the fourth trimester cards

daily support, inspiration, and wisdom for new mothers

KIMBERLY ANN JOHNSON



introduction



Welcome! The Fourth Trimester Cards offer practical wisdom for new moms and the people who care for them in the postpartum time. In Ayurveda, the saying goes "42 days for 42 years." A woman's robust health at this time can set her up for 42 years of radiance and well-being. This sacred window offers opportunities for growth and deep reset beyond what we can imagine. We cannot do it alone though; we need guidance and stewarding through this time. This deck can be a trusted companion and support throughout your journey. The cards contain the wisdom I wish I had known years ago when I became a mother.

These cards are divided into five sections: inspiration, body, mind, nourishment, and relationships and intimacy. They are designed so that you can pick one up at any time—any time you need a dose of wisdom and a reminder that you are not alone. Each card details a practice, exercise, or piece of nourishment. The cards were created to be gems that you can take with you throughout your day and into your postpartum experience.

Pull one any time you need to shore up or come back to yourself. The cards only work if you use them. So grab a journal, close your eyes, or call a friend. Take these small actions to care for yourself, your baby, and your family so that you can emerge from the postpartum time stronger and more whole from the inside out.

May your journey be rich and filled insight and inspiration.

Have courage!



mother lineage tree

INSPIRATION

hat will you carry forward from your mother line? It's so easy to focus on what we don't want to repeat that we forget what we do want to pass on from our lineage.

- Draw three stacked circles on a piece of paper.
 The circle on the bottom is you. The circle above is your mother, and then above that is your grandmother. Label the circles with their names and yours.
- 2. Divide the top circle in half. In the left half of the circle, write down your grandmother's negative or damaging qualities, things you don't like. In the right half of the circle, write what you love about her. Do the same for your mother in the middle circle.
- 3. Then come down to your circle. Without dividing it, fill your circle with the positive qualities from the right sides of the circles above, the things that you would like to pass on to your children.

This is your beautiful maternal legacy.

"Every daughter contains her mother and all the women who came before her. The unrealized dreams of our maternal ancestors are part of our heritage. To become optimally healthy and happy, each of us must get clear about the ways in which our mother's history both influences and continues to inform our state of health, our beliefs, and how we live our lives."

-CHRISTIANE NORTHRUP

five universal postpartum needs

INSPIRATION

n most cultures around the world, the immediate postpartum period is regarded as a crucial time for women to recover after birth. The reverence for this time is reflected in the poetic names used to characterize it.

In India this period is called the Sacred Window; in China, the Golden Month; and in Vietnam, Sitting in the Nest. This time is known to be so powerful that women can heal lifelong illnesses during it. Ayurveda says "42 days for 42 years": how we are cared for during this time can impact and determine our health for the next 42 years. Isn't that an amazing incentive to reframe this time?

In studying various cultures, I identified five universal needs all women share after giving birth:

- 1. An extended rest period of 30 to 45 days
- 2. Mineral-rich, collagen-dense food
- 3. Loving therapeutic touch
- 4. Presence of wise women and spiritual companionship
- 5. Contact with nature

This care should be a necessity and not a luxury.

"Without a rite of passage from our elders we may fumble somewhat unconsciously through major life transitions such as puberty, motherhood, and menopause. If we make the 40-day period conscious and sacred, it can be a rite of passage. This becomes a powerful foundation from which to mother your child consciously."

-SIL REYNOLDS

write your birth story

MIND

iving birth is one of the most impactful experiences of our lives. There are gems and wisdom in each birth experience. Italian researchers found that the process of a woman writing down her birth experience within the first 48 hours decreases the likelihood of postpartum depression. I believe that there is enormous healing impact in telling the story orally or in writing at *any* time after giving birth. Here are the instructions adapted from that study:

- With privacy, take a notebook and a pen and write for IO to I5 minutes without stopping, letting the thoughts and feelings you had during labor and delivery flow onto paper.
- Describe your most secret feelings and thoughts, the ones you might not have told to anyone.
- Let go and allow your deepest emotions to come to the surface. Write about how you truly experienced and lived the birth.

- 4. Over time, you may want to write the story again. Rather than focusing on a procedural moment-to-moment account, elaborate on one or two turning-point moments that have stuck with you. These are turning-point moments that most likely have core pieces of information about your soul's purpose and growth potential.
- 5. Save each of the versions you write.



breastfeeding meditation: breathing with your baby

MIND

At a time when most of us can't fit in a formal practice, we can include meditation in that which we are already doing, such as breastfeeding. The following practice is called antar mouna, "inner silence," and was adapted for breastfeeding by Uma Dinsmore-Tuli, author of Yoni Shakti.

This is a valuable practice to use when you are feeling tired or drained by the demands of infant and baby care. It provides an opportunity to direct toward yourself some of the nurturing attention and focus that is given to the baby during a feeding.

- Sit or lie in a position in which you can comfortably feed your baby. As you settle in and your baby gets into nursing, begin to notice your breath.
- 2. As your breath comes in and out through your nose, be aware of the four stages of breath: inhale, a little pause, exhale, a little pause. Allow this natural flow of the breath to continue easily as you enter the next stage of

- the practice, which is shifting the focus of your mental attention from one sense to the next.
- 3. Bring your full attention to the sense of hearing. Exhale your awareness into the sense of hearing and be aware of the sounds around you. Notice the sounds that are farthest away from you. Then begin to notice the sounds that are closest to you. Draw your attention closer and closer to you until you are focusing on just the sound of your baby's breath and the sound of your baby feeding. Also hear the sound of your own breath as it comes in and goes out. Listen to these intimate sounds, the sounds that are closest to you. Let each sound be recognized, and then pass on to the next. Give your full attention to the sense of hearing.

For a guided audio version of this meditation, visit www.magamama.com/breastfeedingmeditation.

looking in the mirror

BODY

ne of the first ways to come home to yourself and your sexuality after childbirth, no matter how your birth experience went, is to look at your vulva and vagina in a mirror.

- 1. Take some time to check out how you look now.
 - Take in the shape, the size, and the colors that you see.
 - Notice the dimensions of your inner labia, your outer labia, and your perineum.
 - Is the introitus, your vaginal opening, visible?
- As you look with your eyes, notice the sensations that arise in your body. As much as possible, maintain an attitude of curiosity.

It is normal to feel strange if the look of your genitals has changed, and it probably has. Know that they probably will continue to change as your hormones shift, organs return to their place, ligaments get firmer, and healing continues. You

may want to do this a couple of times before your first postpartum visit so you can witness your own progress.

Many women worry that the changes to their genitals will be permanent and that sex will never be the same. Although both may be true, you can gain full access to pleasure and sexual power even with genitals that are different and new, or with changed desires regarding sex. The first step is to have the courage to look—to see and connect with this aspect of your womanhood again.



6-minute reset

BODY

aring for a new baby requires a lot of giving, a lot of energy moving outward. Simple gestures of coming back inward to our body after childbirth can make a huge difference in our ability to regulate ourselves and soothe anxiety during difficult moments, as well as to contain and potentiate the energy that we do keep for ourselves.

The next time you put your baby down for a nap, pause. Instead of quickly moving on to washing dishes, checking e-mail, or straightening up, set your timer for 3 minutes. Then go to a comfortable place where you will be able to lie down.

- In a standing position, place your hands on the top of your head. Exert a light pressure downward. As you feel the contact of your hands on your head, state inwardly, "This is my body."
- 2. Then, in sequence, place your hands on your face, neck, and throat using firm and comfortable contact with your hands against your skin in a palming or kneading action. Say inwardly, "This is my body."

- 3. Continue down your body. Touch your shoulders, your breasts, your arms, your belly: "This is my body." Feel your hips, your thighs, your shins and feet: "This is my body." If the 3 minutes have not finished, start again from your head.
- 4. Set your timer for 3 minutes again. Lie down on your back. Rest the heels of your hands gently over your eyes—your fingers will be point toward your head—and with the slightest pressure feel your forehead skin guided downward. When you find yourself restless or your mind wandering, say to yourself, "I give myself the gift of deep relaxation." Avoid the temptation to jump up and resolve something. Allow yourself to relax for these 3 minutes.

oil is "love"

NOURISHMENT

n Ayurveda, one of the most important parts of a woman's postpartum healing process is staying well oiled, inside and out. The Sanskrit word for "oil" is sneha, which also means "love"!

Eating healthy fats in the form of at least a tablespoon of grass-fed ghee, butter, or coconut oil with each meal is recommended for new moms. Good fats won't make you fat. They'll satiate you and help you heal from the inside out. Eat even more if you are constipated or have dry skin. The oils nourish your tissues and help to strengthen your nervous system. Ghee, butter, and coconut oil are soothing and will contribute to the healing of your tissues. Because the fats are transferred through breast milk, they will also contribute to your baby's brain development.

Get yourself a spoonful of ghee or coconut oil now! Eat it plain, or put it on a cracker or in a hot beverage.



breastfeeding basket

NOURISHMENT

Because you will probably spend many hours of your day breastfeeding, it is useful to have at least one care basket at hand so that you can relax while you are doing it. Of course, eye contact is crucial for bonding, but you will find there are times your baby has his or her eyes closed, or your neck might hurt, or you simply have been breastfeeding for hours on end. You might need some mental stimulation or even distraction, which is OK.

In this basket you might include:

- · A good book (not on babies) or your tablet
- Some snacks, such as dried fruit and nuts
 - Water
- Fashion magazines
- Sudoku
- Crosswords
- Remote control
- iPod loaded with your favorite playlists or inspiring podcasts
- Poetry book

- Essential oils
- Burp cloth
- This deck!

Having at least one care basket at a nursing station will allow you to settle in and will provide alternatives to sliding into the social-media vortex.



daily check-ins, or the relationship battery pack

RELATIONSHIPS AND INTIMACY

Vour relationship with your partner can be the
battery pack where you recharge, the place
you plug in for more energy. With so much
going on, sometimes it's hard to know how to
stay connected, or even where to start. Try this
simple check-in template.

"Hey, _____ (fill in your love's name), can we drop in with each other for a few minutes? Let's try something. If we like it, I was thinking we could make this a daily thing in the midst of all this crazy change. I'll start."

- 1. One thing I really appreciate about you is
- 2. One thing that is challenging me right now about parenting is ______.
- 3. One small way that you could support me in that challenge is _____.



birth story listening

RELATIONSHIPS AND INTIMACY

our partner had a different experience of the birth of your baby than you did. It's important to know what each other's experience was like. This is not about agreeing on the sequence or details, which are always remembered differently at such an intense time. You're not trying to get the facts straight. You are listening to how your partner felt and experienced the birth.

Here are some guiding questions. Pick one or two, and ask your partner:

- "What part of the birth stands out most for you?"
- "What was easy for you in the experience?"
- "What was difficult for you?"
- "What surprised you?"

Then just listen. Resist the urge to jump in and correct or to tell your story. Allow for pauses and silence while your partner reviews their experience.



The Fourth Trimester Cards offer sage, relatable advice that can be used in the moment to help support postpartum healing. With 52 cards organized and color-coded by theme—Nourishment, Body, Mind, Relationship, and Inspiration—this beautiful deck will be a welcome companion for any new mother.



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