

GOLDEN MONTH PLANNING

# Navigating your matrescence



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A workbook designed to support you to consider your Matrescence (the process of becoming a mother).



# Welcome

Becoming a mother is the biggest rite of passage most of us experience. Yet pregnancy can often be consumed with the physical aspects of birth and the practical planning for when your baby arrives.

The intention behind this workbook is to support you to consider the emotional aspects of this transition.

Because you are the only 'newborn essential' that your baby will actually need.

So let's make sure you are feeling as strong, supported and cared for as possible as you enter into this new season of your life.

With love

*Nancy*

"The moment a child is  
born, the mother is also  
born.

She never existed before.

The woman existed, but  
the mother, never.

**A mother is something  
absolutely new."**

-Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh

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# One. Expectations & the reality gap.



Every mother I have met has experienced the gap.

This space between what we thought it would be like and what it is actually like.

Often motherhood is portrayed as something that will **only** be fulfilling and joyful. That mothers have endless reserves, patience and compassion.

That bonding with our baby will happen instantly and powerfully in a strong rush of love. Intuition gets spoken about often, that we will have a 'knowing' about what the right thing to do is. That it will flow 'naturally' to us.





## Two. (Re)connecting to your body

*Traditional healing practices talk about postpartum as a moment of powerful restoration.*

Both Traditional Chinese Medicine and Ayurveda speak about postpartum as a time for deep healing that can go beyond the healing and recovery of birth. An opportunity to have a lasting impact on your physical and emotional health.

*So what might you choose to do for your body? How will you deeply nourish and care for yourself after your birth experience?*

Beautiful fabrics that feel luxurious on your skin? Your favorite foods? Cushions, blankets and all things cozy? Wheat bags for your shoulders after a day (and night) of rocking baby? Massage? Baths? Gentle yoga practices like yoga nidra? The most beautiful oils? Opportunities for rest and relaxation?

Start to collect those things for yourself now. Have them in the house, start testing them out. Discover what makes you feel special and cozy and comfortable. What makes you (and your body) feel really special. .

# What would I like to gift to myself and my body in this time

Food & Drink

Music & Books

Beautiful cosy fabrics, clothes or comforts

Movement, treatments and/or bodywork

Rest

If it feeling hard to gift yourself rest, and nourishment and kindness, what or who might help you to take the permission to treat yourself with compassion and love?



# Three. Gifting yourself time & the opportunity to be a beginner

Carol Dweck wrote a brilliant book called *Mindset*. In it she talks about a 'fixed' mindset and a 'growth' mindset.

A 'fixed' mindset is where we believe that humans are either good or bad at something and each situation is a test where we will judge ourselves to be good or bad.

A 'growth' mindset is where we believe that everyone has a similar(ish) ability and each situation is an opportunity to learn and improve. It's a brilliant book and this is a massive oversimplification.

However, I'm including it here as the growth mindset is a much more fun and enjoyable way to move through life. The fixed mindset leads to comparison, negative self talk and pressure.

# Gifting yourself time & the opportunity to be a beginner

We can sometimes expect that we will have motherhood all figured out straight away, or within the first few days / weeks.

But I am encouraging you to give yourself the grace of a beginner. To accept that you will be learning and growing and making mistakes all the time. To try as much as possible to have a growth mindset with mothering.

So maybe you could think about something that you do beautifully now and remember all the time it took you to arrive at this state of being experienced and doing it with ease and grace. It probably wasn't an overnight experience.



If I allowed myself to be a  
beginner I would...

I could let myself...

# Four.

## Emotional range and language

Sometimes, as humans, we expect that when X happens we will feel Y. Sometimes we do but often we feel very different to how we expected.

This transition will ask a lot of you. There will be times where you aren't getting your needs met. This can often lead to feelings of frustration, anger, and/or overwhelm. These might feel like difficult emotions to hold alongside a newborn.

Talk to the support you will have around you. Have a plan in place for when you are feeling pushed beyond your limits. If you have a partner talk about how they might notice you are struggling, what signs could they look out for and how you might like to be supported if this happens.



# Emotional range and language

Brene Brown talks about the difference between 'in the weeds' and 'blown'.

She uses these terms to talk about stress vs overwhelm and that when you are stressed you need some help but that you are okay and capable of delegating and asking for that help.

Whereas when we are overwhelmed we need the help to come in and manage the situation for us, we shouldn't be delegating tasks, we need to step out for a while. [This video for Brene Brown speaking to Oprah about it is a really good explanation \(the first three minutes are all you need to watch\).](#)

Can you find this language for you and your family?

How will you share the difference between 'I'm finding it hard and could do with some support'

&

'I'm drowning and desperately need to leave, *right now*, collect myself and come back in fifteen minutes?'

# Five. No 'right' way

There exists a world of information out there. In our age of google, reels, YouTube, blogs, influencers and experts, there is a LOT of stuff you can read about parenting.

Everyone will have advice, what worked for them, the system to follow, the things not to do. I love this article by Oliver Burkeman, [The diabolical genius of the baby advice industry](#).

In it he highlights that most people will only actually have direct experience of parenting two, maybe three humans. That this will never make a statistically significant evidence base for their 'strategies'.



# No 'right' way

But most importantly he addresses the issue that was at the heart of my own struggles with Matresence, **this belief that there was a right way to care for my daughter and that right answer existed somewhere but I just couldn't find it.** In a book, or an online course, or some strategy we hadn't tried yet. It was exhausting researching all these different ways to approach parenting, figuring out how to apply them to our life and then feeling crushed when we couldn't do it / made no difference. Or even worse possibly made a difference but one that you could replicate a second or third time.

We are all different. You have your unique lived experiences, your preferences, your culture, your experience of being parented... your partner (if you have one) will bring their experience into the mix. All babies are different, what works for one probably won't work for another.

This phase of life is difficult, we don't have any answers and the stakes are oh so high. Finding peace with things unfolding how they are, accepting that you will have a distressed baby from time to time, even when you've worked through all five of the 's' for soothing and knowing that they will be different to other babies you know.

# No 'right' way

When things aren't going 'right' I want to remember that...



Six.  
People  
choose to  
present things  
differently.  
People forget.  
People lie.



"Oh she's sleeping through the night." I actually found out months later meant, she only wakes up to feed in the night, **multiple times**. WTF. That is not SLEEPING THROUGH THE NIGHT.

We are all trying to muddle our way through this, to make new friends, to cope with the constantly shifting sands of early motherhood. Some people will choose to put a face on it. To focus on the positive bits, to only share snippets (an interpretation) of what it is really like.

\*Also, for those who did this a while ago, it is very, very possible they have forgotten what it was like AND OR had a village around them AND OR didn't have the same work / financial pressures AND OR did not have to do it surrounded by so much noise and information AND OR had a very different medical care AND OR were ten years younger so sleep deprivation felt very, very different to them.

But there are warm, wise, wonderful women out there.

Ones who will make you laugh, feel seen, understand you.

Spend a few minutes thinking about who those people are for you. Who do you trust to sit with you when times are hard? Who makes you feel good about yourself? Seek those humans out and invite them to walk with you on this path.

Also, spend some time thinking about who doesn't make you feel good. Think about how you will let their words wash over you. How you will let anything they say go back into the universe and not stay festering in your mind.

*Please know that all babies are different and if yours is unhappy and your new mum friends' babies are peaceful and content, this is LUCK. There isn't a magic mothering strategy that works, some babies are just calmer.*

# Seven. Focus on you.

The last thing I would like you to consider is that you will need to, on purpose, center your mind to focus on you.

There is a lot of focus on the baby. We hear all the time after difficult births 'at least you have a healthy baby'. It can become very easy to focus all your attention on your baby and forget about yourself, your wellbeing. But we know that when mum is doing well, her baby is doing well too.

You need to be cared for. You need to know how you are feeling, how you are doing and you need to make sure that you (as much as possible) are getting your needs met.



Those early weeks will be hard. This is a time to call in the favors. Call in the support. Invest in yourself and in making life as easy as possible. Most of all, keep checking in with yourself and your mental health. How am I doing today? Am I feeling okay? Can I name the emotion for myself (and know that all are normal and all are welcome)?

"The life of a mother is the life of a child: you are two blossoms on a single branch."

- Karen Maezen Miller

Three questions that can help with this are;

1. What do I need right now?
2. How can I remind myself that I am loved?
3. What went well today?





*Thank you!*

Thank you so much for reading this guide. I would love to hear if it was helpful for you. Please do share any feedback with me.

My work is dedicated to helping mothers feel better about themselves. You'll find a podcast, *The Fourth Trimester*, workshops and coaching over on my website.

*With love*

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