

# BUILDING A POSTPARTUM RESILIENCE TOOLKIT

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# THIS IS FOR YOU

## BUILDING A POSTPARTUM RESILIENCE WELL-BEING 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. Postpartum wellbeing is influenced by the parent's strengths and resilience. Depression and sadness may get in the way of bonding with the baby, which then decreases confidence in one's ability as a parent.



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 that is also aligned with our values, realistic expectations, time to our Self, 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 resilience - 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.

Please note that this booklet is for information purposes only; it is not meant to replace medical or therapeutic support. If you are currently struggling, please seek professional support.



# OUTLINE

Things to look for  
Pillars of Postpartum Resilience  
Restorative Healing  
Village Support  
Sense of Self  
Attached Parenting Plan  
Rhythm and Balance  
Self-Care  
Emotion Regulation Resources  
Birth Story Healing  
My Plan



# THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR

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

**1**

HISTORY OF  
DEPRESSION  
OR ANXIETY

**2**

LACK OF  
SUPPORT

**3**

LACK OF  
POSTPARTUM  
PLAN

**4**

EXCESSIVE  
CRYING AND  
WEEPINESS

**5**

DIFFICULTY  
BONDING WITH  
BABY

**6**

CHANGE IN  
APPETITE

**7**

INTENSE  
IRRITABILITY  
AND ANGER

**8**

HARD TO GET  
UP IN THE  
MORNING

**9**

SEVERE ANXIETY  
AND  
PANIC ATTACKS

**10**

FATIGUE AND  
INABILITY  
TO SLEEP

**11**

WITHDRAWAL  
FROM OTHERS

**12**

THINKING  
SCARY OR  
RACING  
THOUGHTS

\* please note this list is not exhaustive and is for informational purposes only; please also see professional help if needed  
The first 3 are the most common risk factors of PMADs

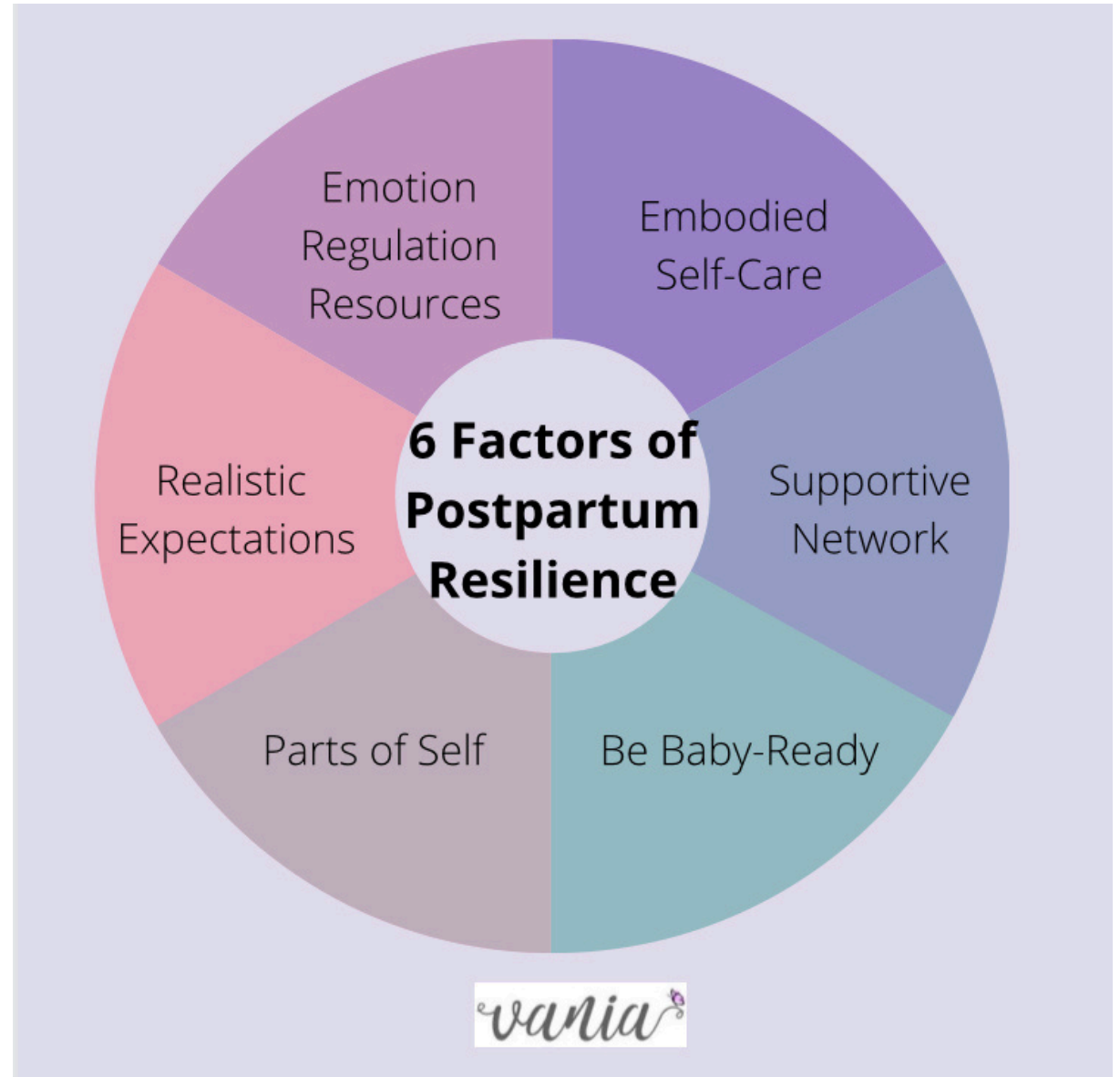


# POSTPARTUM RESILIENCE

Adapted from Olivia Scobie

We need to integrate this new role and identity into our life. It takes recognizing the separation from our own identity (of Maiden, or not a parent yet) to transition into the messyness of this new life. And that takes time before we can integrate or incorporate this new identity into the rest of who we are. That needs resilience that comes from internal and external resources and supports.

Becoming a new parent is not innate and we can build resilience and capacity. Here are some ways to do it. Looking at the 6 pillars, what might you need to do to prepare for each of them?



# 5 UNIVERSAL NEEDS

Think of these like a hierarchy of needs, and no one person can defy them – they are the foundational needs to restore yourself after giving birth.



Nature is the best guide and reminder to slow down, be present, and honour the natural course of life. It also is a beautiful testament of soul vitamins and experience of awe, joy, and mindfulness.

We are not meant to be parents in isolation. We are social creatures and need community to help us adjust to any new transition and part of our life. Find ways to ask for help or even to have contact with others.

New parents who just give birth need to be held and cared for like their babies; cuddle, receive massage and be loved. This is a form of contact nutrition and helps oxytocin to keep flowing.

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.

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!



## 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. 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. 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.



# SENSE OF SELF

When we become parents, we experience a rite of passage called **Matrascence** - the transition of becoming a mother. 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.

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 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).

We all need to time our Self, so we can gather our thoughts and visit the other parts of ourself that are also important. Time to ourself is not selfish but rather a necessary reset to be able to keep going.

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.



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# ATTACHED PARENTING PLAN

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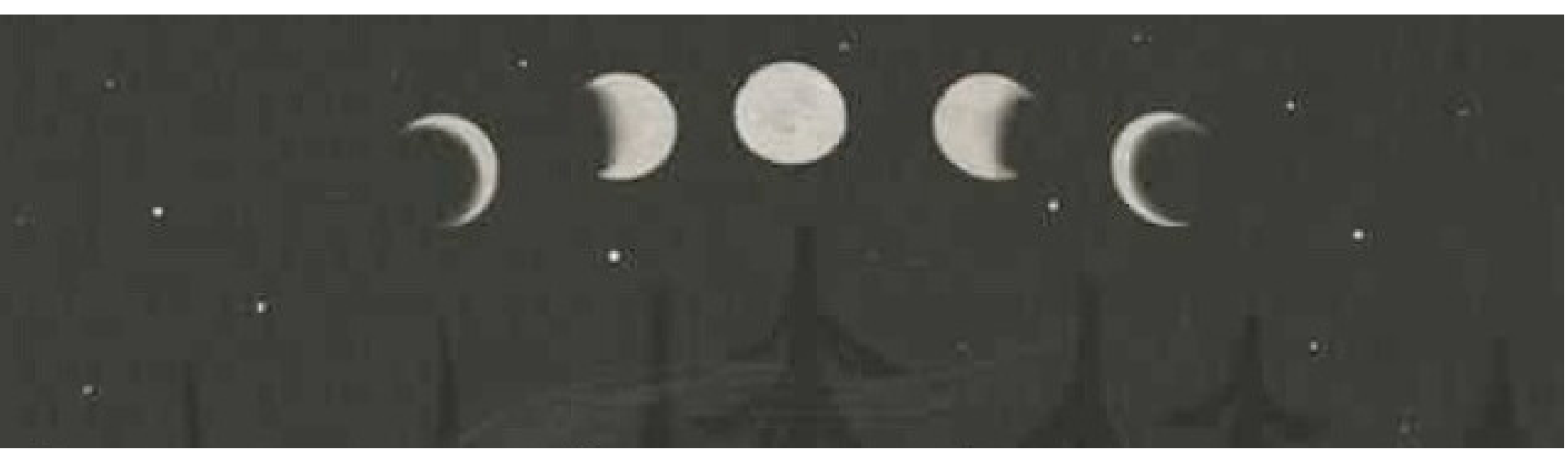
“Children don’t experience our intentions as their caregivers, no matter how heartfelt. They experience what we manifest in tone and behaviour.”  
Gordon Neufeld



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 – it takes a few years for children to truly attach well to us. To get your started off right, 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.

\*Please note that these tips are based on attachment theory and styles, not Attachment Parenting, which is a form of parenting lifestyle. One suggestion is to learn more about your own attachment style to see how you may practice it to build a bond with your own child.



# 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:

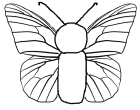
Set down some anchors that can help you be mindful in the present moment; this helps us stay in tune with what we need. Think of leaving a tea cup out to remind you of filling your cup, or look for rainbows in the everyday magic of life. What could be your anchor?

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!)

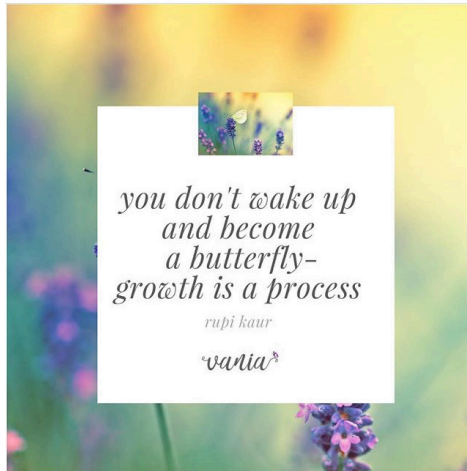


# BALANCE



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** – As complex mammals, one of our gifts is having a wise mind – the balance of logic and emotions. i.e. therapy, read for pleasure or to learn, creative outlets, mindset, affirmations, self-compassion, radical acceptance



**Body** –Healing the body helps shift into this new phase of life; exercise, movement and body work are helpful ways to heal; as a new parent, your body is your instrument so take care of it as you can. i.e. physical exercise, dance, rest, drink water, have nutritious food, pelvic physiotherapy, massage, acupuncture, bath, getting dressed for day

**Soul** –Becoming a parent is a pivotal rite of passage, and is supposed to be done in community and ritual. i.e. intuition, faith, rituals, nature, everyday magic, sanctuary, journal, values, intentions, mindfulness

# Helpful Resources for Emotion Regulation

## PLEASE NOTE

These tools do not replace therapy or more ongoing support

## YOU ARE YOUR EXPERT

Take time to find the resources that help you. Keep them handy nearby.

*There are many resources and exercises to help boost your mood, offer emotion regulation, and provide coping in a more sustainable way. Here are a few that can be a good fit for you.*

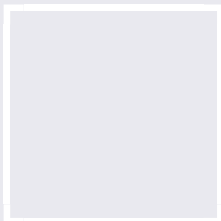


## Window of Tolerance

Track to see what level of regulation is in your body right now. What do you need to get back into a window of capacity or 'tolerance?' Are you hyperaroused or activated - go for a walk, drink cold water, splash water on your face, or throw a ball against a wall. Or maybe you are hypoaroused and low - have a warm shower, call a friend, drink a copy of soothing tea.

## Box Breathing

Inhale for 4



Exhale for 4

## BOLD Decision

Breathe  
Observe  
Listen  
Decide on what is right based on your values

Source: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

## How to Catch a RAINBOW



This is a resource I created that helps when you are feeling low. It is based in mindfulness, somatic resourcing and self-compassion

- Relaxation exercise
- Radical Acceptance
- Image that Grounds You
- Do something Nice for You
- Breathwork
- One Activity Outside
- Drink or be with WATER

## NESTS

\*Source: Oscar Serrallach: It can be used for years to come, to address postpartum depletion and more

Nutrition

Exercise and Movement

Sleep and Rest

Time to Self

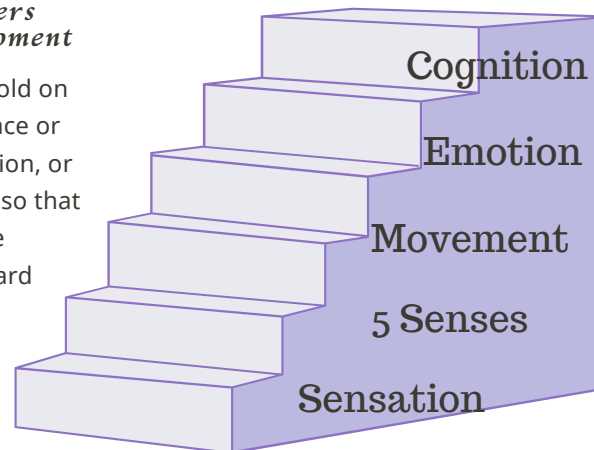
Support System



## Core Organizers for a Good Moment

This is how we hold on to a favourite place or memory, a vacation, or a glow moment, so that we can feel more resourced in a hard moment.

\*Source: Sensorimotor Psychotherapy



## How to IMPROVE your Mood

Find an IMAGE that soothes you right here right now

What is the MEANING behind the feeling or thought

Say a PRAYER, mantra or affirmation to yourself

Do one activity of RELAXATION right now

Focus on ONE thing at a time

Take a mental VACATION to a happy place or time

Connect with a person who ENCOURAGES you

## Bring JOY In

Try to find things to do each week that bring you joy - it can be music to play in the background, a quick dance party, a call to a friend, a funny show, or quiet time in a bath or journaling.



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# SELF-CARE

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

**Radical** - What helps create boundaries that honour what i need (this form of care helps me to say no to what I don't want):  
Think of saying No to other's requests, not going to more outings

**Restorative** - What brings me JOY and lingers in my body after doing it (the more i do this, the better i feel):  
Think of that nap, bubble bath, or massage we all hear about

**Reflective** - What makes me feel better when i am having a hard time (this activity helps me sit with this feeling):  
Think of a journal entry, booking a therapy session, or reading a good self-help book





# BIRTH STORY HEALING

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Since the process of giving birth is a major rite of passage, we need the space to be able to unpack its 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

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# MY PLAN

self-care

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.

parenting  
plan

5 universal  
Needs

birth story  
processing

village support

sense of self

balance


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





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I am a Registered Psychotherapist who focuses on perinatal mental health, birth trauma, the transition into parenthood, and helping others to build resilience. As a Feminist Therapist, I am also a trauma-focused therapist, and work in the intersection of former trauma and parenting. I believe you are the expert in your life, and work from an trauma-informed anti-oppression framework. I am honoured to support women and new families, so that you can live the life that you love.

Check out my website if you want to sign-up for the monthly Building your Resilience Toy Kit newsletter or to join our private Facebook group!



*Helping you live  
the life you love*

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