



Homebirth Services in Central Vermont

## ADJUSTMENT TO MOTHERHOOD by Katherine Bramhall

***“In order for the mother to be born, the pregnant woman must die.”***

*-Claudia Panuthos Transformation Through Birth*

The birth of your baby is the end of one journey and the beginning of the next one. The end of pregnancy for women is symbolized both physically and emotionally by the involution processes in the post-pregnant woman. What comes after birth is an exquisite array of changes that present themselves to the new mother to pick and choose paths through.

***“Do your best. Angels can do no better”***

The transformation from your “previous” life to the life of a mother requires both time and profound compassion for yourself...be generous and abundant with them, if you can. If compassion, generosity and time are not plentiful, do your best to forgive yourself for that. Truth be told, there are few times in your life when you will be asked and required to transform yourself so thoroughly. There will be places in you where this transformation will come with grace and willingness. Other changes and adjustments may be more challenging, confusing and uncomfortable. Finally, there will be changes in your adjustment into motherhood that will just be a mystery that you will be challenged to solve from a place inside you that will need constant awareness and development.

Embrace the transformations into motherhood that your new little teacher/baby is offering you the opportunity to make and do the best you can with each opportunity. Most important, be patient with yourself and forgive yourself each time you fall short of your own expectations. This is a new journey. Your map into motherhood is new with each new baby.

***The Ticopia of the Solomon Islands announce the birth of a child by saying,  
“A mother has given birth!” rather than, “A child is born!”<sup>1</sup>***

***The spiritual definition of love is: when you look at the other person, it makes you love yourself more. –the Taoists’***

You need to be nurtured and cared for postpartum in the same way and in the same measure as you will be expected to nurture and care for your new baby. It is this nurturing of you in the

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<sup>1</sup> Transformation Through Birth. Pg. 132



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postpartum that you experience the loving, caring, holding and responsiveness that you will need to find inside yourself to give to your baby. Your experience of being tenderly cared for in the time after birth will help remind you of and then say your “last goodbyes” to the time in your life when you were in the role of the “child” and welcome in your new, ever-evolving role as “mother.”

Look for this care for yourself in the faces of dear, trusted friends, dear, trusted neighbors, dear, trusted family and/or dear trusted community services. Emphasis is on *dear, trusted*, as this is a time when you and your baby are very impressionable and your time together should be held gently by all around you in every capacity.

***"Friends are God's way of taking care of us." -unknown***

Remember, this is a gradual, gentle transformation that sometimes takes more time than you might have expected and you deserve limitless support tailored to your unique situation.

***Let your heart guide you. It whispers, so listen closely.***  
***-unknown***

For a time after your baby is born, your body goes through a myriad of very normal changes on its way to your new “mother-body” that may take time to understand and welcome. One obvious example is your belly is now empty of the being that you carried inside you and the transition from mothering from the outside-in, to inside-out might feel a little disorienting.

While baby was tucked neatly inside of you, you learned how to carry her and touch her and rub her, finding a natural “holding” of her. After birth, your arms and outer torso have to learn their own lessons in holding, adjusting to your baby’s unique size, shape and movement patterns. This may be awkward at times, but within a very short time you will find that your teacher/baby has made her preferences quite clear.

This example of physical mothering adjustment will take place in all areas of yourself as you re-learn to sleep, eat, feed and bathe yourself on a schedule that will be set for you by your baby. Not all women have the natural capacity to flow with the outward demands that are imposed by baby. That may lead to feelings of inadequacy and self-disappointment to varying degrees. At those times the aid of a postpartum doula can be invaluable. Someone who is there to remind you that of course you don’t know...that you have never had to do this before.

***"We all have expectations that we will be these loving, in love, devoted mothers and then you have this baby screaming at you, and then there's all this confusion."***  
***-E. Slayton***



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***With each breath in, take in the faith of those who have believed when belief seemed foolish. -unknown***

After your baby's birth, if there are times when it feels as if chaos reigns, that there isn't 'enough' support, resources, love, nurturing...that you just can't 'do' it, try to remember those times in labor when you knew in your heart of hearts, in every cell of your body that you couldn't 'do' it. Try to remember that something inside you guided you through that time, gave you strength...in the most rudimentary way maybe, but got you through nonetheless.

Even if you can't find that place in moments of chaos, rest assured you've been there before and there is at least a thin line drawn on your map of motherhood to guide you back there again. It may take practice, as all things do, but you've drawn that place on the map already. The signs will show themselves to you. Remember that your emotional state as you move into motherhood is delicate *and* emotional *and* strong.

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*You do not need to be good  
You do not need to walk on your knees  
For a hundred miles across the desert repenting.  
You only have to let the soft animal of your body love what it loves.*

*-Mary Oliver*