

SURVIVING NEW PARENTHOOD



WELCOME

No matter where you are in your parenting journey—total newbie or seasoned veteran—navigating your parenthood can be overwhelming.

I remember when each of my children were born, I was full of questions, often turning to google for answers—I was woefully unaware of the amazing resources we have right here in our community for parents. However, it wasn't until I found and began to utilize many of these amazing resources (in addition to the support of my family and friends), did I start to feel like I had this whole “parenting thing” under control.

Finding and seeking out guidance from the amazing professionals we have in our area has helped, and is currently helping, me “survive” my parenthood journey. Knowing how invaluable they have been to my journey, I have collected information and tips from a few of these professionals in hopes you will find them just as useful throughout your journey as I did.

Warmly,

Gabriella

P.S. Remember to always listen to your parenting instincts and consult with your doctor or health care professionals before deciding to adapt any new health or exercise programs.





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Laura Kline-Taylor Coaching

Laura is a life coach who helps mothers be imperfect out loud. In 2014, her life, perfect by design, began to crumble: Her dream job no longer a dream and once solid marriage suddenly uncertain. As she embarked on the courageous journey of Mamapreneurship, like so many women before her, Laura felt pressure to be the “perfect mom” – and yet the more she embraced a practice of unapologetic imperfection, the more joy and power she experienced. Today, her company helps fellow mothers replace the persistent feeling of never being enough, with the true power and serenity that come from being imperfect out loud.



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Dr. Nicole M. Clemente is a Doctor of Chiropractic that specializes treatment for pregnant women, pediatrics and family wellness. She is Webster certified and certified by the International Chiropractic Pediatric Association (ICPA) and the Academy of Family Chiropractic Practice which allows her to provide the highest quality of chiropractic care to the whole family.



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Kara's journey in the birth world began while assisting midwives in rural Cambodia during her Peace Corps service. Since she returned to the United States, Kara has become a DONA certified doula, a Certified Childbirth Educator (ACBE), a PBI certified Placenta Encapsulator, a breastmilk jewelry designer, and most importantly, the mother of a beautiful boy. She is passionate about empowering mothers by helping them prepare for a safe and happy birth and postpartum experience.



THE BENEFITS OF **CHIROPRACTIC** FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY

Dr. Nicole Clemente | www.ChiropracticandPregnancy.com

Women's bodies are nothing short of incredible. During pregnancy, a woman's body undergoes many physiological changes that can put a lot of stress on their bodies. Getting adjusted regularly during pregnancy can help manage these physiological changes and help to prevent, or stop, any pain or discomfort a pregnant woman might experience. Chiropractic care has been proven helpful in the treatment of neck, back, hip, and pelvic pain as well as pubic symphysis dysfunction, sciatica, headaches, round ligament pain and carpal tunnel. In addition, it has also been proven helpful in increasing the likelihood of a successful VBAC, vaginal birth after cesarean section, for moms who desire to have one.

Techniques such as the webster technique, can help to prepare a woman's body for child birth by ensuring proper function of the nervous system and proper alignment of the pelvis. Regularly receiving chiropractic treatment during pregnancy has been shown to help reduce time in labor and reduce the need for medical interventions (ICPA).

Chiropractic care doesn't just stop after the baby is born. The process of giving birth can be traumatic to both mom and baby's body. Follow up chiropractic care can be helpful to alleviate any issues that can arise from the birthing process.

I am sure the next questions in your head are: Why do infants and children need chiropractic care? Is it safe? Do babies and children get adjusted the same way adults do?

There can be many reasons children and infants would require chiropractic care. These can range from issues as a result of traumatic birth, 'growing pains', and even sports-related injuries in older children.

Ailments such as ear infections, colic, reflux, constipation, and even lactation concerns have all been alleviated through consistent chiropractic care.

For instance, if a baby is having difficulty nursing on one side, it is possible something in the baby's neck might be misaligned which could be causing some level of discomfort when turning her head to nurse on a particular breast. Once the misalignment in the neck is corrected with a safe and gentle chiropractic spinal adjustment, the baby should be able to nurse comfortably and efficiently on both sides.

Having children adjusted regularly can help to boost immunity and help to promote good posture in developing spines. Studies have shown children who went to the chiropractor more than seven times per year had an increased immunity to common childhood diseases. In short, it is a safe, gentle way to promote overall wellness in growing infants and children.



THE MAGICAL MYSTERY OF GRANDMA DUST

Molly Deutschbein | www.SpiritOrganic.net

I get to fall in love every day. I work with people of all ages, but the most tender ones are the newborns. They don't come by themselves and get on my table. They are brought by (usually) frantic parents: exhausted new mamas and daddies who have a child who isn't eating well or is colicky or won't ever settle well on their own.

I bring a lot of different experiences to my practice. And one of them is my own life as a parent of small children and as a member of a large community of families who raised our kids together over the years. I was a La Leche League Leader and a childbirth educator. I taught in a private elementary school for two years and in a Waldorf program for a year. I have been around a lot of pregnant people, birthing couples, newborns and small children. In other words, little people don't make me nervous. I find babies and small children fascinating.

Working with new parents over the years has its own fascinations. Watching a person become a parent is glorious. It's a metamorphosis. I experienced it myself: the realities of being a parent are unfathomable until you are doing it yourself.

I often find myself with young families undone by a newborn's needs. Usually the parents are people accustomed to preparation and success. They are almost always in my office because an obstacle has been encountered: a breech presentation, a long difficult birth, a tongue that can't make a good latch, a nervous system that can't transition from alert to asleep, a tummy that can't digest comfortably.

And they marvel at my "magic".

Let me tell you a secret: There is no magic. We may joke about "Grandma Dust", the stuff that makes a shrieking baby settle on an older lady's forearm or shoulder and fall quiet, but there is no such thing. And sometimes that myth leaves new parents feeling inadequate.

I had a new couple in the office with their newborn a while ago and I felt sad when they left. They were struggling with how to handle their sensitive little one. I put her on the table, followed her movements and had her calm and sleepy in minutes. The parents looked utterly defeated. They wanted to know why I could do that and they couldn't and here's where I made my mistake: in my



desire to make it seem like they could comfort their baby, too, I told them that it was easy, "Just follow what her body wants to do." Big smile on my face. But I had read them incorrectly. They looked crestfallen. Here was another way they were failing their baby. And, of course, they didn't come back.

What I should have said was the truth: "I have had 28 years of practice holding babies. I have had 27 years of training in childhood development and bodywork. I have been moving with babies this way as a professional bodyworker for 12 years. Of course you need some help learning how to soothe your sensitive little one who had a rough birth."

Grandma dust is just shorthand for "person who has held a lot of babies and is holding a baby that she can hand back to a parent whenever she wants to". That makes me a lot more relaxed when I am holding a newborn. New parents are often told to "just relax". It is never a good idea to tell anyone to "just relax". Let me repeat that for those of you in the back: IT IS NEVER A GOOD IDEA TO TELL ANYONE TO "JUST RELAX". Ever.

Because it makes them more tense. This is something I know and yet, in that moment with those parents, I inadvertently said it in a different way: "It's easy; just do this thing I've been learning to do for almost thirty years." Smack my head. Hit me with a wet noodle.

Regardless, I do get to fall in love every day. And on some days I get to watch myself fail miserably, not as a bodyworker or doula, but as a people reader. A lot of my job is sorting out different personality and learning types so I can meet people where they are. It's a good part of the fun, the puzzle solving. When I am successful it is glorious and when I fail it is like the wrong answer buzzer is ringing in my ear for a few days.

Believe me, I want to send all of my families home with fairy dust that will guarantee their baby will be content, able to suckle and colic-free. It is hard knowing that they will have nights like I did when I wasn't sure there was an adult in the house (just two exhausted people who were supposed to be responsible but wanted to act like whiny babies themselves – "I'm not an adult, I just play one on TV").

And yet, that frantic desire to take care of our babies is hard-wired in us for a reason: so we won't let them die from neglect. We are desperate to get them feeding well because we know their lives depend on it. We want an "easy" baby because easy babies get better care from their community. We want a calm, content, charming baby because we know that will make our baby successful at charming good care from their care providers. These are instinctive responses that need to be honored in parents when they are desperate for solutions. Of course, they can't "just handle your baby like a seasoned pro."

The truth is I have no fairy dust to give you, and I promise never to pretend it is that easy again. I love you and you are not alone. Even at three in the morning. You are frantic because you are trying to do a good job and that makes you a good enough parent. Hang in there and text me when the sun comes up.

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

How it helps moms and infants postpartum

Patrick Boswell | www.ANewLifeAcupuncture.com

For thousands of years Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) was the only medical system in China. True integration of “western” or “orthodox” medicine has only been around for approximately 100-150 years. Before this period, TCM was used to treat the entire population’s scope of health care including postpartum and pediatric issues ranging from life-threatening to more common, everyday symptoms. Nowadays, we leave the serious stuff to the hospitals and pediatricians.

TCM refers to the various modalities used to treat within the system. Those include Acupuncture & Moxabustion, Chinese herbal medicine, Tui Na (Chinese medical massage), eastern dietary therapy, and self-care/exercise (in the form of Qi Gong). We will focus on acupuncture since it is the most common modality practiced in the United States.

At a basic level, acupuncture is the insertion of sterile, very fine (.2-.3 mm) solid needles (think of a pin) into various areas for a specific, desired effect. The point selection depends on your diagnosis and symptoms. The majority of the time acupuncture is a painless, relaxing treatment focused on re-establishing proper function of the various body systems through the activation of the circulatory, nervous, endocrine (hormonal), and musculoskeletal systems. Throughout the years, research has been issued reinforcing the effectiveness of the use of acupuncture for many issues, as well as mechanisms that explain aspects of acupuncture.

The Chinese have a long history of exceptional postpartum care. The tradition of the “month of sitting” is still practiced to this day by many Chinese mothers. During the month of sitting your only responsibility is to breastfeed your baby. Everything else is done for you by your family, or more recently, by a specialized hotel staff. Special meals, herbal formulas, and care are provided in order to restore strength and fertility quickly, as well as prevent illness. In my practice, I use TCM



most often during the postpartum period for stress/anxiety/depression, various pains, lactation issues, and fatigue.

Pediatric care spans over a long period of time; where many different issues can arise. For example, we can treat colic and rashes in babies, acne and hormonal issues in teens, and everything in between. Most often acupuncture isn’t started in children until they will tolerate/try it of their own volition—anywhere from 6 to 10 years old. Even at that point very few needles are used and with very mild stimulation, if any. Most of what is used at, and before, this point is Chinese Herbal medicine, and Tui Na.

Many of the conditions we see in young children and babies are caused by an overburdened, underdeveloped digestive system and we would suggest some dietary modifications.

Chinese herbal medicine uses classic, traditional formula which include multiple, individual herbs in very specific dosages and ratios. The formula is chosen based on your TCM diagnosis; modifications to the formula are done based on the unique presentation of your symptoms (branch) and underlying constitution (root). Because it is diagnosis-based, the herbal formula you receive may be different than someone with the same main issue. This is not a one symptom = one herb/formula based system like much of modern “western” herbal practice. Tui Na is simply put, the traditional Chinese form of bodywork. Like most traditional forms of bodywork, it address structural and functional issues of the musculoskeletal system. This includes hand and tool techniques such as cupping and Gua Sha.

When is the right time to utilize and seek out TCM as a treatment option? Honestly, at any point you feel you need help mentally or physically with the issues you or your child are experiencing. It is never too early or too late to seek help from your local Acupuncturist. Due to our ability to treat based on our own TCM diagnosis regardless of your other diagnosis from your health care providers, we don’t need a referral or permission from your doctor. A typical office or home/hospital visit (if someone in your area makes house/hospital calls) starts with an indepth look at your current and previous health history. This is a conversation where we talk about your concerns and symptoms while asking follow up questions to assess a complete TCM diagnosis and treatment plan. Every feeling and symptom is relevant to our ultimate diagnosis and treatment plan.



STOP TRYING TO BE PERFECT: EMBRACE REAL, EVERYDAY LIFE

Gabriella Hunt | www.GabriellaHunt.com

I am no stranger to self-confidence issues and self-defeating comments—and I know it's a struggle far too many of us deal with on a regular basis. I know I am not the only one who is guilty of chasing the illusion that is "perfection". For a long time, I thought perfect families (and by extension "perfect parenting") looked like a perfectly kept house, tangle-free hair, and an always clean shirt. I know it's unreasonable to think all these things, but I couldn't help think there was something wrong with me. Why didn't my house look like the ones on Pinterest? Why weren't my kids the perfect angels that put their toys away without a meltdown? Why did every other mom seem to have time to put make-up on, shower, and get dressed, when I was able to shower every couple days (if I was lucky)? Why did

my toddler want to dress in mismatched and fading clothes (because she only wanted to wear the same 3 shirt/pant combinations daily), so she more closely resembled a homeless person rather than the GAP models other parent's children looked like?

It didn't help that the photos online showcased these inaccurate depictions of what daily life is like. Every picture I saw from one of my many Facebook friends included immaculately clean houses, perfectly coordinated outfits with a perfectly coordinated background, and their kids were eating only the healthiest of foods—no mac and cheese or hot dogs for them (which by the way, seems to be the only thing my toddler will eat nowadays). There were no meltdowns, no dirty faces—only picture-perfect families with well-behaved, angelic children.

Don't get me wrong, I have my fair share of "traditional" portraits adorning my walls. Sometimes it's nice to have "nice" pictures. But these "nice" pictures don't accurately represent my family (and all of our quirks). These pictures are just a "polished" version of what my family really is like. Throughout our lives, we're taught to "smile for the camera" and the only images worth showing the world are the ones which depict us as close to "perfect" as possible.

I feel there is something fundamentally wrong with this method of thinking and way of sharing ourselves with others. The more we see this idealized version of reality the more we lose sight of the beauty right in front of us. We start to believe we NEED to obtain perfection to achieve happiness. In my eyes, my family is perfect (perfectly flawed, as we all are) and I wouldn't change anything about us. Which then had me asking myself the question: "if I believe my family is perfect the way we are, why am I so afraid to share images that show us in our truest forms?"

Thinking we can only share images that show perfectly polished versions of ourselves is not doing us any favors. We are selling ourselves (and our families) short. By trying to attain the unattainable, we are missing all the beauty, humor, and awkwardness that is a part of REAL family life. We need to show ourselves a little kindness and start embracing life (and all its imperfections) if not for us, then for our children. For this reason alone, images of real, everyday life deserve the same attention and consideration you would give "traditional" photos. Our children need to know it's okay to not always have it together and that among the curve-balls life can throw at us it is still full of love, humor, and genuine happiness.

This is why I started photographing families the way I do—no posing, no forced smiles—just authentic, family life and all its perfect imperfections. Our children already believe we are pretty darn incredible, yet we are still trying to be who society tells us we should be. We tell our children they are perfect just the way they are, but the only way we can really convince them of this is by our actions. The next time your child tells you you're beautiful or that you



are the best mom ever, don't think about all the ways you fall short. Take the time to try and see what your children see—and just believe it.

The thing I have learned most from my time documenting families is this: your children idolize you and you are perfect in their eyes. They don't care about how clean your kitchen is, if your hair is perfect, or if your shirt is wrinkled—they just want to spend time being loved by you. It's time we stop pretending to be perfect, be a little vulnerable by showcasing our flaws, and see ourselves through the eyes of our children. We need to be kinder to ourselves and start showing (and believing) that despite all its imperfections, real life is perfect.

RITE OF PASSAGE

Dianne Cassidy | www.DianneCassidyConsulting.com

I remember how I felt when I found out I was pregnant with my first baby. It was a total surprise. It took several days for it to really sink in. Once it did, my first thought was “I can’t even take care of myself half the time, how will I take care of a baby?”

Part of the reason for my surprise is that I was not planning on having a baby anytime soon. I was in the Army at the time, didn’t have a doctor that I was comfortable with and didn’t know any, and I was hundreds of miles from home. I was married back then, and because we were both military, that was really our only support system. I was terrified, and felt pretty alone. I had been somewhat of a nomad for several years, moving all around the country. No roots, no solid relationships and no family nearby. We decided to move back home after the baby was born so we could have the help of our families.

At the time, I thought it was a pretty unique situation that I happened to find myself in. Quite honestly, I have never done anything the easy way, and the circumstances surrounding the birth of my first baby were no different. I spent the last few weeks of pregnancy panicking about how I was going to manage this move if the baby was late or I ended up with a cesarean delivery. I was packing a house. Nathan was a week late (not a cesarean), and I spent the first week of his life running around town closing bank accounts, collecting medical records, finishing the packing and getting ready to leave the town that had been my home for 2 years. It was a blur. I was miserable.

Now that I have spent the last 10 years working with families during this delicate time, I have realized that my experience in the post partum period really wasn’t unique after all. The majority of the families I work with never seem to just “have a baby”. There is always many layers to life, and having a baby often comes with moving, starting a new job, death of a family member...some other huge life change that makes it difficult to concentrate on having a baby. Society tends to hold expectations for us that feel almost impossible to fulfill, and transition to motherhood is a struggle all on its own. We celebrate babies, and the amazing women who choose to have babies. We have parties for them during pregnancy; shower them with every baby item and cute little outfit that we can find. We inundate them with prenatal information about childbirth and parenting, send them on multiple doctor appointments and offer endless advice. Once the baby is born, new families are almost left to themselves. Those first days home from the hospital are nothing short of a culture shock. No more doctor appointments, no one to answer questions about recovery. Why is the baby crying? Is he starving? Is breastfeeding supposed to hurt? If babies only sleep and eat, why am I so tired? Why won’t the baby let me put her down in one of the several baby holding chairs/rockers/swings that we have taking over our living space?

I definitely wasn’t prepared for what came after the birth of the baby. I was so unhappy. I didn’t know what was happening. I hated breastfeeding. I hated feeling so insecure and unstable. No one talked about this part of things. Everyone only talked about how beautiful the baby was, how happy we should all be and how wonderful to have a new baby in the family. I didn’t feel any of that at all. No one talked to me about post partum mood disorders and what my risk factors were. It took me a long time to adjust to my new life. At the time I related it back to my “surprise” pregnancy and all the changes that happened afterwards. I realize now that I would have struggled to adjust even without those other obstacles thrown in.



Eventually I adapted. I felt needed and loved by my son. I began to really love breastfeeding, and felt very proud that Nathan was growing and developing perfectly. Watching him learn and flourish was fulfilling. I found it to be a strange sensation. Maybe I shouldn’t even call it a sensation. I made decisions based on my son and our new life and my life as a mother. Even though I made those decisions and choices, I found it to be a lonely life at times. I didn’t really have other mom friends and I wasn’t working, so it was almost as if I had lost my identity along the way, yet this is what I chose to do.

I suppose it was my experience with my own children that launched me into this role as a lactation consultant and maternal child health specialist. When I had my kids I felt abandoned in a way, even though I had the help from my family. I fought my way through post partum, felt intimidated by breastfeeding and coveted a support system that I could really bear my soul to. THIS is what motherhood is about. THIS is what it really looks like. It’s not the smiling, perfect face one may see on the cover of a magazine. I feel like it is my job now to align myself with new parents and assure them that what they are experiencing may not feel normal to them, but it is, indeed, normal. It’s ok to take the time to adapt and adjust to this huge transition. It’s ok to feel overwhelmed and it’s ok to even hate what you are doing some days. It’s ok to feel insecure about who you are now, especially when you took a long time to become who you were before the baby was born. You will be that person again too.

If I could do it again I would find my tribe. My tendency to keep to myself didn’t do me any favors. Historically, new mothers were not intended to do any of this alone. Somehow, we lost the art of community. Let’s face it, the baby business doesn’t really slow down. However, people evolve and times change and we would all benefit from support and community during vulnerable times. Motherhood, this amazing rite of passage, is a very solitary place if we give it that power. Every new mother I work with is caught off guard. “No one told me this is what it would be like” is our motto. So let’s talk about what it’s really like. Let’s be realistic when we talk to others about becoming a mother, transitioning into a family, growing a family from 1 to 2, or 2 to 3 (in my case, we went from 1 baby to 3 after my twins were born). It’s hard enough to be a mother and wife and daughter and friend and lover and employee (or employer).

Let’s support each other through it.

THE REMARKABLE PLACENTA

Kara Snyder | www.TeamDoula.com

What did you do the minute you found out you were expecting? Did you think about a name for the baby? Or a certain car seat? Did you immerse yourself in all things baby and motherhood? As new moms, we tend to go above and beyond considering the well-being of the new life we are bringing into the world. We arm ourselves with information about care and safety for our newborn, but not what being a new mom means for ourselves as mothers.

Postpartum mood disorders like depression and anxiety are the most common complication related to pregnancy and childbirth, yet they are not universally screened for. In fact, according to the CDC, an average of 15-20% of all postpartum women in the U.S. suffer from depression, anxiety, or psychosis. To put this in perspective, gestational diabetes only occurs in about 7% of all pregnancies in the US--that's conservatively half as prevalent. However, unlike postpartum mood disorders, gestational diabetes is something regularly screened for by healthcare providers.

Due to lack of screening and other factors, many women go undiagnosed with PPD. To make matters a bit more complicated, even those who are diagnosed do not feel comfortable receiving treatment in the form of pharmaceutical drugs. This is mainly due to the fear of the side effects to them or the baby (as well as a myriad of other personal reasons). As a result, the search is on for a more natural and gentle treatment. This is why some have turned to placenta encapsulation. There has been anecdotal evidence which has shown the placenta might actually be able to support your emotional state postpartum.

Hormones and the Placenta

The placenta is an intricate, miraculous organ made from scratch during pregnancy. It is a baby's lifeline: it joins a mother to her baby, provides oxygen and nutrients through the umbilical cord, and is a powerful barrier to protect baby from harm.

The placenta is an endocrine organ, producing hormones such as estrogen and progesterone.

As the placenta grows, it takes over for the other endocrine organs such as the thyroid and hypothalamus. Right after the delivery stage of labor, mom may experience a sudden change in mood--this is due in part to the placenta delivery. This is because as the placenta is expelled, your hormone function once again is controlled by your pre-pregnancy endocrine organs.

It is believed this extreme hormonal crash mothers experience in the weeks and months after delivery is the reason we are seeing postpartum mood disorders at the frequency we are. This process paired with interrupted sleep and overall adjustment to parenthood, can be overwhelming and stressful. Some call it the 'baby blues', but the truth is there is a spectrum of postpartum mood disorders, with many shades of gray. Minor "blues" could include general feelings of sadness, while more severe forms of depression include loss of appetite, crying, or feelings of inadequacy.

Placenta Encapsulation

Placenta Encapsulation is the process in which you prepare your placenta to be consumed in the form of a capsule. The concept of encapsulation may seem odd the first time you hear about it, but placenta ingestion is a common practice amongst most mammals in the wild. There are a variety of theories as to why most mammals do this and the truth is, we might never really know. However, considering we are mammals ourselves, we may stand to learn from this practice.

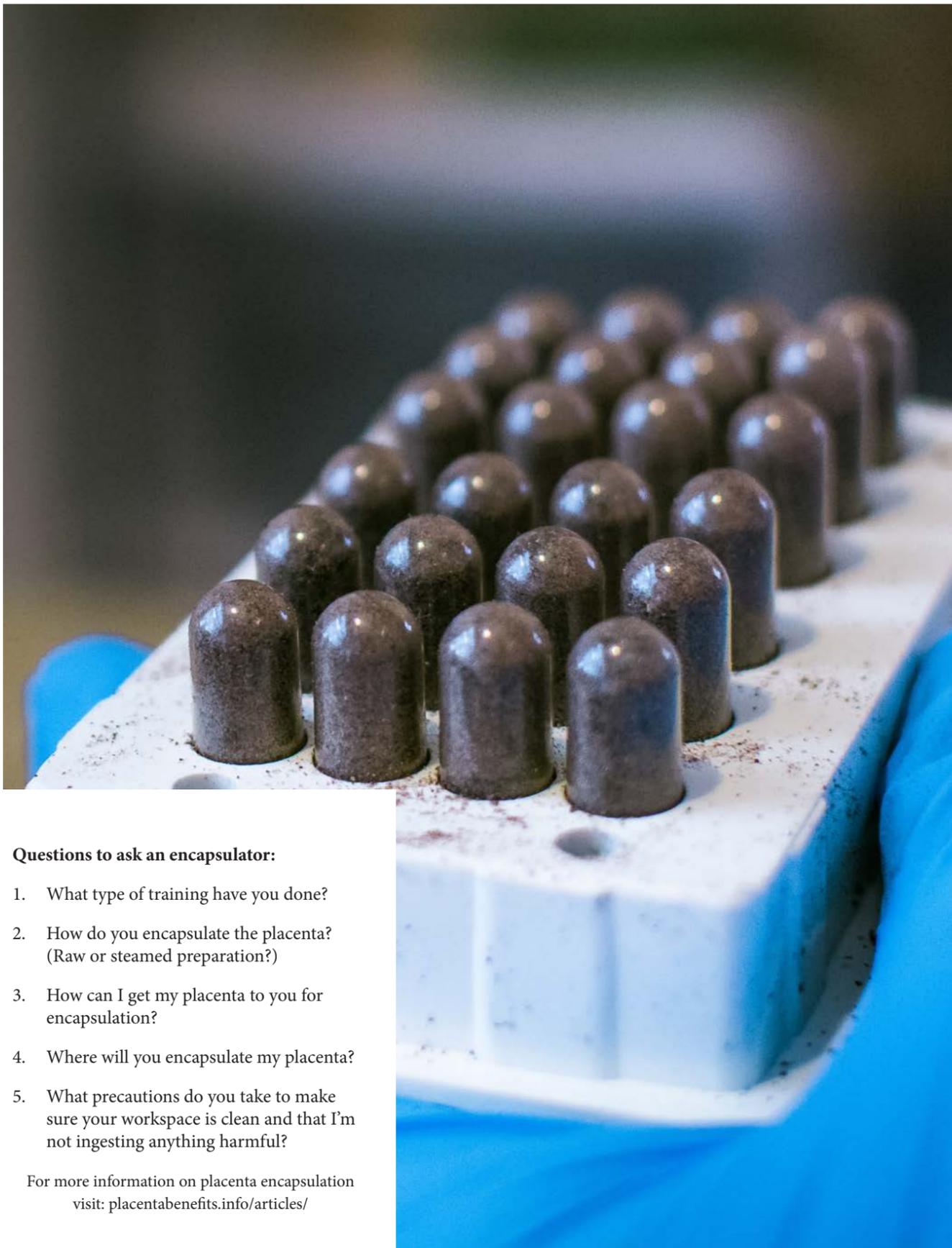
There is significant anecdotal evidence as to why this practice may be a good one. Women who take placenta capsules often report less

mood swings, an increase in milk production, and feel significantly more energetic. These reported positive outcomes may be partially due to the retained pregnancy hormones the placenta contains as well as its high natural iron content.

If you suffer from anemia or are predisposed to depression disorders, placenta encapsulation might be an option for you. Most care providers have heard of the practice and are willing to discuss the benefits and risks. Encapsulation is only contraindicated in the case of infection or fever during labor, or if the placenta has been sent to pathology after delivery.

Once you decide placenta encapsulation is something you might be interested in, your next step would be to seek out a trained placenta encapsulation specialist. A placenta encapsulation specialist can answer many of the questions you might have with regard to encapsulating your placenta. They are educated on the benefits and contraindications of this practice. In addition, they have also had comprehensive preparation and blood-borne pathogen training.

As a new mom we know your main focus is your little one's well being. However, it is important you don't forget that their well being is linked to yours. Placenta Encapsulation is just one option you have available to help support the physical and mental areas of your motherhood journey. While the decision is ultimately yours as to whether you decide to encapsulate your placenta, if you are someone who is predisposed to any of the conditions mentioned previously, it might be something to consider.



Questions to ask an encapsulator:

1. What type of training have you done?
2. How do you encapsulate the placenta? (Raw or steamed preparation?)
3. How can I get my placenta to you for encapsulation?
4. Where will you encapsulate my placenta?
5. What precautions do you take to make sure your workspace is clean and that I'm not ingesting anything harmful?

For more information on placenta encapsulation visit: placentabenefits.info/articles/

When you give birth to a child, you give birth to a mother, too. Just as your infant learns to make sense of this brand new, colorful world, you are learning what it means to be a mom. More to the point, you're learning what it means to be you and to be a mom.

There are pleasures in this process, and there are challenges. Chances are, you find yourself suddenly overwhelmed by a wealth of internal and societal pressures to make being a mom look effortless (as if you don't have enough to do). You bear down, trying to get everything about life with a new baby just right. The good news? There's no such thing. The bad news? Many new moms don't slow down often or long enough to actually believe it - our desire to look good and fit in gets in our own way of having the compassion we need for ourselves and others experiencing similar challenges.

In the early months, you may start to feel like, "Well, now I'm a mom, I should hang out in mom circles." And while being part of a community of new parents is essential for creating powerful support structures, it can also challenge our sense of identity: "Am I only a mom, now?" It can also set up an unfortunate dynamic where we feel like we need to conceal the messiness of our mom identity when we're outside of a mom-specific context. When your baby cries around other moms, you can count on sympathy and support. When your baby cries in mixed company, it can feel like you need to apologize and like somehow it's not OK to be sleepless, lack patience with your spouse or experience limits to your creativity and professional goals. On the flip side, you may give into the identity of new motherhood as a reason to not create the structures that would allow a good night's sleep, a vulnerable request for what you need from your spouse, the support you need to renew the career or creative projects you love.

The overall effect of this split existence can leave you confused about how to be authentic and wondering where some of the parts you love most about you are hiding. It can feel like the best it gets is striving to keep your head above water; that thriving fully afloat

NEW MOMS: BE IMPERFECT *Out Loud*

Laura Kline-Taylor | www.LauraKlineTaylor.com

with all of the the metaphorical hydration and sunscreen required to avoid the burn is a pipedream for the rich and famous.

In coaching, we talk about the difference between surviving and thriving. Surviving is what we do when we're in the mode of reacting to a whole bunch of external circumstances. Worrying about what other people think. Trying to measure up to what we perceive are other people's expectations of us (many of which we make up). Thriving is when we tune into the essence of who we really are, and operate from that place.

Motherhood can be about thriving from the beginning. Like with all transitions of identity it likely won't be picture perfect, but it's only a struggle if you say so.

It's not your job to perform the role of mother according to someone else's script. If you're so excited for that meeting or coffee date with a child-free friend, but you only got three hours of sleep, show up anyway! Own that you're a new mom running on very little sleep and notice how your vulnerability shifts the interaction. If the other person responds negatively, consider their judgment is more about them than it is about you. Instead of acting out the role of mother that you think other people want you to play, surround yourself with people who accept you as the mother and person you are and aspire to be.



When we compartmentalize we cut off parts of ourselves. We don't have access to our innate, intuitive wisdom. We relate to ourselves as incomplete or half or wrong. Instead of compartmentalizing your life to survive; integrate to thrive.

When my family decided to play a bigger game of life and quit our jobs to become entrepreneurs, we also recognized the need to cast a wider net of support. In the last 2 years my family has built a village that consists of other new moms, fellow coaches and business owners, clients, and friends who support with childcare and household management. Every one of these people is a stand for us to live the life we aspire to and that the journey be a joy ride.

When I put on my coach hat to work with my clients I don't have to take off or cover up my mom cape. When I'm with my daughter, keeping the coach hat on actually makes the outfit work - and the high heels this business

owner wears bring me closer - not farther - to my 6'5" husband.

The frame of new motherhood around your life doesn't have to mean becoming someone who's constantly behind the eight ball, incomplete, or wrong because of your lack of sleep, failed attempts, or the crying child that you're supposed to hide away. Allow yourself to have all of these experiences, and let them be part of you. Be honest and share them.

My invitation is that we all practice being imperfect out loud. Accept your imperfection, own it, celebrate it — instead of trying to fix it or hide it away. When you're feeling underslept or under supported, it doesn't mean you're wrong or that it's not out there. It simply means it's time to get vulnerable. Authentic. And it's time to get your needs met.

Think of the unconditional love you pour into your child, and pour it into yourself, too.



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