



Post Partum Planning

for a beautiful Babymoon

BY ERICA LIVINGSTON



Expecting families these days are told to make their 'birth plan.' I'm sure you've heard of it. This can be anything from a bullet point list of what they want labor and delivery to look like to a detailed many-paragraph physical manifestation of their perfect birth-story-to-be. I believe this is a wonderful task for families to do as it gets them thinking about their choices, options, and helps them to visualize their birth in a beautiful context. However, it is not the final step.

Laying the foundation of nurturing care, holistic nourishment, and endless rest and support in these precious and fleeting first few months with your new baby can set you and your whole family up for a beautiful future full of love and support.

My dream for expecting families is that once their birth plan is completed they move right into their postpartum plan, or as I like to call it "The After Baby Plan." Other beautiful words for this plan and this time are Sitting Moon, Babymoon, Mama Moon, Lying In, Sitting Month or The 40 Days. It's a time of rest, usually mostly in the bedroom, where bonding, healing, and nourishment are the primary focus. When explaining this to the families I am supporting as their postpartum doula I say this, "Most people spend lots of time on planning their wedding and forget about the marriage; the place cards are a really big deal until it's the day after the honeymoon and your trying to learn how to live, relate and coexist together—having a baby is no different, most people spend a lot of time planning the labor and birth and do very little thinking about all that follows, which is essentially the rest of your life."

So planning for your postpartum period and first months with this new baby can be a lifelong investment for not only Mama but the family as a whole. With just

a little time, thought, and organization you can set up a time for yourself and your family to heal, rest, and bond in a supported and nourishing environment.

Here's a quick guide to making the most of the precious first weeks with your new baby:

What You Want and How Long

The first thing to think about is what an ideal babymoon looks like for your family. In some cultures this time is 21, 30, 40 or even 100 days. Deciding how long your family can take this time is a huge first step in prioritizing your health and healing. Some common questions to answer are: How long is my maternity leave? How long will my partner be able to be home? What obligations can we outsource? (i.e. laundry, meals, housework, community obligations) Your Sitting Moon can be anything you want it to be. It all depends on your resources, planning, and vision. Just like a honeymoon, you want it to be beautiful and memorable in the best of ways.

Rest

The importance of sleep in the first few weeks is so paramount to healing and enjoying this time. Sleep when the baby sleeps is no joke. And even though you try your best, sometimes even the tiredest parent can't shut their eyes at all. Knowing what helps you fall asleep is great and it's better to starting to think about it now rather than on day four of no rest. Herbal teas like chamomile and lavender are known helpers, a warm cup of milk and soothing sounds or even a valerian

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tincture or rescue remedy flower essence can be of assistance for some. Rest is of value at this time too, so if you can't sleep

rest. I've heard people say "don't wear pants for the first week after you have the baby" and I think that's great advice as it

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encourages you to stay in bed or at least relaxing. Sleep deprivation with a new baby is common but most families are not prepared for the shift in the way sleeping will change. Have a discussion now about ways you can support each other to get "protected sleep" or as we call it in my home "Golden Time." Even just admitting how much sleep really is or is not important to you and your partner is a great way to ease this transition. Some people get angry on little sleep and others get very quiet and sad. Neither is better or worse but it's so good to know yourself and each other and be prepared for these emotions. If there's space for all the feelings then no one will take over.

Healing

Preparing now for ways to encourage your healing after the birth is a great way to prep for baby. Once you've picked out the perfect moses basket and the absolute cutest baby rattle make sure to start looking at postpartum healing supplies. These include a peri bottle filled with warm water or a warm tea of healing herbs, frozen witch hazel pads or witch'cicles, an herbal sitz bath and some basics like old sheets and towels to place under you in bed.

Asking For Support

A huge part of this planning is analyzing your circles of support; who can help out? Who loves to cook? Who loves to clean? Who loves to make you smile? Making a list of these people and the ways they can help you is the beginning. The next step is asking them. And this is the big one because we are all conditioned to think that asking for support is wrong or a burden. Let me tell you it is not. If there is ever a time in your life that you need help from

others it is now. And it will make you a better parent to start being able to ask for what you need. Do I think you should ask your cousin? Yes. Do I think you should ask your boss? Absolutely. Do I think you should ask your ex boyfriend's mother? I've seen it done and it was successful! The truth is people love to support each other and even more we love to be told how to do it, so ask your accountant even, but just make sure you direct them on the easiest way to fulfill the ask. (i.e. grocery shopping, pick up the kids from school, make us a healthy meal.)

Food

Food is a huge component of the healing process. This is a time for warming nutritious foods that help specifically with healing and lactation. There is a need for lots of hydration and not only water but barley water, cups of warm bone broth and nutritive teas like Nettles, Dandelion and Oatstraw. Also important are hearty soups and stews made with warming spices like ginger and turmeric. Now who is going to make all of this food? Asking your postpartum doula or a close friend to start a meal train for you can be a wonderful way to ask for support. There are also companies popping up all over that do meal delivery services for new families. A lot of them allow you to add them to your registry so people can buy food for you and your family instead of more onesies. And even your friends that can't cook can help out. When your Great Aunt Linda says, "How can I help?" answer with "There's a lovely juice shop in town that makes delicious soups and smoothies. Even the smallest gift card from there would be a huge help to our food prep when the baby arrives."

Self Care

Making a list of the ways in which you can care for yourself is so important. Beyond healing and nourishing there is also the woman who has just given birth and her partner. They need to tether to themselves and remember who they are in this time as well. Each of you making

of the paper. I've supported families whose lists were as crazy or as simple as boxing, rock climbing, playing video games, getting a haircut, painting their toenails or playing dungeons and dragons. Embracing your authentic self, especially in this time of major transition will keep your grounded and happy.

Nourishing the Partnership

Along with making your personal list of ways to give to yourself don't forget to plan to stay together. Make a list of 5 things you and your partner can do to reconnect in this time. Things like snuggling or spooning in bed for fifteen minutes while the baby sleeps is as restorative as the food you eat. Reading to each other from your favorite books or listening to a guided meditation together can reset everyone and remind you how you got here in the first place...your love.

Care For Older Siblings

If this isn't your first rodeo (I mean baby) then you need to do some planning for the feelings and care of the older kiddos. Making a list of people that can step in to show them a good time is great. Talking with your partner about ways that you can still honor family rituals and traditions (i.e. bedtime, social and meal routines) and starting new ones that include the new baby that will be exciting for

the older kids (i.e. family baby massage, an evening song before bedtime, a daily nursing picnic in the bedroom with special snacks, etc.) Putting some attention to the transition facing an older sibling can make their new job of big brother or big sister something they really look forward to.



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a list of 5 things that you can do to "fill yourself up" will pay off. This list may look different according to your likes, your mindfulness practice, and spiritual beliefs, but it can be simple things like taking a healing salt and oil bath, making a perfect cup of tea while watching the sunset, or reading your favorite section



Local Resources

Compiling a list of local resources will help so much as things arise after baby is born. Make a list of these and post it on your fridge or at your family command station. Who is your postpartum doula? Who is your local lactation consultant and phone number? Where are the best mama meet ups? Where does your babywearing group meet? Where and when is your closest La Leche League meeting? Having these resources now will save you from scrambling to find them when you really need them and literally have your hands full.

Laying the foundation of nurturing care, holistic nourishment, and endless rest and support in these precious and fleeting first few months with your new baby can set you and your whole family up for a beautiful future full of love and support. I also always remind parents that in taking this time and absorbing it's beauty we realize how much we each deserve it. Then when our sister, neighbor, or even our accountant is going through the same time, we not only know how to support them but we love doing it.

Recommended Reading List

- The First Forty Days: The Essential Art of Nourishing the New Mother by Heng Ou
- Natural Health after Birth: The Complete Guide to Postpartum Wellness by Aviva Jill Romm
- Nurturing the Family by Jacqueline Kelleher
- The Mommy Plan by Valerie Lynn
- After the Baby's Birth by Robin Lim



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