

BUILDING A POSTPARTUM WELLNESS TOOLKIT

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THIS IS FOR YOU

BUILDING A POSTPARTUM MENTAL WELLNESS PLAN



Being a new parent can be overwhelming. The focus of this booklet is on you, as opposed to the things that you will do for your baby. This booklet is for you to intentionally set up how you want to take care of your mental health as a new parent. In order to be **resilient** in the postpartum period, we need good community support, realistic expectations, and tools for self-care to help the feelings that come up - what truly helps us heal is to make space for them and learn from the hard feelings as well as the easy ones.

This guide is made to help you to reach that resiliency - so that you can embrace this new narrative and stage in your life, endure the challenges as well as embrace the joy of new parenthood: You can live the life you love.



OUTLINE

Things to look for
Restorative Healing
Sense of Self
Village Support
Attachment
Rhythm and Balance
Self-Care
Birth Story Healing
My Plan

THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR

Here are 9 signs you may need to use your plan *

1

HARD TO GET
UP IN THE
MORNING

2

THINKING
SCARY OR
RACING
THOUGHTS

3

EXCESSIVE
CRYING AND
WEEPINESS

4

DIFFICULTY
BONDING WITH
BABY

5

CHANGE IN
APPETITE

6

INTENSE
IRRITABILITY
AND ANGER

7

SEVERE ANXIETY
AND
PANIC ATTACKS

8

FATIGUE AND
INABILITY
TO SLEEP

9

WITHDRAWAL
FROM OTHERS

PILLARS OF RESTORATIVE HEALING

REST

Slow down! We need rest to be resilient and replenished; this is the foundation of our self-care; what can be outsourced so that we get rest that is needed; how to stay in bed as much as possible. Self-care is not selfish!

BODY

Healing the body helps shift into this new phase of life; loving touch is also healing; exercise and body work are helpful ways to heal; as a new mom your body is your instrument so take care of it as you can How about a daily bath?

NUTRITION

Nourishing foods that help us heal and adjust to life after having a baby are crucial; food also serves as a tool for energy balance and mental health support; you can prep meals ahead of time or outsource

MIND

How we think about ourselves (our inner dialogue) matters; how we tell our stories; what our values are; intentions for ourselves; be creative, learn self-regulation tools to help with stress, overwhelm and hard feelings

SENSE OF SELF

When we become parents, we experience a rite of passage called **Matrascence** - the transition of becoming mothers. You don't have to identify as a 'mother' to also experience this transition. It helps us adjust to this new identity when we can make meaning as a new parent, and be mindful of what our purpose is as a parent.

With this new role, we can be faced with impossible expectations - both our own and others. Pay attention to those assumed ideas, as they can lead to a breakdown in this new role (oftentimes coined Maternal Role Collapse).

Set realistic expectations and practice self-compassion as it is hard work to be a parent. What can you do to help you live the life you love? Think of ways you were raised. What would you do differently, or the same? Who else took care of you, and what do you want to take from them as you begin this journey as a parent. Share some of your intentions below.





VILLAGE SUPPORT

It's true what people say about needing a village. We are social creatures, and so we were never meant to parent alone. As social creatures, we need support and guidance, and also reassurance that we are not alone. It's imperative for our mental health to build a village that speaks our language. Asking for help is vulnerable and crucial. The right help can make all the difference. Know who you can reach out to when you need a hug, cry, rant, or share a laugh with. Who is in your village of support?

Contact and guidance from wise women is an especially helpful support as they can help us see that we are not alone in this struggle, and can be anchors that ground us. Find a community that speaks your same parenting language. It is not enough to have support if their values and priorities are not aligned with your language.

ATTACHMENT

“Children don’t experience our intentions as their caregivers, no matter how heartfelt. They experience what we manifest in tone and behaviour.”
Gordon Neufeld



New and experienced parents can benefit by learning more about the benefits of attachment-based parenting. There are 6 stages of attachment: proximity, sameness, belonging, significance, love, and being known that take up to 6 years to establish, as it's based on child development stages. It's all about attuning to your child - Keep things simple in first 40 days after baby comes home so you can focus on the bond (i.e. stay in bed, skin-to-skin, find ways to connect). Some attachment-focused tips include:

- A) Be the **Alpha** - Know that parenting is hard and full-time work! We are meant to be their guide.
- B) **Bridge** gaps, say hi and bye - exaggerate them. Bridge the distance so that can focus on re-connection i..e when saying good night, also add 'see you in the morning!'
- C) One on one time to **Cuddle** each day - in morning, and evening. Babies cannot be spoiled - to hold them means to love them, cuddle them helps with bonding (stage of proximity)
- D) **Dedicated** time together - have children help choose daily special time together, and an adventure/vacation
- E) **Eyes Smile Nod** to get attention - connect before you direct. Make sure to get their eyes + smile + nod first if you need to get their attention; we need to connect before you direct a child
- F) Tears of **Futility** - while it can be hard and even triggering to see our child cry, we need to help them learn perseverance and that we carry them through any of their feelings.



RHYTHM

You don't need to be over-scheduled but rather find a routine and rhythm that works for you on a regular basis. Think of it as your daily medicine or vitamin to get to your desired feelings.

You can do this in several ways - find ways to incorporate care for self into your day. It's a good practice to start with a morning ritual that sets the **intention**. It can be a breathe exercise, journal or mantra you say to yourself as you take a shower. List some ideas here:

Set down some anchors that can help you be mindful in the present moment; this helps us stay in tune with what we need. Think of leaving a tea cup out to remind you of filling your cup, or look for rainbows in the everyday magic of life. What could be your anchor?

Create **space** for yourself - make your home inviting so you can stay still with yourself.

Get daily access to nature - everything is better outside! Your brain will thank you. Aim for 10-15 minutes (research shows that's how long your brain needs!)

BALANCE

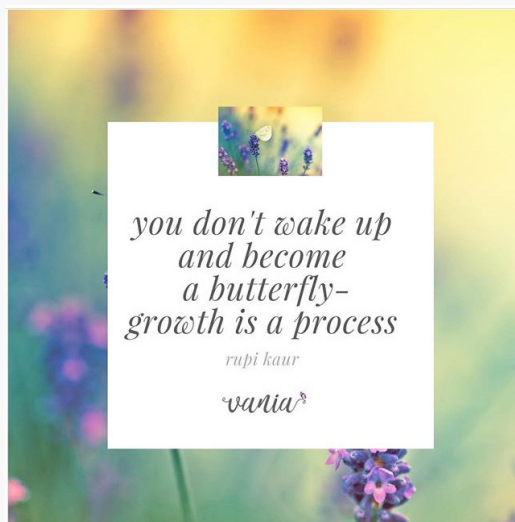
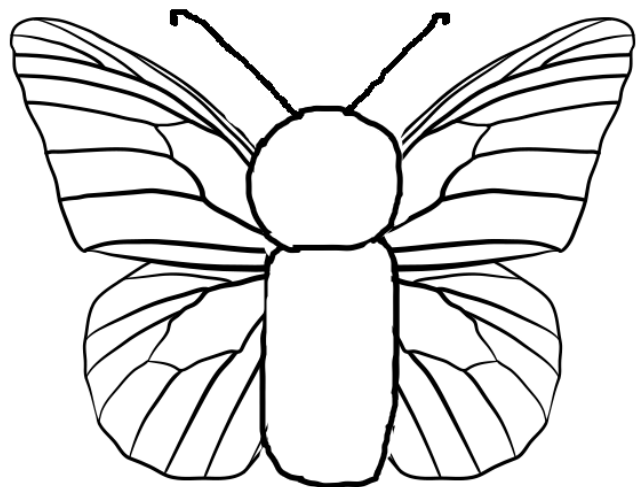
What do you do for yourself that gives you a boost, how can you give yourself a full embodied balance? Use this worksheet as a guide.

Mind - i.e. therapy, read for pleasure or to learn, creative outlets, mindset, affirmations, self-compassion, radical acceptance

Body - i.e. physical exercise, dance, rest, drink water, have nutritious food, pelvic physiotherapy, massage, acupuncture, bath, getting dressed for day

Spirit - i.e. intuition, faith, nature, everyday magic, sanctuary, journal, values, intentions, mindfulness

How do you connect to external parts of you? Think of your community, family, friends and how you might contribute in a compassionate way to your collective.





SELF-CARE

What are some ways you can bring in acts of self-care:

Radical - Think of what helps me create boundaries that honour what i need (this form of care helps me to say no to what I don't want to do):

Restorative - What brings me JOY and lingers in my body after doing it (the more i do this, the better i feel):

Reflective - What makes me feel better when i am having a hard time (this activity helps me sit with this feeling):



BIRTH STORY HEALING

Since the process of giving birth is a major rite of passage, we need the space to be able to unpack it's story. Making time to intentionally process the birth of your child is very healing. This is true for all births, and not just ones that are seen as traumatic. "Birth Story Medicine is an uplifting and guided personal-growth process that brings insight, resolution, and healing after a difficult or disappointing birth." Pam England

MY PLAN

self-care

attachment

Take some time and think of ways you can put a plan in place* that is all your own - you are your own expert after all! You deserve to live a life you love.

healing

birth story
processing

village support

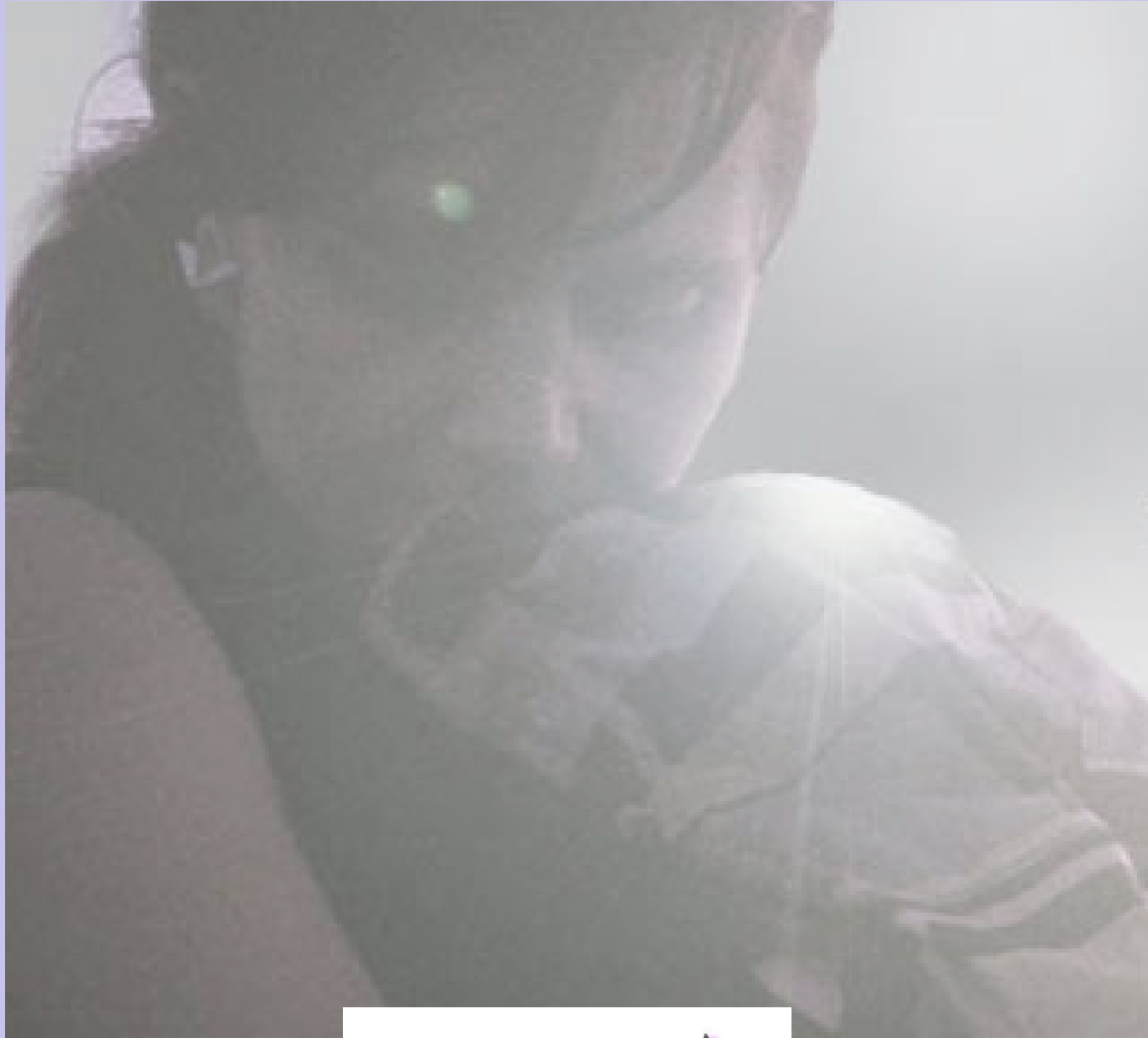
sense of self

rhythm and
balance

* don't overwhelm yourself - just think of one thing for each area

with your
wellness
in mind

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