually go “coo coo” and want space and time alone or with someone else! So don't feel bad for feeling this way, it is normal under the circumstances!

It seems as though the days of aunties, sisters or grannies at hand to help with the little ones, or groups of multi age children around to help out, play with and teach our young ones by example, has become a cultural rarity.

As mothers, not only do we feel obliged to be our child's mother, but also his/her “play slave,” plus being the maid, the cook, the wet nurse, the wife and the friend. There are so many hats that we have to wear as mothers that we can easily forget who we are in the process, outside of all the roles that we are called to play in our life.

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While we have to make the best of this situation and seek out support, community, resources, surrogate aunts, uncles and cousins for our children, it is not an easy task. Many of our biological relatives are not necessarily thinking in this way and do not know how to best contribute to and cultivate a relationship with our children.

In this modern society, while we live in huge city centers with thousands and even millions of other people in close proximity, we often live very fragmented and separate lives from our extended families. While we might imagine that once we have a baby, everyone will crawl out of the woodwork to be our support and take joy in spending time with our child, the truth is that- it is for the most part a fantasy.

In general, we are all living very busy lives. Not to mention, it can be difficult to find common ground with our relatives, blood or not, when we are not working toward a common goal, as we naturally would be if we lived in close physical proximity- or in an intentional community setting.

Fostering these connections can be even more difficult

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when our birth and parenting choices challenge people's assumptions and the accepted norms. We can find that while we are educating ourselves and very consciously considering how our choices will affect our child, we often face disapproval.

In addition, families who choose a less conventional approach to parenthood often find themselves at a loss for resources because government funded options are often far behind the growing and evolving planetary consciousness.

So what can we do when following our heart and our values causes even more separation and isolation in our lives, at a time when we need it the most?

As well as taking steps to forge new and deeper connections with our current friends and family, we in a sense have to create new ties and community that is outside our history and bloodline. We have to seek new friends and take the time to cultivate those relationships.

Many parents find that they move on from their old group

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of friends to a new group of *parent* friends. While this is natural and a beneficial transition, moving on from old friends is not necessarily a healthy experience, but one that occurs because most communities just do not understand the needs of a new family.

It is my hope that this book inspires us all to *come together* with the birth of a new soul on the planet, rather than have our old friendships unravel and be replaced. While it is beneficial to let go of relationships that are not healthy, it is sad to see relationships die because of a lack of understanding.

After my first birth, I seemed to have lost touch with my friends as I no longer felt like “going out”. In hindsight, I felt unable to communicate my need for them to “*come in*”.

Ideally, our relationships would transform as we relate to one another in a new way. While you may not want to go out and party with your pre pregnancy friends, you can

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still find common ground.

A sure sign that we are losing ourselves in motherhood is to find ourselves unable to relate to non-parents. In my personal experience, this stems from a combination of not having a life outside of parenthood - and because, separation inevitably occurs when unsolicited advice and judgment is imposed by non-parents as it often is!

Everyone is an expert in parenting until they become one (eye roll)! That is just how it is.

We must be very careful not to judge ourselves and others as parents. Parenting is extremely complex, as are all relationships, but probably more so.

As parents in the modern context, **we are rewriting the code** through our experience of trying to co-create a life *with* and on behalf of our children. We aim to first give them the respect we require of them, rather than “*laying down the law.*”

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"Native Americans have a very high regard for children," he says. "In the Lakota language, the word for child means 'standing sacred.' Children are treated respectfully and there is no punishment" (Brokenleg - member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe)

We do not make our children behave for the purpose of being perfect little angels *for the sake and comfort of others*. This is a ridiculous way to approach parenthood unless we want our children to succumb to peer pressure, subjugate their own needs to those of others, and become submissive conformists! The intention of conscious parenting is to model the appropriate behaviour and watch them *"do as we do,"* not what we say they should.

This can look very messy to an outsider. We walk the balance of dealing with our own impulses to parent in the old paradigm (the way we were programmed to parent by example) while searching for the answers to parent consciously and creatively. So what does this all have to do with self-care?

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In order to honour and uphold the woman inside the mother, we must keep our self-care as the top priority, after meeting our own and our children's base needs. We have all heard it said from airline emergency instructions in case of air pressure changes *“parents, please attach your own mask, before attaching the mask to your child.”*

What good are we to the child if we put on their mask and then pass out ourselves! While our instinct is to “save” them first, ultimately we leave them vulnerable when we are not a strong example of self-care. If we never get time alone, do not feel supported, and live our lives from a place of exhaustion, inevitably this will show in our mothering and the consequences impact both our own and our children's well-being.

A mantra I use on myself is *“It is not up to me to meet all my child's needs, but it is up to me to see that all my children's needs are met.”* Sit with it and feel the difference. Can you feel the freedom in this statement?

We must seek to find a place of consensus with our

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children where both our needs are met and *not one or both compromised*. While not easy, this is possible. We just have to think outside of the box and be willing to slow down enough to address issues at their core, especially the ones that keep coming up over and over again.

Our culture can often be so much about “go-go-go” that even before we have children, we may neglect our self-care. If this is the case, please realize to say that parenthood takes the challenge up a notch is an understatement! For this reason, establishing a rhythm of self-care during pregnancy is the best practice for motherhood.

If you cannot get self-care in place now, motherhood will be a harsh wakeup call! With the constant change and the many surprises of motherhood, establishing *a rhythm* around self-care is essential because you will not be able to live by the clock!

In order to make self-care work, we have to weave activities that nourish our soul into our days and do them at the same interval, not at the same clock time.

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For example, we have our bath *before* bed. The time that we get to bed might be different, but the ritual of for example, *bath before bed*, stays the same.

Or, we might make breakfast *and then* make tea and sit down to read something inspiring while nursing our baby.

We might go for walks *after supper*.

Sounds good doesn't it, but do we trust ourselves to follow through on it?

Upon reviewing the manuscript of this book, a dear friend expressed to me, "*Great plan. But who really does that? And how do I actually achieve this?*"

Her response brings to mind some distinctions that are begging to be made on the topic of establishing a rhythm.

And just so it be known, I am often very successful at

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failing miserably at rhythms myself! Remember how I compared motherhood earlier on as a spiritual path of *practice*? The concept for establishing rhythms as a way of being with children and homemaking comes from Waldorf early childhood education. Upon discovering it, for many it seems like a beautiful and conscious way of being with the tasks of homemaking. But in reality, it is not so easy to keep a rhythm on our own.

While our ancestors naturally fell into rhythms, they had a group consciousness around this and accountability to each other about how each individuals' time was spent.

Mother's today do not have these things of which I am speaking. This is both a curse and a blessing. The work of being a homemaker is much harder than living in a community or tribe because there is less joy in work that has no social element (unless it is your passion!). On the other hand, it is nice not to have to answer to other people if you don't feel like doing your dishes!

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Now, think back to your days at job where you were working for someone else. How did you pass the time, pace yourself and make the day go by in a tolerable way? You had rhythms!

Rhythms are difficult to keep because in modern motherhood, you don't have a boss breathing down your shoulder insisting that you look busy! As a "product" of our culture, you have been programmed to be externally motivated (by others), not internally self-motivated.

This brings me to another spiritual comparison of motherhood. Establishing rhythms is also very much a path of self-actualization. You are learning after many years of being programmed to submit to the will of authority, in both the educational system and the workforce, how to now assume authority as the boss of your own life.

In a sense the chaos we can feel amidst the harried life of busyness, coupled with the social alienation of being at

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home all day by ourselves with young children, is kind of like the breakdown, before the break though, into our own freedom.

Somewhere in the midst of it all, you will find your own natural pace and rhythm and eventually discover the motivation within you that will enable you to follow your own will, not someone else's.

So while cultivating order and rhythms could be part of transforming the “frenzy of homemaking with children in tow,” it could also be taken on yet as another exceedingly difficult expectation or a high ideal to live up to.

Yet the point about having a rhythm is that, it is a *practice*, we keep coming back to it. We don't ever arrive.... but giving up “*getting there*,” gets us closer to our goal!

We give up by acknowledging that we are never going to get it right, get it perfect. We just need keep coming back to rhythm as we would in meditation, come back to our thoughts. We may follow our whims for weeks or months

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at a time and then suddenly wake up to our unsettled feelings, depression or lack of satisfaction with our life and remember, "oh ya, I need a rhythm."

Upon first glance, many people assume that to have a rhythm is to make restrictions in one's life. But it isn't so. Rhythms help us do the stuff that we need to do for our health and well-being, thus enabling us to be truly spontaneous without guilt or "should be's" creeping up on us when adventure calls us elsewhere.

Rhythms allow us to do things on autopilot so that we don't waste precious energy thinking about when to do things that should require little thought.

Do we plan, think about, or dread brushing our teeth? Or do we just do it *every night before we go to bed* (giving it little thought).

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Our self-care rhythms, from journaling to housework, can become as easy as brushing our teeth when we lose our resistance to them!

The following excerpt from “The Way of A Child” illustrates beautifully how rhythm can conserve our energy (essential to self care in motherhood)!

“In the rhythmic system also we find organically expressed that quality of movement which has already been alluded to in connection with the power of feeling. The rhythmic system never tires. The limbs will go no further at the end of a mere days walk; the brain becomes exhausted with a few hours concentrated thinking; but the heart and lungs must pulse and stir without rest by day or night from the first intake of mortal air to the last out breathing of the breath of life. It is due to this tirelessness of the rhythmic system that all work is less fatiguing in proportion as it is done rhythmically and, being so done, rests on the rhythmic system of the body. The old customs of singing and chanting at work were based on this knowledge and students of fatigue in modern times

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have only rediscovered the importance of making movements rhythmical if they are not to tire. But because the connection of the rhythmic system with the power of feeling is not understood, people have not begun to study the effect of feeling on the nature of fatigue.” p. 18 “The Way of a Child” A.C. Hardwood.

Rhythms should not be set in stone either, but rather fluid and changing with the particular needs that we have in our life. I find that it helps to sit down with a piece of paper and write them down so that we can keep coming back to it and revising as we see what works and what doesn't for us.

Getting into a rhythm now during pregnancy is not only of benefit to your own and of your baby's well-being now, but will set the tone for your future self care. Without conscious intention into this aspect of your life, there is little chance that it will just happen on its own, unless your own mother modeled this behaviour for you herself or you already have a rhythm that would fit easily into the construct of motherhood.

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Baby's and children in general have some kind of expressed need for you to fulfill, or have a breakdown at some point, about every 5 minutes!! A boo boo, a diaper change, a glass of water, a question....you name it, they will be calling on you! This has been one of my biggest challenges personally...to accept that pretty much as soon as I sit down to get started on something, I will be interrupted consistently and without failure. There is little opportunity for getting *time in a row* and momentum on projects with children in tow.

Yet, along with all the dreams we have of what we will provide for our children, we must also continue to keep dreaming of all that we will give to ourselves as we continue to walk our journey in life.

One such way to consciously cultivate self-care comes from a retired midwife and midwifery teacher, Whapio. She shares with her students an exercise in helping pregnant woman determine what their needs are so that they can get started on their path of self-care. She has her students

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draw a circle and divide it into 8 pieces of pie. Each section is labelled with an aspect of self-care and then the students come up with their own ideas of how to nurture each aspect of their lives (as practice for helping mamas come up with ways to nurture themselves and to be nurtured by their doula or midwife). The doula can do this exercise with her client and then help the pregnant woman come up with ideas of how to get her unique needs met.

As mothers, we can also do this exercise ourselves to get clear about what our needs and desires are! Clarity is essential to see what action we need to take and without action, self-care will never happen!

The following exercise is especially worthwhile if right now you don't have a lot of ideas for self care or don't know where to start.

So go right now and get a piece of paper and a pen, or even better, get some art paper and colours, so you can make this a beautiful art project and a gentle reminder of your needs and intentions!

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Draw the circle, divide it into 8 sections, and add the following headings:

√ Physical

√ Spiritual

√ Emotional

√ Intellectual

√ Soulful

√ Social

√ Sexual

√ Psychological

Now get creative and fill in the triangles with ideas for how you can nurture all of these aspects of yourself as a multidimensional woman!

Here are some ideas to get you started (check off the ones that resonate as being ideally nurturing to you!):

Take time to be alone.

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- Take time to be with your partner explore each other in terms of talking about your personal values and your visions of parenthood together.

- Explore higher realms of sexuality together such as deeper connection or sex as a spiritual practice. Many couples find it challenging once baby arrives to make time for lovemaking. Exploring other dimensions of lovemaking can help open us to more possibilities when restrictions of time and space inevitably relegate sex to a lesser priority. With the aim of orgasm out of the way, we can find new ways to make love and a stay attracted to and connected to our partner (see resources for more info).

- Take naps or rest when you feel the need.

- Sing, play music or listen to music that inspires you!

- Prepare and eat luscious nourishing foods and beverages.

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- Prepare and drink nourishing herbal teas, infusions & elixirs.

- Take candlelit baths.

- Journal about your feelings, about what you are learning from your challenges and experiences.

- Follow the circadian rhythms, go to bed early and rise early, spend time in the moonlight and sunlight. Let nature *feed* you more vitality!

- Stretch and move your body (yoga, walking, dancing). I highly recommend the book Prenatal Yoga and Childbirth by Jeannine Parvati Baker.

- Meditate, set aside times for absolute silence, colour mandalas.

- Give yourself weekly manicures and monthly pedicures (use non toxic products if you are going to wear polish or

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forego the polish altogether; or just do your toes which last longer!).

- Take time to be creative (writing, painting, drawing, knitting, sewing etc.). The book, Birthing From Within by Pam England is a great resource and reference for birth art.

- Go on regular “dates” with yourself and/or with your partner/with your kids...take time to savour the present moment as it is in preparation for the upcoming transformation of your family!

- Deepen into your feminine essence and radiance. Have you embraced and explored the feminine aspects of yourself? What would make you feel more feminine? Embody it!

- Explore your own sexuality and intend to have an orgasmic birth! Consciously cultivating a healthy sense of sexuality, along with the ability to navigate different aspects of the sexual experience (beyond carnal desire and

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orgasm) would be good practice and a way of opening ourselves not only to a more satisfying sex life, but maybe even a painless and even pleasurable experience of childbirth. Visit www.orgasmicbirth.com.

- Work through any lingering birth fears, plus visualize and set clear intentions for your birth and embarkation into motherhood.

- Purchase or borrow relaxation CD's that walk you through deep relaxation and meditation techniques. I highly recommend the Calm Birth practices, please go to www.calmbirth.org.

- Communicate and nurture your unborn child through guided meditations or journaling exercises. I recommend [Communing with the Spirit of your Unborn Child - A Practical Guide to Intimate Communication with Your Unborn or Infant Child](#), by Dawson Church www.dawsonchurch.com.

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- Do some pregnancy honouring activities such as belly mehndi, belly casting, belly dancing classes, prenatal yoga classes, birthing classes and mother blessings.

- Hire a doula that offers nourishing practices as part of her pre-natal services (there will be more on this topic in the upcoming section on holistic doulas).

- Seek out the services of natural therapists to promote well being and optimum health such as nutrition consulting <http://www.domesticdiva.ca/e-courses/radiant-mother-blissful-baby/> chiropractic realignment, craniosacral therapy, Reiki, reflexology, massage therapy etc.

- Give yourself massage!

- Dry brushing your skin to stimulate, energize, and improve your circulation.

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- Spend time in nature for pure pleasure and enjoyment or to heighten the expression of your inner understanding, intuition and instincts. For more information in relation to nature, spirit and childbirth, I recommend reading the book Sacred Birthing by Sunni Karll.

- Create a private sacred space in your home and consecrate it to honour your pregnancy; create a pregnancy meditation altar. For more information, see the book Beautiful, Bountiful, Blissful by Gurmukh Khalsa.

- Take care of your living environment, keep it clean and tidy to prevent overwhelm.

- Create a sacred space to welcome your baby into your home and enjoy your babymoon in it!

- Purify and cleanse the energy in your home with beeswax candles, plants, and aromatherapy.

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- Embrace your pregnancy, birth, and embarkation into motherhood as a rite of passage. Create ritual and celebration in your life. Create your own mother blessing or better yet, send a close friend a copy of this book and ask her if she would like the honour of throwing a mother blessing for you!

- Embrace your pregnancy as a woman's vision quest by using this 9 months as a process of personal transformation, manifestation and self actualization. Some excellent books that take this approach to childbirth are found in the resources section.

Prenatal Yoga - A Practice in Self Care in Preparation for Giving Birth

While yoga is in my opinion the best practice that you can do in preparation for childbirth, it is also an excellent form of self-care. I have no idea where I would have gathered my strength from in the birth of my first child, if I did not understand how to “*be with*” and breathe through intense sensation.

After the birth, my husband said, “It didn't look as though you were experiencing much pain.” While I would like to have been able to say I had a painless birth, the truth is it looked as though giving birth was easy for me because I was able to stay centered, by staying present in the moment by following my breath. Through the practice of yoga, I learned how to use the breath to open and move through uncomfortable sensations and tension, an innate capability with which we are born.

Yoga teaches us how to breathe as we are physiologically meant to (through our bellies as opposed to in our chests).

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This promotes a relaxed state of mind, which is essential to embark on the journey of birth without fear and anxiety.

In addition, yoga incorporates the present moment awareness that is needed to be present to what is happening in the birth process, rather than battling the process via the mind, or being focused on the future (when is this going to be over?).

With moment-to-moment awareness, we can stay in the process itself, fostering a deeper connection to our bodies and to our babies, instead of being carried away by pain and suffering, which causes us to be somewhere in the future when birth is over and done with.

I highly recommend YOGA as a self-care practice and as a practice in preparation for natural childbirth and here is why:

√ Yoga brings you into your body. Knowing the language of your body is required in order to facilitate intuitive movement during pregnancy and the childbirth experience.

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√ Yoga brings to you, the awareness of your breath. There are many misconceptions about breathing techniques that are taught to assist women during birth. Although “techniques” may help some women, they are often for many, mechanical and unnatural. It is rather the awareness of the breath and abdominal based "breath work" that releases tension and fosters relaxation during childbirth. Relaxed and deep abdominal breath, not only enhances endurance by bringing increased oxygen to the uterine muscles, but it also relieves pain by releasing muscular tensions, with the exhale breath.

√ The breath also connects us to the Divine. For many women who acknowledge and embrace the spiritual element of pregnancy and birth, the practice of yoga can facilitate a deeper connection to the self and to the spirit of creation/the creator.

√ Yoga is practice for childbirth. Many childbirth courses teach students awareness and breath exercises in the

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practical, but limited method of holding ice chips in hand to "simulate" the pain of labour. It is a great idea, but of course, this type of pain is sensory to the skin and not intramuscular. Therefore, there is no innate bodily memory of how to use this technique when a woman is actually in the process of labour. Women therefore, must bring their intellect to the forefront of their brain in order to remember and facilitate the breathing/awareness technique. This is counterproductive to labour, since it is primarily a primitive process, rather than an intellectual one.

√ Women who have practiced yoga on the other hand, have a bodily and intramuscular memory of how to breathe through and dissolve tension. They have experienced how to move through and beyond pain and tension in their muscles (of which the uterus is one!) through postures that challenge them in their regular yoga practice. Since the uterus is a muscle and muscular pain is caused by tension, the practice of Yoga is the most effective and practical preparation for natural childbirth.

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√ Yoga can give you the space to become meditative (so that you can be present to the quality of your being, beyond thoughts and thinking).

√ Yoga increases your energy, oxygen intake and circulation.

√ Yoga engages the mind, while at the same time, it quiets it. This allows you to be able to listen to the subtle messages of your baby and your body.

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Nurturing Momma and Expanding the Masculine Heart

Father's work in pregnancy is to ground mother in his love. His conscious holding of her, allows her to be able to relinquish herself to the altered state that pregnancy and giving birth afford.

The father ultimately grounds mother so that she can open fully to the birth process. She can let go knowing that he is holding and anchoring her to expand in unboundedness as the creative forces move through her body. If she trusts in him and he can do this, she has no need for subtle tension or holding.

As much as it is the father's role to be a stable force, mother's work is to deepen into her trust in him and let go of the past. Coming together into greater love and intimacy in pregnancy is part of the self-care for both parents in preparation for parenthood. This inner work and relating between mother and father is as much birth and

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parenthood preparation for the parents, as it is a dynamic presence for children to behold and role model!

It is important to mention that this dynamic is not only relevant in heterosexual couples, but in same sex partnerships as well. While the pregnant woman is innately in touch with the feminine, her female partner can also deepen in her masculine energy. Both men and women have both masculine and feminine aspects which can be harnessed and cultivated. While I am using words that speak to opposite sex partnership, what I am really speaking to are the masculine and feminine aspects of each of us, which we all embody to differing degrees at different times in our lives.

Pregnancy is both time for a man to deepen into his masculinity, and for a woman to deepen into her femininity.

A father's role in conception, pregnancy, and birth are very often underestimated in our culture, yet Father's play an

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integral role in conception, birth, and parenting.

From a spiritual perspective, the father's highest consciousness thus far attained, calls in a soul to match, while Mother matches this vibration to create the developing body in optimum health. While it is imperative for father to do his own inner work, his role is not complete after conception. Mother most easily retains her own and the child's radiance with his help. Mother's radiance is supported by father's unwavering presence and highest consciousness (Sunni Karll).

Women in the highest expression of their femininity are receptive, radiant, deep, mysterious and ever changing (symbolized by the moon). While a man in the highest expression of his masculinity is anchored, protective, firey and penetrative as (symbolized by the sun).

Women give birth and men provide for life. This is an interdependent alchemy. In the birth process, in the most practical of senses, as a man deepens into the highest expression of his masculine love and presence, he becomes

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the stable force that *holds* mother as she opens and flowers into her highest expression of feminine receptiveness. That being of opening to the forces of creation! This individual inner work not only increases the bond between the parents, but it also increases sexual magnetism and thus allows for a deepening and expansion of their sexual exploration together; something which will be especially essential in the context of a satisfying sex life during the childbearing years. For more info on deepening into your sexual essence, please refer to the resources at the end of this book.

While we are always talking about a father (or sperm donor) when speaking of conception, in regards to giving birth, we can translate father for “masculine essence.” Anyone who can embody and deepen into the masculine aspects of themselves can play this role for a woman in birth.

Someone in her community such as a doula, a friend or a female partner who is invested in the long-term well-being of the mother, and committed to conscious birthing can *hold the space* for her. We must think less in terms of biological male"ness" and female"ness" and rather translate

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these words as needed to refer to a person embodying the masculine or feminine essence.

Both emotionally and physically, many pregnant women find within themselves a receptive tender place that longs to be filled by a masculine force (and during pregnancy this may be the first time it is noticed!). She innately feels not only emotionally, but physically vulnerable and often desires to really feel the true *presence* of a *protective* masculine energy, the way only a deep and fully present man can provide.

She most often longs for her partner to be fully *available* emotionally and physically *present* so that she can continue the unconscious opening of all aspects of herself, not only for the birth, but also as a surrendering into motherhood.

For many women, finding out that they are pregnant can feel like a very fragile time in their lives. Not only, is the mother-to-be processing her feelings about being pregnant

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and recreating the picture of her future but, she can often feel an increased sense of vulnerability. It may be the first time in her life (or one of the many times) where she feels the need to be protected. This is biological. At some point in the pregnancy, she truly will become physically vulnerable; in the sense that she will no longer be able to do the simple things that she used to be able to do: such as pick up and carry, certain objects on her own or run if she needed to. In the weight of the responsibility that she carries in her children's life, this feeling of being vulnerable can stay her throughout her children's early childhood.

Father, if your partner is very feminine, she will likely feel the desire to merge more deeply with you and long to feel the depths of your masculine heart and protective energy.

When the world trade center came down, my son was almost 1 month old (a very delicate time when I was still very much postpartum). With all the talk of disasters and terrorism, I felt a looming sense powerlessness as I witnessed what was occurring in the United States. It brought it home hard for me how lucky I was to live here in

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Canada, where I had had no reason before this, to fear terrorism, war, or natural disaster. Yet every day around the world, pregnant women, women with a newborns and young children face a vulnerability of significant and heartbreaking proportion.

While I could barely just catch a glimpse of the suffering, this exposure to a very painful reality, is one that I will never forget. It has left me with a tangibly deep compassion for mothers and young ones who suffer incomprehensible atrocities around the world each day.

While becoming more vulnerable in pregnancy may feel uncomfortable for most women, if our life is actually relatively safe, we can use it as a catalyst to deepen into our more feminine aspects of openness, beauty and receptivity. If a woman trusts her partner, feels safe and grounded in his strength, she will be able to do this.

“Partner” could also be interchanged with God or Goddess as well. If you are a pregnant single mother, you can even draw on the masculine qualities within yourself to anchor

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and ground you. This is best done in harmony rather than in balance. Balance is stationary, not dynamic and neither fully masculine nor fully feminine. There is no magnetism or attraction in balance! Living in harmony with both the masculine and feminine aspects of ourselves, is to weave fully in and out of the polarities as it most appropriately serves the purpose. This way, we can fully feel the radiance of our femininity and assert and manifest powerfully when we need to be in our masculinity.

To be in balance, we would never experience the richness of either state in their fullness. With our culture being so focused on the establishment of greater equality amongst the sexes, in a sense we have lost sight of our unique differences as masculine and feminine beings. Many of these differences, if cultivated and embraced, can nourish our soul life, as well as deepen and magnetize our relationships with members of the opposite sex or sexual essence (referring to masculinity or femininity).

Speaking as a woman and as a primarily feminine being,

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while at times I manifest from the masculine aspects of myself, there are other times that I just want to be both "taken" (you know what I mean ladies) and "taken care of". I want a *big strong man to **hold** me!* Nothing less will do!

And this works both ways in the sense that sometimes men just want to be lovingly held and nurtured by their women, whether it be through a delicious meal, by receiving appreciation or through sexual union.

Pregnancy, birth and motherhood naturally call us deeper into our feminine aspects, as we yield to both the hormonal and physical changes in our body. I would even go so far as to say that the degree to which we can open and deepen into our feminine selves, is the degree to which our resistance melts. Thus opening us to yield to and accept the more challenging aspects of motherhood. While this might not be universal, it is a truth that I have felt and experienced in my own life.

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Playing with the polarities of masculine and feminine can be a path not only of great self-care, but also of deeper understanding of our self and of one another.

Fatherhood can also naturally deepen a man into his masculinity if he will step into the role of the provider.

With the conception of a child, a masculine man becomes motivated to ensure that his family is provided for.

Father, this can be a unique opportunity to get clear and strong in your own purpose and self-care. You may have never before had any reason to be so highly motivated to “get your shit together,” so to speak. The degree to which your woman trusts you to do this, is the degree to which she can let go and open herself to you.

As well as needing to sense that you are committed and will truly provide for her during the childbearing years, moms need nurturing from you to fully feel the depths of their femininity. In a world that has been trying to relegate femininity to a degree of lesser importance, this aspect or

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side of your woman can feel suppressed or buried under the fast pace and expectation of modern living. Father's can help their women slow down.

While a masculine person has the desire for “nothingness” or empty space, such as coming home from work and sitting down with a good beer in front of the TV, to meditating for hours or engaging in watching or playing a dangerous sport for the thrill of straddling to the edge of death. A more feminine person on the other hand, has the desire to "tend and mend," nurture relationships and to *fill up space*.

While the feminine person busily fills space with conversation, beautiful artifacts and music, the masculine person is less inclined to emotional outpouring and expression. In fact, men often need emotional foreplay to really deepen into a conversation and to open to greater intimacy. *Women, we must ease into emotionally charged conversations with our men if we want them to fully engage*

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in our conversations!

Throughout pregnancy, mother will often want to spend time with her partner talking about her feelings, hopes, dreams and desires for the future. The feminine wants your feedback and to know what you are thinking and how you feel. One way that fathers can nurture their partners is through heartfelt conversation.

Because feminine women tend to naturally be nurturing, they can easily give too much and then feel drained. The feminine woman will look to her masculine partner to for nurturing. When a woman does not feel lovingly held or nurtured by her partner, she will often reflect her dark and moody nature, rather than her radiance. She will close down and become unreceptive physically to him. This is very often why many mothers lose their sex drive after birth. They are burned out.

While the courting, connecting, romance, adventure and the hours of foreplay have been substantially reduced, the

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mother is most often still expected by her partner to be sexually responsive. But what has to be understood is that while sexual energy desires release in a man, in a woman, sexual energy is *cultivated*.

If she does not feel your nurturing masculine essence, she will be left with only the carnal desire for sex that comes with ovulation. This usually translates into only a few days each month of sexual longing for her.

While it may seem like a lot of effort to discover your woman's particular needs, keep in mind that while a woman multitasks nurturing her friends, her family, her children and you, you only have one person who longs for your nurturing presence! And remember that all this effort toward nurturing your partnership is on behalf of your needs and well-being too!

What I have been sharing are some seemingly universal needs of feminine people (of the majority of which are women). If you know and understand the dynamic magnetism of masculine and feminine energies, it could

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deepen and possibly even save a partnership that was otherwise doomed to fail.

To take this seriously as a father is to also nurture and heighten your purpose and masculinity as you take on the new role of parenthood. Men are equally at risk of losing themselves in the process, and can also be left wondering who they were, before they had children.

While very early in pregnancy, a pregnant woman is not only softening physically to open to the birth process (via a hormonal interplay that even now begins to relax her) but she also softens emotionally, becoming more receptive. At this time, she is more inward and wants your attention, she does not necessarily want the social nurturing of the community just yet. She wants you to hold her, touch her, hold her hand, “draw” on her, massage her, all without the expectation of sex.

What many men don't realize is that the expectation to end hugging, touching and cuddling with sex, is what stops

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many women from opening to the idea of sex in the first place.

If a woman gets ample touching without this expectation, she will relax and open herself even more to being touched. Once she relaxes and melts, she will be much more receptive to your longing to make love to her.

More commonly though it seems that just the opposite occurs. During a time when a woman have a unique opportunity to deepen into their femininity (relying more on her man and opening and trusting him more fully) instead she experiences her deepening yin expression as feeling tired, emotional and moody. When this happens father, it is a cue that your woman needs to be penetrated by more of your masculine light.

As you find ways to deepen into your masculine strength, how to do this will become more and more intuitive. For excellent insight on how to deepen into your masculinity, I recommend an excellent book on the subject by David

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Deida called The Way of the Superior Man.

Feminine women will enjoy reading this book too. Woman often breathe a deep sigh of relief to know that there really are men out there who understand the dance of the masculine and feminine, outside of the context of having sex.

I have come to believe through the past 11 years of motherhood and by working with and alongside mothers that if this conscious honouring, care and attention throughout pregnancy and beyond is withheld from the mother, she will feel alone, depressed, tired, and irritable throughout pregnancy.

Although this is not always the case, all women deserve to be nurtured, cherished, and ravished by their partners. If your woman is already a happy go lucky pregnant woman or mother, imagine how incredibly blissful and radiant she could be with your extra love and connection! Mothers feel a great need for more intimacy with you! This opens her to

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yearn to feel your masculine power, a strength that can assist her to ground and open more fully into her feminine essence in preparation in childbirth and motherhood.

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Holistic Doula-Nurturing Pregnancy & Birth

The Greek word doula can be loosely translated to mean "woman's servant" in the English language. However, in childbirth terminology, this word describes a woman who tends to the needs of the laboring woman.

Not to be confused with midwives, who are now often classified as medical professionals; doulas support mothers and their partners exclusively on the emotional, psychological, and physical level. They are not trained, nor is it within their scope of practice to perform any medical tests or to catch babies.

A doula in action at a birth can often be found massaging a woman in between contractions, whispering supportive words in the mother's ear, wiping the sweat from her brow, making suggestions for laboring positions, as well as being an emotional support to the baby's father.

Oftentimes, first time parents underestimate the need for a

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doula because they imagine that the father alone can fulfill the nurturing role during the birth. While the father is a great support, he cannot mentor mother through the experience of birth because he has never given birth before. Nor does he have any context for relating to the experience through the female body.

Having a doula or experienced women friend is an invaluable aspect of the rite of passage. Women have always attended other women in birth. That is just the way of it.

As well, a doula can assist the father by giving him positive feedback. She helps to keep both parents up to speed on medical jargon and protocol, things of which can be very confusing to parents when giving birth in a medicalized environment.

Finally, a doula helps take care of all the little details that first time parents often do not think of.

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Thus, having a doula present gives father more space to just be with his partner and the experience, rather than chasing things to do or having to run interference.

For fathers that find nurturing and childbirth uncomfortable or intimidating and prefer to stand back as the protective father bear, then a doula or other woman friend can stand in to fulfill the role of nurturing the woman in labour.

Whereas for fathers that truly want to be a part of the birth *experience* and *present to meet the nurturing needs of the mother*, having a doula can take the pressure off from having to play too many roles that would otherwise distract him from being present. In this case, the doula can step back, witness and “hold the space” for both the parents to give birth in their own way.

Basically a doula does whatever is needed to help the birthing woman achieve the type of birth experience she

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desires. The doula supports in whatever manner is appropriate for that individual woman and her family.

Historically, all over the world, birth was most often attended by mothers, aunts, sisters or other women relatives and friends of the birthing woman. Unfortunately, with the dawn of colonization in North America (which resulted in the social isolation of women), women now most often birth without much-needed women-to-women care.

When male obstetricians became involved in childbirth, the social and spiritually transformative nature of birth was unfortunately reduced to a medical emergency - one, it is assumed, from which women and babies need to be saved. The value of bringing female birth attendants/doulas and experienced women friends back into birth, should not be underestimated. This shift is now showing to improve the quality of a woman's experience of birth.

So, just how do doulas reduce interventions and empower women, to experience greater satisfaction psychologically,

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emotionally, physically and sometimes even spiritually in childbirth?

By loving "hands on healing" and via "holding the space."

We have all felt the contagious nature of fear, and by the same means the trust of one person can also be reassuring to many. The doula's calm and familiar presence, encourages the mother to feel truly safe and cared for in her chosen birth environment.

Doulas assist mothers to attain the conscious attention and focus needed to stay with the process, thus helping to enable the mother to yield to, rather than resist the powerful birthing energies or power. She does this by attending to the birthing environment, both physically and energetically, ensuring that the mother is not disturbed by outside influences.

While a doula's presence can help reduce the pain and fear that often resides both in the mind and body of the

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laboring women, the real work of the doula comes before the birth. It is the doulas' role to provide information, encouragement and birth options prenatally. Thereby, she helps the mother to make informed choices, in regards to her health and well-being during pregnancy, birth and in the care of their newborn.

A doula can help the pregnant women realistically evaluate the benefits vs. the risks associated with the many, and often unnecessary routine prenatal tests and birth interventions.

Instead of finding herself surprised by the *techno-medical* birth climate of our day, women who have a doula by their side or to consult with, have access to many more resources, as well as the doula's knowledge and experience.

The doula distils complicated medical jargon into practical application, helping women to understand what each test and intervention is, and when it may be used appropriately or inappropriately.

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A women who understands her choices and the associated risks or benefits, can confidently and consciously object to tests and protocols, that she does not feel are of benefit, to her own or her baby's health.

Women who enlist the services of a doula, beginning early in pregnancy, have the opportunity to more carefully consider their choice of caregiver and place of birth.

Many pregnant women, who upon becoming increasingly more educated and informed during their pregnancies, have expressed that they wish that they would have known about their options, and the controversies surrounding them much, much earlier in their pregnancies. They feel they would have made much different choices if they knew then, "what they know now". These women find themselves stuck "between a rock and a hard place." Either they must surrender to the path they are on, and make the best of it, or they must choose to change the entire course of their care.

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Certainly, it is not an easy task to change your course of care late in pregnancy, but many a pregnant woman has done so, without regret!

However, the whole situation can be prevented by hiring a doula early in pregnancy and reviewing the many options in childbirth, *before choosing where and with whom to give birth*. Many women who gain a greater understanding of the system, and understand the risk vs. benefits of routine prenatal testing such as ultrasound for example, will not accept routine prenatal testing as part of their prenatal care.

Beyond informational and educational support, one of the most important role of the doula, is to provide social-emotional support through nurturing.

On the psychological and spiritual level, doulas are invaluable. For most women birthing in hospitals, visits with their Obstetrician, consist of an average of 5 minutes

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of medical evaluation and next to no emotional support.

The doula, to a pregnant woman is her confidant. She offers guidance, unconditional support, and an open heart to assist the mother in overcoming her personal challenges. The doula offers insight and suggestions that can assist the mom to work on and move through her fears prior to giving birth.

A doula is also often the only person in the mother's life who wholeheartedly believes in her ability to give birth naturally and to be inherently capable of birthing, without complication.

A holistic doula often honours and celebrates the mother, by facilitating a mother blessing for her. A mother blessing often includes culture specific honouring rituals, birth songs and a potluck. Guests are encouraged to bring extra food for the mother's freezer, to ensure that there are plenty of healthy homemade meals at hand for the family, after the baby is born.

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As well as social-emotional support, a holistic doula can provide preventative natural prenatal care. For example, a holistic doula who has a good knowledge of nutrition and natural therapies, can support a pregnant woman, by offering her practical suggestions in the realm of diet, supplements, herbal and homeopathic remedies to improve the mother's general well-being. Thereby preventing and allaying common pregnancy discomforts without side effects to the mom or baby.

During the postpartum, a holistic doula can provide light housekeeping and meal preparation, plus rejuvenating postpartum therapies including moxibustion, uterine massage, herbal sitz baths, nourishing infusions and belly wrapping (more to come later on these practices) all of which nurture and support the mother. Thus easing and honoring her transition, in a culture that minimizes the importance of the *experience* of childbirth and the embarkation into motherhood.

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Full Postpartum Care Service

The flow of a full postpartum care service offered by a holistic doula usually looks like six postpartum visits over six weeks. The doula brings the mother nourishing herbal infusions and gives her a full body massage ending with moxibution treatment (see upcoming section for more info).

If the mother wants, she can also have her belly “wrapped” to help improve her posture and assist in the return of her pre pregnancy tummy.

Oftentimes the doula will throw some towels in the wash and pre pare a light meal for the mother too. On the sixth and final visit, the treatments are completed by a herbal infused bath, as a special way to celebrate and mark the end of the 42 day postpartum journey.

For most North American women, pregnancy and the first year of motherhood can be a lonely and isolating experience. Hiring the services of a holistic doula, trained in natural therapies and postnatal care, can enliven the

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journey of motherhood and bring joy to a woman's experience of pregnancy and birth!

But what about the women who cannot afford to hire a holistic doula? Friends and family members can easily coordinate their time and energy into finding 6 friends of the new mom who can each take their turn in nurturing the momma this way.

Instead of coming over for a visit to see the new baby, come to nurture and celebrate the new momma too! And if you can dedicate a half a day to this pursuit, as well as offering the mother nurturing therapies, consider tidying up the house, doing some laundry and making the family a nurturing meal with fresh ingredients. It really can be this simple to get a new mama's needs met! Surely we can dedicate one day of our lives to the care of a friend in such a delicate time in her life.

Cultured at Birth

What does it mean to be “cultured” at Birth?

As our babies are being birthed, they are literally being “cultured” by our vaginal flora.

“The medical science shows that the flora in the vagina comes from the gut. What lives in the woman’s bowel will live in her vagina... in women with recurrent thrush, no matter how many powerful anti fungal topical preparations are used, the thrush always comes back. Until she gets rid of it in the bowel, she is not going to be free from vaginal thrush. But why does this woman have an overgrowth of fungi in her bowel? Because she does not have a healthy gut flora to protect her from this fungus and many other microbial invaders. This woman has a condition called gut dysbiosis. She will not only have an overgrowth of Candida albicans in her gut but lots of other pathogenic microbes, causing many other health problems.”

Dr. Natasha Campbell McBride MD, MMedSci(neurology), MMedSci(nutrition)

Babies acquire their particular microflora balance at birth through the skin, eyes and mucous membranes of their mouth and nose, as they descend through the birth canal.

What happens when moms have gut dysbiosis (an imbalance of good vs. bad bacteria in the gut)?

Mother passes on her own gut flora (for better or for worse) to her baby. The state of mom’s flora has the potential to

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either promote healthy digestion, immunity and mental capacities or it can compromise her baby's health right from birth causing a lot of unnecessary pain and suffering for both.

Besides having a history of antibiotic use (antibiotics kill our good bacteria leaving no competition to keep the bad or pathogenic types in check) there are many other digestive, immune and mental indications that we need to restore our bacterial balance (or inner ecosystem).

Here are some key symptoms:

- allergies and food sensitivities
- vaginal yeast infections
- difficulty losing weight
- fatigue
- depression
- bi polar
- OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder)
- dyslexia or dyspraxia
- ADD/ADHD
- autism/aspergers
- poor concentration
- sugar/carb cravings
- constipation
- diarrhea
- poor digestion and digestive disorders
- acid reflux
- sleeping poorly and night sweats
- joint inflammation and stiffness
- bad breath

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- gum disease and dental problems
- frequent colds and flus
- frequent infections
- chronic yeast problems
- acne
- eczema
- fungal infections
- menstrual difficulties

If you suffer from 1 or many of the above symptoms you might be wondering how you can find the resources and the support you need to learn how to heal, restore or improve your current microflora balance, right?

Follow this step-by-step guide to improving your microbial balance in pregnancy:

1. Eliminate white sugar and flour from your diet. If that sounds incredibly difficult or impossible, [click here](#) to read the article: [How to get off Bread and Sugar-and by the way it is not your fault!](#)
2. Avoid natural sources of concentrated sugar ie: dried fruit, tropical fruits like bananas and mangoes etc. Instead include sour fruits like kiwi, berries of all kinds and green apples.
3. Acidify your colon (good bacteria thrive in a lactic acidic rich environment)- eat plenty of [cultured foods](#)- start with the [kid friendly ones](#) if you are nervous about getting started.
4. Eliminate all bleached, refined and deodorized fats like: margarine & vegetable oil food products like corn, soy

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and canola oil from your diet. Replace them with traditional fats like butter and coconut oil for baking and sauteing while using olive oil (raw only) for salad dressing.

5. Alkalize your blood- modern people are often overfed, yet undernourished. Mineralize deficient blood by eating plenty of cooked green vegetables, crispy seeds, gelatinous bone broth and seaweeds.
6. Take a probiotic pill with a wide variety of beneficial bacteria (10-14 or more strains) throughout your entire pregnancy and during breastfeeding.
7. Upgrade the quality of the animal products that you consume to being antibiotic free, from compassionately raised and free range or grass fed animals.
8. Drink, bathe and shower in water that has been filtered of chlorine (which is also unfortunately an antibiotic).

These practices must be adopted by couples planning to conceive, and by pregnant and breastfeeding women -and moms seeking to prevent common childhood disorders such as asthma, eczema, colic and tummy aches while promoting optimal immune health in their developing baby and children.

For people who don't have severe digestive problems or a long history of antibiotic use, the aforementioned recommendations will be adequate to restore the gut flora in most cases.

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However, in more severe situations such as autism, IBS and other chronic or persistent cases of digestive distress and mental illness, the family must in addition adhere to a grain free diet for 6 months to 2 ½ years to restore the gut back to its optimal state of health.

For more information about how to get started on that path check out our [private consulting services](#) or [‘Getting Started with GAPS’ e-course](#).

Want to learn more?

1) [Watch](#) Dr. Natasha Campbell Mc Bride chat about gut health.

1) <http://gapsdiet.com/>

2) <http://bodyecology.com/autism/bedrobroch0609st.pdf>

What should you do now, if you didn’t know about this before having your kids? These same steps apply for anyone who suffers from microbial imbalance. It is never too late to improve your own and your family’s health!

Want to learn more and how to make cultured foods at home that please even the kids (and kids at heart)? If you said yes, then check out our [Cultured Kids e-course](#) page where we show you a video of how we transform a standard North American lunch into a wholesome probiotic feast!!!

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The 42 Day Sacred Window

"Following delivery of the child, the new mother should be allowed to relax for three or four days. After this time, massage and deep breathing exercises should be resumed and continued for forty days. While this period can be prolonged, it should not be reduced. In India, both the newborn and the mother are given massage as regularly as they are given food and nourishment. The value of massage as a cleansing tool is especially important at this time, since neither the mother nor child can engage in any strenuous physical exercise. " ~Ayurvedic Massage by Harish Johari

In Ayurveda, it is believed that postpartum women are to be nurtured and cared for by extended family with proper post partum food (see upcoming section), daily massage, and nothing to do but care for and bond with their baby after the birth. It is believed that, women who are cared for in this way will become rejuvenated, increasingly energized, and healthier than they were before giving birth!

Ayurvedic seers have also observed that if new mothers are not cared for and are expected by their community to just

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get on with the daily tasks of life; that they age faster and experience a *loss in vitality* throughout the birth process and postpartum time.

During the 6 week or 42 day postpartum window, traditionally the Ayurvedic midwives would oil the mother with **daily hot oil (sesame) massage**. Today fathers can fulfill this role if the family cannot afford to hire a holistic doula, Ayur-doula or massage therapist (or maybe just because father wants to)! I am not talking about an hour massage (unless you feel so inspired!) but rather just a gentle application of oil from mother's head to toe! This could take all of 10 minutes per day. This investment of time and energy balances the mother's hormones, rejuvenates her, creates greater emotional harmony in the family, and fortifies her immune strength and more.

We must remember that even while baby is now out of mother's body and in our world, baby is still at one with the mother and she is still "manufacturing" and providing the sustenance of baby's growing body. All of which takes great energy. The investment of father's time and attention

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not only eases her stress, but it affords a quality loving connection with each other as a couple. If you gift her with this care now, you will have a beautiful moist woman on your hands; instead of a tired, achy and overworked one (who is also less likely to have the interest or energy to make love!).

" In modern times, new mothers find they cannot afford forty days of rest; such rest is only possible for mothers living in extended families. When this rest is denied, problems related to stress and strain are created, which in turn destroy a woman's natural romantic feelings. While the social structure women live in may have changed...the postdelivery abdominal musculature of women has not changed..." Harish Johari, Ayurvedic Massage

This time together can also be an act of foreplay although sex should not be expected. For most feminine women, sexual desire is cultivated or courted. Mothers are usually not as drawn to sex for release and relaxation the way a

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man experiences sexual desire. However, when mother finally is relaxed, she becomes open and enlivened.

While this is obviously not a “*how-to*” sex manual, father's, I will let you in on a few little secrets about the way that women experience pleasure, because I know how important sex is to you, especially being that it is one of the ways in which you feel nurtured as a man. And I know that your woman will appreciate having her pleasure expanded too!

If you approach your woman in a way that she is biologically designed to receive you, you will both be satisfied! Your chances of making love after oiling the mother or giving her a massage (now I'm talking about once a mother is ready to, which can be many weeks after the birth) will increased tenfold, if you keep the following in mind:

1) Move slowly. To you it will seem almost unnaturally slow, unless she is already turned on (if that is the case the slowness could be too slow).

2) Follow her breath and the sounds that she makes.

Perceiving this will help you pace yourself.

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3) Start from the back, move to the front. Approaching a woman sexually from the front of her body when she is not already interested in making love with you will cause her to retreat. Approaching her from behind, is much less threatening.

4) Move in circles, not straight lines. Circular flowing movements are much more of a turn on for most woman.

5) Begin foreplay with non-erogenous zones and only once the mother is *obviously* turned on, *only then* move to the erogenous zones. Women are opposite to men. While you like your erogenous zones touched, which soothes your desire and feels good for you, for a woman, if you touch her breasts or genitals too early on in foreplay, it will actually snuff out her fire or excitement.

6) Practice making love without ejaculating. This will conserve your energy and keep you emotionally closer to your woman. Unless your woman tells you different, practice making love in this way. I will say no more.

Back to the 42 days and the oiling ritual. If father is not in the picture, another partner or friend (male or female, doesn't matter) can take up this honoured rite and take a

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stand for a new mother to be nurtured in this way. Anyone who is committed and caring can stand in this role as a keeper of the sacred embarkation into motherhood.

This special concern and care for mothers-to-be and new mothers is not unique to Ayurveda. The Chinese and Japanese cultures also take great care of the mothers in their midst. In Japan for example, a woman goes to live with her parents in the last month of pregnancy, so that she can be cared for and rest in preparation for the birth.

A wonderful book on conscious care in pregnancy from Ancient China is Queen Jin's Hand Book of Pregnancy by Fred Seligson.

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Postpartum Care in other Cultures

Turkey & Iran: eating a kind of dessert called Bumac, drank a mixture of grape molasses and butter, abdomen tightly wrapped, were not left home alone, avoided sexual intercourse for 40 days after giving birth

Chinese: “Zuo yuezi” (confinement” or “doing the month”)- formalized support, recognition of the status of motherhood, protect mothers of newborn from postpartum depression. Help the mother regain her strength and protect her future health, eating more food, and avoiding cold food, staying inside the home for 1 month, avoiding housework or discouraging domestic duties, limiting visitors, restricting bathing (but including daily vulval and perineal hygiene).

Vietnamese: lying by a fire, keeping warm after birth, staying indoors and resting in bed, avoiding housework, avoiding intercourse

Amazon: “resguardo” food and work restrictions -allowing them to devote more time to infant care, served an important social function by reinforcing bonds and for young women marking the transition into woman hood

Swazi: lengthy periods of postpartum confinement; gave regular enemas, traditional remedies to their babies, specific rituals

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Malaysian: “Patang” (refers to the do’s and don’ts’ during the postpartum) physical confinement 53 days, restrictions on bathing, prescription on hot and cold foods, mother roasting, steaming or smoking

Ecuador: “La Dieta” both mother and child are secluded and nurtured — protected from the noise and busy-ness of everyday life, remains indoors for forty-two days after the birth, mother rests in bed with her child close by and is freed from daily tasks, shielded from daylight & visitors, body wrapped from belly to breast to realign the bones, specific foods, special baths (water boiled with herbs, perfume, and a cup of milk, or with the petals of three white roses).

In common: However these three ethnic groups (Chinese, Malaysian, Indian) share some similar principles and elements including prescribed confinement period, postpartum diet, massage, hot compress (*bertungku*), corset (*bengkung*), herbal baths and medicinal tonics as well as certain specific lifestyle measures.

North America: baby shower for first child (or mother blessing if community is alternative), maternity leave (if lucky).

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The Babymoon

The Babymoon in a way corresponds to the 42 day *Sacred Window*. It refers to the special care we take as parents to bask in the afterglow of the birthing vibes and the beauty of bonding with our baby. Just as we have a honeymoon after getting married by secluding ourselves and taking out special time to bond with our partner, we can also intentionally create a babymoon with our new baby.

Doesn't it just make intuitive sense that we would want this special time alone as a new family, to get to know one another without onlookers, interruptions, or the feeling of being observed? As well, taking time to create a sacred space for and with our new baby is a wonderful way to honour and savour the incredible blessing that our baby is to us.

Setting this time aside is also very soothing to the baby's senses, giving him or her more time to adjust and settle comfortably into this new world before being exposed to outsiders. It can be very unsettling to bring a newborn out

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into the public where others are unaware of the significance of this precious time.

By taking a sojourn such as this, we protect our baby from loud noises, harsh colours, pollution, germs and other negative energies and impressions. As well as being considerate to avoid excess stimulation outside of the home, we must also consider the tone inside the home. We can keep the lights dim, light candles, keep the TV off, play soft music and clothe the baby in soft natural fibres of natural colour.

In general, we want to avoid heated conversation and unsettling stimuli of any kind. Consider your home a sanctuary and you will know just how to cultivate the perfect babymoon for your family. The babymoon can be yet another way to carve out time to *just be* and to protect ourselves from the overexertion and distractions that can weaken us during this delicate time.

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Some women take the entire 42 days to stay at home with their babies and ask their friends and family to wait to visit only until after this time. Others while being selective of who is invited into the space, may also leave the home from time to time under very certain circumstances. While I have heard of mothers going on with life as usual after the birth and even attending social gatherings and functions such as rock concerts or festivals, I don't recommend it.

We have to ask ourselves if what we are choosing is really in our baby's best interests and if we really *need to* do these things with an infant. As well as being hard on the baby's emerging senses, mothers and babies have a biological need to spend a lot of time together resting and naked skin to skin. This not only fosters bonding, but keeps the hormones flowing optimally - increasing love between the mother-baby and also ensuring ample breast milk.

The first thing we need to consider if a mother is seemingly not producing adequate milk, is that she needs to get

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naked and lay in bed with her baby. This skin-to-skin contact will send a message to her body that yes, baby is here and that yes, baby will be needing milk! To not attend to this primary biological need while attempting other tricks to promote breastfeeding (even if they are natural remedies), is to miss the fundamental foundation of establishing breast milk production. We are mammals as much as we are humans!

Slowing down is an essential element for an easeful and gentle transition into motherhood.

Also during this time we might want to ceremoniously welcome our baby to the earth with a special ritual. What can you do to celebrate your baby's birth? Does your culture have a special way of honouring the newborn? Could you start a new ritual for your own family of how you honour and celebrate the birth of new life?

I like to imagine that the place of birth and the home where a newborn resides as being a sanctuary or sacred space.

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Like all sacred spaces the energy in the room is pristine, the light is low, voices are hushed and there is a tangible presence of reverence in the room. To me the babymoon is very much like a place of worship, deserving of our highest consciousness.

Finally, to mark the completion of the babymoon, a special baby welcoming ceremony can be created, including potlach (each guest brings a gift of food to share) or a ceremony to welcome and name the baby. This event can signify the baby entering into the greater community. It is a physical manifestation of the intention of the community to come together to raise the child. It can be a secular or a religious event.

All that matters is that the community has the opportunity to be welcomed by the family to take part in the child's life. The community in turn warmly welcomes the child and envelopes the new family in love. The celebration is best a co creation, created by the community as much as by the parents. Whereas if a ceremony is conducted, it should be

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one with which the parents create and resonate.

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Nourishing the Postpartum Woman With Food

In the postpartum, a mother's digestive power is weakened, yet her need for nurturing and vital nutrition remains strong.

This section is intended for those who will be cooking for the mom while she tends to her baby in the first six weeks postpartum. Mother, you can help make this an easier task by filling your fridge and pantry with the foods that are to be emphasized during the postpartum period.

While in general refined sweets are never a good choice, during the postpartum period, adequate sweet flavor from unrefined sources is essential to help “sweeten” the experience of the postpartum. Some examples of nourishing sweet foods are root vegetables and stewed fruit or wholesome desserts made with unrefined cane sugar, organic blackstrap molasses, rice syrup, dark maple syrup and raw honey.

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The best foods to eat in the postpartum are whole foods that are easy to digest (warm, oily or moist, mushy or creamy textured nutrient dense and traditionally prepared foods) all of which increase the mother's digestive capacities while the nutrition is easily assimilated. For example coconut rice pudding and Indian dahl's make delicious easy to digest foods when the rice and lentils are soaked overnight and cooked in homemade broth. For more information about traditionally prepared foods, please purchase the cookbook [Nourishing Traditions](#) by Sally Fallon.

As well as fresh spring water (bottled at the source) or other purified water - **not distilled water** as it depletes mother's mineral status - moist and oily foods are ideal to replenish moisture and beneficial fats, for example soups made with bone broth and *lassis* (an Indian Yogurt drink).

The process of gestating and giving birth tends to be quite drying on the mother, which is why daily massage with oil and oily foods, given with pure water are essential to rebuild mother's stores.

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Use healthy fats and oils more abundantly than usual! This is important for postnatal hormonal, lubricating, cleansing and rejuvenation needs. Emphasize ghee (clarified butter) for replenishing mother's good saturated fat stores, and also as an ideal digestive tonic. Ghee helps the mother to optimally assimilate her nutrition. Ghee can be made at home on your stovetop, purchased online or at an ethnic grocer.

Ample saturated fats from grass fed animals, helps the mother to absorb fat soluble vitamins and minerals which require saturated fats for absorption. Adequate minerals from almonds, seeds, seaweeds, green leafy vegetables and fermented dairy such as kefir milk and yogurt (if they are tolerated) are necessary to restore mama's mineral status. The new mama needs even more nutrition now that she is making mineral rich milk for her new baby! In addition adequate fats and minerals are essential to tone and soothe the nervous system to ensure that mom feels emotionally stable.

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Use generous amounts of sesame and toasted sesame oil, butter, olive oil (and coconut oil in the spring and summer months) with warming spices such as ginger, garlic (not raw), pepper, cardamom and clove.

As much as we want to consider the quality of the ingredients made to prepare the food, we also want to consider the quality with which we make the food. The person preparing the food is essentially infusing that food with their love and intention. The best food is made with fresh ingredients intentionally made with love by a happy cook!

While it has been recommended to bring the family extra portions of food to freeze before the birth, this is not ideal food for the immediate postpartum for the mother. It can cause too much gas for both mom and baby! Leftovers are considered to have degenerative energy and are best minimized in the immediate postpartum (great for dads and kids though).

Some unpasteurized apple cider vinegar with each meal

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can be beneficial to improve digestion and promote the growth of beneficial intestinal flora for both mom and baby.

While fermented foods are not generally recommended in the postpartum because of the potential to produce gas, because of the prevalence of bacterial imbalances we want to continue eating small amounts of probiotic foods such as lacto fermented foods as dictated by our cravings, such as fermented vegetables, yogurt (brewed 24hrs minimum to break down all the difficult to assimilate nutrition) and kefir milk. Additionally, probiotic capsules can be included in the diet (preferable one that contains 10 or more strains of beneficial bacteria).

To summarize, we want to give new mothers warming, moist, sweet, oily and mineral rich foods that are easy to digest. We also want to avoid drying, cold, heavy and difficult to digest foods. For more ideas about which particular foods are nourishing to the new mother and baby, please see Sacred Window, Tonic Ayurvedic Care for Mother and Baby, in the resources section.

How to Treat Colic

My daughter Jasmine screamed for 4 hours straight every night from 10-2am for 6 months and then 2 hours a night for the next 6 months and when she was 1 she still screamed for an hour before falling asleep despite being lovingly "walked down" in a sling the whole time (thank God she was a Buddha Baby by day)!

If I only knew then what I know about gut health now!

If your baby has colic, run, don't walk to do the following now:

- 1) Get your baby in for a chiro or cranio sacral adjustment, this can sometimes work wonders for their digestion...the stress of the birth process can sometimes create blocks in the nervous system restricting the digestive system.
- 2) Homeopathic Chamomilla if your baby's stools are green or see a homeopath to get a remedy that matches your baby's unique symptom picture.

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3) Eat fermented dairy ONLY for you-only homemade yogurt cultured for 24 hours to ensure that all of the lactose and milk proteins have been pre-digested by the probiotic bacteria.

4) In addition to the probiotics that you consume and give to your baby through your breastmilk, give baby 1/8 tsp of the juice from your cultured veggies and build up from there (seeing what the impact is). NOTE: I know that it seems a bit counterintuitive to give a baby anything but breastmilk, but we have really got our gut flora in a mess in this age of antibiotics-sometimes we have to do something out of the ordinary to correct the imbalances we have created from drugs and pollution in the environment etc. Dr. Natasha Campbell Mc Bride has been recommending that mom's do this successfully for years when their babes have digestive issues. I am normally of the mind that a baby need nothing but breastmilk, however in the case of colic we have to try everything we can to nourish and support the baby's digestion.

5) Give baby supplementation of L.reuteri which is a particular strain of probiotic bacteria that has been proven

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to help babies with colic. Follow this link for
info:<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20713478>

A brand that carries *L.reuteri* is Nature's Way, have a look through the link to see what it looks like, so you can easily locate it at a health food store:

<http://www.aviva.ca/shop/products.asp?itemid=4306&catid=263>

Read my article for more info and please follow the references at the end of the article so that you can understand the bigger picture of why your baby has colic and how you can treat your whole family and prevent your next baby from having colic.

<http://www.domesticdiva.ca/building-community/how-to-prevent-colic-diaper-rash-and-other-digestive-disturbances-in-baby-before-birth/>

It is important to do it all simultaneously to make sure you put all the foundational pieces of good digestion in place. Don't just try these things one at a time, healing happens

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synergistically with all aspects of our health being nourished including:

- 1) proper nerve flow
- 2) probiotics
- 3) eliminating trigger foods until gut is healed and reintroduce them later (this would be the short list, but the essential pieces!)

You will need to dissolve the homeopathic chamomilla tabs (30C potency) and the L.reuteri in a bit of breastmilk on a spoon. Only administer the chamomilla if your babe has green stools and stop once they turn back to a normal colour.

If none of the above work you may have to go on a leaky gut diet to resolve your baby's digestive discomfort. If you feel overwhelmed by figuring it all out on their own, I offer private consulting on all matters of mother, child and infant digestive issues.

To book a session: www.SherryRothwell.com

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Preventing Postpartum Depression and Anxiety

These recommendations can go a long way toward preventing postpartum depression and anxiety. With mother optimally nourished and baby easily able to digest mother's milk, stress is reduced for everyone. It cannot be overstated how important optimal nourishment is on all levels in the postpartum period. During this time, we want to make sure that cooking and household chores are taken care of, so that all that is required of the new mother is to bond with and nurse her new baby.

We also want to ensure that mother is being served proper postpartum food combinations so that baby can relax and bond with mama. A baby who is in digestive pain will find it difficult to fully open to the bonding and attachment process.

In all the reading and research that I have done over the years, I have never seen it mentioned, let alone emphasized that a mother's diet in the postpartum has any effect on

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the bonding process. Yet it is blatantly obvious that if mother is exhausted because she is depleted or if a baby is suffering in pain, both are apt to withdraw from one another to some extent.

Mother's digestion impacts: the quality of her milk, her mood, colic, rejuvenation, strength, comfort and her natural expression of mothering. It should be our intention to replenish mother's fatty acid and mineral status for the purposes of ensuring optimal development of the new baby's brain, eye and nervous system. By doing so, we can help prevent postpartum depression and ultimately promote optimal bonding.

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Fathering in the Postpartum

Masculine and feminine polarities take a natural shift into reverse in certain aspects of the postpartum experience.

This time can be especially delicate for parents when conflict arises. While in the postpartum, mothers will still desire the protective masculine presence, they will not want father to take the lead here, but rather to step back, witness and be a supportive nurturing presence.

Mother is looking for compassion, understanding and nurturing, but not for answers. She wants to share her heart with you, but she is not looking for you to fix things or to tell her the answers.

For a feminine spirit, questions lead to more questions, not to finite answers. Mothers *in touch with their instincts* will naturally assume a more masculine protective and penetrative presence in terms of the care of the newborn.

In order to keep the balance, fathers may notice that

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yielding to the momma bear and her instincts are in everyone's best interests, or at least to *keep the peace* until a time arises that you can work through to the heart of your conflicts.

As a father in regards to caring for your unborn or just born child, you may find yourself moving into your inner boy and wanting “have your turn,” do things your own way, or have equal say in matters of the mother and baby's health or well-being.

For some men, what I am about to say will just be obvious, while for others it will not be.

I ask that you consider what I am about to say from your confident unwavering man self who is not defensive or insecure, but who can hear this from an objective and non emotional viewpoint.

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Mother has three factors that you don't have, in terms of knowing what is best for your baby:

1) *Instincts* - Mother is flowing with hormones that give her instinctual wisdom about what is best for her baby. If she is sensing that something isn't right, then it is not, even when she cannot articulate why. This baby is still very much a part of her body. They are still a unit with the mother being solely responsible and capable to provide for the baby's life through breastfeeding.

2) *Experience* - Remember, mama just carried this baby in her womb for 9 months, opened her body and brought this child onto the planet. That is a lot of past experience with this baby in a very intimate way. In addition, most women have had much more experience in caring for babies in general. She has experience that you do not have, both in terms of time spent observing other women tend to babies and in her own experience of nurturing. Women in this culture tend to have way more opportunity than men, to nurture children and others. Nurturing is in general is also more instinctive for feminine women, she may just

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have a knack for it, even with little prior hands-on experience.

3) She has *knowledge* - How many books, magazines and articles have you read or studied on pregnancy, birth, breastfeeding and care of the newborn in comparison to her? I rest my case.

Now this is not to say that you have *no say* in any of these things. Yes your concerns should be heard and your needs met too, but let's consider the context.

Unless you are in a very unique position, remember that she *is* and *has* taken on more of the responsibility in gestating, birthing and nursing and raising this child. Why should you have equal say about something for which you have not assumed equal responsibility? It is just not logical or reasonable to demand equality in this situation.

Fathers, I recommend that if you want more equality in decision making around the mother and baby's health and

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well-being, that you be prepared to provide evidence that your concerns are well founded.

Have you done your research and have you developed an informed opinion? There are so many controversies surrounding health care choices especially in pregnancy, birth and care of the newborn! While the majority of mothers will willingly accept the status quo, if your woman does not, then it is in everyone's best interests that you listen willingly and with an open mind to her point of view. The fact that she is even questioning these things should alert you to the fact that she is doing her homework.

While I sense that to be so straight up about this topic may not make me too popular, I have to say it, because I have seen too many mommas lose their power to partners at a time when their greatest concern should be for the baby's well-being, not in pleasing and being submissive to their husbands.

On the other hand, mother's must gracefully tolerate their

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partners learning curve and be patient in order to avoid an infusion of unnecessary conflict and the emotional pain that can damper the warm ember of the bliss of the *babymoon! Be nice!*

In the end, the ideal way to manage conflict is to look for a higher solution than that of which either person originally brought to the table. If we can narrow our concerns down to what our true needs are, and truly understand one another's needs, then we can together to co-create a solution that is focused not on *getting our own way*, but rather find one that meets everyone's needs in the highest interests of all concerned.

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Preparing Your Postpartum Sanctuary

In North American culture, women are expected, to not only to recover physically and emotionally from childbirth in a short period of time, but they are also expected, to simultaneously and solely care for their baby without breaks, support and community life. At no other time in history, have women been expected to do so much, with so little help. Historically, families lived in either tribal or cultural communities. There were grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins to help out with the children; the domestic tasks were shared by many. **No one person did everything!** Even upper class women in more modern times relied on the assistance of a wet nurse, butler, and a maid! In order to gain a realistic perspective about the postpartum experience, as pregnant women, it is very important to explore our own expectations, the expectations of our partner and those of our extended family so that we do not set ourselves up for disappointment.

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Given our culture's misunderstanding about the postpartum experience, it is very important to specifically enlist the help of your friends, extended family and community. **Most people are willing to assist you in whatever way they can, but they truly need to be, informed that you even need their help at all!**

It is likely that your own mother lived in isolation while she mothered you or she spent many days at the hospital attended to by nurses.

If she was left to her own resources in the postpartum experience, she may expect you to do the same, but hopefully not if she reads this and is now inspired to nurture you!

It may be challenging to ask for help, but know that you will be a better person and mother for having done so. Your child wants you to be rested, tranquil, and present with him or her....someone else can do the laundry and take out the garbage while you bond with your baby!

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If you come to realize your family or closest friends are unable to support you; if instead your mother, partner and best friends expect you to “just get on with” your life; it is imperative that you hire a postpartum doula who will support and respect your need for continued rest and rejuvenation.

The transition from maiden to mother is so precious and fragile. Your transition can set the tone for your journey and experience of motherhood. Will it be a celebration? Will you savour it? Will you relax into it and be present? Will you feel supported? Or, will it be difficult and tiring? Will you wish you were somewhere else, doing something else? Will you feel alone and abandoned?

Proper postpartum nourishment: emotional, physical, spiritual, and nutritional support by an experienced mother, sister, friend or doula - who is competent in counseling in all these areas - can assist in setting the stage for a healthy future for your family life.

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Ideally, after the birth of your baby, you will have, at minimum 6 weeks of rest and recuperation, and possibly more, if you and your baby endured birth trauma of any kind. Once your baby is born, ensure that you will experience at minimum 1 hour in complete privacy to savor breastfeeding, your oxytocin (love hormone) peak and the initial bonding experience.

After that time, your midwife and/doula, will tend to your needs, while you tend to the needs of your little one (nursing, resting and cuddling!).

With your doula overseeing light housekeeping, running errands, and preparing your meals, even father can be present and bask in the afterglow.

During this six-week period, many of, if not all of your meals should be prepared for you. Most of the housecleaning is best taken care of **by others**. Extensive nurturing of this type is not easy to come by if you don't plan for it and have a willing friend, mother or partner or

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the cash flow to hire a postpartum doula! Without a strong desire and intention, you will likely not come by this kind of care by good fortune alone! Do your best to set this up in advance without being *attached* to receiving it. Few people in our culture are able to realize its necessity and even less will be able to take the time away from their own responsibilities to facilitate it.

However, be creative. Maybe you have an extra room in your house. If so, you could trade accommodations for meal prep and house cleaning, by a female university student, nanny or an *au pair*.

If you do feel the desire to take part in meal preparation and in tending to the house, then of course do so, but with attention to your need for rest and recuperation. Ask for help when you need it! Socialize only as much as you feel compelled to, and spend most of your time with your partner and your baby; basking in the sacredness of your new family life together.

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During this precious postpartum time, the “babymoon”, you are bonding with your baby, emotionally processing the pregnancy and birth – nourishing and strengthening your body and adjusting to your new life as a mother. Your physiology is transforming and reordering from a pregnant woman back to a non-pregnant woman and a breastfeeding mother. To take the postpartum rejuvenation window lightly, is to be ill prepared for how your life will change.

Making the process a celebration is to consciously begin your mothering journey on a positive, prepared, and peaceful note. The nourishing rhythms that you establish during pregnancy and the immediate post-partum period will continue to support and nourish you along the journey of motherhood.

Preparing for the Postpartum - A Checklist:

Hire a Birth Doula- Your birth doula can mentor you to experience a fulfilling and safe birth experience. A good birth experience naturally supports the post-partum

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experience.

□ **Hire a Postpartum Doula-** She takes care of the parents so that they can tend to one other and to the new baby. A postpartum doula, takes the load of your shoulders, is on top of your needs before you even know you have them, and creates a warm and uplifting environment in which to enjoy your six weeks of sacred rejuvenation. If there are any Ayur doulas in your area, hire one. Or, find a doula who wants to take the training, pay for it for her and then have her practice on you (I intuit that many holistically minded doulas would be interested in this exchange)!

□ **Prepare and Freeze Meals in Advance.** Ideally in the first six weeks after the birth of your baby, you will be eating easy –to- digest fresh meals. After that, it would be great to have some frozen homemade comfort food to grab from the freezer as needed! Invite a friend to spend a whole day cooking with you; what a great way to spend hours nurturing a friendship!

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□ **Practice Managing Your Energy.** You don't want to be scrambling around at the last minute washing baby clothes and cloth diapers. Maybe there are other things around the house that you wanted to get done before the baby comes, but you can't seem to make happen soon enough. Release your attachment to these things. Babies don't need beautiful nurseries or organized closets. They need a relaxed and present mother. Let go of your stress. Accept and surrender to what is; this is good practice for labour! Ask your doula to assist you in prioritizing; sometimes a fresh perspective can help!

□ **Have a Close Friend Organize a Motherblessing For You!** If no one around you is available to host and facilitate your mother blessing, create your own rite of passage party and invite your friends to come and celebrate you! Get your friends to make a bellycast with you and/or birthing prayer flags!

□ **Allow for 1 Hour of Undisturbed Time Alone with Your Baby Immediately After the Birth.** This not only ensures prime bonding time and promotes breastfeeding

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ease, but also ensures your hormonal oxytocin peak, which is essential for optimal bonding and for proper placental separation. According to Dr. Michel Odent, if all mothers and their babies were given complete privacy during this time in a warm environment, there would be virtually no excessive postpartum bleeding or haemorrhage in childbirth.

☐ **Mother and Baby Roasting** - Keep the postpartum home warm! This supports mother's rest, rejuvenation and healing. This "womb like" temperature keeps baby feeling settled, safe and secure. Many mothers complain that baby will never let them put him/her down but a warm atmosphere helps baby to settle. Avoid "drafty" areas of the home. Proper heating can go a long way to supporting baby's need for comfort. This also helps prevent excessive blood loss after birth, conserving vital nutrition reserves.

☐ **Minimize Guests Until you Feel Ready for Them.**

Many new mothers feel overwhelmed with friends and family visiting after the birth. Often mothers become tired

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from hosting, since it is they who need to be served! You may want to put a note on your door letting uninvited guests know that you desire privacy for the time being.

Ideally, you will designate someone to contact friends and family to tell them of the birth and inform them of your need for privacy until a certain date. If the local midwives are serving you, they will most likely put a poster on your door for you to remind guests of your requests. Then again, you may desire company. If that is true, then ask only your close friends to come by, ones who would naturally intuit how to be in a state of quiet reverence during the babymoon.

☐ Moxibustion, Abdominal Massage, Belly “Wrapping” and Herbal Baths Will Assist in Post-Partum Recovery:

√ Postpartum relaxation massage is great to relieve neck and shoulder pain from poor posture during breastfeeding and to soothe tension. Any kind hands will do!

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√ Kegel exercise, along with belly “wrapping”, is a great way to bring back abdomen tone and to support your lower back as you gain, you rebuild your abdominal strength. Just wrap a wide cloth around the belly tightly and fasten with safety pins.

√ Moxibustion uses heat to close down the energy centre that opens in birth. This strengthens mother, keeping her energy contained to be re-circulated and subsequently revitalizing her. It also helps bring the uterus back down to pre-pregnancy size. When I first learned of this practice from Aviva Jill Romm’s book *Natural Health After Birth*, I thought to myself “what a nice way to symbolically close the birth portal.” I really didn’t think that it would do anything on the physical level, after all, it is just a herb (mugwort) made into a stick and lit with fire. However, from the first time I used it, the women told me it felt like “a vacuum suctioning down their uterus” or that they could feel “energy pulling up through their legs.” One midwife noticed that a woman’s uterus went back down to pre pregnancy size twice as fast as the average woman’s did.

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Moxibustion sticks can be purchased at a Chinese Herbal store. In order to keep the environment less smoky, ask for a smokeless stick. You will also need to use a glass jar or something in place of an ashtray. Simply make clockwise circles over the abdomen, or where you imagine the uterus to be. Take care not to burn the skin.

√ Herbal infusions can be made for the bath as a sitz bath (to reduce swelling if need be) or purely for pleasure with comfrey, lavender, calendula etc. A lovely herbal bath at the end of the 6 weeks postpartum can be a wonderful way to acknowledge the end of the postpartum period. Sitz baths can be bought in birth and baby stores or you can look online for a recipe to make your own!

*Ask your doula to include the above treatments in your post-partum care.

□ **Drink your nourishment tea**, your doula can also

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prepare this for you in her home or yours.

- **Drink lots of water and eat light meals** to ease digestion, reserve energy, to facilitate good bowel movement and to support your body's natural healing capacity.

- **Continue your practice of Kegel or pelvic floor exercises**, both to restore your pelvic tone and to prevent injury due to weakness, and so that you can jump on a trampoline later without feeling like you have to go pee!

- **Self Massage** - If it is not possible to have someone else do warm oil applications for you, continue with self-massage during the 42 day window while baby is sleeping.

- **Nursing Sacred Space** - Create a sacred space for sitting down to nurse during the day. Find a cozy rocking chair and put a footstool underneath to promote good posture while nursing. Have your nursing pillow close by with a few good books or magazines and small coffee table with coasters for liquids. Before you sit down to nurse your

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baby, remember to fill your cups with herbal infusions and water so that you can easily access them once you are settled and cozy.

□ Purchase Aviva Jill Romm's excellent postpartum book **Natural Health after Birth-The Complete Guide to Postpartum Wellness**. Read it and be inspired to truly give to yourself. Remember, you cannot give to others, what you do not have yourself. Making yourself feel great ensures that you will mother to your fullest potential. Visit www.avivaromm.com.

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The Un-Nurtured Woman

One significant thing that I have noticed as a holistic doula, in my own experience of postpartum, and as a friend of many mothers, is the importance of the mother trusting that she will not be abandoned in the postpartum by her partner or her community.

In my observation and experience, if women do not receive some kind of postpartum nurturing, a complication will eventually present itself in the postpartum, thus enabling the mother to receive the help and attention that she truly needs and desires in the first place.

I feel these complications are an unconscious way of getting our needs met. While I know that pregnant women do not consciously create postpartum drama, I recognize that as my doula services have increasingly become more holistic and nurturing - less focused on information and chatting about the birth and ever more about embracing and honouring the pregnancy - my clients births and postpartum experiences also became more easeful,

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enjoyable and straight forward.

To illustrate this point from my personal experience; while I had excellent post partum nurturing by my community after the birth of my daughter Jasmine, at about 5 weeks post partum my husband made a comment that maybe things should just get back to normal now, and that I should be doing more.

To be brutally honest, it kind of felt like a stab to the heart and I felt betrayed. I thought my husband understood the importance of this time and why we were taking this time to acknowledge the significance of postpartum, and rejuvenation, by intentionally allowing and gifting me deep rest and recuperation.

Within 12 hours of this comment, I was up in the emergency ward getting stitches (note to self, unplug the blender before deciding to wipe down the blades). Not only had I unconsciously created a way to get my needs met, but now with a completely useless hand, my husband had to take on even more of the household duties, and change

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ALL of the diapers himself!

This story brings us to an important point. Many people will perceive your desire for a “babymoon” or your request for special care and support in the postpartum as ludicrous.

You may get eye rolls, strange looks and people may even call you lazy or selfish. That is North America for ya! I recommend that you be very selective of whom you choose to ask for support and with whom you share your plans. The last thing a pregnant woman needs is to be shamed for asserting that her needs be met. Beyond the fact that it just feels so good to rest and recuperate, to be honoured, nurtured and cared for, having a 42 day postpartum sojourn is also a matter of physical health and mental/emotional well-being.

How much post partum alienation and depression do you think could be allayed, if women experienced this type of care after giving birth to a child? Many women also struggle with feeling unworthy, but look what you have

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given selflessly to this baby and to the planet! You have given your body over to a new shape that you may or may not be comfortable with. You have given up things that you enjoyed and taken on things that you don't, just to nurture this baby's well being! You have opened your body to forces that you may have been afraid to death of, and now that your baby is born, you will give up your sleep, yet more nutrition, your space, your time, your ability "to just do" what you want, when you feel like it! You are selflessly giving of yourself as a vessel for new life and in the continuation of humankind. Selfish? My word. I think not.

By ensuring a Sacred Window after the birth, you are effectively benefitting everyone and here's how:

- 1) Your baby will be nurtured by you and you are the only person for whom your newborn truly has a need.
- 2) Baby will have adequate and nourishing breast milk made by a calm and contented mom.
- 3) A calm and contented baby is in everyone's best interests.

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4) You will be rejuvenated and happy, which ensures that your partner and your baby will be happy, although this is only true if your partner or family does not give begrudgingly. Take great care to get support from willing people!

5) Your rejuvenation will make you more youthful and healthier. This is of benefit to your long-term health, which benefits your baby and your partner and takes a burden off the health care system.

6) You will have energy and feel recuperated, so that you can give back to the community, instead of being a chronically drained, depleted, aging and exhausted mother. An energetic and happy mom is much more fun to be around for everyone!

7) Because of feeling all this love, support, and connection with your partner, you will trust him/her and will continue to feel open to lovemaking, which is essential to both of your health. Just because most couple's sex life takes a nosedive after parenthood, does not mean that yours has to too! Remember, up until now, the community has been

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celebrating the new baby, but the momma has been left in the shadows and expected to just get on with life.

I recognize that to some extent, all of this might be confusing for a woman or couple who hasn't given birth, but the significance of it is obvious for those of us who have given birth before and were not honoured and nurtured in the process.

I hope that if you are a first time mom and reading this, that you will not underestimate the importance of these things. I hope that you will take action so that you will not ever have to suffer being drained and exhausted, lonely and even hungry while trying to attend to a newborn and a household at the same time. Prevention is the best medicine.

So go ahead, gather together a circle of women to support you in the postpartum, or hire a holistic doula or an Ayur-doula.

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So what to do, if you are standing in the place of not feeling like you have the kind of friends in your life whom can be a support to you, and you cannot afford to hire a doula?

While for obvious reasons, it would be more nourishing to be on the receiving end of this kind of care. That does not mean that an individual woman on her own could not give herself her own form of conscious care during the 42 day postpartum window.

Some great ideas would be:

To purchase the foods to favour in the postpartum and stock your kitchen with the intention to use these ingredients to make yourself simple foods after the birth.

You could apply oil daily to your body before or after you bathe or shower. You could sit in a reclining chair and circle the moxibustion stick over your abdomen.

You could infuse yourself a special bath to have with your baby on day 42.

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The point is to nurture and nourish yourself in whatever way that you can, to honour your experience.

If you have no one to weave your birth story with, why not write it and publish it in a birthing publication or a blog to have your story witnessed.

You could join a community online and be nourished by the “word medicine” of other mommas who can hold the space for you from afar and be there to mentor you along your journey.

What if you are reading this now wishing or wondering what it would have been like for you, if only you had had nurturing prenatal and postpartum care?

Well, I think that it is possible to renew and honour ourselves as mothers for having at one time given our bodies, our time and our energy to birth and/or raise child, by creating a sacred space and re enacting our postpartum.

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Maybe you didn't raise your child or maybe you raised a child that you didn't birth, either way you too deserve to be honoured in this way!

What about 42 days of self-massage or having a “kiddymoon” with your child?

Or maybe you could dedicate a special week of nurturing your connection together as a mother-child unit.

Re enact the 42nd day with a friend! Give each other massages and moxibustion. Tell the tale of your birth stories! Have a hot tub or sauna together, or create a herbal bath tea bag in order to honour your journey as a mother.

Be creative! The possibilities are endless! I feel that doing this is not only symbolic, but also that it creates a new energetic imprint for the future expression of your health. Not to mention, the benefits of hot oil massage are not

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limited to any particular time in our lives!

If you don't have a friend to do this with you, consider hiring a holistic doula! I am sure that they would love to re-enact this with you! FUN!

For some time now, I have carried the vision of creating a red tent of sorts for mothers, wherein a community of holistic practitioners and doulas would come together to create community mother blessings open to all women.

I have imagined that both pregnant women and mothers young and old would come to be nurtured and honoured in their journey as a mother.

Together as women we could sit in circle and weave our birth stories. There could be a complimentary "blessingway" ceremony including birth chants and other women honouring songs. As well as small booths with local holistic businesses so that moms can discover the alternative services that are available to them. As well,

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moms could make connections with doulas and holistic practitioners who have joined hands to create this community service. It is a win-win situation for everyone.

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Co-Creating and Cultivating Community

While we all cannot or choose not to move into an intentional community, coop or eco village, we can all cultivate more community in our lives.

Our family has tried many different possibilities in this regard, from cooking days with other friends where we cook all day, share a meal, split the food, and then take it home for the week, to living in one large house with 3 different and unique families.

At one particular time, we had 4 students living with our family. This was an incredible time of abundance of both time and money. We were able to share in all the living expenses, cleaning and cooking! We all had 1 day per week where we were each responsible for cooking dinner for everyone in the house. On Sundays, everyone fended for themselves. This meant that each individual would only be required to cook two dinners a week, yet everyone was fed a wholesome meal every day of the week! This worked

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wonderfully given all of our busy lifestyles. It gave us all more time to pursue study and leisure, not to mention intentional and precious time together over delicious food. While we had to forgo privacy, our lives were much richer for it. In this culture privacy is highly valued, but it can come at the cost of separation.

While our experiences living with other families brought with it a whole other set of challenges, despite the hardship, these times were some of the richest experiences of our lives. In hindsight though, I don't recommend living in the same home with other young families - multi age is the key! However, I would recommend living on the same block or same land and having a shared community space for gatherings. By having an exclusive dwelling of your own where you can *just be*, you have the freedom to express your individuality and creativity. In such a scenario, you can enjoy both the privacy of the new world along with the comfort, lighter load and community spirit of the old world.

Another great way to build community among mothers is to start a mothering group by putting a call out to women

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who have similar values and interests as you do.

I met my “tribe” of women this way, when a lovely woman in our community distributed a poster looking for moms interesting in: baby wearing, co-sleeping, attachment parenting, and whole foods. I saw the poster and knew immediately that this group was for me. While the group has long since lost touch, many of us are still great friends and have seen each other through many milestones, both as mothers and as women. Some of the deepest and richest friendships of my life have come out of this mothering group.

As a resource for creating mothering circles around the concept of self-care, I recommend purchasing the book [Mother Renewal](#) by Renee Trudeau. This book is about how to cultivate self-care specifically for mothers. You could even train to become a group facilitator and create groups in your community while running a part time business.

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Potlucks are another great family friendly way to gather and cultivate community with other families. A potluck is a gathering over food where each guest brings one portion to add to the meal so that no one person has to do everything to “entertain,” yet everyone gets a night out over a delicious meal in a child-friendly atmosphere at no cost!

Some of the busiest restaurants that I know of and love are child-friendly such as The Rocky Mountain Pizza Factory in Vancouver, BC. This restaurant has a designated play area and special night of the week where children can make their own wood fired pizzas! I loved being a patron of this restaurant knowing that I could relax and enjoy my meal without the expectation to make my children sit still.

It seems like North American culture tends to have little tolerance for children in public places, yet it does not provide for the children’s needs. This leaves all of us, with unmet needs. The children are uncomfortable and incapable of sitting for long periods. While their “acting out” bothers the other guests and parents are stuck in

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between feeling responsible for everyone's discomfort and *too stressed to enjoy their meal!* To ask a child to sit still for an hour is an unreasonable request and expecting parents to never go out, just in order not to inconvenience others, is also unreasonable and unfair.

However, if we look to co-create a higher solution, we can make restaurants child-friendly. When children are given some freedom to play and explore, they are generally good natured and enjoyable to be with.

The fact that it is typical that public places do not provide for the comfort of children, and at the same time the culture lacks a deeply committed extended community that contributes to the lives of young family, makes both going out and staying in, often unfulfilling for parents.

I can understand why sometimes people feel like they would rather not dine with children, that is ok too, but I do feel that our lives could benefit from a lot more intentional thought about how to facilitate children's needs in an adult

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world. While some people just don't understand this perspective and feel that parents should give up these luxuries or hire a babysitter when they go out, in other cultures such as in Greece, Bali and Mexico for example, families are integral to the culture and welcome in public places with their children.

I love the story of how my friend was dining in a restaurant in Chiapas, Mexico where her 1 year old daughter was fussing at the table and wanting to get down. The server picked her up in one hand and waited tables with the other hand while carrying the little one on her hip for 20 minutes! All so that my friend could enjoy eating, as well as to entertain and enjoy the baby!

That would be hard pressed to happen here in Canada. Not that I don't think that there are lovely young women who would want to, but that to be so care free and interactive on the job, would be shunned in today's working environments. After all, we are not getting paid to carry babies now are we?!

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Another great example of a culture that reveres children is the Balinese culture. According to Karen Horneffer-Ginter in her article entitled, *The Medicine of Bali*, she expresses how she heard other travelers speak in reference to the Balinese that *"They see children as being holy, and they don't even let their feet touch the ground until they turn one"* or they *"treat their children like gods, and their gods like children."* She goes on to say, *"...as we arrived in the airport and were immediately pulled aside when our children were spotted. I assumed I was being flagged over to be reprimanded for being in the way.....or somehow not doing something with myself or my luggage or my children that I should have been doing. But I soon realized that this was just my conditioning from U.S. airports. Here, we were being escorted in front of hundreds of people in line to get our visas. It would be unthinkable in their country to make children wait that long."*

What a beautiful glimpse she gives us into the wisdom and insight of Balinese culture.

Someday when I am a granny, I intend to study how the

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legislation came into place to meet the needs of handicapped people and I would like to use that model to create a child friendly world as well. Most of the population at one time or another is a parent and then a grandparent, thus making the numbers of people that would use the extra facilities or services very viable.

Even if half of public facilities were mother and child friendly and the other half *adult only*, it would make a huge difference for everyone and would meet all of our needs. I hope someone beats me to this dream and makes it a reality!

Another idea that has been on my mind for a while now is to create a non-profit and volunteer run organization very much like “Big Brothers and Sisters” except that its purpose is to connect postpartum and young families with women who have an interest in supporting other women in the childbearing years.

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This would be a volunteer position with the potential for lifelong connection and could be a wonderful opportunity for everyone involved!

Young women would get to learn from experienced mothers about the basics and ease of breastfeeding, how to nurture and care for young children, while mothers would get the energetic help and company they need and desire.

People who want to be Grandparents or aunts and uncles, but have no biological grandchildren or nieces and nephews to enjoy, could adopt surrogate ones who might not have Grandparents who are involved or who live close by.

I'm talking about a grass roots community organization run by the community where we see each other through- in times of need, hardship or vulnerability instead of handing our power over to agencies and experts.

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It seems to me that we have become too fragmented from one another and that a return to some degree of responsibility in one another's lives on a daily basis is called for, now more than ever. We don't need to be dependant or independent from one another, but rather interdependent. For without relationship with other human beings, what is the point of life? We just cannot live our dreams independently. We are always interdependent on one another.

This whole mentality of handing over the responsibility for our children, friends and families over to strangers and experts who have no long term investment in their lives is so very sad.

Yet this is exactly what we do to one another as soon as *the other*, becomes vulnerable. We give our children over to spend more of their time in daycares than at home.

If we are giving birth, we are attended to by strangers or acquaintances at best.

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If we are sick we are sent to the hospital or when dying to a respite centre.

Or if we are senile we are sent to a home.

If we are emotionally unwell, our family's send us to the psychiatric hospital (as though sadness were an emotional defect), instead of holding us and finding out what we need and how our needs can get met.

Or if we become "too old" to do everything on our own, then we are moved to an old folks home, rather than moving into the homes of our own children where we can continue to be a contributing member of our family and our society!

Why do we hand the responsibility of our friends and family over to strangers who have to be paid money to care for them in their times of vulnerability? How sincere can this care really be? While I do agree that many people who

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work in caring careers truly do have a passion for what they do, there are also those for whom caring is *just a job*.

Is this system really working for the vulnerable or is it just easier and more convenient for those of us who are well? It certainly works well does it not, until we are the ones who are vulnerable and have to sit on the other side of it.

Now I do understand that some families have great complexities in which one might prefer to be in the hands of strangers than in the hands of their own kin! But for the majority of us, would there not be many benefits to having more interdependence with our friends and our family?

Sure these services are also a great stand-in, in the unfortunate circumstances that there are no friends and family to come to our aid, but wouldn't our lives be richer if most of us sat at the feet of our parents and grandparents while they aged and eventually lay dying on their death beds?

Would it not be of benefit to our children to witness the full

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spectrum, the joys and sorrows of life moving full circle from home birth to home death?

Let us acknowledge that one day the young mothers and babies who we share delight in now, will one day tend to us in our old age! Let us ensure that they have had a tender experience of being cared for in their own times of vulnerability.

For those mothers and babies who have been genuinely held, unconditionally loved, and cared for, it will be natural, easy and an honour for them to lovingly and generously give back to the elders of their own community.

To each his own, but I for one would like to see the world move in the direction of greater interdependence in community rather than on governments, institutions and agencies.

I feel a longing for more elders, aunties and uncles available to take part in my own and my children's lives,

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whether biological or not.

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My Second Postpartum Story

In conclusion I would like to share with you my personal postpartum experience with my daughter Jasmine. This postpartum experience was truly nothing short of blissful and this is due in part to my birth choice, and in part because by this time in my life, I had gathered a group of women around me who were privy to the needs of postpartum women. Many of them are still close friends today. I have also had the pleasure of nurturing them in the postpartum as well.

Together we created a culture of nurturing around pregnancy, birth and postpartum. We asked questions of each other such as *“is (so and so) getting enough nurturing”* and *“how can we come together to help her get her needs met.”* As a circle, we’ve held pregnant women and gathered around them to hold their birth intentions over and over again, through mother blessing ceremonies, whether it is their first child or their fourth!

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Unlike a baby shower, we bless our mamas over and over again! New families are showered with food and help without expectation to visit or see the new baby until the mother tells us that she is ready for guests. Our first priority is to meet the needs of the new family and then to celebrate the baby once the parents feel ready to share their joy with us.

When I was pregnant with Jasmine, I had no doubt that my needs would be taken care of. My community knew just what to do. But there were some essential elements of the postpartum that enabled me to experience the fullness of the journey in a way that I had not been able to the first time around.

With Jasmine's birth, I chose to gestate and give birth without any experts. Along with wanting to explore the fullness of pregnancy and birth as the experience would flow without onlookers, other's projections and concerns or ideals; and to be free from routine homebirth protocol that felt inhibitive in my first birth, I choose to give birth

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unassisted and to assume complete authority over my own prenatal care and my own birth.

By having no interruptions at all - no tests, no monitoring, no measuring, no bathing, no pricking, no administering, no getting up and showering, and on and on, I had much longer than a completely undisturbed hour postpartum!

We set up the birth space to have a mattress and the birthing pool right in front of the wood burning fireplace in our cozy living room. I caught my baby daughter Jasmine with my own hands (in the birthing pool) and I stepped out from the tub straight onto the mattress that we had mindfully placed between the birthing tub and the fireplace. My husband lit the fire and our mother-baby roasting began in front of a beautiful and nurturing natural flame.

Sometime after the first hour, my friend Jen came over and she sponge bathed me with warm cloths so that I didn't have to move from my bed. That day she helped my

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husband clean up from the birth and set us up for our lotus birth. Before she went home, she gave me my first glorious postpartum treatment of massage and moxibustion.

I have to tell you that the night before, just before labour started, I had this strange compulsion to shave my legs and paint my toenails bright red, normally I just go au natural in both departments!

All I could think while receiving this postpartum treatment is that I felt like a goddess and I just couldn't get over how "hot" *as in sexy* I felt! I could never have imagined feeling so radiant and exuberant after having just given birth!

After that she made me nourishing tea and tucked me in under the midday afternoon sun. Then the food started coming in.

While lots of food was gifted us over the weeks, my friend Shalynn made the most incredible tasting dahls ever! She

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took instruction for which spices were especially nourishing to a new mama and “winged it” beautifully!

Having a natural and undisturbed physiological birth and a gentle birth in water was extremely astounding to me. No swelling, no tearing.

While it felt like an incredible experience, it also felt like an everyday normal experience, as though this was how babies were really meant to come into the world.

No fuss, no experts, just lovingly enveloped by loved ones. All of whom have an intimate relationship with the family and a long term investment in the child’s life to come. I felt elated.

Over the next few weeks between my husband, Jen and my friend Kat, I was given at least 6 warm oil treatments and moxibustion. I can attest to the truth of the ayurvedic seers. While I didn’t get my 42 days of massage, my husband did take paternity leave and friends continued to

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come by and help and YES I got my mother blessing (only after the birth because my dates were off!).

I truly experienced the contrast between having a typical North American postpartum and a holistic postpartum filled with love and community.

I also noticed the difference in my health and vibrancy as well, and I can attest to the feeling of having aged after giving birth the first time around. After the birth of my first child I felt overweight and unattractive and with a lovely set of varicose veins to boot.

Whereas with my second pregnancy, even though I gained even more weight than the first time around, I just felt gorgeous! And you know, I had no problem with my veins in that pregnancy either.

I do believe from my personal experience that giving birth truly is an opportunity for mothers to rejuvenate and absorb more life force with a subsequent reverse of aging. I

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am so grateful for having had the opportunity to discover and experience this. I am also so thankful to have the circle of women friends that I do.

But I have to tell you, this did not happen overnight. We built this community birth by birth, and you can do this in your community as well, one mother-baby at a time.

Remember, you don't have to be a birth expert or health practitioner. It is time now that we become the woman healers that we are, not through study, but by being and doing. By virtue of being a woman, you are a nurturer and a healer. Claim it! Not only for yourself, but also for the community and for humankind!

So whether you are a pregnant woman, a father, a grandmother, sister or friend, I wholeheartedly thank you for taking the time to read this book and to contemplate the message contained herein. I hope that you have also gained much inspiration and reverence for what it takes to consciously care for pregnant women, womb babies and

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new mothers.

Maybe one day you might take a stand for you sister, your niece, your cousin, your friend, your daughter or even your neighbour next door to be consciously nurtured in motherhood!

Remember that what we do for mothers, we do for babies and what we do for babies, we do for humankind at large! The ripple effects of *good will* continually expand, even if we are not conscious of it! So love the mamas and thank them for taking such good care of the future, not just their future and their children's future, but for your own too! Let us now give freely of our *T.E.A. - time, energy and attention* (*Whapio*).

Thank you for deeply considering how you can serve the future of life on planet earth by nurturing community and nourishing new mothers and new families!

Appendix 1

The Joy of Herbal Infusions

Taking the time out to make herbal infusions for yourself during pregnancy, is not only a great way to add to your nutritional stores, but also a wonderful act of self care.

Taking the time to say a little prayer of intention and “infuse” your tea with your dreams for your birth, motherhood or for your unborn child can be powerful energy medicine.

Infusions and teas are also inexpensive, simple and nourishing gifts that grandmothers, aunties, sisters, friends, doulas and midwives can give you as well to show their love and care!

The following herbs are generally considered nutritive rather than medicinal as infusions. For example, 1 cup of nettle tea contains 5mg of calcium, whereas 1 cup of the same herb, brewed as an infusion contains 250mg of

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calcium!

Alfalfa (*Medicago Sativa*) - Alfalfa is considered the “King of Herbs” since the depths of its roots penetrate to a depth of over 40 feet, it contains elements long since lost to garden vegetables because of soil erosion. Specifically, alfalfa is a significant source of protein, vitamins A, C, D, E, B6 and K, bioflavonoids, calcium, iron, magnesium, manganese, phosphorus, trace minerals (boron, chromium, molybdenum, selenium) digestive enzymes, chlorophyll, carotenes and all the essential amino acids. Alfalfa strengthens the body, prevents vitamin and mineral deficiencies and also is preventative for haemorrhage during birth.

Nettle (*Urtica Dioica*) - high in vitamins and trace minerals, tones and energizes, promotes healthy kidney functioning, strengthens the kidneys, reduces varicose veins, prevents haemorrhaging at birth. Nettle can be a regular part of your pregnancy diet as it nourishes the blood and prevents anaemia. Drink up to a quart of the

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infusion daily (1 handful dried nettle in a quart of boiling water, steep covered for 1 hour).

Oatstraw (*Avena Sativa*) - high in phosphorus, potassium, calcium and magnesium, hormonal balancing, maintains bones & teeth, drink to relax the nerves and healthy muscle functioning, to increase your calcium intake, prevent insomnia, cramps and other pregnancy related discomforts. For deep reliable nervous system tonification, use the tincture form up to 1tsp, 1-2x's daily.

Rose Hips (*Rosa Canina*) - high in vitamin C which is essential to the health of both the circulatory and immune systems. Mixes well with other herbs such as peppermint, lemon balm and fennel seeds.

How to Make an Herbal Infusion:

Use one quart canning jar

Distilled or spring water

One ounce of dried leaves (2 handfuls)

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Put leaves in the jar, fill to the top with boiling water, put lid on snug and steep at room temperature for 4 hours. Enjoy reheated or cold as iced tea!

In general, consume two to three cups per day.

Appendix 2

Red Raspberry - The mother of pregnancy herbs, red raspberry leaves are the most widely used pregnancy herb with a proven track record for safety. Red Raspberry Leaves have been used by many generations of Aboriginal North American women to promote a short and easy childbirth. There is even a magazine called the Compleat Mother (yes the spelling is correct!) which dedicates a few pages of each issue to testimonials from its subscribers in praise of Red Raspberry Leaf Tea. The leaves of the Red Raspberry plant contain an alkaloid called *fragrine*, which tones the entire pelvic area including the uterus. The nourishing component of this highly nutritious leaf can also be credited for many of the preventative and health benefits of its regular consumption. Below is a list of the uses for red raspberry leaf from Susun S. Weed's book which I highly recommend, called Wise Women Herbal for the Childbearing Year.

Two other books that she has written are also excellent

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resources for women:

Breast Cancer? Breast Health!

Healing Wise - (1 of my 2 favourite books on herbs!)

Her website is wealth of resources: www.susunweed.com.

√ ***Preventing miscarriage and haemorrhage***

-tones the uterus

-helps prevent miscarriage

-preventative of postpartum haemorrhage due to a relaxed or atonic uterus.

-eases morning sickness and stomach distress

√ ***Reduces pain during labour and after birth***

-via toning the muscles used during labour and delivery

√ ***Providing a safe and timely labour***

-encourages the uterus to let go and function without tension. It does not strengthen contractions; instead it

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coordinates them into a rhythm that may make birth easier and faster.

√ ***Nourishes Breast milk***

-Assisting in production of plentiful breast milk

-The high mineral content of Raspberry leaf assists in milk production (its astringency may counter that for some women).

How to Use Red Raspberry Tea

Since using red raspberry tea tones the uterus by encouraging intramuscular contractions that keep the uterus strong, drinking this tea, is kind of like an effortless workout for the uterus, (at least in terms of it being an involuntary muscle).

It may be a necessary precaution to avoid using it during the first trimester. If you are prone to miscarriage and haven't used it before, due to its stimulating effect on the uterus, some theorize that it could increase the chances of

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miscarriage (use your own best judgment).

However, if you used red raspberry tea in the pre-conception, by virtue of it promoting a healthy, strong and functional uterus, it in fact can prevent miscarriage.

Keep in mind that very safe practices, herbs and supplement products are now often given a disclaimer for use during pregnancy. This is because many companies are afraid of being sued as the scapegoat for a woman's miscarriage.

Use your own logic and intuition to decide which healing therapies are right for you, and avoid overly paranoid practitioners. Choose ones that understand pregnant physiology and who are confident in the safety of their own practices.

Getting Started with Red Raspberry Tea:

3 cups of the tea or the infusion (more potent) daily, starting 1 month (or earlier) preconception.

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If you've never used it before and are not concerned about miscarriage start with:

1 cup a day for week one

2 cups a day for week two

3 cups a day until the last two weeks to a month before your expected due date.

If you are concerned about miscarriage, use the aforementioned schedule, however begin no sooner than the second trimester and start with the tea before moving into infusions.

Two weeks before your estimated due date, drink up to 2 litres of the tea or infusion per day - again, use your own best judgement - how is your body responding to the herb, does it feel like the right nourishment for you?

Appendix 3 Herbal Recipes for Mother's

To make a tea, use 1 tsp. of your dried herb (some health food stores carry it in tea bags) in a cup of boiling water, strain off herb. Add organic cream and raw honey or maple syrup. To make iced tea, make an infusion, refrigerate and sweeten with maple syrup/honey to taste. Optional, add fresh lemon slices.

Red Raspberry CHAI

(adapted from Salt Spring Island Cooking p.271)

walnut size piece of fresh ginger or more to taste

2 cinnamon sticks

2 cups of water

pinch of black pepper

½ tsp. cardamom

¼ tsp. cloves

1 or 2 Tbsp. loose red raspberry leaf

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2 cups certified organic or raw milk

sweeten to taste

Finely grate ginger & crush cinnamon sticks, add to water & bring to a boil, then simmer for 5 min. Add pepper, cardamom, & cloves and bring back to a boil, then turn off heat, add tea, stir & brew for 3 min.

Pour in organic milk & heat, then sweeten.

Easy Nourishing Tea - Whapio Diane Bartlett

www.TheMatrona.com

1/3 alfalfa leaf, 1/3 red raspberry, 1/3 nettle

Combine all herbs and store in a glass jar until you are ready to use them. Steep a handful per quart of boiling water.

Let stand for 4 hours. Strain and mix half-and-half with apple juice (organic if possible).

Appendix 4

Pregnancy Brain - Could it be the First Sign of EFA Deficiency during Childbearing Years?

While this book is not about nutrition in pregnancy, I feel it is very important to emphasize the role of adequate intake of quality saturated and essential fatty acids in the childbearing years, not only to prevent postpartum depression, but also because deficiency can be related to other chronic health problems later in life.

Because of the widespread use of refined, bleached, deodorized and hydrogenated fats in the modern diet, I feel that this topic deserves a special attention. If there is one place to focus our attention in terms of nourishing the pregnant woman and her womb baby it would be to upgrade the quality of the fats in her kitchen.

Replacing refined fats with quality fats such as those found in nature, the ones that we have evolved to have enzyme systems to metabolize and assimilate them, is of utmost

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importance. We must emphasize quality and adequate fats in the diet, given that both mother and baby's brain, nervous systems, myelin sheaths and cell membranes all require good fats as provided by nature to develop *optimally*. We must keep in mind that food is the *matter* by which we build the very cells and tissues of our bodies!

"Pregnancy brain" is a condition whereby expectant mothers experience short term memory loss and forgetfulness that often persists into the postpartum and breastfeeding period. Given widespread fatty acid deficiency in the Standard American Diet (SAD), along with the fact that the brain is built on fat, it is incumbent upon us to consider adequate and optimal fats in the prevention and treatment of "pregnancy brain."

It also stands to reason that pregnancy brain, if left unchecked, may be the first and most benign symptom of a deficiency, which could later prove to have much greater consequence. According to Michael A. Schimdt, PhD (NASA researcher), "To achieve adequate levels for brain development, the baby essentially robs the mother of these

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fatty acids by taking them from the placental blood." If not attended to, EFA status in the mother will continue to decline throughout the breastfeeding period, with repercussions to both her breastfeeding baby and subsequent children.

Essential fatty acid deficiency has been shown to play a key role in many growth and developmental difficulties such as: learning, behavioral, nervous and immune related disorders. Pregnant women who are deficient in essential fats, as well as mothers who have birthed more than one child (without adequate time in between to replenish their EFA status), may be more vulnerable to depression and disease later in life. It seems plausible that the wide spread prevalence of postpartum depression could be due at least in part to EFA deficiency. It is well established that essential fats play a substantial role in the prevention and treatment of depression.

Chronic deficiencies originating during this critical time period may also explain why women tend to experience far

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more depression, fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue, and autoimmune disease than men.

While "pregnancy brain" is also associated with the "amnesia" effects of the hormone oxytocin and other nutritional deficiencies, science has now shown that a pregnant woman's brain actually shrinks in size during pregnancy, and then increases again at six months postpartum. It is likely no coincidence that this occurrence co-relates with the time when many women stop or decrease breastfeeding, thus eliminating or reducing the strain on the mother's EFA stores.

Since we know that 60% of the human brain is composed of fat and that a woman's reserves are most strained during the childbearing years, we have to at least consider essential fats as a significant contributing piece of the "pregnancy brain" puzzle. The cause and occurrence of "pregnancy brain" and the potential consequences of declining EFA status in women of childbearing years is an

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important topic that warrants further investigation.

Due to the fact that it is so common, "pregnancy brain" has been mostly overlooked as a normal part of an otherwise healthy pregnancy. On the other hand, it may point to the likelihood that, modern mothers may need to attend to their fatty acid status through better diet or supplementation.

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Resources

Motherblessings:

I highly recommend these books as a reference for ideas for facilitating Mother Blessings:

Blessingways-A Guide to Mother-Centered Baby Showers

by Shari Maser

Mother Blessings- Honouring Women Becoming Mothers by

Anna Stewart

Mother Rising- the Blessingway Journey into Motherhood

by Yana Cortlund, Barb Lucke, Donna Miller Watelet, and Pam England

Sacred Sex:

I highly recommend these books for exploring sexuality and for deepening into your masculinity or feminity available visit www.deida.info

The Way of the Superior Man by David Deida

The Enlightened Sex Manual by David Deida

Dear Lover by David Deida

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The Emergence of The Sensual Woman by Saida Desilets

www.thedesiletsmethod.com

If you haven't already heard, women are beginning to tell stories of having orgasmic births. There is a documentary called "Orgasmic Birth" on DVD available on this subject visit www.orgasmicbirth.com

Gentle Birth Choices:

If you are curious about the gentle birth and parenting approach, I highly recommend the following books and resources:

www.OnlineChildbirthClasses.org (co-developed by myself and Jennifer Summerfeldt)

Gentle Birth, Gentle Mothering by Sarah Buckley

www.sarahjbuckley.com

Birth and Breastfeeding by Dr. Michel Odent

<http://www.michelodent.com/author.php?id=3>

Gentle Birth Choices, by Barbara Harper

www.waterbirth.org

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Calm Birth- New Method for Conscious Childbirth-by

Robert Newman

www.calmbirth.org

Sacred Birthing by Sunni Karll www.sacredbirthing.com

Hypnobirthing by Marie F. Mongon

www.hypnobirthing.com

Gentle Birth Method by Dr Gowri Motha

www.gentlebirthmethod.com

Homebirth in the Hospital- Integrating Natural Childbirth

with Modern Medicine by Stacey Marie Kerr, MD

www.homebirthinthehospital.com

Lotus Birth:

www.lotusbirth.info

Pregnancy and Birth as a Path of Self Actualization:

Prenatal Yoga and Childbirth by Jeannine Parvati Baker

www.birthkeeper.org

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“Birth as We Know It” (Video) by Elena Tonetti

www.birthintobeing.com

Unassisted Childbirth by Laura Shanley

www.unassistedchildbirth.com

Primal Mothering by Hygeia Halfmoon

<http://www.myspace.com/hygeiahalfmoon>

Calm Birth- New Method for Conscious Childbirth-by

Robert Newman

www.calmbirth.org

Sacred Birthing by Sunni Karl

www.sacredbirthing.com

Gentle Parenting

Beyond Discipline-From Compliance to Community by Alfie

Kohn

Raising Our Children, Raising Ourselves by Naomi Aldort

Hold Onto Your Children by Gordon Neufeld and Gabor

Mate

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Where to Find holistic doulas: Go ahead gather together a circle of women to support you in the postpartum or hire a holistic or Ayur doula
www.sacredwindow.com

www.thematrona.com

Holistic doula Training:

Sherry Rothwell www.DomesticDiva.ca

Whapio Diane Bartlett www.TheMatrona.com

(Ayur-doula Training) www.sacredwindow.com

Essential Wellness Books for the Childbearing Years:

Pregnancy

The Natural Pregnancy and Birth Book by Jill Aviva Romm

The Wise Woman Herbal for the Childbearing Year by
Susun S. Weed

Healing Yourself During Pregnancy by Joy Gardner

Alternative Therapies for Pregnancy and Birth by Pat

Thomas Homeopathy for Pregnancy, Birth and Your Baby's
First Year by Miranda Castro

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Postpartum

Natural Health After Birth by Jill Aviva Romm

Homeopathy for Pregnancy, Birth and Your Baby's First Year by Miranda Castro

Care of the Newborn

The Natural Baby by Janet Balaskas

Homeopathic Medicine for Children and Infants by Dana Ullman, M.P.H.

Homeopathy for Pregnancy, Birth and Your Baby's First Year by Miranda Castro

Children's Health

Smart Medicine for a Healthier Child by Janet Zand, ND., Robert Roundtree, MD., Rachel Walton, MSN, CRNP

Natural Medicine for Children - Drug-Free Health Care for Children from Birth to Age Twelve by Julian Scott, PH.D.

Naturally Healthy Babies and Children by Aviva Jill Romm

Homeopathic Medicine for Children and Infants by Dana Ullman, M.P.H.

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The Homeopathic Treatment of Children Pediatric

Constitutional Types by George Vithoulkas

Cookbooks

Nourishing Traditions by Sally Fallon

Feeding the Whole Family by Cynthia Lair

Get it Ripe by Jae Steele

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www.SherryRothwell.com