



MY WELL
PREGNANCY
BOOK

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Introduction

Why is it that pregnancy for some women is a time when they glow with radiance, vitality, joy, and health while for other women it is a time when they glow with fear, ill health, and negativity? It is natural that when we as women discover we are pregnant for the first time or for the fifth time our inborn motherly feelings of joy, love, expansion of life, and desire to nurture the new baby growing inside our bodies fills our minds and hearts. It is when a pregnant woman looks outside herself and ignores her inner wisdom that the fears, myths, disbeliefs, and dogmatic views of society negatively influence her beliefs and feelings about her strength, wisdom, and capacity to have a healthy, joyful, beautiful, natural pregnancy, labor and delivery. We are told by society that during pregnancy it is a time to eat for two, that it is normal to have daily cravings for sugar laden treats, that physical activity and exercise are not necessary or even dangerous, that we should just take it easy, and that it is normal to have aches and pains. Over the years the paradigm of our healthcare system is; all we have to do is show up to the hospital get our cocktail of drugs to ensure that we have our babies on or before our due date, not feel any pain, and the doctor and nurses that are in charge will “take care of the labor and delivery process“. These are myths and unconscious beliefs that have been passed down throughout the years. They are based on fears and are now accepted as “normal“. Often the result is that women then view pregnancy as a time of joy intertwined with an unhealthy projection of how to take care of their body, mind, and overall health. This unhealthy projection also infiltrates into a woman’s expectations and lack of confidence in herself and in regards to the ability to have a natural and empowering childbirth.

On the other hand, women have the opportunity to glow with health, radiance, beauty, and energy throughout pregnancy. Women have the right and the inborn capacity to experience an empowering and joyous pregnancy, labor, and delivery. It is when women educate themselves on the resources and opportunities that are available to support them in their choices that a conscious pregnancy unfolds. A conscious pregnancy leading into a mindful labor and delivery takes commitment. Commitment to the foundations of optimal physical, nutritional, and emotional health. Dedication to empowering thoughts and actions or daily habits. A network people and health care professionals who will be coaches that support a women’s choices during her

pregnancy and birth plan. It begins with a thought or a feeling that we have the desire and capacity to be a vibrant pregnant women who has an empowering and natural labor and delivery. Then depending on that woman's dominant beliefs she will choose to honor that innate wisdom or to let her own fears projected on her by her environment or society break that initial empowering belief down. My message is that we as women have the resources, the people, the opportunities, and most importantly the ability to experiences a conscious, healthy, and natural pregnancy, labor, and delivery. It is in the choices and thoughts we make and create everyday that move us closer to the pregnancy and birth we truly desire. I honor every woman and her inborn wisdom and strength to have the most joyful, healthy, pregnancy and empowering and natural labor possible.

My Childbirth Experiences.....

When I found out I was pregnant with my first child, my daughter Reese, my conscious immediately told me that I wanted a natural child birth. I felt confident that I could do it, I just needed to surround myself with the right people and environment. This is when and how I discovered midwifery, doulas, and home birth. As I started to explore the approach and care of midwives and doulas I began to understand that their approach was far from the approach of traditional obstetrics and it was what I wanted. It was after hearing various birth stories from women who went into a traditional hospital setting and had a birth process that unfolded in a way in which they did not plan or choose, I decided my birth was going to be on my turf, with my best interest in mind. I tend to trust and go with my instincts on everything in life but my husband was a little skeptical and had lost of questions. So, we then sat down with our soon to be midwife for an interview. My husband asked questions like, what happens if there is an emergency, what if something goes wrong, what if the cord is wrapped, how do we know the baby is O.K., and how fast can you get to our home. As our midwife answered all of our questions it was then that we realized the extent of her training, her confidence and experience in delivering babies, and her care and compassion for the woman in labor. We were then 100% on board for having a home birth with a midwife and doula. Everyone thought I was crazy and brave for doing such a thing. To this day I tell those who have that viewpoint that I would be crazy and brave to step foot into a

hospital to deliver my baby. After educating myself on the facts and statistics of the safety and outcomes of homebirth and the occurrence of birth intervention compared to a hospital birth my instinctive decision was further supported. Fast forwarding to December 15th, 2005 was my first homebirth. My labor began and my husband called my midwife and doula. The setting was so very peaceful; an aqua doula birthing tub was set up in my living room with soft yoga music in the background, soft white Christmas lights shining over the mantle and tree with lavender scents burning in the background. My labor was 2 hours and my husband, midwife, and doula coached me to the birth of my visions and my dreams. It was an empowering experience that made me fully focus on my body's abilities, the love I had for our new baby girl and bringing her into this world in the most natural, safe, and peaceful way I knew possible. My second birth two and one half years later at our new home in O'Fallon Missouri was just as special and beautiful. It was also 2 hours and I had a water birth with a similar serene setting. I found another caring, experienced, professional midwife and an exceptionally gifted doula who worked harmoniously to once again give me the support and environment to deliver my second and third children; baby boy, Boston Cash and baby girl Taylor Olivia

I had and will always have complete faith in my body, my capabilities, my health, and midwifery to bring my children into this world. But, that is my head space. Every woman has a different set of circumstances, fears, significant other, family influences, background, ect. So, it is up to every woman to listen to what her consciousness tells her, regardless of others, and start exploring the different option for her birth. Homebirth, midwifery, doula services, water birthing and natural child birth are all wonderful and viable options for almost any woman. I tell you of my experience because I want more women to know it is possible and that every woman can have the birth of her visions and dreams.

The Greater Meaning of Giving It Your Best

Why read this book? This book gives you the opportunity to discover your potential as a woman and a mother. Pregnancy, whether it is your first or your tenth, is a unique and special time to re-connect to your womanly intuition and the love you have to express and receive. It is a time that you can establish your goals and visions as a mother, role model and leader for your new baby, and established family if you already have one. Your thoughts and actions during the 9 months of pregnancy set the stage for successful emotional bonding, baby's overall neurological, physical, and emotional development, and a positive and peaceful environment in-utero and post-partum. In other words you have the opportunity to be a guide for your children, to help them reach their full potential by giving it your best during pregnancy, mind and body. In turn, you may discover hidden gifts, strengths, and values as a woman and mother that you have been too "busy" to see or express in your life. By focusing on yourself and the level of how you take care of your mind and body during pregnancy you will find that your strength and connection with all relationships in your life are greatly improved. This is because when you honor your mind and body during pregnancy you have more to give to others.

The "glow" is truly more than a hormonal change. It is because you are loving yourself again. When you choose healthy, loving thoughts and actions for you and baby your "glow" radiates because of how happy, joyful, and connected you are. This is a wonderful result of giving it your best, but realize this result still has another deeper meaning. The secret is this; by the result of expressing your true potential as a woman and mother during pregnancy you will positively influence your future generations, starting with your own children, and our entire culture. I know that seems like a "big" thought but hear me out. The way you think, act, feel and live your life is observed by all. First comes your own family that is with you day in and day out, then your friendships and community. The way you live your life and specific to what this book is about, how you take care of your mind and body during pregnancy will impact many. Without a word you lead by example. You have the opportunity to provide a history for your future generations on what a healthy and conscious pregnancy and labor can be like. As a woman and mother you are a leader and role model. What a better time to examine what type of role model and leader you want to be. It starts now. It starts with

making conscious choices, examining your thoughts and actions, and aligning them with the woman and mother you desire to be. The greater meaning for you personally is how you define it. I ask you to take time now and throughout your pregnancy to define what is possible and what truly brings you health, vitality, and joy. Discover your greater meaning.

Mind

Chapter 1: You hold the key....

The biggest lesson I have learned throughout my three pregnancies is that I am unique. Meaning, I chose not to fit into what others thought a pregnancy should be like or what a pregnant woman should experience during pregnancy, labor, and delivery. I realized that no matter what I was going through during each trimester is that I held the key to a healthy mind and body. It was my thoughts and consistent habits that gave me joy and great results in all areas of my pregnancy regardless of the physical changes I personally experienced or the cultural perceptions of pregnancy.

You and every expecting mother reading this hold your own key. Your key may be different than mine and open different doors for you but you will never be able to use your key unless you recognize and confidently use it. This key represents what women have had for ages and ages. It stands for inner guidance, your intuition, your mental and physical strength, your body's natural built in hormonal and healing system, your inner peace, and your energy and vitality. These descriptions of what you have already inside you are not commonly talked about by our culture, the traditional medical profession, other women, or by our own mothers. So, I understand these might sound like foreign or lofty words to you right now but once you feel and see these qualities in action for yourself you will realize the keys and the power that you do hold.

Because of my background in natural health and my own stubbornness to do it my way and buck the traditional system of almost anything in my life I was fortunate to discover these keys during my three pregnancies. Not only did they give me great benefits during pregnancy, labor and delivery but they have shaped the woman and mother I am today.

It is time for you to find your key and unlock the potential you have inside to experience the pregnancy, labor and delivery you truly desire. You can design the mind-set and physical experience you want and that you are individually capable of.

Pregnancy Gem: *You can either stumble along the pot-holed filled path that others have worn out before or you can go down your own path laid with golden bricks*

Chapter 2: Your greatest asset....

Pregnancy is one of the greatest honors and joys of being a woman. At the same time this joyous period is mixed with a great deal of hormonal changes to support the growing fetus. For many women this can be a challenge. How you feel changes in the beginning of pregnancy and for some continues on to various degrees. Nausea, fatigue and irritability are common symptoms expecting mothers experience. Personally, I experienced so much nausea and varying degrees of fatigue the first trimesters of all three pregnancies I would lose 5-8 pounds and often wonder "how am I going to make it through this". I understand, it can almost be paralyzing. These symptoms that I and many other women experience can even alter the amount of joy you are associating with being pregnant and really affect your ability to function in your life. It is real. So fortunate are you if you do not experience this degree of changes during your pregnancy. For myself and those of you reading who do I will reveal to you your greatest asset to get you through it.

You must use your mind to overcome your physical symptoms. Your physical symptoms may come and go, change, or remain. Regardless you have the opportunity to call on your mind and spirit to put a blanket over these challenges to be able to experience joy throughout your pregnancy which in turn fuels your ability to keep on keeping on. How? First is to re-frame in your mind what you actually are experiencing physically. Meaning, yes it may be real but what do these changes mean? For example, the nausea may be your body's way of protecting your baby, or choosing foods that are best suited for you at this time in your pregnancy, or it may be your body's way of getting you to slow down considerably for the health and development of your baby. I noticed a direct correlation with the amount of stress and fatigue I had in relation to the level of nausea I would experience that day. Instead of just fighting through it with my will I finally wised up my third pregnancy and listened. I took a nap everyday, even if it was at lunch at my office. I cut my workouts temporarily from 6 days a week to 3-4 days a week for 20 minutes versus 60 minutes. I even reduced my hours at work and simply asked other people in my life for more help. To do any of these steps I first had to be aware that these were changes that were there for a reason so I had the opportunity to honor this time during my pregnancy and make some changes to accommodate me and this new blessing in my life.

Your mind is your greatest asset because you may not be able consciously control the symptoms you are experiencing but you can change your mental attitude, your perspective, your outlook, and your thoughts about whatever challenge you are facing. Another great function of you mind, if you use it, is to be present where you are. For example the more you think about your ailments or worry about how you are going to get through your "to do" list of your day the more the physical symptoms of your body can take over. Why, because you are not relaxed and focused on where you are and what you can do at that given moment to not only get through it but find joy and peace in it. For example, have you ever tried to multi-task thinking you could get four things done at once but only to find out each task was done incorrectly and possibly the person in front of you was frustrated because you did not even hear what they were trying to tell you? You can choose the quantity and quality of your thoughts. You can either let your mind and thoughts be consumed with the sensations of your symptoms and worry about future events you can not control or you can focus on what is important and right for you at that moment so that you can be present with where or whom you are with at that time. The second option may not take away whatever physical challenge you are experiencing at the time but I promise you it will ease the tension of your mind and body which will result in less stress, fatigue, and a perpetuating cycle of your focus on "what is wrong". Meditation is one of the best practices to help you with this new mind habit.

Please see Well Pregnancy Journal for instructions and references on meditation.

Pregnancy Gem: *Allow your mind and body to be friends, because the more they get along the better you will feel*

Chapter 3: Your Vision...

What do you envision for yourself during your pregnancy? This may be a question you have never thought to ask yourself. Or you may have thought about how you see yourself during your pregnancy or how you will experience it based upon cultural stereotypes of pregnancy, commercials and television, or even by the beliefs and stories of your own family and friends. For your benefit I ask you to become aware of what your vision is for yourself during your pregnancy, labor, and delivery. How do you want to look and feel each trimester, what activities do you want to do while you are pregnant, what kind of labor and delivery would you like to experience? Answers, your answers, to these questions will reveal to you your own true desires for what and how you want to experience pregnancy and labor. Then it is up to you to act upon and make real your visions for yourself.

Visualizing is a process that we have done since we were children. Daydreaming and imagining came naturally to us once. As adults we often lose touch with this creative habit. Our thoughts about what we can do or what a circumstance could look like in the future is heavily influenced by our past experiences and fears so that we are not daydreaming for what we really want at all. We are imagining ourselves and our future reality based upon old messages, usually negative or self-defeating, and beliefs. When you think about your pregnancy, labor and delivery what do you imagine for yourself? Do you succumb to the picture of; "I will be tired all the time, have to stop or limit my physical activity, look less attractive, and I shall eat whatever I want because I am going to gain weight anyway" or "Labor and delivery will be unbearably painful, I would never be strong enough to do it without pain medications, just get it over with". These are just two examples of common thoughts and beliefs that stigmatize pregnancy for so many women. You can choose your own thoughts and visions of how you want to look, feel, and experience pregnancy. You can open your mind to what options and possibilities are available for you during your labor and delivery. Visualizing what you truly desire for yourself during your pregnancy and labor is your pure creation. There are no rules for you, this is your journey through pregnancy. Choose thoughts that align with exactly what you desire for yourself. The power of visualization is stronger than what you may trust right now. Just practice it daily and your mind will see a new picture for you and your experience. Your mind does not know the difference between

what you imagine and what you really experience. Meaning, visualizing regularly will link your imagined thoughts for yourself, with the feelings you will have during your pregnancy with the actions you will take with the results you see and feel.

I will share with you my visions during each of my pregnancies. I hope that they give you an idea of what is possible and inspire you to create your own. Visualizing my daily actions and habits in addition to how I wanted to look and feel during my first two pregnancies were almost identical. The only difference with this pregnancy, as I am writing this chapter in my third trimester, is that my visualizations are even more clear and have an unshakable confidence and certainty behind them. From the beginning of my sixth week till the end of my first trimester, with all three pregnancies, the first thing I imagined for myself was my labor and delivery. It was important for me to determine what kind of labor and delivery I wanted, regardless of anyone else's thoughts and opinions. It was helpful for me, especially during the first trimester 24 hour nausea to see the end in mind. I visualized a peaceful serene, unmediated, home birth, that welcomed my baby into this world. I knew from the beginning without analyzing all the factors that I wanted to give birth on my terms, based on my highest values. I wanted to steer clear of any environment or circumstance during labor that would not support me in what I wanted. After that I really thought about what I wanted to do during my pregnancy. I knew that feeling good, staying fit, having the best energy possible, and eating healthy and nutritious foods on a daily basis was important to me. So at night, regardless of how tired or nauseated I was I visualized my next day and even my next trimester because I knew I would be feeling much better and the habits would be even easier. My key was never giving up. Constantly, I imagined what I wanted for myself in all these areas. Even when the fears and beliefs of others would be expressed to me I would think to myself; "These are THEIR thoughts and opinions....and I have my own dream for myself". Please do not take this as arrogance or that I am disregarding any real health or safety concern for any woman who is expecting. I am telling you that visualizing is a self-supporting practice that guides your mind and eventually habits in the direction which you desire. This is far from control or rigidity. It is also far from conformity. When I visualized daily, even if it was for 2 minutes, it freed my mind of any doubts and fears that I would start to have. It kept my mind and body going in the right direction because it was the direction that I truly desired in my heart. Just like life, pregnancy can throw us curve balls. One day you may be flying

high and feeling good and the next may be different. For some woman, who my heart goes out to, they may even get some serious news regarding their health or the health of their baby. The good news is; we can still stay flexible and instantly visualize what we want. It may be different than previous visualizations but that is the beauty of it. We can use our imagination with practice during our pregnancy, no matter the circumstance, to set our thoughts in a positive direction. Just so you know that there are real benefits and actions behind visualizing and its not just something children do, all my visualizations came true. I gained the perfect amount of healthy weight 14-16 pounds for the first two pregnancies and am on the same track for the third, worked out until the day I delivered, practiced as a chiropractor until the week I delivered, glowed with positivist each pregnancy, and had two natural home births, delivering Reese and Boston in the water with three hour labors. Of course, I am on my way and visualizing a third!

I ask you to be aware of your previous thoughts about yourself during pregnancy. Then I ask you to ask yourself, without giving yourself any excuses, what it is you desire. Finally I ask you to visualize....

Please see Well Pregnancy Journal for instructions on visualizations

Pregnancy Gem: *Let your mind dream of your hearts true desires, of what is possible, so that you have the opportunity to EXPERIENCE what you are truly capable of.*

Chapter 4: Setting your sights high

Now that you have worked on thinking about and imagining what you desire for yourself and baby during your pregnancy, labor and delivery the next step is writing down your goals. Examples of goals are fitness goals, work goals, family goals, and financial goals. So, why is it not common thought to set goals during pregnancy too? We not only have our own health and wellbeing to think about but we have the health and wellbeing of the new little life growing inside of us to be conscious of. Goals in any aspect of our lives give us direction, focus, and meaning to our habits and action steps. Goals keep our minds, thoughts and actions on track with the purpose we intend in any facet of our life. Therefore, it is time that you write down your goals for your pregnancy. Your goals will give you a road map. A road map that you created and intend to follow. Your goals will remind you, during the harder times, of what you desire to accomplish. Always remember that they are your goals, may be subject to change, and that the fun is in the journey to your goals!

When I thought about what goals I wanted to focus on during my pregnancies they related strongly to my core values of feeling healthy and strong, maintain a healthy weight, experiencing joy, continuing my work, and creating the most healthy and positive environment for my growing baby. What that looked like was a list of statements that I put action steps behind everyday and week to achieve to the best of my ability. To be specific my goals were to exercise at the appropriate level 4-5 times per week; this included yoga, swimming, weight training, and cardio. With each pregnancy the quality of my nutrition and the types of foods I choose to eat was and is an integral goal of mine. It has resulted in keeping my energy up, keeping me strong, helping me gain the appropriate amount of weight, and most importantly to nourish my growing baby with whole, nutritious, chemical free nutrients. Pursuing my passion and purpose through my work during each of my pregnancies was a goal I held high. The meaning and benefits behind this goal have proven to balance my life and my emotions tremendously. When I set the goal to continue my work as a chiropractor through the worst of the first trimester nausea until days before I delivered and I followed through, it resulted in being so present in giving to others and making a difference in their lives each day. Whether it is your work, your family, a particular cause or mission you serve I encourage you to have a goal that is meaningful to you and

makes you feel joy when fulfilling it. When you are only focused on yourself during your pregnancy it is easy to get caught up in your story; excuses you give yourself, symptoms or ailments you are experiencing, boredom or anticipation, fear of the unknown, and many more unproductive thoughts. Acting on a passion of yours or simply giving to others in some big or small way each day can help you to experience joy, gratitude, and love. In addition it takes your mind down a path of being present in the moment, diverges your negative and repeating thought patterns, strengthens your confidence as a pregnant woman, and creates balance in your life. It is easy to get focused on just one aspect of your life such as pregnancy but I challenge you to set goals that are diverse and include your passion and purpose. By doing this and following through you are giving to yourself as a woman and mother while setting the stage for being an even more powerful, balanced, and loving role model for your baby and children who are watching you in action.

Your goals are your desires and dreams for yourself. The first step is to dream or envision what you want. The second step is to write your goals down. The third and most important is to write down the benefits of working towards and achieving your goals in addition to the consequences of not achieving or striving for your goals. Remember there is no such thing as sitting passively and saying you "will try". The reality is when you write your goals down you have the choice to take big or small action steps each day to achieve your goals or do nothing about them. It really is that simple. Rereading your goals and the benefits and consequences you determined for yourself gives you a healthy reminder of why your goals matter to you and why you would get up and follow through each day. How goals are different from your visualizations is that you are taking physical and mental action on what you have written down. Although, when you visualize your goals and them being accomplished positive emotions will start to build and your actions will follow like a magnet.

Your birth plan is another creative way for you to list out the visions, goals, and steps you want most for your experience during labor, delivery, and moments after baby has arrived. I have often heard "I am going to try for an unmediated birth but we will see what happens". Going into birth without a vision or plan for yourself is setting you up for an outcome that you may not have desired. Teams that make it to the world series plan and practice everyday for the best outcome at the end of the season. If you

want the best outcome that you desire it is up to YOU to plan and take charge. That begins with a pro-active, conscious birth plan. What is a birth plan? A birth plan is a list of all of preferences and choices for your delivery that you share with your doctor, nurses, doula, and/or midwife. the birth plan is the map your birth and delivery team will use to follow your wishes.

Please see Well Pregnancy Journal for instructions on goal setting and birth plan

Pregnancy Gem: *Accomplishing the goals you set for yourself awards you with the gold medals of confidence, inspired action, and joy.*

Chapter 5: Turning fear into faith

Your emotions not only effect your health and well-being but they also effect your developing baby. Negative emotions and fear can increase the amount of stress hormones circulating through your body and the amount of pain you feel during labor. Your thoughts and feelings heavily influence your experience during pregnancy, in labor and the delivery of your baby. Therefore, it is important to recognize any persistent negative emotions and reframe them with positive emotions for both the good of you and baby. How is this done? It begins with your thoughts and your feelings. We have millions of thoughts per day and can not always change outer circumstances. So, it begins with consistently increasing your positive thoughts and feelings. Let's start with the most common negative thought associated with pregnancy and labor.

FEAR: False Expectations Appearing Real

Fears regarding your pregnancy and labor can come from past circumstances, other's belief systems that you have been influenced by, or our culture and media. Fears that women may have when they think about their pregnancy and labor could be; "Pregnancy will take a tole on my body and my looks", "Labor will be so painful", "So many things could go wrong during labor and deliver", or "Recovery after labor and breastfeeding will be so hard, can I do it?". We all have unique fears based upon our own past, upbringing, and current belief system. What you have the opportunity to recognize is that first you can identify your fears and tame them so that they do not impact the vision and goals you have for your pregnancy, labor, and post-partum experience. When you clearly identify you fear the next step is to tame it. Your fears are like a toddler throwing a tantrum. What is the best solution? You could combat the tantrums with force and domination. You could ignore the tantrums but they only continue on day after day. Or you could approach the child with love and understanding, let the child express their emotion, and then provide a new solution or choice that empowers the child to choose a new behavior and focuses the child in a whole new direction. Which do you think would result in a more peaceful and long-term solution? It is the same for any fears you have. Instead of trying to pretend you don't have them, ignoring them, or thinking that you have to "eliminate them", you can

slowly re-program or turn your fears into faith. By first becoming aware of your fear then you can honor that it is there by not judging it or yourself for having it. Then you move forward and re-program your fear with the exact opposite positive, empowering thought, action or behavior. You call upon your faith and your inner strength as a woman to say to your fear

"I understand that I have you, you do me no good, and my faith in myself and what I desire is letting you rest while I move forward!". Starting with this statement and then putting the daily action behind it will result in you experiencing what you desire in your mind for your pregnancy, labor, and post-partum because you are removing your own roadblocks that keep you paralyzed in fear.

I was close to fearless when it came to myself and knowing what I wanted for my pregnancy and labor. Although, the fear based opinions of others quickly made their way into my life as soon as I verbalized the type of labor and delivery I desired. From the very beginning I knew I wanted a natural home birth with no intervention. It wasn't something I had researched fully yet, all I can say is that I just knew that this is what I truly desired. Everyone from my husband, family, other doctors, friends, and even patients I took care of voiced their concerns and fears about my decision. I knew they truly cared about me and the health of my baby but they still were coming from a place of their own judgment, experiences, and belief systems. So, my solution in turning fear into faith was to first empower myself with the knowledge and resources to support my decision. As soon as my husband looked at the research which supported the safety of a home birth, met with a professional certified mid-wife, and got all his questions answered my support system was complete. My husband was on board and we hired our midwife and doula. From there I continued to feel and exude more confidence about my decision as I educated myself with research, books, natural birthing classes, and a social network of like-minded women and mothers.

Your fears or even the fears of others impact you in ways that you may not even realize. Fear can ultimately turn into doubt and can chip away at your confidence. This is why it is so important to really become aware of any fears that you have in addition to how other's project their fears onto you. Then the most important step from awareness is to take control of the wheel and equip yourself with the action steps,

thoughts, resources, and network of people that support you in your process of turning fear into faith.

Please see Well Pregnancy Journal for instructions on re-framing fears

Pregnancy Gem: *Faith in yourself is the key to unlocking your potential*

Chapter 6: Flexibility

When something out of "your plan" happens in life you have the choice to get upset about it and view it as a setback or you have the chance to see it for what it is, move forward, and learn from the experience. Sometimes we can get so rigid in what we expect and have planned but for whatever reason, because of something completely out of our control or an effect of our actions and thoughts, we are faced with a situation or result we did not expect. During pregnancy, labor, delivery and postpartum you may experience this on either big or small levels. From the spectrum of acne, varicose veins, fatigue, difficult labor to a complicated pregnancy or bed rest, we are not immune to certain challenges. Here is where I will ask you; what would you do or what are you doing in the midst of a challenge? Are you attached to "what is going wrong" or are you being proactive and searching for ways to act and think in ways that move you forward in a healthy direction regardless of the circumstance? Flexibility of mind, heart, and action are integral tools for you as you prepare for the stages of your pregnancy, labor, delivery, post-partum and when you are in the midst of a challenge.

I know it sounds like the opposite of what I said earlier about the importance and results of visualizing, goaling for, and staying intent on what it is you desire. These are important steps and do put your mind, body, and actions on the path of what you intend to experience. At the same time "life" does and can work differently than how you may have defined it personally. Meaning we do get curve balls sometimes. But one or two curve balls do not have to throw our batting average into a tailspin. We might even hit the curve balls out of the park. In pregnancy and in life the gift of flexibility allows for us to stay open, to stay proactive, to become aware, to find our strength and courage, to look for a new way, to love more, and to live our lives as we choose regardless of external circumstances. If a situation or result occurs that you did not expect or was not part of "your plan" you may feel defeated, angry, sad, or even fearful. Don't deny these initial emotional reactions. After that turn on the power of your mind and call on the gift of flexibility. Ask yourself the following questions, what is the worst that can go wrong and ultimately how will I deal with it, what new positive thoughts and emotions can I choose to re-frame my mind to bring me out of this state, what do I have to do to continue to move forward in a healthy direction regardless of the circumstance at hand, and what can I learn from this situation and possibly even help

others with from what I have learned? This last question has the potential to give your life and your experience greater fulfillment than you could have ever imagined. It not only empowers you but it can positively impact the lives of others on a small or very large scale. You have the choice to have a pity party for a day or for possibly a lifetime. Flexibility is taking your confusion or disappointment and guiding it in a new direction of personal clarity. The perfect marriage of determination and focused intention with detachment from the outcome or unexpected circumstances is what I call "The Balance of Life". During pregnancy, labor, and post-partum your emotions, physical body and symptoms, your energy levels, your planning and actions are all subject to change. It is when you stay limber and flexible in mind and body along the path you have set forth with conscious intention that you will find joy, hope, love, and inspiration to go on in "your way" no matter what.

During my third pregnancy I expected for everything to "go as planned". Yes I knew I might experience the first trimester nausea and fatigue that I experienced with my first two but that I could handle it and all would go exactly as I visualized and was familiar with. Then those curve balls came. The nausea was worse than the first two to the point where I had much more weight loss and inability to even function. At first I was angry that I had to experience this level of physical symptoms and that they were now interfering with my life. I was at a hugely successful building point in my practice, my physical activity had been on the level of training for Olympic distance triathlons, I was living the dream of fulfilling my passion as a chiropractor and at the same time fulfilling my highest value as a mother, and I had many new personal and professional goals in my sights. So, just like I explained to you earlier I had the choice to throw myself a pity party everyday or be flexible. So then I asked myself what is the worst that can happen if I take half a day off, rest all morning then do my best at going into the office only in the afternoons? I followed through with this, asked for more help from my husband and nanny and it not only gave me the push I needed to get through my first trimester but it took a tremendous amount of rigidity and pressure I was putting on myself to "do it all". It also aided in relieving my stress levels and brought me out of the states of anger, frustration, and sadness into a much greater state of peace. The second curve ball was during my second trimester when I started feeling better. I noticed large bulging veins down the backs of both of my legs which worsened quickly over a two week period. I thought to myself; how could this happen, I eat almost

perfectly, I exercise, I have only gained 2-3 pounds, I do not sit all day, my mom never had these things and so on. This physical change in my body sent my ego into an alarmed state. I was consumed by the fear of what these changes were doing to my physical appearance and how they would affect me in the future. I was losing total connection with the real peace and meaning of my pregnancy and once again frustrated and angry with “what was wrong”. Again, for about 2 weeks I stayed in-flexible and unconscious. After a discussion with my husband about how this was affecting my behaviors a light bulb came on. I realized that I continually have the choice on how I view and handle this unexpected change in my body. So, I sought out information on what is the worst that can happen and more importantly what are solutions during a consult with a fabulous medical doctor who specializes in vein treatment. That conversation alone brought my ego out of the alarmed state and me back to having conscious and empowering thoughts. I decided after that appointment regardless how bad it gets or if they need to be fixed in the future this physical change was not going to interfere with my joy, peace, and positive emotions for myself and my baby. I decided that I was only creating a story that was taking me in a negative direction and that was bigger than this change in my body.

I tell you these stories because I hope to inspire you with hope and confidence during your challenge or struggle. Perfection is a fairytale we create. Instead why not strive for excellence with flexibility. When you do this you can still be focused, clear and always making conscious choices towards being your best but without the attachment to and pressure to reach perfection. Pregnancy is the most opportune time in your life to focus on what will provide you with joy, health, energy, radiance, positive emotions, and personal growth. I believe that if you can embrace your experience and if you stay open to any and all changes you can expand your gifts of courage, peace, consciousness, confidence, love for yourself, the quality of bonding with your baby, and all relationships in your life. This can be a reward that lasts a lifetime.

Pregnancy Gem: Flexibility is taking your confusion or disappointment and guiding it with a compass to a new path of clarity

Chapter 7: Mama & Baby Connection

You and baby are connected in so many wonderful ways. The most obvious is physically, the baby is inside your uterus and connected to you via the umbilical cord. As your baby grows and develops you start to feel the physical connection. You feel movements, begin to know when the baby is quiet or active, and may even be aware of the different sounds and voices that the baby responds to. You feel the baby “coming to life” and what a special feeling for you when this happens. It is like always hearing about a great performance, even listening to the music on CD, and then eventually getting to go see the performance live. You get to connect what you love in your heart and your mind with what you feel and are experiencing. This physical connection does cause a ripple effect that brings about emotions of excitement, joy, anticipation, and love for your baby. These physical connections are a magical part of the mama and baby connection.

Notice that I stated that they are “a part” of the whole connection. Less obvious is your emotional connection and influence on your baby. This area is not commonly talked about. Very little attention is brought to the fact that our emotions as expecting mothers do influence the baby on many levels. Stress, anxiety, constant worry or fear, and emotions of anger all negatively impact your body. They cause negative thought patterns, possibly negative behaviors in addition to what happens on a physiological level. Examples are, elevation in blood pressure, a rise in stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol, and elevated heart rate. Results of these physiological changes, especially on a constant or chronic basis can lead to fatigue, chronic stress, hormonal imbalances, and high blood pressure. Are you seeing the picture I am painting for you? This cascade of events does not just effect you and your experience during pregnancy, your baby is impacted also.

In a featured article on WebMD, *Fetus to Mom: Your Stressing Me Out* specialists in the fields of perinatology, obstetrics, maternal-fetal medicine, and developmental psychology reported on their research and clinical experience. Dr. Wadhwa, who is a co-editor of a special issue of scientific papers on pregnancy and stress published in *Health Psychology* in 2012 made the following statement based on his research, "At each stage of development, the organism uses cues from its environment to decide how best

to construct itself within the parameters of its genes.". He goes on to state "When the mother is stressed, several biological changes occur, including elevation of stress hormones and increased likelihood of intrauterine infection". "The fetus builds itself permanently to deal with this kind of high-stress environment, and once it's born may be at greater risk for a whole bunch of stress-related pathologies." (1) Most recently, some studies are suggesting that stress in the womb can affect a baby's temperament and neurobehavioral development. Infants whose mothers experienced high levels of stress while pregnant, particularly in the first trimester, show signs of more depression and irritability. In the womb, they also are slower to "habituate" or tune out repeated stimuli -- a skill that, in infants, is an important predictor of IQ. Who you are and what you're like when you're pregnant will affect who that baby is," says Janet DiPietro, a developmental psychologist at Johns Hopkins University. "Women's psychological functioning during pregnancy -- their anxiety level, stress, personality -- ultimately affects the temperament of their babies. (1) This is just one of the examples of how we are looking at the science of how stress impacts the fetus.

Source: (1) <http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=51730&page=3>

In the future, I hope that health care providers in the field of maternal care see the question of "how are you handling stress?" just as important as "how is your water and food intake?".

As you can see your emotional health impacts the growth and development of your baby. The exciting side of this statement is that you have the potential to nurture and provide a healthy, joyful, peaceful, supportive, positive and loving mamma and baby connection. You have the opportunity to give your child the environment to reach their full potential, mind, body, and spirit, starting the first 9 months of their life. Once again your choices in how you think, act, and feel form a connection of optimal health and growth. Or your choices can create a connection that interferes with the true potential of a life growing inside of you. This may sound harsh, but it is time that we wake up to the responsibility and choice we have as mothers to be a guide and provide the environment that can best support ourselves and our children from the start.

Think of the physical and emotional mama and baby connection as a new light

bulb being screwed into a lamp. The light bulb is your emotional connection and the lamp is the physical connection. Both do not work or produce what they were intended for unless united. Once they are then you can see the full power and potential of what each piece has to offer. The first step is to be aware of both of these facets and their impact on you and baby. The second step is to take daily action steps that support you in the process of having more positive emotions and thoughts. The third step is to realize that when we do have emotions of fear, anger, and stress that is how we are choosing to react or feel. It is then in that moment of awareness and acceptance of the feelings we are experiencing that we can empower ourselves. We can re-route our thoughts and actions so that the negative emotion or stress response we are experiencing does not become a chronic pattern that begins to affect both ourselves and baby on a physiological level. We once again through being conscious and aware can strengthen the health, mind and body, of ourselves and baby throughout the entire 9 months. The connections to our baby are formed on many levels. Through our emotions and choices in how we react to life, we as mothers are the guide to what type of connections are formed. You have the opportunity to be the guide to healthy, positive, peaceful, and loving connections during the development of your baby's mind and body.

Please see Well Pregnancy Journal for instructions on re-framing the stress response

Pregnancy Gem: "I give everything its meaning" is a powerful mantra to putting stress in it's place.

Chapter 8: The power of your words

What you say to yourself and out loud is a direct reflection of what you are thinking both consciously and subconsciously. Comments like “I am gaining a lot of baby weight”, “I am so hormonal”, “I look so pregnant”, “I am stressed and overwhelmed”, or “I am such a wimp when it comes to pain, I could never give labor without an epidural” are all self-defeating statements that reinforce your mind in the negative direction. Your words are powerful. Let me say this again in a different way; your words are a broadcast that signals your mind and body to define what they are. Are the words you use and say about yourself describing a victim of pregnancy and all the woes that come with it or are they describing a healthy, positive, vibrant, confident and loving woman who has embraced pregnancy and all that comes with it?

The words you use are a direct link to the thoughts you are thinking. Pay close attention to what you are thinking in the background. Meaning, are you constantly comparing yourself, thinking of future situations out of fear and worry, or putting yourself down in destructive ways? I can relate. Some of the background thoughts that were being broadcasted by my words through even my third pregnancy were, “I wonder if people think I am getting fat or that I am pregnant?”, “I can’t handle this nausea, it is ruining my life”, and “I am not as powerful in my career now that I am pregnant”. I would catch myself saying these statements in many different ways to myself and others. Each pregnancy I got better at either keeping the words to myself or masking them in such a way that no one may have even noticed. It wasn’t until it was brought to my attention by my best friend and husband that my words were self-destructive. Because of a great conversation that we had it truly brought to light that I was portraying the image of a healthy, positive, glowing pregnant woman who did all the right things but I was continually using key phrases and words that were revealing negative thought patterns that I was thinking about myself and my pregnancy.

What are you saying to yourself or out loud? First pay close attention to your words. Be aware. Your awareness of your words will help you discover the thoughts you have been thinking. Now, if you are o.k. with these thoughts and you are satisfied with less than optimal results and experiences throughout your pregnancy then don’t change a thing. Otherwise, you can begin to choose new words which lead to new

thoughts which lead to a new healthy version of yourself and joyful pregnancy. When you start with changing your words it is like jumping on stage and acting for the first time. It feels a little forced, new, possibly even un-believable to your mind. You are actually doing something new that your mind and body, thoughts and actions, have to catch up with. You are consciously and actively changing the habits you have always been comfortable with.

So, what I am talking about here is doing affirmations throughout your pregnancy, and I hope throughout your life. What are affirmations? They are affirmative declarations that state, in the present tense, who you are, what you intend to experience, and the qualities that align with the best version of yourself. So let me give you examples of my affirmations I state to reprogram my mind in the direction I want it to go based on the self-defeating statements I told you about earlier. My affirmations: My body is in a period of beautiful change and growth, I am temporarily gaining the perfect amount of weight for the health of my baby, I have a healthy baby growing inside of me and my body is doing exactly what it needs to do right now to have a healthy pregnancy (reframing the nausea), I access the great power of love and harmony that I now have as a woman who is pregnant and take this power as I do the best job I can everyday in my role as a chiropractor and business owner. Shorter affirmative statements are; I am vibrant, I handle all stress gracefully, I honor my body, I am confident and beautiful, and I am choosing healthy habits today that support the growth of my body and my baby. Just reading them is most likely making you feel more positive. The best use of affirmations is when they are said out loud, first thing in the morning and daily. Why, because you are telling yourself repetively what you want and intend. Saying them first thing in the morning directs your thoughts in the way that you desire so that when “life happens” that morning or throughout your day you already have put you coat of armor on. When done regularly, just like getting up on that stage for the tenth time, you no longer are having to calm your nerves and try to remember the lines while looking natural. Your statements become a part of who you are. They re-direct your thoughts and actions in a new way. The way that nurtures the true potential and the joyful experiences that are available to you. You don't have to settle for less but you do have to put in the work to go in a new and positive direction.

Doing your own personal written affirmative statements will subtly change your

life and your experience throughout your pregnancy, in labor, and post-partum. You can create new statements for each phase described above. It is most beneficial if you start these affirmations at least 60 days before the next phase. Meaning, write and begin saying affirmations for your labor the beginning of your second trimester, and of course sooner if you want to. Baby can also greatly benefit from affirmations. Remember the mamma and baby connection we explored in the previous chapter? Affirmations said out loud to and about your baby create a positive environment, energy, and connection that can't be measured. At least not at this time but maybe in the future. There are no rules. All you have to do is write your affirmative statements so that have a personal, energizing, motivating, and heart felt meaning. Your affirmations are your guide posts to keeping the health of your thoughts and mind on track. Have fun with them. They will truly become who you are and what you experience throughout your pregnancy and beyond....

Please see Well Pregnancy Journal for instructions on writing your affirmations

Pregnancy Gem: *What you say is a painting of who you are and the pregnancy you are experiencing. Use words of power and positivity to paint a spectacular experience.*

Chapter 9: Your labor and delivery

Before you approach your estimated due date you probably have lots of thoughts swimming through your head. You may be wondering “what’s it going to be like?”, “can I handle the pain?”, “will everyone cooperate with what I want during my labor?”, “will my labor be long or short?”, or “how will I feel when I see my baby for the first time?”. You may be experiencing feelings of excitement, wonder, and fear all at the same time as you approach your labor. Whether it is your first labor or a consecutive labor each brings with it a sense of “what will it be like?”. We don’t know for sure how our labor may go or how each stage of labor may pan out but what we can know for sure is how we prepared ourselves for labor. How we experience labor is in the mindset and preparation that we have chosen to have well before labor begins. For example, if you have let the fears of “this will be so painful”, “I am such a wimp, can I really do this” or “I am all alone in this process” overtake your thoughts about labor then you already have two strikes against you. On the other hand if you have been meditating on and visualizing a birth that you stay calm and relaxed, you have a support team (nurses, doulas, family, doctor, etc.) that will be there at your beck and call while meeting your every want, and you envision the environment for birth that supports you best, you will already go into your labor more relaxed and confident. If you have let yourself experience feelings of excitement, self-confidence, trust, love, and clarity you will have built a strong foundation for your mind and body even before you go into labor.

The easiest thing to remember before and during birth is that you can choose fear or love and acceptance. Fear or love in how your body begins to prepare for birth just weeks before and dread or acceptance as you go through each stage of labor to birth your baby. You will still have the experience either way but the empowering thing is that you get to choose how you will experience it no matter what. I have talked to women whom like myself have had three hour all natural births and I have heard the stories of women who have experienced 12-24 hour labors with lots of trials. The common thread through each labor is that the woman felt confident that she did her best, and was joyous of the outcome no matter what when she honored her intuition throughout labor, did the best she could, had an amazing support team and went into the labor with love and acceptance. Versus the common thread that I sadly

and often hear from the woman who are happy with the arrival of their baby but are not so thrilled about their experience. These women have told me they felt a feeling of self-defeat, experienced birth interventions which led to her disappointment, had a team of nurses or docs that did not respect and honor her wishes and labor process, and experienced feelings of my “power was taken away”. The other common theme in this less than ideal experience is when I asked further questions or knew how the woman prepared for labor it was often the following scenario. The woman went into labor unconscious and unprepared both mentally and physically, she decided to leave it up to everyone else to “get the baby out”, she did not see herself in charge and as an active role in her own birth, she did not prepare a birth plan or was not specific on the type of birth and environment she wanted, and had a lot of fear going into the process. Not to say that a positive mind set, proper preparation both mentally and physically, a great birth plan and great support team is always a guarantee for the ideal birth and birth experience but it does result in your peace and clarity that you did your best and you were honored as a woman. What that alone brings to your experience and how you go into future births because of your experience is what truly matters the most.

So, what can you do first? First become totally aware of your thoughts and feelings about your upcoming birth. Second, examine each aspect of your birth to determine what it means for you and how it is getting you closer to your goal, a beautiful healthy baby. For example, I have started pre-labor two to three weeks before each of my children were born. I experience contractions (sometimes keeping me awake most of the night), widening of my pelvis and pubic bone area (which feels like lightening shocks), back pressure, and burst of energy followed by periods of fatigue. I truly get excited when I experience each of these changes, pleasant or not, because I know that my body is preparing and doing work for me now that will make my birth go easier. I honor and accept the changes even if it takes weeks. I become commander and chief of my birth environment and support team weeks before. I communicate to them exactly how I want the environment, how they can best support me and what I will do as an active role in my birth. I let them know to help me with effective breathing, remind me to relax my entire body while the contractions are doing their work, and to not disrupt “my zone” that I mentally get into as active labor begins. These are my keys to empowering, peaceful, and beautiful births. You have to find

yours. You are responsible for the consciousness, preparation, and emotions you bring to your birth. If you choose not to actively participate and prepare mind and body then you may or may not enjoy the experience, it's a coin toss. The most important thing for you to know is that you do have a choice and how you prepare and view birth is up to you. The outcome of holding your baby at the end no matter how he or she arrived is magical and monumental all in itself. But you can't erase the feelings and how you experienced your birth after delivery. It will stick with you and impact you and baby more that you know after the magical moments of seeing your baby for the first time are gone. I know this because I have heard the stories, I have seen the tears on women's faces, I have seen how the mindset of women's view of birth has shifted to one of fear and dis-empowerment. On the flip side I know women who have experienced total satisfaction, personal growth, feelings of empowerment and joy, and nothing but a feeling of "I did it and had an awesome experience!" In my heart all I want for you and all women is to trust and honor your inborn strength, love, and power to experience and give birth. The magic of your labor and birth is in how you experience it which is determined how you prepare for it both mind and body. None of us can control birth or every outcome but we can lovingly and actively guide the path of our births. One woman and one birth at a time....

Pregnancy Gem: *Your labor and delivery is your grand opportunity to welcome your baby into the world with peace, love and grace*

Chapter 10: Conscious Pregnancy

I have talked a lot about being aware of your thoughts and feelings during your pregnancy. There is one specific word that encompasses what it means for you to be aware and awake to your thoughts, feelings, actions, and results. That is *consciousness*. Consciousness can be thought of much like alertness. Have you ever been driving down a major street and totally forgotten to turn into the parking lot of the grocery store to which you had decided to go to? You just kept driving by in a daze then to realize; where am I going? At that moment you were thinking of something else to the point that you were totally un aware and not alert to your pre-determined destination. Now magnify this example and apply it to your life. Consciousness is simply being awake and alert to your thoughts and the decisions you make. At every moment of every minute of your life you can either be asleep or awake to the fact that you are either making decisions and taking action from a place of “automation and past habits” or a place of awareness and intuition. When you are conscious you make choices throughout your day based on your highest values, what is best for you and others, and what simply feels right. Pregnancy is a time when we as women naturally become more conscious. Because we now have a reason to be aware of how we are taking care of ourselves for the protection of our new baby growing inside, we wake up to how we are living our life.

Pregnancy is a wonderful time to examine your level of consciousness in your life. Have you just been surviving in life and making choices to just get by? Now you may be examining how you really feel about the choices you are making or will make each day of your pregnancy. You will reflect on how they will impact you, your family, and new baby now and in the future. I call this “waking up to your life”. Every choice, habit, thought, and action carries with it the level of attention you have given it. You can bring love and care to the choices you make throughout your pregnancy or you can go on “auto pilot” and let your past, your culture, media, friends and family dictate your choices. Being conscious of what fuels you for a healthy and joyful pregnancy comes down to being alert and attentive to what supports you everyday in everyday. Meaning you get to decide what it is that you really desire and then just be aware during each day of your pregnancy to what you are thinking, saying, and doing to match up with your desires.

My consciousness radar is turned up and tuned in during my pregnancies more than ever. I have loved experiencing a whole new level of alertness to how I am living my life during my pregnancies. It sticks with me and I know I have grown as a woman and mother because my consciousness radar was turned up for 9 months. I become even more awake to my nutritional choices, my vitamins and supplements, reducing toxic and unhealthy foods, maintaining a moderate and healthy level of fitness, and noticing and enjoying what really matters most to me in my life, which isn't stuff. I also truly nurture my inner peace and balance in order to reduce stress. I know that being conscious everyday in all of these areas results in a better pregnancy and a the healthiest possible environment for my babies. When I am not conscious you bet I see and feel the consequences. Irritability, fatigue, increase symptoms of nausea and others appear in my life. Fortunately I wake up to the fact that I have not been conscious of my thoughts and actions. The negative feelings or results that happened are because I resorted back to being stressed, not taking care of myself, or just simply got out of balance in an area of my life; "I went on auto pilot". So a conscious pregnancy for each and everyone of us is like taking a magnifying glass to our life. Specifically our thoughts and actions in how we take care of our mind and body. Like building up your fitness level you can build up your level of consciousness. One thought, one action, one day at a time.

Pregnancy Gem: *Pregnancy is a time for you to awaken to explore and polish your temple; your mind and body*

Chapter 11: Therapy Through Writing Your Memoir

Have you ever looked at a particular problem in your life for so long and felt stuck with no way to solve it? You may be experiencing the same fearful thought, stressor, or negative emotion over and over. Or you may have a circumstance happen that has caused you to have a whole new perspective in regards to your pregnancy and baby; positive or negative. Either way you may be experiencing new emotions, fears, or thoughts that you would benefit from just “getting out”. Journaling is one of the most cost effective and cathartic therapies you could give to yourself. At the same time you record your deepest thoughts and important parts of your life for your child or children to read one day. Let’s face it our children want to know who we really are and what we are really made of. You sharing all of your strengths and weaknesses lets your children see the real you and who you are a mother and a woman. We all learn from each other. What a gift we can give as mothers to our own children. Our thoughts and perspective during pregnancy and birth could give our children great insight, education, and inspiration as they embark upon these times in their own life. Our journals could positively impact all our future generations and their thoughts on pregnancy and birth.

The easiest and most simple thing about journaling is that there are NO RULES. You can do short daily journals, one monthly journal, written journals, video journals, and anything else you want. The point is to just do it. Now, even though there are no rules to journaling there are definitely ways to get the most benefit out of your journaling. The first is to BE REAL. Let it all go in your journal writing. Write or record your true feelings and emotions. Talk about how they have impacted your life and what lessons or insights you have gained. Journal about your fears and setbacks but also journal about your dreams and solutions. Use your journaling process to lay out your “problem” if you have one and then use it to move forward with your insights and new found perspectives. When journaling you will guide yourself to the solution and the release that you needed. Why? Because there are no filters with journaling. It is you time to bring total awareness to what you would like to journal about and then to release it when and if you are ready.

Journaling during the week of my expected due date literally turned my whole birth experience around. I want you to see how REAL you can get with yourself in a

journal entry and what it can really do for you. So, read my most inner thoughts during a trying time in the last weeks of my pregnancy;

Journal Entry; March 8th 2011

What a roller coaster of emotions. I stopped adjusting at the office and called it my last official day on Friday, March 4th. I had completed all major projects, checked almost everything off my list for the birth and was mentally ready to “switch gears”. I went to the midwife on Friday the 4th and stated “check me I am ready to have the baby”. I found out I was 2 cm dilated and 50-75% effaced. Okay I thought here comes baby! Well today is March 8th. Lots have happened; pre-labor signs every day. I even have had what I thought was labor, but everything stops. I did hit a turning point emotionally yesterday. I became disappointed, not in you but that I had not “achieved labor” yet. You see your mom is wired to achieve. After a great talk with your Dad last night I realized that the past 4 days have been about my definition, expectations, image, and yes, control, of your birth. I chose to feel defeated, less than perfect, and let down that I had not given birth yet. And the fact that I didn’t know what to do with myself. I felt purpose-less all of the sudden. I told your Dad I shifted to a low place and I didn’t like it. I also knew in my heart that now I was “officially” creating resistance in my mind and body and this really could affect not only when you come but our total experience together during your birth. That is the furthest from what I wanted. So thank God and my deep connection to God I became aware of the path, mentally, I was starting to go down. A path led by my ego, my trap of image and achievement and my fear of not looking perfect. Wow, what a blessing to realize this! With the help and coaching of your Dad, total self-awareness, being humble to my own shortcomings, prayer and meditation, I broke through and now am on a new path today and everyday leading up to your birth. I have let go of my ego’s expectations and fears of failing. You are the only thing that matters so I will Be and Do what supports peace, excitement, joy and contentment in my mind and body. Whether it is just for today or an entire week. I am in a new and wonderful place. I am full of gratitude and love for you. Whatever amount of time you need before you arrive I am completely at peace with. I wake up each day with a purpose and that purpose is to live my day from a place of

love and excitement. I will not just stop what makes me tick; working on my pregnancy blog and book, things for our chiropractic office, planning and preparing, working out, enjoying "me" time, and spending "present" time with Reese and Boston. I realize that I went from 90 mph to 0 mph in regards to my purpose, my habits, and my focus on having a joyful and conscious life and pregnancy. I am now back "on" from a new place of acceptance, non-resistance and joy.

Yes I am ready for you and your beautiful birth and at the same time I have no attachment to WHEN. I live my life today and everyday ANEW because everyday is a blessing and an opportunity to experience joy, to grow as a person, to spend time with the ones I love, to learn or do something new and to take actions that will benefit me and others in the future. What an awesome opportunity this has been to discover my own strengths, weaknesses but most importantly my awareness of how my thoughts are something I choose and deeply effect my life.

I am now aware and conscious of the thoughts and actions I choose that support my joy, internal peace and gratitude, healthy habits (mind & body) and excitement (yet non-resistance and rigidity) for your arrival!!

*Namaste-
Mamma*

Body

Chapter 12: Move your way to a healthy pregnancy

Our bodies truly crave movement. Think of how you feel after sitting all day. Maybe stiff and lethargic? Pregnancy is a time when this is no different. Once again we can use pregnancy as an excuse. We can decide to “take it easy” and avoid any unnecessary activities. Or we can do activities and exercises that give our bodies the movement and stimulation that they need to stay healthy, fit, and strong. Aside from a true medical reason or health concern, activity and exercise is very beneficial and in my opinion a must if you want to feel your best throughout your pregnancy and have a speedier recovery. Just think about it. Your entire body and hormone system is changing to grow a baby. Your posture, ligaments, and muscles all have to adapt and carry your baby for 9 months. Your body is asking you to work for not only you but a baby now. Then follow this by what I call your “Olympic Event” or birth. Birth is the most physically rewarding demand you will place on your body for an undetermined amount of time. Meaning you could have a short labor or a long labor. Either way your body will need physical strength, flexibility or stamina that only you can prepare it for.

So just imagine if you have a job like most Americans do where you sit at a desk for 6-8 hours per day. You only get up during this period to eat lunch, go the bathroom, or take a short walk to the printer. On top of this you do no other activities or exercises outside of this 6-8 hour work day. You do this for 9 months and then expect your pelvis to be able to expand and shift properly in the last weeks of your pregnancy to prepare for baby's optimal birth position and birth. In addition now it is time for the “Olympic Event” and you need your body and pelvis to be as flexible and non-rigid as possible to help you and baby have the best possible birth. Because just millimeters of movement and alignment of your pelvis and sacrum make a huge difference in a faster and easier birth a sedentary lifestyle will greatly impact your birth experience. So you can see by this illustration that “not moving” will affect your birth experience and not allow your body to work for you the way it could if you had been consistent with your exercises, activities and stretches.

“I should exercise”. Please erase that sentence from your vocabulary. Instead let’s think about the consequences and benefits of exercise for you. Then you can decide if you “will” exercise during your pregnancy. Consequences could include but are not limited to, loosing muscle mass which makes it much harder for your “figure” to bounce back after pregnancy. You may experience decreased strength and stamina which bubbles over to feeling constantly fatigued or easily fatigued after activities of daily living. Decreased body strength and stamina also could also impact your labor and post-partum recovery. Your physical body may start showing unhealthy signs like a rise in blood pressure, swelling, or blood sugar imbalances. Let’s switch gears to benefits. Benefits you could gain and experience with regular movement and exercise are, but not limited to, gaining a healthy amount of weight and no more. Some women even with a perfect diet and regular exercise gain 20-30 pounds while others like myself only gain 15 pounds. It is not about the scales. If it is truly only the healthy amount of weight that your body needs for pregnancy then you will lose that weight with greater ease after the baby is born. Other benefits are maintaining your muscle mass, strength, energy, confidence, and total physical health. This then translates into a more fit and flexible body for birth. I promise you after going into three births being physically fit, flexible, and healthy, I have complete validation that taking care of your physical body during pregnancy **MAKES A DIFFERENCE!**

For safety reasons I do have to talk about standard recommendations on exercise during pregnancy. It is usually recommended that if you have not been on an exercise program before you got pregnant not to start one during pregnancy. The problem with this is that this can be taken as a ticket to being a couch potato. It is more helpful if a woman is educated that there are different levels of fitness and exercise. It needs to be explained that it is not wise or safe to begin an intermediate to advanced fitness program during pregnancy if a woman has no to little history of any regular fitness program. Instead of writing activity or fitness off altogether for a pregnant woman with such a history it could be explained that increasing activities of daily living and beginner levels exercises and stretching programs can be implemented. For example, parking at the end of a parking lot and walking extra steps to a building, taking the stairs versus the elevator or escalator, walking for 15-20 minutes, riding a recumbent bike for 15 minutes, swimming for 15-20 minutes or taking a pre-natal yoga class are all safe, beginner level activities that almost any woman in her pregnancy could

incorporate 1 to 2 days per week and work up to 3-4 days per week. Once again, barring any health concerns, activity and exercise are GOOD for a pregnant woman's body and can serve her well.

Now for those of you who have been incorporating fitness into your life or are addicted to fitness like myself then continue on. It actually may be harder for you. Why? You may feel significant changes like fatigue and nausea during your first trimester or longer. Trust me I have been there, it makes it much harder if not impossible to continue at the level, duration, frequency, and pace you may have been accustomed to. It is your body's own self-protective mechanism. Your body is changing and adapting for your baby and your pregnancy. So honor this process and let it go. Let go of your need to exercise at the level you "were" and enjoy fitness at the level you "can". Your fitness routine now has a different goal. To keep your body healthy and fit for pregnancy and a faster easier post-partum recovery. Just remember that every time you exercise, even if you are not seeing visible changes or are frustrated by a decrease in your normal fitness level that you are maintaining the health and fitness levels. It is under the surface, you just can't see it. Oh, but you will when post-partum begins and you see your fitness levels and body come back three times as fast compared to if you had done nothing.

There are actually days where you may feel like doing "nothing". I encourage you to do "something". Unless it is truly a needed and planned "day off" from your fitness routine then incorporating whatever your desired choice of activity for just 10-15 minutes. This will help boost your energy levels and will keep you in the healthy habit of exercising regularly. Let me share with you how my views on fitness quickly changed during pregnancy. It wasn't until my third pregnancy that I really honored what my body needed and understood how fitness impacted my health, my body, and my total experience. Before my third pregnancy I was hitting the gym or the pavement 6 days a week training for Olympic distance triathalons. Exercise has always been what I considered a hobby and I always have truly enjoyed it. To me it has been my "me" time.

The intensity of my exercise regimen came to a screeching halt six weeks into my first trimester because of the fatigue and nausea. So, for the third time I found myself at

a crossroad. Do I quit exercise all together because of the way I now feel? Or do I continue on at a new pace with new goals in mind? I chose the latter. But different from the past two pregnancies I chose to embrace were I was and have a positive mindset about lowering my intensity. I chose to honor my body and completely trust that I would re-gain my fitness level back after baby. And, the best part is I once again reaped the benefits of exercise throughout my pregnancy, during labor, and in post-partum.

The keys to sticking with an exercise program is to first feel confident in the exercises you are doing, Whether it be walking, weight training or yoga you must feel that you are doing them in the way that is best for you while you are expecting. That is where the second key of surrounding yourself with the proper support system or resources comes in. A fitness trainer, fitness classes specific to pregnancy, a walking group, pre-natal yoga classes or dvd's are all great examples. The third key is choosing exercises and activities that you enjoy. Remember exercise is for your mind and body. Finally, the most important key is to plan and schedule. Meaning sit down on a Sunday and literally pencil or program in your "fitness" times and activities for your week. It is easy to let life take over and not put you first. Scheduling your exercise program ensures that you will accomplish this component of a healthy pregnancy. Your body and your mind crave movement. Your confidence, inner and outer strength, and your energy will soar if you just move it!

Please see Well Pregnancy Journal for instructions on pre-natal exercises and stretching

Pregnancy Gem: *Movement is your fuel to a healthy and energized pregnancy*

Chapter 13: Nutrition for mom and baby

Cravings, aversions to once loved foods, or new sensitivities to foods are all very real and common during pregnancy. Your body and its chemistry changes drastically and with that comes a whole new world in your eating desires and habits. That is actually how I knew I was pregnant all three times. Coffee took on a whole new smell and foods that I ate daily didn't appeal to me any longer. Shifts in hormones and nausea may give your nutrition a whole new meaning. Yes, the way you feel about certain foods may change but the principles about good nutrition do not change. For example you may have an aversion to animal protein with pregnancy but that doesn't mean you don't have to ditch it altogether. You could start consuming a combination of plant based proteins to get the adequate amount of protein you need for a trimester or the duration of your pregnancy. Also, you may crave more sugar than you have in the past but that isn't a green light to fill up on doughnuts and ice cream. What it can be though is a time to explore new foods and snacks that are tasty and contain fiber, natural sugars such as honey, agave, or brown rice syrup. Pregnancy is the most important time in your life to examine WHY good nutrition is key for you and baby. It is also the most important time to consume nutrient dense, chemical free, and natural foods so that your pregnancy and your baby can be as healthy as possible.

This chapter is really about what you can do to provide a healthy environment for you and baby from what you eat. Optimal nutrition ensures that all essential nutrients, such as fats, carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins, and minerals, are a part of your diet each and every day. Optimal, as I am defining it for you is clean, "whole" (natural and chemical free) and nutrient packed. Why? Because optimal nutrition is essential for normal organ and nervous system development for baby, normal hormonal balance for you, and for overall healing of the body. Yes pregnancy is a normal state for the female body but is also an additional stressor. An increase in nutrition, vitamins and minerals are required to meet the needs of pregnancy.

Dr. Tom Brewer found that through more than 30 years of research that each day, pregnant women need a well-balanced, high quality diet that includes 80 to 100 grams of protein, adequate salt (sea salt), and water, as well as calories from all the food groups. This should supply the 2000 to 3000 calories/per day that a pregnant woman

needs. Typically for the average, healthy woman this is a 300 calorie per day increase in her normal diet.

A study conducted at Harvard University found that by eating at least 75 grams of protein per day, pregnant women could prevent diseases of pregnancy such as preeclampsia (metabolic toxemia of late pregnancy). It is really very simple, the more high quality protein that you are eating the less low quality sugary, processed carbohydrates you will fill up on. When protein is eaten with a carbohydrate (preferably a high quality one like brown rice, a whole wheat product, or vegetables) then you feel fuller faster and longer. Without adequate protein your energy and your blood sugar rides a roller coaster and leaves you hunting for quick sugary carbs. It is also common knowledge that folic acid prevents neural tube defects. So, these are just a couple of examples of how nutrition impacts both mother and baby. *With my pregnancies I naturally gravitated to a more "paleo based diet". The bulk of my diet was clean meats like chicken, beef and turkey, lots of veggies, fruits, nut butters, gluten free pancakes/waffles, and coconut milk. It was amazing that when I filled up on these foods I had little to no room (literally) for sugary snacks. It wasn't that I put sugar off limits it's just that my body did not crave it or have any room for it. It was also great because I already had great eating habits to support me in my post-partum recovery, nursing, and getting back to my ideal body composition. But still what was the most important was that I was giving my babies the healthiest start possible through my nutrition and reducing as much chemical exposure to them as possible.*

The foods, drinks and snacks that you intake on a daily basis are going to directly and greatly impact your body composition, your energy and your baby. From fatigue to serious medical issues like gestational diabetes your body will reflect how and what you eat. We all fall off the "good nutrition wagon" at points in our pregnancy but what matters is how long you delay in getting back on the wagon. You have to find the top 3 to 5 motivating factors to make good nutritional choices 80-90% of your total diet. It could be to feel better, look better, have more energy, to ensure the proper amount of healthy weight gain, to optimize bouncing back post-partum, and any healthy meaning that you give it.

First define your motivating factors and then you can create a healthy shopping list each week to ensure that you have all the foods and snacks available that are power packed with good and natural nutrition. Think of your shopping list this way; list foods that are whole, natural and come from nature. Fruits, vegetables and nuts are the most obvious natural foods right from nature. Other foods such as meats, milks, condiments, and packaged items still can be natural foods but label reading is required. You want to seek hormone and antibiotic free meats. Organic can be a very good option for any of the examples listed above but if you are not able to buy organic meats, milks, veggies, fruits or packaged items then read your labels! Understand that the more preservatives, chemicals, hormones, coloring, corn syrup, etc., that you are exposed to then the more toxicity that your entire body and baby is exposed to. The other major food to watch, know its exact source, and ensure that it is heavy metal free is fish. You are better off taking a high quality, purity certified fish oil than consuming fish that is not 100% clean.

In addition start exploring restaurants that offer healthy choices with natural ingredients. My favorites are Chipolte® and Crazy Bowels and Wraps®. If you are not sure just ask the chef what the ingredients are in the foods and if they have any artificial ingredients such as MSG. Remember knowledge is power. So be proactive in reading labels, examining different brands, and finding out how foods are processed. You are the chief in command in regards to what goes into your body, what nutrients baby receives and what toxic chemicals your body has to filter. Feel and be empowered to only let what nourishes you and baby to enter your body.

Below are food categories and examples optimal sources of nutrition for each category:

◆ **Proteins – Hormone & Antibiotic Free Chicken, Beef, Turkey & Eggs, Edamame, Wild Caught Salmon, Raw Almonds or Walnuts, or Tofu**

◆ **Carbohydrates – Brown Rice, Potatoes, Whole Grain Pastas, Crackers, and Bread, Whole Oats, Quinoa, and Gluten Free Products**

◆ **Fats – Olive Oil, Avocados, Grapeseed Oil, Organic Coconut Oil**

Let me share my nutritional journey from my three pregnancies. I can truly say they were identical in how I felt starting at 6 weeks into my pregnancies until the day I delivered. *As I referenced above how I knew I was pregnant all three times was the way foods tasted and smelled. In addition to the daily nausea that kicked in at 6 weeks and lasted until the middle of the second trimester my nutrition took on a whole new meaning. I gravitated more towards carbohydrates, had a very hard time eating breakfast, could only eat animal proteins in the evening, tolerated absolutely no sugar (even natural types), and had an all new aversion to raw veggies. The first trimester was always about getting by the best I could with the foods I could actually tolerate. Even if it was a food such as plain pasta that I could tolerate at a meal then I would choose a pasta like Barilla Plus that contains more fiber and plant based proteins. Since I couldn't tolerate raw veggies or smoothies for the first trimester I kept steamed veggies on hand. Basically I did what I could to eat as healthy as possible. It was no where near where I had been with my nutrition but I was able to get back to a more nutritious diet in my second trimester. Then the other issue of heart burn and inability to eat large portions began. Once again I just modified when and how much I ate. Because I moved to more frequent smaller meals it was essential to plan my shopping list and have healthy foods available. My pregnancies became a time where I examined food labels even more and got really creative with simple yet healthy meals and snacks. My top healthy nutrition motivators were for the health of my baby, for my own appearance and energy, and to ensure that my recovery would be as optimal as possible.*

Top 5 Nutritional Gems For A Healthy Pregnancy

- ◆ Ensure you are eating an adequate amount of protein at each meal and snack to reach a range of 65-80 grams of protein per day

- ◆ Read all food and drink labels; avoid artificial ingredients, additives, and chemicals

- ◆ Plan your snacks and meals for the week in advance

◆ **Consume sea salt in your diet while avoiding processed sodium (table salt)**

◆ **Don't let more than 4 hours go by without eating a healthy meal or snack that contains protein and a veggie or fruit**

Please see Well Pregnancy Journal for instructions on more nutritional tips & strategies

Pregnancy Gem: Let your foods be the building blocks for a healthy pregnancy & baby!

Chapter 14: Body Balance

Pregnancy will absolutely put your body's balance system to the test. What is your body's balance system? It is a very complex system, but simply defined it is your spine, your pelvis, and all the ligaments and muscles that support your structure. Hormone fluctuations, past imbalances of your feet, hips, and posture, in addition to the growth of your baby all take a toll on your body's balance system. Throw in a little of life, sitting at a computer all day, holding other children, a fall, or yard work, and quickly your body has to adapt. This adaptation could be tension in your muscles, instability of your ligaments or joints, and misalignments of the joints in your neck, back or hips. Your imbalances may then appear as pain and discomfort, difficulty walking properly, decreased strength and stamina or even interfere with your baby's positioning. Your body is your baby's vehicle. Specifically, if your pelvis and hips are not in symmetry then the ligaments that attach the uterus to your pelvis have to adapt by becoming tense at their attachments. This then can interfere with optimal uterine tone which then may impact the ability of your baby to get into or maintain the proper head down position for birth. Malpositioning of your baby, whether in utero or during birth makes it much more difficult for you and baby. Malpositioning in utero may result in increased pressure on your lower back or sciatic nerve, and improper forces on the baby's spine. Malpositioning during labor increases the likelihood of a more difficult labor and medical intervention such as c-section, forceps or vacuum. If your pelvis is out of balance and or baby is not in the optimal head down with the back of the head in the anterior position (front), labor and delivery now have obstacles.

So, how do you know if your spine and/or pelvis is out of balance and then what do you do about it? Your brain and body are connected via your nervous system through your spine and lower pelvis. In addition to that your pelvis is the structure to which your uterus (baby's house) is anchored. Any imbalance of your spine and/or pelvis will cause nerve, muscle and ligament imbalances. Imbalances of your pelvis specifically can cause what is called "asymmetrical uterine tone". Meaning the tone of the muscles of the uterus may become tight on one side and create an imbalance of where the uterus attaches into your spine and pelvis. If you feel pain in your legs, back or neck, pain into your hips or groin (round ligament area), your nervous system is relaying the message that you are out of balance. Also, if you suffer from headaches, leg

cramps, difficulty with normal activities such as bending and walking, your spine and pelvis most likely is in a state of imbalance. Your baby's position, especially critical at 30 weeks and beyond is another indicator of body balance or imbalances of your pelvis. Meaning if your baby is breech, transverse, or posterior at any point in your pregnancy then imbalances of your pelvis and the uterine attachments to your pelvis may very well be present. Stated differently, if baby is not able to get into the optimal head down position then it is possible that an imbalance that you have in your pelvis is interfering with your baby's optimal positioning for birth on a physical level. A common scenario I often see as a chiropractor, specializing in pregnancy, is that a large percentage of women have no perceived signs or symptoms of pelvic imbalance yet they have significant problems. Because women are now being proactive and researching ways to have a natural birth and the healthiest pregnancy possible, many women research the benefits of chiropractic care during their pregnancy and seek a chiropractic evaluation. This is when I often find that women who have no pain have very similar imbalances that women with pain or fetal malposition have. So the moral of the story is that ANY woman can benefit from knowing if she has imbalances of her spine and/or pelvis. And then, once fully educated, empower herself with the benefits of chiropractic care throughout pregnancy and even postpartum.

Yoga, general stretching techniques, massage and chiropractic care are all great approaches to imbalances of the spine and hips. With pregnancy you want to make sure that you are seeking guidance or care from resources or professionals listed above that specialize in pregnancy. Talking with your OB or Midwife is another great way to get a great referral to one of these professionals and at the same time creates a cohesive team that is working together for you. I have found both personally and as a chiropractor that a combination of these approaches started at the beginning of pregnancy gets the best results. Starting a stretching, chiropractic and massage program regularly and early prevents so many of the common "pregnancy ailments". In addition to these forms of body balancing care it gets you in the routine of taking care of you. By taking care of you first, you then are better able and fully equipped to take care of everyone else around you. You reap the benefits of decreased stress, decreased pain and improved stamina and health. Your power as a woman and a mother has to be maintained and nurtured. Taking care of your body balance system will also ripple out into positively influencing the life of your baby. Your pregnancy, labor, and recovery will be greatly impacted by your choice and actions to take care of the balance of your physical body.

Let me share with you how these techniques have impacted me and hundreds of patients over the past 8 years. *During my first pregnancy I was a newly practicing chiropractor. Because of my pregnancy and my profession I quickly became thoroughly interested in learning about how the alignment of the spine and pelvis affected pregnancy and labor. I began researching chiropractic techniques specific to pregnancy and yoga. I began utilizing them myself and continued them throughout my pregnancy. I then became certified in the Webster Technique (a specific chiropractic technique for pregnancy). Over the next five to six years my practice grew and the number of pregnant women I helped also grew rapidly. Time after time, woman after woman, reported to me how they truly felt their chiropractic care and the stretching exercises I had recommended really helped them throughout their pregnancy and labor. For me, the proof was really in the pudding when second and third time moms who had not had chiropractic care their first pregnancies but did during a following pregnancy noticed remarkable differences. Most women, except for special circumstances, noticed an overall better pregnancy, and decreased labor time. For myself, during the second and third pregnancies chiropractic care and yoga became essential. I was holding more children on one hip, adjusting more patients, and just dealing with an overall busier life in all dimensions. If I did not take care of my body then I do not believe that I could have sustained working, exercising up until the day I delivered and accomplished 3 all natural deliveries in a 3-5 hour time period.*

You may find more information, resources and research on chiropractic care and family wellness at www.icpa4kids.org.

Please see Well Pregnancy Journal for instructions on pre-natal stretching

Pregnancy Gem: Remove the resistance to your optimal pregnancy and labor by keeping the balance.

Chapter 15: Stamina

This chapter is for when you are in your third trimester. So if you are not yet feel free to read but make sure you come back to this chapter a few times when you are in your third trimester. Stamina is the name of the game for you now, both mentally and physically. You may feel bursts of energy at points throughout your third trimester or you may feel fatigue quickly set in with what has been your normal routine. Either way you still are weeks away. So what can fuel you through this time? What is and what is to come. Meaning, enjoy that you still have two free hands, more time to rest (even if you have other children you still have more down time than when your new baby is here) and more time to prepare your home for an ideal transition post-partum. What you have now is time and a great excuse that almost everyone understands and will support you on which is “I am about to have a baby”. So some “you time” wherever you can get it has a much greater chance than when your baby arrives. It is something that took me three children to learn, “ask for help and support”. I thought I had to be super woman even the week of my estimated due date and “do it all”. Now I look back and am a little sad that I missed out on the opportunity in my third trimester to slow down a little bit, ask for help and take care of me a little more before my big job of caring for a new baby began. I hope that you take this perspective and advice to heart. You will never regret the extra energy that you put towards yourself before your next transition into motherhood for the first time or tenth!

You also have the future to motivate you. It is often called “nesting”. You may find yourself wanting to organize, de clutter, and make simple updates in the spaces of your home. When you make room for the new and simplify your home you will have more space and less clutter (mental and physical). You will also have fewer distractions when you are baby mooning in those first 4 weeks. So you could make it a goal in your third trimester to organize your home and have everything prepared so that you can coast for weeks or months after baby is born!

Examples

- **Tackle one room in your house per week and get rid of anything that you do not want or use**

- Get all the baby's clothes hung, washed and put away
- Also if you have other children go through their closets and make sure you put/give away anything that is too small and get their drawers and closet ready for the season/size that they will be in once baby arrives
- Prepare what you will need post-partum, put into organizer baskets and place baskets on every level of the house you would be in (middle level, basement, upstairs)

Pregnancy Gem: The finish line may seem so far.... Change your focus and pace those last miles so that you can enjoy what is after the finish line...

Chapter 16: The Big Event!

Weeks before your labor and delivery you will begin to feel “ready”. At first it is an excited ready. Then it becomes a more serious “see it on your face” ready. Finally you transition into “It is time!” ready. You may have fears. Know that this is natural, even if you have done everything you possibly can do to prepare yourself. Honor your fears yet have faith in yourself and the unknown. When the real “transition” of labor begins you will know it is time to focus on the present moment and all that you can do to birth your baby. What is “transition” like? It is the time when nothing else matters but you, what you are feeling, and your birth process. If you have chosen to have a natural birth without medical intervention (Pitocin and/or epidural) then your birth team is integral and will be there to assist you. But, know that you will still be in “your own zone”. If you do choose an epidural still know that you are just as involved and powerful in your labor and birth experience. If have a situation where you begin birth but a true emergency arisis and a c-section is the next step then know once again you did all you could to birth your baby and some circumstances are out of your control. You may have a birth that goes exactly as you planned or there may be detours that still get you to the end goal, which is holding your baby in your arms. Birth can be beautiful, hard, rewarding, and a true test of conquering your fears all wrapped up in one.

Every woman has a different birth because even though it may sound the same every woman goes into birth with a different mindset and also experiences labor differently. So it is never a one size fits all. That can actually ease your mind when you are hearing about birth horror stories weeks before your labor. You can know that this is YOUR BIRTH and that you may not know exactly how it is going to go but that you will have your own unique experience and you are entitled to it! The best advice that I could ever give a woman is don't put pressure on yourself no matter what type of birth you have planned for. Also to be in the moment, every moment of your labor. Why? Because if you filter out any distractions and just stay with what is happening you will know what to do. You will feel so empowered by this....in the moment and after you have birthed your baby. Your best birth experience can be when you combine a little Super Woman with a little Mother Theresa. Birth is the art of being empowered and being humble and faithful to the greater plan. You will understand this best when you experience it. So look forward to your labor and the birth of your baby!

Pregnancy Gem: Your greatest job and honor in life is bringing a new life into this world so honor that the greatest honors in life take focus and work to get them. Ahh, but the honor is priceless.....

Chapter 17: Life give us life

After I wrote what I thought was the last chapter in this book during my 4th pregnancy I miscarried. I miscarried around 8 to 10 weeks. My fourth pregnancy was a surprise. It had taken me about three weeks after I found out to really accept that pregnancy with my whole mind and body. It was a challenge in itself. I had my own plan, my own agenda, and another pregnancy was not a part of my plan. And...with much patience, prayer, and tough and unpleasant, but “must face it and see the beauty of it” talks with my husband, we embraced the pregnancy. My husband stuck with me and constantly gave me examples and reminders of what life is really all about; love and family. I felt like such a fraud! Here I was this chiropractor and mother who had a passion for helping pregnant women, babies, and families and I was strongly resisting another pregnancy. Furthermore, here I had written this book on conscious and natural pregnancy yet I couldn’t wrap my heart and mind around the joy of a new life. But, what I wrote about in this book went from “tips and experiences” during pregnancy to “mission critical”. Meaning, I knew I must look at my own fears as scary as they were and I had to get help and support from others. I had to journal to release my deepest thoughts, feelings and emotions. I had to exercise to release the stress hormones that were building up because of my own repeated stressful thoughts. I had to regain peace, or I knew that my attitude, emotions, and beliefs about that pregnancy would interfere in some way, shape, or form with the life expression of that baby. I really never thought I would miscarry. I had three natural and uneventful, healthy pregnancies. I thought the same for this pregnancy and that is why I knew it was “mission critical” to use the tools that I wrote about in this book to turn myself around, for me and baby. I did...and that was when I finished what I thought was the last chapter. I was about three weeks later when I found out we miscarried. That was a tough time personally. I really had to face my good side and dark side. My husband and I hit a major tipping point in our marriage right after the miscarriage. With heart felt communication we came out of that point renewed. Little did we know that we were renewed for a new life to come. I look back and realize that struggle did surround that pregnancy on both ends but we were determined to have faith, love and communication and that is what we were left with after. We were left with a more loving marriage, a greater appreciation for our own children, and a process of personal growth, which is not always fun or easy.

So as the story goes on....we did not elect to get any form of permanent birth control and decided to utilize a natural rhythm method. Well...what I believe was a recipe of my body's own innate desire to become pregnant, an unexpected early ovulation, and possibly god's own plan, I got pregnant within three months after my miscarriage. What was amazing is that after a bit of initial shock, we quickly embraced this 5th pregnancy. It was completely different this time. Yes, I had to use all the tools again to get through the first trimester nausea and fatigue. Once that passed at week 12, we heard the heartbeat, and saw the baby via ultrasound we could take a deep breath and now celebrate! We could tell friends and family and begin the process of having "Another Well Pregnancy". I close this chapter in my 5th month and am clear that "life gives us life". A life whether it stays or goes give us something. When I let go of my fears, expectations, and embraced life my life was renewed in multiple ways. So can yours! If you have one child or ten, life will give to you. See those gifts and embrace them. They may show up as the children you hold in your arms or the gifts left in your heart and soul from a child that passes. That is a hard one to accept...but just maybe at some point you can see that life as a gift. Look hard to see what gift was left or has been impressed upon you by that life.

Pregnancy...your pregnancy has the opportunity to show you what really lies inside of you. As I learned, and I am sure will continue to learn, is that life much like pregnancy may not go exactly as we planned. But, with conscious effort, faith, love and support, we don't have to deviate too far off our path. It just gets bumpy sometimes. Then we can either find a better path or get right back on our track. I will once again use all the tools and resources I have given you in this book and pregnancy journal to create the birth I envision. I hope you do the same. Though most importantly is that I can truly say that I am not only preparing mind and body but that I finally get that pregnancy and birth isn't just something we "prepare for" and "accomplish". It is an experience that connects life to this world and our spirits. I hope that you feel even just some of what I am saying and learn this beautiful lesson through my words and experience. I hope that you have a beautiful, and life giving, journey through pregnancy and motherhood!

Chapter 18: The Birth of Completion

It was March 19th 2015, Gianna Maxine's (our 4th baby) official estimated due date. As usual my contractions started after dinner dishes were put away. My contractions progressed after we put our other 3 children to bed, and I was assured they were sound asleep. Contractions were less than 10 minutes apart and I thought to myself "here we go". I told Jay, my husband, to go to sleep and rest and that I would wake him when I needed him. This is when my night took a major detour. It was 10:30 pm and I got up to do a little pacing in our nearby living room when all of the sudden I began to think about my life and what was to come. It was like a movie started playing before my eyes and it wasn't a fairy tale. In one massive rush all of my fears and personal insecurities surfaced in one scene. I had the following thoughts and pictures of; not being a good mother to four children, being completely un-fulfilled in "just being a mother and a wife", being bitter and regretful in "giving up or stepping down" from my calling of being a chiropractor and partner in our health and wellness clinic, and simply not being happy, fulfilled, and successful in achieving my dreams as a mother, woman and professional. I literally brought any labor I was having to a screeching halt! I went so deep that I was scared of my own emotions at the time. I was scared to bring Gianna into this world and felt so discouraged as a mother and woman. I laid awake until 3 A.M. processing my emotions and trying to reframe myself with every positive thought and affirmation I knew. Well...it didn't work. I finally cried my eyes out and passed out from exhaustion at 3 A.M. I woke at 6 A.M. to talk with my husband before the kids got up and our morning routine started. After a talk with my husband and later that morning my best friend and business partner, Olivia, here are the realizations that I came to that I hope you can pull from to help you at any stage in your pregnancy or even post-partum.

- I first have to face my emotions and understand what they are trying to tell me. If I continue to run from them they will eventually show up and will disturb my peace until I embrace and understand them.
- I can choose the roles and facets that I juggle in my life. I don't have to hide behind one role, like I felt like I needed to with being a mother of now 4, and make the excuse that I need to give up another role that is

important to me. I don't have to give up being passionate and dedicating time to being a chiropractor. For you it may be a profession, a hobby, a vocation, ect.

- I (you) have to be real and authentic with what my (your) purpose is on this earth. If it is to be solely a mother and that is what you know to be true in your heart then that is what is right for you. If it is to be a mother and work outside the home in a small or large capacity then again, you will find a way. Work or children/motherhood can both become a curtain to hide behind. They can, if you let them, become an excuse to not pursuing your dreams in all areas of your life.
- We have blissful moments, like when you birth your baby and hold him/her in your arms for the first time, but life is not continual bliss. Meaning life goes back to normal. That is what I saw playing out for me post-partum; me unfulfilled and limiting my own potential by thinking that I am not capable of being a new mother again and continuing to put effort into another important role in my life.
- When I define what I am passionate about and make all efforts to not give up then my capacity will naturally expand for the roles I value and that authentically give me joy. This is what truly can fulfill us and make us better women and mothers.
- No amount of time, material wealth, or THINGS can replace true inner peace. Material things can and never will fulfill the living out all the necessary facets of life that we have PERSONALLY defined for ourselves.
- When I (you) take personal responsibility for exactly where I (you) am right now, I can then begin to re-define the future. Meaning, stop blaming everyone else and know that only you can change your path to being a better mother, being fulfilled and creating the life that you dream of.

These are the awakenings that I had over a 12 hour period before the birth of Gianna. I thank God for the emotional rollercoaster and the “reality movie of myself” that I got to view. It was not easy. But, I am so thankful because I now can define and face what I am feeling and shed any resistance that may have interfered with what I believe will be the most beautiful and spiritual birth yet....I can also go into baby mooning and postpartum with a new vantage point. I can start to re-define myself as a woman and mother. I can take small but monumental steps to yes “juggle” all the facets that I want in my life. Even if there is more chaos because of it, as long as I am pursuing what is most fulfilling to me and serving my family then then I will find a way to make it work. So can you....find your path, start your journey, and enjoy the ride.....

Please stay tuned to Gianna Maxine’s birth story in which will be the first chapter in

My Well Post-Partum
Coming Soon!

Conclusion

The suggestions and perspectives outlined in this book can and will help you to the degree that you embrace them. You may embrace all elements of this book or only certain perspectives hit home with you. Either way the journey is yours. I pray and hope for every woman that she has the chance to know that she does have a choice and a voice throughout her pregnancy and during her birth experience. I believe that when this happens more and more we will see less complications in childbirth. I believe that we will see more peaceful births, less post-partum depression, and healthier babies. Who knows what positive ripple effect this could create.

I will end with the thought that we as women and mothers are the cornerstone of the way our societies and communities function as a whole. And...it all begins with the pregnancy and birth experience. So anchor to the thought that your pregnancy and birth do matter and the way you approach them also really matters. Be conscious, be free to choose, and love what you are now contributing to the world.

With gratitude and love....Whitney Hamed