

Joy

"being in the moment"
winter 2007



the e-zine of Joyous Birth, the Australian homebirth network

www.joyousbirth.info



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Dear friends,

Welcome to the first ever edition of JOY, the e-zine of Joyous Birth, the Australian homebirth network. We will be a seasonal treat for you, with articles and interviews, art work, birth announcements and more. In fact, whatever you want from a magazine that saves trees and has no advertising! I look forward to hearing more from readers so please write in and offer opinions and stories.

I was "being in the moment" with my daughter, breastfeeding her to sleep, when it occurred to me that it was a great theme for our first edition. Not only do we deal with birth and how that is a series of amazing moments but we also support families in parenting gently and children are experts at being in the moment. We also work online and that makes every click a potential new moment, whether clicking on birth photographs that make you gasp, reading the pages of a blog, or contributing to the great conversations on the forums at Joyous Birth.

Each birth is a series of amazing moments where the preparation we've done and the model of care we've chosen impacts each moment, imprints it with meaning and moves us to the next one. Women forced to make decisions and converse during labour are not able to live each moment of birth in the most nurturing and fulfilling way possible. We know that birth works best when women work best, which is with intact self esteem, lots of knowledge of all kinds, and loving support from those surrounding us. It doesn't seem a lot to ask, does it? In a beautiful birth where a woman is in charge and supported well, each moment can become an amazing treasure trove of memories to be pulled out and lovingly shared in the years to come. In a birthrape, each moment comes back over and over ad infinitum as the woman relives her trauma on a loop and each moment of pain is imprinted on her over and over. No birth should be like this.

Healing our lives and healing our birth trauma, or supporting those of us who have experienced it when we haven't, is another series of beautiful moments. Women offering care and genuine support to one another, to challenge our deeply held beliefs, to find new ways of being, and to move through our lives able to embrace each challenge are some of the most beautiful moments I've been privileged to witness. Joyous Birth has grown in it's few years from a small local group to a national group with ties in every city and state, friendships have blossomed and lives have been changed as women found courage they'd forgotten they had to change their lives for the better. What a ripple effect we are having in our families, communities and through the generations too as we make more nurturing choices in birth and parenting than did some of our families.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts on JOY, reading some letters and feedback, joining in some discussion on the brilliant forums on thought provoking issues!

Live JOY, breathe JOY, JOY for all!

Janet Fraser

National Convenor, Joyous Birth,
Australian homebirth network.

Winter 2007.

Being in the moment...

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Being in the moment

Being in the moment...

Carly Brooks

I knew there was something magical about the cool dark night ahead of me.

I couldn't remember the last time I had seen such a beautiful stormy sky and a magnificent light show to accompany it.

Almost like it was a power source for the energy I would require a little later on.

I could feel the power and spirit emerging from within me as we worked together through our journey and beyond to our babe's earth side destination.

My beautiful babe was finally coming to greet this wonderful world!

Another soul to cherish, nurture and love.

As my body worked hard to prepare for the birth, the contractions intensified.

I steadied myself on the sink, loudly singing my birthing song to the moon above and my babe below, staring deep into the drain envisioning a beautiful flower blooming in the sunlight bigger and wider with each contraction.

I was in another world completely focussed on my body's birthing rhythm, right there in the moment...

Lisa Barrett

The phone rings. It's early hours. It's birth. My heart races and I move quickly to go. As I'm on my way there is another phone call, partner on the phone saying hurry up we want you here. I reassure them all is well and they should make a comfortable area. They don't need me. They are doing it well.

When I arrive I step quietly through the door carrying a bag. The birth vibe is everywhere, the lights are dim and I talk quietly.

On all fours is a great strong birthing woman. I'm coloured by her aura. She says, "I'm glad your here. I'm pushing and I'm scared of this bit." I say "You've done it, this is the easy part, just concentrate on your baby". She gives a push and we see something. Her energy lifts me up and her courage has returned.

We watch and wait. Each burst brings her closer to meeting her baby. Her partner whispers soft words of encouragement and her birth helpers sit around taking in the moment. A bottom has appeared and then a foot. As the baby slowly descends with each limb becoming visible I feel honoured to be at the birth. To witness such power and love. There is a video running in the background, the birth being filmed by a friend I hardly notice. The baby is born and I move her gently through legs to her parents. The birth mother unwraps the cord from around the baby's neck and the baby girl gives a small cry. They are ecstatic and relieved, crying and laughing. I am crying too, tears of pure joy.

This isn't my birth story; no birth I attend is my story. It's the story of strength, belief and birth that belongs to each and every woman.

For a midwife to really be in the moment is just to be there. To see the incredible nature of women and the glorious story of birth.

Zoe

I am feeling my uterus working and my cervix opening. There is nothing else on this earth but me and my body working to birth my baby. There is no pain. Then the sound of my 2 year old son coughing shocks me back into the world. I feel pain. I ask my husband if he can take our son out of the room, because I can't handle any distractions.

As soon as they are gone, I go back into myself. There is nothing else.

I feel my baby moving down and know she will be here soon. I feel no pain, and this moment is all there is. Time has no meaning. She is crowning and I reach down to feel her hair. Then she is here. She is here and I see her and feel her and smell her. My baby is here and all life is held in this moment.

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Reflections on Mother Love

Natalie

Today, you took me back to a place that I have been before, a place that so many women can relate to.

I'm sorry that you've been so distressed by her cries, but I am assured by the knowledge that this is only one chapter of your journey together. I understand, and would never question the devotion you have for your daughter. I know that even in your deepest, darkest hours, you will still look past the anger, sadness and exhaustion that you feel and into the precious eyes of your newborn, where thankfully the unconditional love takes over. Where the "mum" in you just holds the space.

That space doesn't have to be serene, or without frustrations, just a space where a mother and child comfort each other with honesty, love and trust. At that moment in time, you just have to exist, and that is enough acceptance for your little one to openly express herself, in her chosen safe environment.

Can you imagine if your baby's experience was different and her cries were not heard? What if her tears fell, but from another room in the house... far away from the loving arms of her mother!

Just imagine if your experience was different and you did not listen or comfort her, night after night, after night. You would never have survived those emotions, believed that you could cope, worked through the struggle, gained confidence in yourself.

Just imagine if you had no story to tell, your page would be blank. Who would you connect with? Who would connect with you?

If you had not shared these feelings with me, I would not have been as touched as I am at this moment! I would not have reflected on my self as a mother or been swept up on your journey of melancholy, guilt and reservation. And I would not have had the opportunity to console you with the truth.

Listen to my words earth woman! What a privilege it is to be a mother, wife, partner, lover, creator, friend and healer! Yes, all these roles come with a huge responsibility... one that I have no doubt you are fulfilling.

Stay strong and embrace the challenge, surrender to the mystical illusion and meet the wonders of reality head on. Your new skills will enhance the rest of your life and in return that of your daughter and subsequent children.

You can rest peacefully knowing that you are the perfect mother for your child and that she is the divine child for you.

You are a unique person and I admire your weaknesses and strengths. I am so grateful to know you!

Yours in motherhood
Natalie x

Being in the moment

Being in the moment and pain during labour

Fawn

I would like to point out that although I talk about pain a lot during my labour, that it was not that painful at all and is more a reflection of how I was feeling at the time. I believe my reaction to the pain was more about not being sure I could handle it if it got more intense. What is wonderful about labour is that the pain shifts position so it is manageable. The pain taught me about my own strength and trust in my body. As women we are often told we cannot endure pain, but we can. What was particularly noticeable to me, upon reflection, is that whilst I was scared and doubting myself, the pain was far more prevalent, than when I just went with the moment. Women are made to give birth. The last moments when Maia was born were the easiest and virtually pain free and most of labour was like strong period pain. I'd been having period pain for 15 years to prepare me for this birth. So the pain was actually very familiar.

Extract from Maia's Birth Story.

I moved into the bathroom now and tried out the toilet position. At this point things really intensified. At first the toilet seemed like a good position but then it was the worst position. Pretty soon I realised that any position was not a good position. I had no lights on in the bathroom except for a little night light that I used for night trips to the toilet. Adam told me he was getting the birth pool ready, and I thought I would just stay in the bathroom until it was ready. I told him there was a funny smell in the bathroom and that I thought Ernest our cat had urinated in there. I got him to smell out the bathroom and Adam said he thought the smell was from when he washed out the bowl I vomited in. So after he left I washed out the laundry trough, which is located in our bathroom, in an attempt to get rid of the smell. I did

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Being in the moment and pain during labour (continued)
not feel like seeing or talking to anyone at this point. Up until this point I had been busy planning on going to the hospital in my head. I was thinking about how I would convince Kusum that I needed to go and was imagining hopping in the car and thinking it would be difficult to do. I was thinking about that epidural a lot! The pain started to shift to my back and I started making small groaning noises. As the pain shifted I stopped thinking about the hospital as there was just no way I was going to be able to move to get there and I soon forgot about it. I sat on the toilet again wondering if the baby would fall in the bowl. I then felt some wetness between my legs and I put the light on. There looked like some blood and gel-like stuff and when Adam came in to tell me the pool was ready, I told him to get Kusum. She had a look at the rag with the blood and things on it and she said I've had a show.

I came out and got into the birth pool which was just wonderful. Adam had lit some of the candles from my blessingway and the place was quiet and dark. Adam asked me if I wanted Kusum to stay and I said yes. Kusum said she would stay until I was in the pool and then she would go and come back later. I remember thinking I didn't want her to go. Contractions really intensified in the water but I was able to manage them really well. The weightlessness was amazingly helpful. As soon as I got my first contraction in the water I groaned very loudly. Pain was starting to shift position again and it was even easing. I felt a bulging in my lower back and wondered if it was the baby's head. The second midwife, Tiffany, arrived and it was about 11:45pm. My baby would be born in an hour! Tiffany told me later the Kusum said I was having premature urges to push, but when Tiffany heard me groaning she thought to herself, no they're real!

Maia was born one hour later, into water on 18 March 2007.

The Beginnings of a Doula Journey

Carly Brooks

I have always had an affinity with pregnancy, birth, babies and all that's in between. I felt drawn to this special time in one's life.

Now as a mother of two I feel even more compelled and passionate towards birthing women. Despite my own births being very traumatic and heartbreaking, there has been no reason to be dissuaded. I feel I have a voice, a side that's raw and feels the need to share with other women the intensity of birth, both the good and the bad.

I'm not one to preach but my stories, feelings and experiences are an important part of me. They will effect the way I support birthing women as a future Doula.

To cut a long story short I began my career in Aged Care. It was here that I learnt respect, the importance of dignity, communication, advocacy and how to look for alternatives. From there I entered General Nursing, which I found I had no attachment or passion for, but followed through because I just don't quit.

Throughout my studies I remember much of it being very negative and focussed on 'fixing' rather than healing. There was only a small portion dedicated to holistic care. This disappointed and discouraged me even further from Nursing. We are taught to be holistic in our care, yet it's so far from this reality.

There was something deep down that I knew wasn't right. There was so much focus on 'fixing' and 'intervening' and 'hurrying up'. I felt there was always other alternatives, but I wasn't a Doctor, I couldn't possibly know anything, right?

Finally I got a position in a Maternity ward, which I was very excited about because I thought I would see first hand the beauty of birth. It was a dream come true...

On one hand I got to support beautiful birthing goddesses, listen to them, massage them, shower them and most importantly just 'be with woman' but for me on the other hand I watched in horror at the medicalisation of something so normal. It was totally unnecessary and sad. I cringe at the thought of all the interventions, medications and time limits. Women are put under a microscope, told they are taking too long and discouraged in one of the most important times in their lives.

How does scrutinising a woman's ability to birth and interfering in her sacred space thus disrupting the birthing process help? How is this holistic care?

It is really beginning to sink in.

My experiences and knowledge have grown. I am discouraged with the 'care' (and I use the term loosely), lack of evidence-based intervention and the portrayal of birth in today's society.

After a very traumatic second birth I was even more determined to step up and change, even if it is a small minority. I'm doing something rather than accepting it as normal.

Women can learn from my mistakes. So here I am doing something.

On the path to being a doula, supporting women through their journey to motherhood and sharing in the joy that is birth.

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I am Mother

Because I am a mother
I rejoice in watching my belly grow,
the memory of those first movements felt will forever be
The internal growth started before I could tell
I soon forget the aches of pregnancy,
the sleepless nights and the pain of labour

I always smile at the anticipation of impending birth,
preparation of life to welcome you.
The joy of that day finally approaching
holding you in our arms for the first time.
Feeling on top of the world
surrounded by those love hormones
feeling a sense of accomplishment

I remember your sweet smell
the nights we shared in our quiet house
snuggled on the couch feeding into the wee hours of the morning.
All of those firsts that make you a special little person.

Because I am mother I know those cries
and what they mean.

I know when you need me

I love that you trust me to come to your aide
you trust that I will always be there

I love that you learn from me and benefit from me being there
and that I wake up with you smiling in my face like today will be the best day ever.

Teaching you new things and watching you grow
the feeling that there is no place better than to be right there with you

Because I am mother I know the pain of having to say no
The heartache of what could have been
and of the scars left behind
The joy of healing within
accepting the journey we are on together

Because I am mother I know that you will always be my little men
that one day I wont be the centre of your world
In the moment I enjoy our days
knowing that as I blink my eyes
You will both be grown.

Laura Baker 2007

"Uncommon Wisdom"

on Enough Rope with Andrew Denton

Denton interviews Dr Jane Goodall, Chimpanzee researcher and conservationist.

<http://www.abc.net.au/tv/enoughrope/transcripts/s1954354.htm>

Andrew Denton: Did you ever achieve that state that monks sometimes and lamas and imams sometimes do, of losing a sense of self?

Jane Goodall: Absolutely, and that's for me the value of being alone. Because if you're with another human being, doesn't matter who that person is. It can be somebody you really love, but as long as there's somebody with you, you're a human being in the middle of the wilderness. But if you're by yourself, it's very easy to forget you and just be in this and it's very hard to describe. But you know, just on occasions, I truly think I felt something of what the mystics have described, of just feeling what was around me in a in a different kind of way, of seeing half hidden truths and then you come back and you can't really remember.

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Being in the moment

Being in the moment...

Yolande

It's a hospital Birthing Suite. After handover we divi up the patients. I'm in charge. I take the primip at 3 cm irregular contractions in room 2 plus the antenate waiting for a spec for ? APH. There are 7 rooms in our Birthing Suite and they are occupied and there are 2 other midwives and a student to provide the care and to oversee.

I walk into the room and meet the woman and her partner for the first time. They stare at me, they try to take my measure, they acknowledge my arrival and then go back to labour land. I am introduced by the previous shift's midwife, I meet the mother and the sister also, the previous midwife leaves (I feel like an intruder).

The woman is working hard, frightened, fighting the pain. I have to connect with her or all is lost: she will ask for pain relief. I approach her sitting on the bed. Ask her if she would like to change positions? Does she think some other possie would be more comfortable? She looks at me and says she would love to move but can't think what to do. I suggest we just try different places "How about we start with the bath? I'll run it now." I carry out a Temp BP P and FHR before we move. Everything is fine and she is managing to breathe a little deeper and is not appearing so tense.

I settle her partner and her in the bath and encourage him to talk to her, tell her what she means to him, touch her, let her know you are there for her (I run through light touch, firm touch with a bit of a demo ... he sees his partner relax and can see the help he can give). I have to leave for a while (I have to see to the other woman and check what else is happening: 3 others in early labour and the inductions have turned up.) When I return to the woman, her contractions have increased in strength. She has found her rhythm reclining in the arm of her partner, snoozing between surges. I listen to the FHR and BP (it's fine) and top up their water ... I leave. Outside the bathroom the mother and sister sit waiting, tension showing on their faces. I speak to them about how beautifully their daughter/sister is labouring, how she is coping well, how her partner is really making a huge difference. I sit outside the bathroom and fill out my paperwork trying to be unobtrusive. A doctor comes and knocks at her door, I excuse myself to answer the questions, they are not about this woman. While I have excused myself, I do another check on the other midwives, discuss their issues and help them come to decisions about the care of the woman they are caring for. I get asked by the Dr how the **** in Room 2 is going: does she need an epidural yet? "No, she is coping really well" I reply. Her birth plan declines an epidural and pethidine. She is in the bath with her partner." She looks confident and says, "Well, everything is under control then."

I re-enter the room. I am immediately accosted by the mother, "She's starting to yell a little bit." I speak softly to her, letting her know it's fine and actually a great way for her to relieve some of her tension, fear or apprehension. I sneak into the bathroom. She is standing, her partner is helping her rock while providing pressure with his body, she is lolling her head back on his shoulder, he is supporting her, loving her and assisting her to connect with her primal woman. They don't notice me. I sit on the toilet and wait, listen and observe them. I am lost as they are in the power and love of labour.

Part 2

She is hit by an increase in the surges. She looks around, brought out of labour land by her fear, the pain is reaching her now. We heat up the water and she sits on the toilet for a while. I squat on the floor feeling her tummy, listen to baby again, talk her through some deep in breath and slow out breath focusing on opening her pelvic floor and vagina. Her mother comes into the bathroom to hold her daughter. They have a cry as well, the mother holds her as you hold a small child, she snuggles into her mother's breasts and her mother speaks of how much she loves her, how fantastic she is. They call the bump by name and both rub and caress her tummy lovingly. The bath is ready again. She moves slowly between contractions, her waters break as she steps into the bath, she is a little freaked out by it, but the warmth of the water brings her much relief, she is again snoozing, this time in her mother's arms while she floats in a modified all fours, draped with hot towels provided by her sister and I, while she sips water and nibbles on a sandwich Her partner has a reprieve and catches a well earned coffee and collects himself for what is to come. Her birth song is hypnotic and is starting to become low and guttural. She is more restless. The noises from a neighboring birthing suite invade her room, she look up and says "Oh no, I'm scared" I move into her view with my touch, I tell her she is doing great, coping well, going to meet her baby soon.

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Her mother begins to talk her through the surges, by prompting her breath, she is staring at her mother with glassy eyes clutching her tightly, the sister and I chime in. The room is dark, none of us can make actual eye contact, she says OUT OUT OUT and begins to stand, she steps out of the bath and falls to her knees hugging on to her sister, her partner comes back into the bathroom he's been asleep and is a little disorientated but soon slots back into the woman's rhythms. She is finding it really hard, her birth song is loud and a little distressing to the support people, I reassure them it's normal and means she is getting close.

She stands again and says WALK BED ... we walk to the bed (which is an exercise mat on the floor with a bean bag) she lies down and is covered by a blanket which she throws off instantly and is short with her support people, they apologise and carry on with the business of supporting their beautiful birthing goddess. Partner is lightly stroking her hair and applying the ice-cold washers, mum and sister sit away with me across the room. I listen to the FHR and do BP again, I work up the courage to offer her the routine vaginal exam which she declines and I document the same happily, I know she is progressing well with her fantastic support team.

Another knock at the door, "What's the VE the doctor asks?". I say, "Mother declines anymore VEs." as I meet her at the door. She doesn't look happy, and I use my exit again to check what else is happening, help the Dr do a spec and HVS on the other woman with the antepartum haemorrhage, admit her and give handover to the next shift. I am called back into the room by the mother as she has heard her daughter pushing, I go back with the mother and sit next to the woman, she has woken up a little, having more break between her contractions and is experiencing a pushing sensation at the height of her surges. There is a tangible buzz from all of us, the excitement is building, with each surge.

I begin to get anxious my shift finishes soon, and I don't want to rush her, I make a conscious effort to shut up. Her mother and partner are offering her all the support she needs, she is coping well, breathing deeply and remaining open, we are all encourage by the copious amounts of show. She wants to move again, NO not the bath, NO not standing I don't know Fuck Fuck Fuck! She says and then immediately apologises. She settles on kneeling supported by her partner in a chair and we see the results of her powerful body as her labia part and a small tease of head is visible, only a few more pushes and the baby's head is born, she reaches down and touches her baby's head. Her mother looks to me, as if seeking

approval to touch, I say ask her not me and her daughter reaches out for her mother's hand and places it on the baby's head. Her mother catches the rest of the baby and hands it to her daughter as she turns around from her partner's lap to receive her baby, placing it to her naked breast.

The new midwife knocks at the door, as the placenta is birthed. She enters the room and is introduced to the new family. They stare at her, they take her measure then quickly return to the bliss of what has just happened. I fill out the paper work, while the other midwife does a BP T P and checks the mother's fundus, I call by to say goodbye her baby still stuck to her body with birth, warm and snuggled up boobing away. I drive home high and in love with my life, home to kiss my own children and snuggle up next to them in bed.

Feminist Reader

Extract from

Birth Choices: Are Women Being Informed?

By Fawn

Women's bodies have been used against them in the sense that their ability to be pregnant and give birth leaves them physically disabled in comparison to men. What is also striking about this ideology is the concern for the phantom foetus and potential mother being exposed to chemicals, yet when it comes to the actual pregnancy and birth in the labour ward, all manner of drugs and interventions are used and encouraged without the batting of an eyelid. Consider this example; According to my general practitioner, there is a 1-2% chance of foetal miscarriage as a result of undergoing amniocentesis testing (Caines 2006: 3). There is less than 1% chance of uterine rupture occurring in a woman who has a vaginal birth after caesarean (Caines 2006: 3). The 1% risk of miscarriage is overlooked for the testing yet it is considered highly undesirable for a woman to undergo a vaginal birth after caesarean. The recommendation for women who have had previous caesareans is to have another caesarean in subsequent pregnancies. The risk of foetal death during and after a caesarean section is 1.77% (Hawkes 2006). We live in a culture that presupposes modern medicine can promise the birth of flawless babies, and pregnant women and physicians seek to reduce risks. Mothers seek to reduce anxieties and fears that have been heightened by the increased number of tests for abnormalities and physicians seek to allay those fears and protect themselves against malpractice suits by encouraging women to take diagnostic tests (Diamond 1994: 98). If women are incapable of caring for themselves as well as men are, if their bodies are incapable of protecting them from the dangers of chemicals as well as

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men's do, then how can we expect women to birth their own babies? Diamond (1994: 99) discusses how the biomedical environment has created what sociologist Barbara Katz Rothman termed the "tentative pregnancy". Women do not allow themselves to experience pregnancy signs, disallowing identification with their changing bodies until a medical expert has assured them that their fetuses are "normal". The scientific underpinnings for these ideas were produced in the nineteenth century by white, university educated, upper-class men who made up the bulk of the new professions of obstetrics, gynaecology, biology, psychology, sociology, and anthropology (Hubbard 1990: 27). The reality is that these professionals realised that they might lose their prestige and superiority if their mothers, sisters, and wives gained access to their professions also. Unfortunately, the sociology of the laboratory is structured by class, sex, and race just like the rest of society (Hubbard 1990: 31).

Diamond (1994: 99) states that shifting standards of good medical practice, rather than state or federal guidelines, have been the main force in the routinisation of prenatal quality control mechanisms. Feminists in the West generally have tended to define new stages of reproductive technologies as another phase in the male supremacist war against women's reproductive powers (Diamond 1994: 101). Further, Diamond (1994: 102) asserts that activists have questioned the invasiveness of in-vitro fertilisation as well as scientists testing techniques, simply because they can. Whilst it appears that prevention is better than cure, one needs to ask whether intervention for the sake of prevention is better than cure. Diamond (1994: 108) finds that science has a short term focus on the product, the baby, and takes virtually no account of long term consequences of actions that ensure the perfection of the product. Diamond then asserts that eliminating genes that are considered problematic in today's society may actually have detrimental effects to the human gene pool in later generations. She gives an example of efforts to perfect seeds that generate food which has significantly reduced the diversity that sustains agricultural abundance, making crops susceptible to diseases that are completely unprecedented (Diamond 1994: 108). Perhaps scientists and doctors ought to take this as a warning, as although they would claim to be assisting women in having healthy children, they may be acting detrimentally to human genetics.

Whilst my decision not to have amniocentesis testing is purely because I want to trust in my own body, I am still scared that I will have a deformed child and most certainly do not wish to have one. However most women in my situation probably would have the test, as I have watched my mother bring up an intellectually disabled child who passed away at the age of 14. My mother told me that this was the only pregnancy in which she had an ultrasound, and the only child with major problems. Whilst my brother was not born brain damaged, he was born with other health problems and there were a cumulative amount of problems that occurred throughout his life.

"The 'control of nature' is a phrase conceived in arrogance, born of the Neanderthal age of biology and philosophy" (Carson 1965: 128). Women are led to believe that they have the option to choose the type of birth they have. Just as they are led to believe that they are of equal status in society, with equal pay, equal rights, and are completely liberated members of society. Images of beauty have been used against women as they struggle to be recognised and rewarded for their talents and hard work (Wolf 1991:12). The medicalisation of birth is used against women to ensure that the one phenomenon that women do have power and control over is taken away. Pregnancy and birth are achievements that women should be proud of. That the true status of pregnancy and birth is taken away from women is criminal. That there are women who birth at home safely, without the need for medical intervention, is proof that women and their bodies are capable. The dangers and side effects of a hospital birth have been outlined briefly in this essay, and this suggests that just as women have been tricked into believing in their subordinate position in society so too are they tricked into allowing a medical professional to take over their 'incompetent bodies'. Very few women would put their babies at risk, and all women, regardless of their so-called 'risk category' should be informed of all the options available as well as all the consequences. So-called risks, like a breech birth or twins, are deemed risks because doctors aren't trained, are afraid of being sued, and want control over the labour and birth. Interventions should be for actual emergencies only. Interventions are dangerous and should be treated as such, unfortunately we live in a society that deems the woman's own ability to birth well questionable and dangerous. The losers here are the women themselves, as they alone pay the price.

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"being in the moment"
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Homoeopathy is a holistic system of natural medicine based on the law of similars. In Latin this is stated as 'similia, similibus, curentur' or 'let like be cured by like', it means that the symptoms that a substance can cause it can also cure when given in sufficiently small amounts. Thousands of substances have now been prepared for use as homoeopathic medicines. Homoeopathy has been well tried and tested after being founded over 200 years ago by German doctor Samuel Hahnemann.

Hahnemann became very disheartened and disillusioned by the conventional medical practices of his day, a time when blood letting and purging were common treatments with often deadly consequences. Hahnemann was not one to follow blindly in the path of his professors and colleagues and he openly criticised these practices and eventually quit medicine altogether. Being proficient in many languages he began translating medical texts and to cut a long story short, through reading these texts his curiosity was piqued as to why some treatments such as quinine for malaria were successful. He began testing substances on himself and realised that the symptoms these substances could treat they could also produce in a healthy person. Armed with a system of medicine that he could trust to do no harm and to heal quickly and effectively, Hahnemann resumed practice, his hypothesis was proven over and over and Homoeopathic medicine began.

While we no longer have some of the harmful treatments of the past like blood letting, we do have the often indiscriminant use of antibiotics and all manner of conventional drugs that suppress illness and can lead to chronic health problems in the long term. Many people are looking for safe alternatives that are also highly effective without side effects, especially during pregnancy when conventional medication can adversely affect the growing baby and even some natural alternatives like herbs are contra-indicated. It's here that homoeopathy really steps into its own, safe to use during pregnancy and birth and to alleviate health problems in babies.

Homoeopathy is safe and effective as remedies work on the energetic or etheric level of the body. Most of the thousands of remedies available are made from natural plant, animal or mineral substances. These materials are diluted (potentised) to such an extent that only the energetic signature or essence of the original material remains. Interestingly the more a substance is diluted the higher the potency of the remedy. Conventional scientific thought and orthodox medicine has often dismissed homoeopathy, claiming that there is nothing in the remedies and sighting a placebo effect. We know that homoeopathy works brilliantly on animals and babies and it isn't always the first remedy chosen that heals, so this rules out merely a placebo. It's likely the answer to the way remedies act upon the energy body is to be found in the world of quantum physics. Physicist William Tiller says 'In my modeling, homeopathic remedies work on the etheric level of substance. Since this method of treatment is already in use and easy to practice, I expect it to flourish in the near future while allopathic [standard] medicine declines.'

The homoeopath believes that the body is always striving to keep itself in a perfect state of health. The governing force of the body is called the 'vital force', just as its called prana in ayurveda or qi in Chinese medicine. When the vital force is disrupted then the rest of the body and mind cannot function harmoniously. The vital force can be disturbed from genetic inheritance or from environmental factors from the time of conception. Homeopathic remedies act on this vital force and remove whatever is stopping the body from healing itself. They work with nature rather than against it and allow the body to work through illness quickly while expressing it and ridding the body of the disturbance rather than suppressing it, as is usually the case with conventional (antipathic) medicine.

It's great to have a homoeopath who gets to know you – as a whole! Homoeopathy takes into account the physical, emotional and spiritual planes, it does not break the body down into parts but understands the seamless interplay and complex entanglement of all these spheres. Homoeopathic treatment essentially involves the practitioner (or yourself) selecting the remedy that best matches the totality of your symptoms. For chronic illness and more severe ailments it's always best to see a classical homoeopath as they have extensive knowledge and experience in the action of remedies, which remedies antidote each other, remedies that complement each other and they can monitor the way you react to remedies. But for minor ailments and first aid



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situations a homeopathic kit and a good home prescriber can see you finding the right remedy and having great success treating yourself and your loved ones.

While pregnancy is all part of our wellness cycle, there are often some discomforts that women experience while growing their babes. Morning sickness, heartburn, constipation and insomnia are some of the more commonly occurring ones as I'm sure many of us can attest to! These can all be treated safely with homeopathy. Birth is obviously best when left well alone and remedies are definitely not routinely needed, however there may be circumstances where homeopathy can easily treat a problem that is causing distress. I heard a story recently where a birthing woman was having a lot of trouble breathing, the homebirth midwife used her home prescriber and gave the woman the right remedy which alleviated the problem for her straight away. Its times like these that having a kit on hand can come in very handy. Homeopathy is helpful in the post-natal period for any bruising and to treat other problems like mastitis if they arise, along with any emotional imbalances.

As a family we've found our homeopathy kit invaluable. It's been used to treat all manner of everyday ailments and injuries from cuts and bruises to burns, tummy upsets, fevers, bee stings and nose bleeds. It's worked quickly and effectively every time. As they say - homeopathy isn't something you believe in, it's something you experience.

If you're interested in finding out more about this essentially simple yet empirically proven system of medicine, Amy Lanskey's book 'Impossible Cure: the promise of homeopathy' is an interesting read. If you're looking for a good home prescriber I'd recommend 'Homeopathic Medicine at Home' by Panos and Heimlich. Birth kits can be purchased with prescribing booklets and many homeopaths lend out birth kits to their clients. Finally, in the words of Hahnemann 'Aude Sapere' Dare to Know!

My Yoni Monologues

Kiri Koubaroulis.

Part I

They talked so badly about me. Their gossip was killing me. Why was I dirty? Why was I taboo? Why was I so shameful to them? Un-touchable? Un-civilised? Un-feminine? Me! The very essence of – the definition of - womyn!

I tried to explain to my womyn how it really was. I tried to convince her of the truth and the conspiracy against my kind. I needed to protect myself. She struggled with it all. Slowly, she grew to love me deeply, and partook in all my pleasures. She even championed for me. But, in her core she did, unconsciously, believe their talk.

Part II

They rendered me useless. I longed to be a part of my birthing heritage and to squeeze this girl child we had grown and caressed for so many moons into the world just as our ancestors had done before us. We wanted it for her just as much as for ourselves. Ironically though, it was this heritage that degraded and abused us over and over. First, with slurs and threats and scary stories. Then, with shiny implements, fancy machines and thin, bony stick hands masked in latex. And finally when they strapped my womyn to the slab and stuck her with The Knife. My blood flowed freely from that cut. My most sacred and life-giving blood. Sponged and wiped away with surgical gauze. Sucked out of me by plastic tubes. In its place they left a torrid stench. It was the stench of sterility. It stayed with me for many moons. I longed for my sweet, rich, rusty perfume and wondered if it would ever return. Today, it is what I love most about myself and I thank The Divine for the perfect creation that I am.

Part III

My Womyn and I, we survived that birthrape. All the while we were awake, aware, conscious, alive. We felt every violation. Every single one. In every cell of our body. What wounded us deepest, was the betrayal. The betrayal by a world pervaded and perverted by The Male. The betrayal by generations of our wimmin folk perpetuating the misogyny. The betrayal of a system meant to offer sanctuary and aid in times of need but which instead handed over a baby and PTSD "to go". We have re-claimed our power now and re-defined our womynhood. We are forever changed. We have a message for all of you:

The violence against us STOPS HERE.

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Recipes

Cheesy Broccoli and Roasted Garlic Soup.

Winter time is perfect for warm healthy soups. I can never stand a watery soup myself, so here is a cheesy soup that will disappear before your very eyes if you aren't careful.

Ingredients:

2 - 3 heads of broccoli, cauliflower or broccolini (or a combination of all three)
2 brown onions
1 whole bulb of garlic
250g cream cheese
olive oil

What to do:

Drizzle an unpeeled bulb of garlic with olive oil and roast til it's brown and it smells amazing (you'll know when it's ready - trust me). Place a large pot of water or stock (chicken or vegetable) on the stove or in your slow cooker. Add broccolini and sliced onions. Gently boil for 20mins - half an hour, or until cooked. Peel the garlic, as much or as little as you like (any you don't use can be used in another yummy dinner) and add it to the pot. Remove from heat. Blend the soup with a stick blender or food processor (you can also mash it but you'll probably need to remove the stalks). Return to a low heat and add the cream cheese. You can add as much or as little as you like. When it has melted through serve with warm crusty bread.

Extra for experts: I sometimes mix some leftover roasted garlic in butter and make a quick garlic and fresh herb bread in the oven.

This soup is so yummy words can't describe it. I figure you need to enjoy something when the weather is cold, it might as well be food!

Super Bliss Balls (great for on the go)

Ingredients

1 cup raw mixed nuts (soaked in water for an hour or so, or overnight whatever time you have)
8 fresh medjool dates (you have to pit them yourself)
1/4 cup goji berries (soaked for 15 minutes and drained)
1.5 Tbsp raw cacao powder (cacao is unroasted chocolate/cocoa)
1 tsp raw carob powder
1 tsp Maca powder (maca is an amazing root vegetable from Peru that balances the hormones and helps the body to recover from stress)
1 tsp bee pollen (leave out if allergic)
1 Tbsp Agave nectar (agave is from cactus and is really rich in useable minerals - you can use raw honey if you want - mm enzyme rich!)
1 tsp hemp seed meal (optional - I like it and No it doesn't contain the chemical that makes you high or addicted)
1 Tbs cacao butter (melt by the bain marie method - ie: in a mug floating in a bowl of boiling/hot water)
1 tsp coconut oil (melt with the cacao butter)
a tonne of love

Michelle's Method:

Drain the nuts and chop in your food processor/blender until roughly coarse but small - set aside.

Throw the rest of the ingredients in the blender/food processor and blend together to form a smooth paste.

Mix the chopped nuts and chocolatey paste together in a big mixing bowl until all the nuts have been coated well - when this is done it's now time to get your hands dirty! roll bits of the mixture into little bite size balls and roll in dessicated coconut if desired. Try not to scoff the lot before you put them in the fridge to set.

These can be made without the nuts if you have nut issues, or alternatively just macadamias are nice as well.

There you go, now you know my secret. Enjoy!

These would be really nice to have with The Herbwyfe's own special tea/infusion recommendation;

Infusion of Sunshine (St John's Wort, Oatstraw, lemon balm -1 part SJW, 1 part O, 2 parts LB) - great for lifting the spirits, particularly during the winter months.

or if you want to build on the lovejuice promoting properties of the blissballs have some Twinsoul tea (rooibos, rose petals, cinnamon, cardamom, ginger) - add some spice to your life.



"being in the moment"
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Cheesecake

Cheese cake should be illegal, it's just too yummy! It's incredibly easy to make and even easier to eat half of. Here is a simple "To Taste" ricotta cheese cake recipe. I haven't added many measurements coz it's really too easy to bother measuring! Just TASTE IT and you'll know if the mix is right.

Ingredients:

1 / 2 kg ricotta
fresh lemon juice and or vanilla (real or otherwise)
brown sugar
biscuits
walnuts
butter
cream

What to do:

Base: Put a packet of biscuits in the food processor or a plastic bag and mash them up til they look ... crummy (I always love a dreadful pun!). Dry roast walnuts in a frying pan and blend them up. Add melted butter (probably 125g would cut it) to nuts and biscuits and mix well with a wooden spoon. Press this mixture into a cake tin or a glass roasting dish and then refrigerate for half an hour - 1hour.

Filling: In a large mixing bowl combine cheese, cream, lemon juice, and vanilla. Put some sugar in a mug and add enough boiling water just to melt it, then add it to the mixture. Mix it really really well (taste to see if you need anything else like more sugar etc) then put it onto your base. Now there are two choices, and I support either. You can chill it for about 4 hours or you can bake it in a low oven until the top is golden brown and then chill it.

It is a diferent taste to your average philly cheese cake but that's what I like about it. I also love the fact that I can have dessert with so little fuss and bother

Baked Ricotta with Herbs

A really yummy savoury snack that's so easy to make you're laughing!
makes 6 or more servings in about an hour.

You will need:

a clean tea towel, a wooden spoon, and a pie dish.

Ingredients:

1/2 kg ricotta
fresh herbs of your choice or any other thing that tickles your fancy (my personal suggestions basil, rosmary, thyme, dried fruit, seeds, nuts, semi dried tomato, olives etc etc - don't let your imagination hinder your creative kitchen goddess!)
2 - 5 tsp olive oil
pepper or chilli flakes

How to

:Preheat oven to 120 - 150C.

Wrap ricotta in the tea towel and squeeze excess fluid out.

Add your chosen flavourings. (Handy hint: there should be about the same amount in it as you'd see in fruit cake or bread.)

Grease baking dish (I suggest a pie pan or something similar in size - I haven't tried it in a muffin tray but it's certainly an idea I've toyed with.)

Drizzle some olive oil on the top and the pepper or chilli. (I like to add chilli to the mixture as well coz it's a nice colour!)

Bake until it's golden brown. I don't like to suggest an exact time frame, it's best to check it every so often and take it out when it's done.

Serve with biscuits of your choice and eat whilst saying "YUMMY YUMMY! MMMMMM YUMMY"



"being in the moment"
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celebrate girls

my moontime pads

Natti Lewis (aged 10).

We ordered some Moontime Pads from the Luna Collective.

Time to wait. A week later a parcel arrived. I opened it and there were two sets of Moontime Pads and a special pouch to keep them in.

One set was red and the other was a diamond pattern in pastel colours. The spare inners were pink with glittery white stars. We had to make sure we didn't have the ones with the cat and moon pattern because my sister has those.

It was very exciting. Then I stored them away in a special red box I had covered with stickers. Until the day comes to get them out again.

hi from ailis

Hi everybody. My name is Ailis and I'm 9 years old. I am very interested in animals. I have lots of pets.

I have 2 blue tongue lizards, 2 rabbits, 4 dogs, 1 cat, 2 fish, and 2 mice. My favourite pet is Bluey, the blue tongue.

Bluey's favourite food is watermelon and mince mixed together. I think it sounds weird! Bluey also eats snails, slugs, banana, and once he drank some strawberry smoothie.

My lizard lives in a big tank with Billy, another blue tongue. The tank has a big hollow log, a brick, and a special light to help keep him warm. They like shredded paper to sleep in.

I like it when Bluey curls up, I think it's cute. I take Bluey bush walking and he really likes it, he's very good at swimming too.

Bluey is one year old. His birthday is on New Year's Eve. Blue tongue lizards can live twenty years, and have litters of up to twenty babies. The best bit of owning a blue tongue is looking after it, and learning all about them.

book review

Beware of Girls By Tony Blundell

Beware of Girls is a quirky modern fairy tale with the essence of Little Red Riding Hood. This book is perfect for families who are always seaching for a female protagonist with a bit of oomph.

A little girl is visited by a wolf pretending to be her grandmother. She cleverly tricks him into bringing her many tasty treats "like grandma does" and ultimately outsmarts the silly wolf in a humorous conclusion.

It has a story and colourful pictures that are suitable from about 2 or 3 and up. There is the repetition that younger readers rely on for their understanding of the story and quite enough plot and humour in the story and pictures for older readers. Good for homereading or bedtime stories!

4 and a half stars!



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celebrate girls

a we'moon is coming
by Emma Lewis

This is a story about a coming-into-moontime ceremony I was blessed to be a part of.

I was one of two handmaidens a beautiful teenager chose to share her special journey with. After a quiet night and a secluded morning, with only her handmaidens and my sucking babe, this young teen was dressed by us in white and taken to join the rest of the camp - a peace camp of about 50 people.

The idea of the ceremony happened organically and spontaneously after a request made by this teen. It grew over a couple of days and, despite lots of other happenings and commitments, without exception, every member of the camp attended.

The teen herself, the other handmaiden and myself, and numerous other women bled completely out of cycle on the very morning of the ceremony.

With everyone, she danced, sang, drummed and chanted through her final dances as a child, before she was farewelled and led by us handmaidens to a nearby river. Here, she was bathed, cleansing away all the sorrows and pains and struggles of her childhood. Her white garments were discarded for red, and she was returned to the camp where the circle of people were singing with great gusto, a new song especially written for her, welcoming her as a woman, a we'moon.

I do not recall now the exact order of events, but I believe she was first encircled awhile and sang to, before being anointed and blessed on her forehead, lips, heart, hands, feet..... "May all your thoughts/words/deeds/steps be beautiful..." and given a name to be uttered by each of us in blessing on this occasion then subsequently only in ceremony.

She gave away something precious from her childhood (which was later returned to remind her of the importance of play and listening to the child within), and she undertook a solemn promise (her choice) as a we'moon.

She was honoured by the men, who crowned her with a stunning garland and promised her their support. Her father shared his dreams and wishes for her (her mother sadly was not present by choice). By this time, there was barely a dry eye!

She received gifts, greetings, blessings, dreams and wishes from each of us, and then we danced the secret sacred dance of the we'moon. The children and the female elders sat in the middle and the women of bleeding age danced with her. The men formed an outward-facing protective circle for they must not see or hear the song or dance. Of course, they all must have heard our hearty singing, but none remembered. For us we'moon it is forever imprinted on our hearts.

A great feast and fire followed, accompanied by beautiful music and dancing, with the young we'moon's first full sweatlodge that evening.

It was probably one of the most moving days of my life, and my wish is that every one of our young we'moon are able to welcome and celebrate their moontime so beautifully, and to learn to live their lives as a sacred ceremony.

May we all walk the beauty way.

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