

From the Moment They Are Born

Blanca Fresno

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Dedication

[Details to be provided]

Acknowledgment

[Details to be provided]

About the Author

[Details to be provided]

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Prologue

This brief narrative seeks to share my experiences as both a mother and a pediatrician, hoping they will serve, inspire, and enrich you on your own journey into motherhood.

Motherhood is a unique privilege—a transformative experience that opens the doors to an extraordinary world filled with infinite possibilities. Only we, as mothers, can fully embrace it, and it is this profound connection that drives us to dedicate our lives to raising happy children.

Before writing these lines, I often asked myself: would I have chosen motherhood if, three decades ago, I had known what I know today? The answer is always a resounding: Absolutely! The challenges and tears pale in comparison to the immense joy of watching our children grow and spread their wings.

This narrative is born from my desire to share simple yet valuable experiences. Nothing in life compares to the transformation motherhood brings.

The arrival of a child will enrich and change you so profoundly that, at times, you may not recognize yourself. Not everything will be easy—there will be moments of pain, loss, and disappointment. Yet,

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even in those moments, you will find yourself stronger, more complete, ready to nurture and guide your loved ones.

Join me on this journey through time, and bear witness to my life as a mother.

Chapter 1

Decisions of the Last Month - Beliefs and Values

Blanca

"My journey into motherhood began with what could be called a great sin.

It was my first year as a pediatric resident. Winter had arrived in Michigan with unforgiving force, and every morning, leaving my small apartment at six o'clock was an ordeal: coat, boots, scarf, hat, gloves... and then facing streets blanketed in snow that turned to treacherous ice overnight.

Every morning, I followed the same routine: navigating my way to the towering brick building where I was forging my future, carefully avoiding a fall that could leave me with a broken bone. Every winter, new interns arrived with limbs in casts. Thankfully, that wasn't my problem.

My problem had a face: the chief resident. A young man from California who looked like he had spent more time surfing waves than studying books. The connection was immediate and mutual, but there was one complication: he already had someone in his life.

The days dragged on, gray and lonely, until exhaustion, distance, and solitude overcame my pride. I allowed him into my heart. My mother used to say, "sin comes with its own punishment." Most of the time, I agree. But in this particular case, my "sin" brought me a blessing: my first child.

News of my pregnancy spread like wildfire through the hospital. Some condemned me and avoided my gaze; others extended their support and encouragement. At 28, with a promising career ahead, the idea of becoming a mother made me feel empowered and fulfilled. I resolved never to give up.

I never doubted my decision. With or without the father, I was determined to bring this new life into the world."

Human beings are imperfect. We make mistakes, commit errors, and take controversial paths. As mothers, we are no exception. We are not perfect nor do we hold absolute truths—we are simply examples of life for our children. When we chase perfection, we stifle growth, freeze the potential for change, and slowly fade away.

As mothers, we face an ocean of anxieties and doubts. But we always rise above, driven by our determination. Our biological purpose gives us extraordinary strength, allowing us to overcome any obstacle.

Not all families begin under perfect circumstances. In fact, many lack ideal conditions. Yet, we move forward regardless.

To you, the woman awaiting a child:

- Love yourself, you are unique. Your body is a vessel that holds a miracle.
- Forgive yourself, you are human. Your mistakes are bridges toward transformation and growth.
- Take care of yourself, your physical health and emotional strength are the wellspring for your baby.
- Educate yourself, knowledge is power. Learn everything you need to face the journey of motherhood.

Key Information: Decisions in the Final Month

The last month of pregnancy is filled with intense emotions. On one hand, there's the excitement of knowing you'll soon meet your baby; on the other, anxiety and fear about childbirth and delivery. While many factors are beyond the mother's control, staying well-informed can provide a sense of preparedness and calm. During this time, parents face important decisions that will shape their child's future.

Breastfeeding or formula?

Every family is unique, and the final decision belongs to the mother. My recommendation is to prioritize breastfeeding, as it is the most natural and suitable way to nourish your baby. However, there are situations where formula may be necessary. If this is the case, do not feel guilty; feeding method does not define the love you have for your child. What matters is trying breastfeeding whenever possible.

Circumcision: Is it necessary?

For many families, this decision is driven by cultural or religious beliefs. In other cases, it's based on medical recommendations. The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests that circumcision may reduce the risk of certain diseases, such as AIDS, later in life. Ultimately, the choice is personal, and either decision will not significantly affect your baby's overall health.

Will you vaccinate your baby?

Vaccines can be a controversial topic, but it's vital to understand their role in preventing life-threatening diseases. A world without vaccines would mean children suffering from polio, meningitis, smallpox, or whooping cough, leading to severe consequences or death. Vaccinating your child protects not only them but also the community. The first vaccine, for hepatitis B, is typically given shortly after birth.

Will you preserve umbilical cord blood?

Umbilical cord blood is rich in stem cells that can treat severe illnesses like leukemia and genetic disorders. You can choose to store it privately or donate it to a public bank for free. Both options benefit society and could save lives.

Newborn Screening?

This test, mandatory in some states like California, screens for genetic, metabolic, and hormonal disorders in newborns. While you can refuse it for religious reasons, early diagnosis can prevent severe consequences, such as developmental delays or disabilities.

Hearing Screening?

Early detection of hearing issues is critical for language development and overall intelligence. Identifying any challenges within the first weeks ensures your baby receives the proper stimulation and support for healthy growth.

Pulse Oximetry?

This test measures oxygen levels in the blood and can detect congenital heart conditions. It's simple, non-invasive, and provides peace of mind that your baby doesn't have serious cardiac issues.

Your pediatrician or the on-call pediatrician?

Many hospitals have on-call pediatricians, but choosing your own before delivery offers advantages. Building a relationship with a trusted professional allows you to address questions and feel confident that your baby will receive attentive care.

Building Their Future: Beliefs and Values

What is our true role as mothers in the lives of our children?

It's clear that our primary responsibility is to provide them with nourishment and safety. No mother questions that. But have you ever stopped to think that through your attitudes, words, and behaviors, you are shaping your children's future? Are you aware of what this means for the little being you brought into the world? Your baby's destiny lies in your heart, your mind, and your hands. It's up to you to lay the foundation upon which they will build the castle of their life.

In the entire animal kingdom, no newborn is as vulnerable as a human baby. They are entirely dependent on their mothers for survival, highlighting the vital role of the maternal instinct we all possess. This instinct keeps us awake in the first hours after birth, giving us the strength to care for our little ones even when we are utterly exhausted. We ensure they eat, sleep well, and are safe, listening intently to every sound and breath.

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Over time, the initial days of anxiety and excitement settle into a calmer rhythm. This routine allows us to interact with our babies more consciously and deliberately. It is at this moment that the real work of building begins.

Building what?

Building their belief system, their values, and, ultimately, their personality.

Why is this important?

Because these elements will have extraordinary importance in their lives. The beliefs and values deeply rooted in their hearts, combined with their personality, will form the basis of all their decisions and behaviors.

Human behavior is born from emotions, which are in turn motivated by our thoughts. And where do those thoughts come from? From our beliefs, values, and basic attitude toward life. Within this simple chain of concepts lies ancient wisdom that can enrich both your life and your child's.

The dictionary defines personality as "the totality of a person's behaviors and emotional tendencies" and belief as "a conviction about the truth in our lives."

What does this mean for you and your baby?

When your child is born, they have no personality and no beliefs. They are like a blank notebook waiting for a new story to be written; like fertile soil ready to grow sweet and juicy fruits; like a blank canvas waiting for you to create the most beautiful masterpiece ever seen.

As a mother, you hold an extraordinary privilege. Not only have you conceived a new life within your body, but you also have the opportunity to shape their future.

Chapter 2

Vaginal Birth vs. Cesarean Section – The Power of Emotions

Sidney

“I started off failing.

I was drifting off to sleep when I felt as if a lightning bolt had struck my abdomen. A pain shook me, one I immediately recognized. I welcomed it. I opened my eyes in the darkness of the room and became aware of what was happening. I was alone in bed. The soon-to-be father was still awake, watching television in the other room of our small apartment. Two residents with more dreams than money could only afford a modest rent.

I remained still, in the same position, observing my body. Silence and calm. Was it a false alarm? In the previous days, I had already experienced brief Braxton Hicks contractions, but this sensation was different. A few minutes later, I felt warm liquid trickling down my legs, and that was when I knew for sure—the moment had arrived. My water had broken, signaling the beginning of labor.

I stood up, exhilarated, thrilled by the imminent arrival of my first baby. At last, my long wait would be rewarded. My first child, Sidney

Alexander, was about to be born. I had no idea at that moment the difficult journey I would have to endure before seeing his precious little face. His father and I prepared to leave, and on a mild April night, we calmly headed to the hospital where, just a few hours earlier, we had both been working.

At the hospital, everyone welcomed us with joy. This time, I was the one in the wheelchair. What a strange feeling! From doctor to patient in just a few hours. I felt vulnerable, exposed to the world, with my expectations and fears laid bare and completely out of my control. The hours that followed are a blur in my memory. Everything blends together—nurses, doctors, visitors, white and colorful hospital gowns, nausea, pain, heavy sleep, and finally, the desperation of knowing that 24 hours had passed and Sidney still had not descended into the birth canal.

When I saw my obstetrician walk in with determination and a serious expression, I knew I was destined for the scalpel. I had no doubts. The baby was too large for my pelvis, and this was the safest path. I felt grateful for science, for medicine, for the world, and without truly understanding, I placed myself in their expert hands.

The cesarean section went smoothly, and within moments, I could hear my baby's cry.

When I saw him, I fell in love with him forever. He was not only beautiful on the outside but also radiated love and generosity of spirit. In that moment, I committed myself to being his faithful friend, his admirer, his role model, his mother.”

My Words to You, Woman Who Has Just Given Birth...

Keep an open mind. Bringing a new life into the world is a complex process. Our expectations can create a sense of failure if things do not go as planned.

Choose the professionals who will care for you wisely. Their professional qualifications matter, but so does their humanity. Your body and your baby's life will be in their hands.

Trust the process and those who love you. They are by your side to support you.

Important Facts: Vaginal Birth vs. Cesarean Section

In my opinion, there is no other event in family life that compares to the birth of a baby. The physical and emotional transformation a mother undergoes is unparalleled, and only those who have experienced it can truly understand.

In this section, my intention is simply to summarize the key aspects of both vaginal birth and cesarean section. Since my specialty is pediatrics, I will approach this as objectively as possible, without adding my personal or professional opinion. Your obstetrician—the one with whom you have built a relationship over the past nine months—is the expert who will guide you through this stage of your journey.

Vaginal Birth

Generally, between two and four weeks before delivery, first-time mothers experience the baby's descent into the pelvis. This phenomenon is known as *lightening*. At this point, the expectant mother notices a change in the shape of her belly and may find it easier to breathe and eat, as the baby is no longer pressing against the diaphragm as before. When the baby drops, the mother often feels the need to urinate more frequently and may experience cramping similar to menstrual pain and pelvic discomfort. In subsequent pregnancies, the baby's descent does not occur until labor begins.

When labor is truly about to start, the expectant mother may experience bloody vaginal discharge, the expulsion of the mucus plug, and more intense contractions.

Bloody vaginal discharge indicates that the cervix has begun to dilate, causing small blood vessels to rupture and leading to blood-tinged discharge. This usually means that labor will begin within the next 24 hours. The same process is responsible for the expulsion of the mucus plug, which seals the cervix.

Regarding contractions, up until this point, the mother has experienced *Braxton Hicks* contractions. These are painless and short-lived, serving only as preparation for labor. However, when true labor begins, contractions become stronger, more frequent, rhythmic, and painful. The rupture of the membranes and the release of amniotic fluid is the clearest and most definitive sign that labor will start within the next 12 to 24 hours.

First Stage of Labor: Dilation

The first stage of dilation is divided into three phases: *early labor*, *active labor*, and *transition*.

Early or Latent Phase

This is the longest but least intense phase. During this stage, the cervix dilates up to 3 cm. Contractions may be barely noticeable or mildly painful, lasting up to 45 seconds and occurring every 5 to 20 minutes. The expectant mother may experience cramps similar to menstrual pain, indigestion, diarrhea, and bloody vaginal discharge. Emotionally, excitement is common, but some first-time mothers may feel overwhelmed by fear and anxiety.

Active Labor Phase

This phase lasts between 2 to 3 hours. During this time, the cervix dilates up to 7 cm. Contractions become stronger and longer, lasting about 60 seconds and occurring every 3 to 4 minutes.

Expectant mothers experience increasing back and leg pain, along with heavier vaginal discharge. It becomes harder to recover between contractions, and exhaustion, weakness, and frustration often set in.

Transition Phase

This is the most intense and demanding phase. The cervix dilates fully to 10 cm in a short period, usually between 15 minutes and an hour. Contractions last between 60 and 90 seconds and occur every 2 to 3 minutes.

The physical and emotional sensations at this stage are extremely intense. There is immense pressure in the lower back and perineum, accompanied by an overwhelming urge to push or have a bowel movement.

Women may experience chills, heat waves, nausea, vomiting, uncontrollable shaking, or cramps. Emotionally, vulnerability and feelings of distress or confusion are common.

Second Stage of Labor: Pushing and Delivery

This stage lasts between 30 minutes and an hour, though individual variations exist. Contractions last between 60 and 90 seconds, are intense but less painful, and occur less frequently, about every 5 minutes.

The defining sensation of this stage is the uncontrollable urge to push. Despite physical and emotional exhaustion, most mothers feel a resurgence of energy.

Pressure and stinging in the vaginal area are common as the baby crowns, followed by a slippery, wet sensation when the baby finally emerges from the birth canal.

Third Stage of Labor: Placenta Delivery

This phase lasts between 5 minutes and half an hour. As the uterus contracts, the placenta—which served as the baby’s source of nourishment—detaches and moves into the vagina before being expelled. The uterus continues contracting, though these contractions are usually much less painful and sometimes imperceptible.

The placenta’s expulsion is followed by postpartum bleeding similar to a heavy menstrual period, known as *lochia*. The mother often experiences immense relief and typically feels hungry and thirsty.

The range of emotions a new mother experiences is vast, from excitement to apathy. That is why you should not judge yourself—no matter what you feel in this moment, your emotions are valid.

This Summary of Vaginal Birth Events

This summary describes vaginal birth events in general terms. Every pregnancy is unique. Each expectant mother and newborn represents a special situation that only your obstetrician can interpret based on their professional experience and your medical history.

Cesarean Section

The reasons for a surgical birth can be either maternal or fetal. Without a doubt, when the time comes to make this decision, your obstetrician will have carefully explained the reason why a surgical

birth is necessary. In these cases, your calmness and preparation are especially important.

Most mothers build an idealized vision in their minds of how their baby's birth will be. They have expectations and hopes that shape their emotional disposition toward a cesarean delivery.

However, when the time comes, if a cesarean section is necessary to preserve the health of the mother or baby, it is the best alternative. It is far better to let go of our ideals and undergo surgery than to face the potential complications of labor with fetal or maternal distress.

With advancements in anesthesia and more flexible hospital policies, expectant mothers can often share the birth experience with their partners. In emergency situations, the mother may require general anesthesia, and the father may have to wait outside the operating room until the baby is born.

Preparation for surgery is relatively simple, and the procedure itself is not very long, typically lasting between 30 to 45 minutes. In the hands of an experienced surgeon, it is a routine procedure. The uterus is repaired with absorbable sutures, and the abdominal skin is closed with staples or surgical stitches.

Your newborn will be taken to the special care unit as a precautionary measure. It is important to remember that this temporary separation does not affect your bond with your baby. Your well-being and your baby's health are far more important than any expectations you may have had up to this moment.

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When both mother and baby are healthy, there is no failure or disappointment—only a profound blessing.

Building Your Future – The Power of Emotions

Our actions stem from what we feel. Emotions move us as if we were puppets whose invisible strings are controlled by our hearts.

Take a moment to reflect on your life. Think about your most important decisions—was it your mind or your heart that guided you? While it is true that we have all used logic at times, if we are honest with ourselves, we must admit that in life's most defining moments, we follow our hearts. Our choices come from the deepest convictions within us—from what we truly believe and feel.

There are two fundamental emotions: love and fear. Every other feeling and emotion originates from one of these two sources.

- Love gives rise to creativity, enthusiasm, joy, and vitality.
- Fear fuels anger, resentment, envy, and revenge.

From love, we develop constructive behaviors that enrich our lives and the lives of our families. From fear, we develop behaviors that are destructive and perpetuate the very cycle that created them.

So, what generates our emotions? The answer is simple: our thoughts. Our thoughts evoke memories associated with one of these

two fundamental emotions—love or fear. From these, the entire spectrum of human emotions emerges, shaping our behavior.

To better understand this process, try this exercise. Imagine two completely opposite scenarios:

Scenario One:

You are holding your newborn in your arms. The baby is crying desperately and cannot latch onto your breast for feeding. Suddenly, you recall a friend's comment: *"My milk wasn't enough, so I had to supplement with formula."* (This thought triggers an emotion.) You start to feel impatient and frustrated, followed by the inevitable question, *"What if my milk isn't enough?"* No matter how hard you try to ignore it, a growing sense of anxiety takes over (this emotion leads to a behavior). Before long, the thought occurs to you that giving your baby some formula might not be a bad idea. The next step? Preparing a bottle.

Scenario Two:

The situation is identical—your baby is in your arms, crying and struggling to latch. But this time, instead of dwelling on your friend's comment, you focus on the wisdom of those who love and support you. They've assured you that, with patience and tenderness, the process is not only possible but deeply rewarding. (This thought triggers an emotion.) You visualize your baby nursing peacefully, and

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a wave of calm and joy washes over you. (This emotion leads to a behavior.) You relax, fully surrender to the moment, and just then, your baby opens their mouth and successfully latches on. You did it!

This simple mental exercise illustrates the profound impact of thought—not just on your life but on your child’s life as well.

We are what we think. We shape our reality—our entire life—through our thoughts. With our minds, we attract success or failure. With our minds, we build our paradise or our purgatory.

As a mother, you have a responsibility to instill beliefs and values in your child that foster positive and constructive thoughts. While we deeply appreciate the love and guidance of our own parents, we must carefully examine the beliefs we have inherited before passing them on to our children. Not everything we inherit from our ancestors is beneficial.

Loving and respecting your parents and culture does not mean blindly following traditions that compromise your integrity as a woman and as a human being. Nor should you allow harmful cycles to continue by passing them down to your children.

Chapter 3

Physical Characteristics of the Newborn – The Core Belief

Clara

"Her arrival was imminent, and my family life began to unravel like an old blanket.

August. The peach tree was full of ripe fruit. Its branches bent under its weight, and my body reflected the last month of pregnancy. It was the hottest summer of the decade, and my marriage was in flames. My body had reached a state similar to the peach tree. I felt full, with my skin tight, stretched, almost ready to tear. Sidney, already a four-year-old boy, spent most of his time in his magical world. Mauri, my right hand at home, took care of the chores, I continued immersed in my work, and the father, the great love of my life, drowned in a world of self-destruction.

The peaches were so many that they spontaneously fell from the exhausted branches of the tree and landed on the ground, exploding in nectar and summer fragrances. This year, they were harder than ever. I took great pleasure in the taste, the freshness, and the sweetness of

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the fruit... Perhaps to fight the internal bitterness of watching my marriage enter a fatal fall.

The long summer days turned into endless nights. Getting to sleep, finding a position in which I could breathe, and calming the crazy heat that made me sweat constantly were little compared to the anxiety and excitement over the imminent arrival of my second daughter and the sadness of watching my life partner sink deeper into an irreparable depression.

Her birth was scheduled for the 20th, and on the 20th at 8:15 in the morning, Clara announced herself to the world with her first cry. Her beauty and inner strength filled my life like a glow. Upon seeing her, I committed to being her slave, her guide, her protector, her teacher, her mother.”

My words to you, woman who has just had a child... Perfection does not exist, and trying to attain it only takes away the shine from your experience. Even when the conditions of your life are not ideal, the arrival of your baby will fill you with strength to face the world.

Make room for your emotions. When we openly experience our pain, anger, and frustration, when we let loose our tears and empty the bitter cup of failure, we make room in our hearts to feel the love, the joy, the glory of being mothers. We can breathe fully and accept our transformation.

And if your heart only holds joy, enjoy each moment intensely. Do not get distracted by details. Focus on the miracle you have in your arms.

Important Information: Physical Characteristics of the Newborn

All moms have expectations regarding the appearance and behavior of our babies. Sometimes reality exceeds our expectations, and sometimes it is so different that it scares us. It is a good idea to know beforehand what is normal in a newborn.

- **Head and Face:** Some babies are born with swollen faces, particularly around the eyelids, and have difficulty opening their eyes. Their heads must mold to pass through the birth canal, so it may take on an elongated shape rather than a perfectly round one. If your doctor had to use a vacuum to assist in the birth, the baby may have a soft and fluctuating area on the scalp. There is no reason to worry. All these are temporary traits and do not affect your baby.

- **Skin:** The newborn's skin has countless peculiarities. Depending on the gestational age of your baby, they may have vernix (a soap-like substance that covers the baby in the womb) or lanugo (fine hair that disappears over the days). In the days following birth, what concerns

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moms the most is the intense dryness and cracking, especially around the joints of the hands and feet. There is no cause for alarm; the baby will have new and soft skin in the coming weeks.

- **Eyes and Eyelids:** Immediately after birth, some babies have their eyes wide open as if they are looking at everything around them. Others may have swollen eyelids, which makes it difficult for them to open their eyes. Sometimes there may be reddish marks on the eyelids, like moles, which disappear over time. Other times, in the white of the eye (sclera), the baby may have a red crescent shape, a small blood vessel burst that causes no complications and disappears without treatment.

During the first month, babies can only see faces that are close and do not have the ability to focus their vision, which is why they may appear cross-eyed. This is not a cause for concern.

- **Mouth and gums:** Did you know that your baby can be born with a tooth? How curious, right? Neonatal teeth are uncommon but can occur. They usually fall out in the first few months. In the gums, the baby may have small white pearls, which are tiny cysts, not teeth, and they disappear on their own.

- **Chest:** Two things on the baby's chest may catch the attention of mothers. One is the lower end of the sternum, or chest bone, which sometimes protrudes like a slightly sharp point in the middle of the chest. The other is the small breasts of the baby, which can sometimes be swollen due to the stimulation of maternal hormones in the uterus. This will disappear over time and does not require treatment.

- **Abdomen:** The baby's tummy is characteristically round. The abdominal muscles are not very developed in the infant, so everything that happens inside the abdomen can be felt and heard very vividly. The umbilical cord is a source of much concern. In reality, the cord does not require any special treatment. Belly bands are useless and only create problems. There is no need to disinfect the cord. The important thing is not to wet it so that it dries and falls off sooner. The cord will fall off on its own between the 7th and 10th day of life.

- **Genitals:** The newborn's genitals have certain particularities that must be understood.

In girls, the vulva is especially exposed, as it has been stimulated by the mother's hormones, to the point that the baby may have a mucous vaginal discharge and even a small amount of blood around the third day after birth. This appearance gradually disappears as the baby will not produce her own hormones until puberty.

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In boys, the most common question is about circumcision and/or the care of the penis in the absence of it. The topic of circumcision will be addressed in another section.

Regarding the care of an uncircumcised boy, it is important to note that in most children, the foreskin is attached to the body of the penis, making it impossible to retract it to clean the baby. The theory that the foreskin should be exercised and retracted during childhood is incorrect, as it only causes harm to the newborn. The best advice I've heard about this is: The uncircumcised penis should be ignored.

Building Their Future – The Basic Belief: My Mother Loves Me.

Can you give something you don't have? Of course not. Your children can't either.

This premise is important because it gives us the opportunity to explore our expectations as parents and recognize that we cannot expect our children to show values, behaviors, and attitudes that they have not received from us.

Our children are like mirrors in which we will see ourselves reflected in our entirety for the rest of our lives. It's true that as they grow, they begin to reflect behaviors and attitudes from the world around them, but the basic essence of their being comes from their parents.

In previous chapters, we established the premise that it is our thoughts that create our mood and that our thoughts arise from what we accept as an absolute truth.

When looking at your newborn and contemplating their little innocent face, you must remember that everything, absolutely everything you say and do as a mother, is recorded in your child's life program. The mother, and of course the father as well, are the most authoritative figures in the small child's life. Their universe revolves around you. You are like a god, although the baby has no concept of god, their parents are all-powerful and possess all wisdom. Therefore, the words of these "gods" must be true.

In the first stage of their life, the vulnerable baby records the world around them in a very primitive way. You can imagine it as a radar that picks up sound waves, or as a thermometer that records temperature. The baby has not developed the ability to think, but they are capable of recording sensations that bring pleasure and calm or irritability and discomfort to their little body.

Imagine for a moment that you are a newborn who until just a few moments ago was in the warm and dark womb, floating completely protected. Just hours after your birth, they have placed you in a transparent plastic box, and you feel a strange sensation of rough dryness on your skin. Do you have any doubt now as to why your baby is crying?

The newborn prefers a calm environment that provides the security it has lost. Excessive light and sound irritate your baby, who,

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like a sponge, absorbs the energy around them and releases it in the form of exaggerated crying.

In this first stage of your baby's life, your primary role as a mother is to provide the baby with nutrition, security, and affection. There is no possibility of spoiling a newborn, and it is crucial for their calm and well-being to feel your caresses, your voice, and the beat of your heart, as well as become familiar with the scent of your skin. It is through their senses that the baby develops their first concept of what love and security are.

When receiving contact with their mother, the infant's body relaxes and experiences the first pleasurable sensations, sensations that, in the very near future, will be associated with beliefs. "My mother loves me. My mother nourishes me. I am safe. I can trust my mother."

There is no other belief more basic and fundamental in the life of a human being, for it is from this conviction that we intuit our intrinsic worth as human beings. If our mother loves us, that means we are unique, important, and worthy of love.

Chapter 4

Bonding and Attachment Theory – The Senses of the Baby

Sidney

"When I opened my eyes, he was no longer there.

There was a glow behind the curtain, which indicated that it was day again. The room was completely silent. I looked around and saw no signs of the child or his father. Sidney was at university, and his father was working at the hospital. My body screamed for me to feel the warm skin of my baby. Despite the cesarean, and to my surprise, I felt really good. Sleep had repaired my body and mind, and I discovered an inner strength I had never experienced before.

Almost without thinking, I stood up and began walking, dragging the IV tube with me. I missed my baby. I felt I could and should go look for him, and in a trance, I began my journey toward the nursery. I knew the hospital hallways very well, which, like labyrinths, confuse all newcomers. It seemed like I was flying, like my feet weren't touching the ground, like my body was light, transparent. I realized my lips had stretched into an eternal smile, and I felt a crystalline, pure light emanating from me. I was going to find my beloved, my baby...

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And suddenly, the light went out, my mind clouded completely, and I felt as though my whole body deflated of energy and fell to the ground, at the mercy of gravity. I fainted.

Alarms, voices that had been hidden until that moment, came to light, shouting orders, directing the medical team, who quickly gathered around my still body. -Weak and accelerated pulse, announced a nurse to the resident on duty. -Spontaneous, rapid, and shallow breathing, her voice firm and emotionless. What's the blood pressure? I need the blood pressure! The resident shouted. -Quickly, she's in shock...

In a semi-conscious state, I felt myself lifted onto a stretcher and began rolling through a tunnel of intense light. In front of me, I could distinguish the operating room doors. A second before entering, I saw him running toward me, eyes wild, losing his usual calm Californian surfer demeanor. -Don't worry, he told me kindly in English, you're in good hands, and everything will be fine.

I opened my eyes. I was back in my room. But this time, I was no longer alone; Sidney was peacefully sleeping in his plastic crib."

My final words to you, woman who has just had a child...

Enjoy your first encounter. This moment will never repeat itself. It is absolutely unique.

Offer your full attention, let nothing distract you. Etch in your memory all the sensations that your little piece of heaven gives you. His scent, his smooth skin covered in vernix, his hair still sticky with your blood. This is your moment, the moment you've been waiting for.

And if life interferes with this moment, and your baby doesn't reach your arms as you expected, let your emotions flow. They are valid, they are real, they are your way of expressing pain and sorrow. Don't feel guilty if bonding or attachment doesn't happen immediately. Sometimes we must accept a different process; our process is unique and valuable.

Important Information: Bonding and Attachment Theory

The emotional bonds between the mother and the newborn begin to develop during pregnancy and continue to form throughout childhood, but it is during the first three hours after birth that an indestructible bond is literally formed between the mother and the baby. This process is known as bonding.

The physical presence of the newborn after birth and their contact with the mother produce a kind of infatuation in her, through which mothers feel completely connected to their little ones.

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In many cases, the bonding process can be interrupted due to medical reasons, either for the health of the mother or the baby, and negative emotions, pessimism, doubt, or fear may arise.

Emotional attachment (Attachment Theory) can be defined as the deep and lasting bonds that develop between the small creature and the person who provides security and sustenance during childhood. Children come into the world programmed for attachment, and the presence and proximity of their parents not only ensure their survival but also contribute to their physical, emotional, and cognitive development.

According to attachment theory, the quality of the interactions between the child and their parents will determine not only their individual development but also the way this new being relates to others and the type of emotional bonds they will form in their relationships throughout life.

Building Their Future - The Senses of the Baby

Your newborn doesn't think, but it feels. Imagine it as a sponge that absorbs all the energy around it. It experiences pleasure or discomfort. It is either calm and content or irritable. There is no middle ground for it. What exists is the promise of nourishing it with love, so that it can begin to develop its repertoire of emotions, feelings, and values.

Given the primitiveness of its emotional state, the first days and weeks are perfect for experimenting with your baby's senses and offering it everything that nourishes and pleases it.

Long before it understands words, your baby can understand sensations on its tender body. Your caresses and gentle massages carry a message of love that will forever be engraved in your baby's emotional memory. It has been proven that verbal messages accompanied by a physical gesture or a caress are more effective in communicating love than isolated verbal messages. There is a primary need to receive affection physically, and it is during the first stage of life where this need is most evident. Later, in the following formative stages of your child's life, be generous with your gestures, kisses, and hugs. Offer them your knees, your hands, your lap. There will be no place softer in the room than a mother's lap, and it will be from this starting point that you'll launch your little ones into the world with the confidence they need to overcome any obstacle.

Your voice is familiar to your baby. It has been hearing you for nine months inside the womb. It is perhaps, alongside the beat of your heart, the most pleasant sound for this little human being. While reviewing my reference books, I found a beautiful lullaby that immediately took me back to my childhood and, seconds later, to my early steps as a mother. "Arroró mi niño, arroró mi amor, arroró pedazos de mi corazón." As I write these words, I feel the melody—soft and catchy—repeating in the corners of my mind, as if I were a baby and my mother were rocking me. I feel how my arms curve in the usual position to rock my babies. I feel as if my whole body is

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flooded with love. All of that from a lullaby. Sing to your baby, sing to it.

There is a universe of pleasurable sensations around your baby's mouth. Touch, taste, and smell stimulate the most primitive reflexes of the human being. These reflexes are related to nourishment and sustenance, so they are obviously essential. But going a little beyond the basics, it's good to remember that the newborn doesn't understand the concept of love. Therefore, for it, the smell, warmth, and taste of breast milk are the culmination and satisfaction of all its needs. By allowing it to invade your body so shamelessly, you are providing the fullest message of love. Breastfeed your baby, let it comfort itself at your breast.

Chapter 5

Normal Behaviors - Self-Esteem

Clara

"We had gone three nights without sleep, neither she nor I.

Clara's sleep was reversed. During the day, she seemed very peaceful and calm, but by nightfall, her screams, grunts, and whimpers began. In pain and dazed, I walked around the room rocking the baby who was crying uncontrollably, unable to calm down. Finally, around 4 AM, we both succumbed to sleep.

My sleep was heavy. When I opened my eyes, I was dazed, and I had the feeling that several hours had passed. Immediately, the fear struck me. What if Clara had cried and I hadn't heard her? What if something had happened to the baby, and in my exhaustion and unconsciousness, I hadn't paid attention? Her dad wasn't home because he was on duty at the hospital. Clara and I were alone, with Sidney peacefully asleep in the room next door.

A cold sweat formed on my hands. I was scared. This was a new sensation. I had never felt fear's grip on my throat. Was it my intuition? My sixth sense? What caused the unease that had taken over my body?

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I managed to sit up, still feeling pain from my C-section. The clock said it was 5:30 AM. Could it really have only been two hours since I collapsed into bed? Without thinking, I got up and approached Clara's bassinet.

The room was freezing, and the silence was profound. Through the window, the light of dawn was beginning to mix with the darkness. As I neared my baby, I noticed she was unnervingly still, motionless. With an almost unexpected nervousness, I turned on the light, still dim, and pulled back the soft veil that adorned the bassinet.

I froze upon seeing my baby. Her skin looked waxy, pale, ethereal. Was she breathing? Her angelic body seemed not to move. My eyes were deceiving me, and my mind, crazed with fear and doubt, in a second, forgot everything I had learned in years of residency. I sank into my own nightmare. The thought that my daughter might be dead tormented me, and I felt as though my legs wouldn't move.

I took a deep breath and moved closer. My trembling hand touched the baby's pale skin. I felt the warmth of her breath, the energy of her beautiful body, and I came back to life..."

My last words to you, woman who has just had a baby...

Do not fear spoiling your baby. It is not possible.

The mother and her baby are an inseparable unit. After birth, most little ones experience great irritability, especially when they feel separated from their mother.

During pregnancy, your child grew in constant movement inside your womb, which is why it rejects separation and the cold stillness of its crib.

Do not deny the warmth of your body, your voice, the beat of your heart. You are their refuge.

Important Information: Normal Newborn Behaviors

This section can be summed up in a simple phrase: most of the behaviors you observe in your baby are normal. Of course, this isn't enough to answer the countless questions that arise in a mother's mind during the first days after birth. What follows are answers and explanations for the most common baby behaviors.

Shallow, variable, and rapid breathing

In a newborn, all body functions are in a state of transition and maturation. Remember that only a few hours ago, it was your body, not your baby's, that was responsible for all vital functions.

In the womb, the lungs are collapsed, compressed, and filled with fluid. When the baby is born and takes its first breath, the lungs expand

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like balloons and fill with air. Sometimes, some of the fluid that fills the lungs in the womb is retained after birth, causing babies to breathe in an agitated way. This is temporary and does not pose a danger to your baby. This is known as transient tachypnea of the newborn.

Another type of breathing is known as periodic breathing. This type of breathing is shallow and agitated, with pauses of up to 10 seconds after which breathing spontaneously resumes.

Nasal Congestion and Sneezing

Newborns sneeze a lot, and this is not because they are cold or sick, but due to their neurological immaturity. Nasal congestion is also very common and is mostly due to the contrast between the humidity of life in the womb and the dryness of the new environment.

Hiccups

Is the baby wet? Is it cold? Neither of these. Hiccups are another sign of nervous immaturity in your little one. They don't mean anything, they don't hurt, and they will pass on their own. If the hiccups interfere with feeding, take a break and wait for them to stop. As the weeks pass, hiccups will disappear.

Straining and Whimpering

Constipation? Colic? Why does my baby strain so much? Babies have a hard time eliminating waste because their abdominal muscles are very weak and they have no strength. To increase pressure inside the abdominal cavity, the baby uses its diaphragm, a powerful muscle that separates the chest from the abdomen, and it does this through its breathing. When the baby strains, it increases the pressure in their belly, pushing the waste out.

Tremors and Involuntary Movements

Tremors are extremely common in babies. Sometimes their chin or mouth trembles, or their limbs. These are considered normal when they are short-lived and can be stopped by holding them.

Gag Reflex

During the first hours of life, the baby may vomit some of the liquid from their stomach or amniotic fluid retained in their lungs. This process causes great concern among families because it is usually interpreted as reflux. It is a normal process that lasts a day or two and then disappears. Sometimes it seems like the baby is choking when they try to vomit, which causes great alarm. The gag reflex is a protective reflex for the baby's airway, and in healthy newborns, it prevents them from choking.

Building Their Future - Self-Esteem: The Secret of Success

A popular saying goes that children need roots to grow and wings to fly.

This saying couldn't be truer. During the first years of life, your job is to protect and nurture your children physically, emotionally, and spiritually, with the ultimate goal of handing them over to the world—a child capable of navigating the world independently of you.

It's a challenging task, and the essential ingredient is self-esteem. As mothers, we wish to raise children who have an appropriate sense of their worth as human beings, who know the difference between right and wrong, and who can make decisions based on their family experience and personal history.

What a task! With all the surprises that life throws at a family, how could one know what to do with this tiny life that is filling your days!

Studies in child psychology show that a child's self-esteem is directly related to the following factors:

The child feels accepted unconditionally and knows they have value as a person.

As parents, we must be able to show our children that their feelings, ideas, and dreams matter to us, that we understand them, and that we accept them. Remember, accepting your child's ideas doesn't mean agreeing with them.

The child's life is structured within clearly defined, fair, and negotiable limits.

This is perhaps one of the most important rules in raising our children. Clearly defined boundaries give your child a sense of security and emotional stability. A child raised without emotional boundaries grows into an irritable, capricious, anxious, and fearful young person. It's important to remember that boundaries should be appropriate, fair, and flexible. Flexibility is the secret to success as parents.

Parents respect the child's dignity.

From the moment they are born, our children see us as powerful beings. They love and respect us because they are completely dependent on us. Respect must be mutual. Never humiliate your children, whether with words or physically. Insults and corporal punishment can leave emotional scars that undermine a child's self-esteem.

Parents have reasonable expectations for the child.

We must expect the best from our children. Our expectations encourage young people to strive for new and better goals and to surpass themselves. The key is knowing if our expectations are reasonable in relation to the child's ability. Not all children are athletes

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or can play the piano wonderfully. Their mental health and self-esteem depend on our balance and common sense.

Parents have healthy self-esteem.

Perhaps an obvious factor, but no less important. When we feel fulfilled in our lives, we are able to model a confident and serene attitude that helps our children's development.

Chapter 6

Breastfeeding - Unconditional Love

Sidney

"My decision was made. Breastfeeding was not for me.

I had spent many sleepless nights thinking about this topic. Breast or formula? My plans were always clear. Have the baby, recover, and get back to work as soon as possible. I had no time to lose, every minute away from the hospital meant more time in Michigan, and I couldn't wait to escape that prison. Breastfeeding was not part of my plan. Cold and calculating, that was me. I had mapped out my life plan a long time ago, and nothing and no one was going to derail me.

When I arrived in the recovery room, a nurse came over with my baby to assist with their first feeding. A little confused but very sure of my plan, I whispered, 'No, no, I'm not going to breastfeed, I'll give formula.'

'What???' the nurse exploded in sharp, definitive English. I tried to explain, to give my reasons, but when I glimpsed the face of my son, all my determination crumbled in an instant.

And it was in that moment that all the barriers dissolved. The nurse sensed the change in me and gently brought the baby to my breast.

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The little one felt my warmth and in a magical moment of pure energetic alchemy, latched on and began to suckle.

During the following days in the hospital, I felt supported by everyone, my body began to recover from the C-section, and everything seemed to run smoothly.

When we got home, it was different. My milk was slow to come in, the skin on my nipples was cracked, and the pain was unbearable. The baby didn't give me a break, and my body wasn't meeting the demands of the child. I cried, screamed, and cursed the moment I agreed to breastfeed. And yet, every time the little one opened his mouth, I offered my aching body. Defeated and exhausted, I continued with the biological command.

I lost track of time. Sometimes it felt like days had passed, but then I'd realize it had only been a few hours.

One gray morning, I can't quite remember which one, I woke up and felt my robe was damp. Almost not believing it, I looked at my breasts and saw the wonderful yellowish liquid sliding down my belly. My milk was coming in. An inner sun illuminated me. I picked up my son and brought him to my breast once again. We triumphed together."

My Last Words for You, Woman Who Has Just Given Birth...

Let go of control. When it comes to biological processes, like breastfeeding, we must accept that everything has its time and rhythm.

Your body is designed for your little one's survival; it's a miracle, but you can't control it with your willpower.

Focus on giving space to the process. Have faith in the ancient wisdom contained in every cell of your body.

Important Information - Breastfeeding

There is no formula or nutritional supplement that can compare to mother's milk. Its nutritional and immune properties are irreplaceable, and not to mention the power it holds in the psychological and emotional development of your baby.

Breastfeeding protects the baby from infections and prevents allergies.

The biochemical composition of breast milk provides the baby with specific human proteins, a very important factor since there is no other form of nutrition that has this property. Formulas are made from "foreign" proteins, whether cow's milk or soy milk, which when introduced into your baby's body can trigger or worsen allergies. Another important immune property is that breast milk is packed with antibodies, enzymes, and white blood cells. All these ingredients make it excellent for protection against respiratory and digestive infections. An interesting fact is that breastfeeding decreases the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and childhood obesity.

The composition of the milk changes to meet the evolving stages of your baby.

The first milk produced by the breast after childbirth is called colostrum. It is produced in very small quantities, and many mothers become alarmed, thinking it's not enough for their baby. It is rich in protein and very easy to digest. We must remember that the newborn's digestive system is just starting to function, and nature has created the perfect food. After one or two days, colostrum transforms into more mature milk, which is higher in quantity, lactose, and fats, and contains less protein. The fat content of breast milk is very important, as these fatty acids contribute to the development of your baby's brain. The fat concentration changes even within a single feeding, with the milk being lighter at the beginning and thicker and more concentrated toward the end.

Your breast is the baby's natural refuge.

This Vulnerable Being

This tiny being has spent nine months rocked by the sound of your heartbeat, in a completely dark environment with a constant temperature, free from bothersome noises, and protected from all the harshness of the external world. During and after birth, your baby is exposed to a large number of auditory, visual, and tactile stimuli that often stimulate their nervous system, making them irritable and dependent. Breastfeeding provides the baby with a natural refuge. The

little one recognizes their mother, their warmth, scent, heartbeat, and immediately relaxes, feeling safe and protected.

Another important aspect is the revitalizing effect breastfeeding has on the mother. Mothers who successfully breastfeed their children experience great emotional satisfaction. They feel at peace and at ease with themselves. This is largely due to the hormones released during breastfeeding: prolactin and oxytocin. These hormones are responsible for the feeling of complete well-being. Another benefit for the mother is that breastfeeding induces a gradual and sustained weight loss.

The Breastfeeding Process

Breastfeeding is a process. Breast milk doesn't miraculously appear in the mother's breast when the baby is born. The woman's body undergoes an extraordinary transformation during pregnancy and postpartum, preparing her for the newborn's nourishment.

During pregnancy, the structure of the breast changes as fat and supportive tissue are replaced by glands responsible for milk production. Toward the end of pregnancy, the nipples and areola become extremely sensitive, and when the baby's mouth touches them, it sends signals to the brain, which then produces the hormone oxytocin. Oxytocin contracts the ducts of the glands, squeezing the milk toward the nipple.

Common Questions

"I don't feel any milk coming out, is my baby getting enough to eat?"

A mother's biggest concern is knowing whether her baby is getting enough nourishment.

Even if the mother doesn't feel anything, her breast is producing colostrum. Colostrum is specially designed to provide the newborn with a large amount of protein in a very small quantity of liquid. A few drops of colostrum are enough to nourish the baby during the first days.

"My baby sleeps a lot, should I wake them up to feed?"

During the first few hours of life, the newborn alternates between wakefulness and sleep, resting from the laborious birth process and not feeling as hungry as we might think. However, it is important for the mother to offer the breast regularly to establish a feeding rhythm and stimulate milk production.

"How much should my baby eat?"

Breast milk is very easily digested. The baby should nurse every 2 ½ hours for about 15 minutes on each breast. These times are simply a guideline, as each baby is different. It's not good to wait until your

baby is crying desperately from hunger to offer the breast, as it will be harder for them to latch on. It's also not good to interrupt them when they are still feeding vigorously. The mother should learn to interpret her baby's hunger and satiety cues.

"How do I know my baby is eating enough?"

Two or three days after birth, milk production starts. The mother's breasts become engorged, painful, and begin to produce more mature milk, which is richer in lactose and fats and comes in larger volumes. At this point, your baby will give signs that they are being adequately fed. First, you can hear the baby swallowing the milk, and then you will notice they are wetting more than six diapers in 24 hours. By this time, the meconium from the first few days has transformed into mustard-yellow, watery stools with seeds, which usually occur every time the baby eats. Another sign of successful breastfeeding is that the irritability of the first few days gives way to the calmness of a satisfied baby.

"What is the secret to successful breastfeeding?"

There are actually two secrets. One is using the correct position, and the other is having faith in the process.

The baby's mouth must correctly latch onto the nipple and most of the areola. If the latch is not correct, it will hurt the mother and hinder the normal development of the breastfeeding process.

Regarding the mother's attitude, it is crucial for her to have confidence in the breastfeeding process. She should know that it takes time and that her baby is ready to adapt to the change. This confidence will calm her anxieties and fears and give her the opportunity to fully embrace the process naturally.

Building Their Future – Unconditional Love

One of the hardest lessons life has taught me is learning to love my children unconditionally. Saying “I love my children unconditionally” is one thing, but practicing it is another. It’s simply not part of our human nature to love without conditions. It doesn’t happen naturally, and very few relationships can achieve this wonderful feeling. Yet, it is absolutely essential for the healthy development of self-esteem in our children.

The fundamental ingredient in the recipe for healthy self-esteem is self-love. We must begin by realizing that we are capable, beautiful beings, worthy of love and respect, and no matter our level of skill, we are enough. This self-concept is born from the messages we receive from our parents. Our mental and emotional image of who we are arises from the attitudes and behaviors of those who nurtured us from childhood.

Do you realize how important your words, gestures, and behaviors are for your child's future? Everything you say and do will shape the mold in which your child's personality develops.

A child raised with love internalizes the concept that they are worthy of love, and from that, their self-esteem is born. In the early months of your baby's life, it will be natural for this beautiful feeling to flow through you without restrictions. However, as the child begins the emotional growth process typical of the second year, you may feel your love being blocked by tantrums and defiance.

It is at this point that you must have the ability to discipline your child without making them feel unloved. Effective parents know how to set boundaries, express their anger, and discipline their children without causing emotional abandonment. This is a very important point because, during early childhood, the emotional protection and security provided by parents are crucial for the child. Guided by your verbal messages and actions, your child will build a mental map of behaviors that are unacceptable in your family and will avoid them at all costs to please you. Remember, you are the center of their universe.

That's why we must try to accept behaviors that are normal for each developmental stage. When we inhibit their expressions of anger, sadness, and fear, we raise children who learn to suppress negative emotions. In contrast, when we allow the child to express their full emotional spectrum, without barriers or limits, we create undisciplined, selfish young people who struggle to adapt socially.

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Guiding, understanding, advising, and disciplining our children with unconditional love is one of the most complex balances we will have to achieve in our lives as parents.

Another aspect of self-esteem in children is feeling accepted for who they are. It's not uncommon to hear adults proudly say, "This is just who I am, and that's it!" Unfortunately, in many cases, this means they don't want to grow, change, or learn new ways of relating to others. This is not the type of acceptance I'm referring to.

When it comes to your children, it's important to let them know that your love is not tied to their physical beauty, academic achievements, or their ability to meet your expectations. Another difficult step in the life of parents is being able to show love to their children when they fail, make mistakes, or simply commit offenses as part of their growth.

Acceptance does not mean agreeing with or approving unacceptable behaviors according to family values. Acceptance means loving them despite everything and not condemning them for being different from us. From day one, give your child the purest love, unconditionally.

Chapter 7

The Newborn's Sleep – Respect

Sidney

"On the verge of suicide, frazzled, with my nerves on edge and no idea what to do.

The baby had colic. I knew what colic was, when it starts, what causes it, how to treat it, and an endless list of advice I would give to my patients every day. What I didn't know was how it feels to be a mom with a baby suffering from colic.

I won't deny that I left the hospital on a cloud of happiness. After overcoming the disappointment of my cesarean, the rest had been a dream come true. The baby was beautiful. He had intensely blue eyes and a little dimple on his chin that made him completely irresistible. He was like a little doll, and I was the mom.

I never had maternal instincts. My career had always come first, but when I saw his little face, the maternal instinct of all the women in my family surged through my pores. I felt complete and prepared... what a surprise it turned out to be!

The cherub had reflux and colic. If he wasn't vomiting, he was crying. His screams were so high-pitched that they pierced my

eardrums and drilled into my brain. Soon I realized that all the things I'd learned in books couldn't compare to reality, and my dreams of the perfect baby had been just that—dreams.

Sidney and I would walk around the apartment day and night. His dad would pat his back while I tried to take a nap or a quick shower to refresh myself. We tried every remedy, both scientific and homemade. Nothing worked, until one morning I realized that the baby had calmed down while I was vacuuming the carpet in the room. Eureka! Of course, how hadn't we thought of it before? The monotonous, low-vibration sound of the vacuum had relaxed the baby. From that day on, my vacuum stayed right next to Sidney's crib. All I had to do was flip the switch when he started crying, and voilà! Colic solved—Sidney fell asleep in seconds.

Days passed, and the episodes of uncontrollable crying became less frequent. We, the mom, dad, and baby, fell into a natural rhythm of sleep and wakefulness, feeding, and eliminating, and we finally felt human again.

The big surprise came when I finally decided to move the vacuum from its assigned corner in the room. An enormous hole replaced the long, soft cream-colored fibers that had once made the carpet fluffy and soft. My vacuum, the homemade colic remedy, had eaten up the carpet!"

My final words for you, woman who just had a baby...

Accept the help of those who love you. Your body is crying out for sleep, but it's impossible. It's normal, especially in the first days after childbirth, since your hormones create a state of general alertness that prevents you from sleeping. As the hours and days pass, your body and mind will need rest. Don't hesitate to ask for support, because even though you might feel superhuman, resting will give you a more positive outlook.

Important Facts: The Newborn's Sleep

One of the most common concerns new parents have is their baby's sleep, and of course, their own sleep, because from the moment the little one announces their arrival, they will never again sleep a full night.

There are countless beliefs about baby sleep—some say it's because they have their sleep cycle flipped, others say it's due to hunger, being cold, wet, or having colic. In truth, all of these situations stem from the simple fact that most families don't understand the newborn's sleep cycles and believe there's always a reason behind the baby waking up crying.

Sleep patterns, just like hunger patterns, are something we learn. Our sleep and wake cycles are behaviors we've learned over time. Have you noticed that most days you wake up at the same time? And

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that around a certain hour of the night, your eyelids start drooping like they're made of lead? Humans have an internal rhythm that repeats day after day.

The newborn is a different case. During their time in the womb, the baby has cycles of activity and rest. Mothers can predict when their baby is most active, generally in the afternoon or towards the evening. Babies sleep when the mom is awake, and they are active when the mom sleeps. After birth, the baby hasn't yet established a sleep rhythm like that of its parents. That's why we think their sleep is reversed.

Another big surprise is that sleep times are much shorter and more disorganized than we expected. Most parents mistakenly assume that after feeding their infant, they will enjoy at least two or three hours of deep sleep. The reality for your baby is a little different.

The newborn has six different states of sleep and wakefulness: deep sleep, light sleep (REM sleep), drowsy state between sleep and wakefulness, fully alert state, irritability, and crying. In deep sleep and crying, the baby completely shuts off from external stimuli. It's a way of protecting themselves from sensory overload.

Watch your newborn. During deep sleep, their breathing is deep and slow, and there's no way to wake them up. It's as if they're in another world. During REM sleep, the little one has involuntary movements of their body and eyes, and we generally notice that they're dreaming. In the fully alert state, the baby is completely awake, their eyes open, calmly observing those around them. And in the crying state, they loudly vent their feelings and won't let us enter

their consciousness for anything in the world. The drowsy and irritable states are transitional.

The amount of time a baby spends in each phase is variable and difficult to predict in the first days of life outside the womb, but around the third week of life, the infant begins to organize, and their sleep cycles last between 2 and 3 hours, alternating with feeding.

Another aspect we need to consider in this section is the baby's basic personality. Some babies are calm and good-natured, while others are so active that they can't calm down even when they are satisfied and clean. Eventually, our goal is for the baby to learn to fall asleep by themselves and maintain this pattern throughout their childhood. Below are some basic principles related to your baby's sleep:

The baby should be laid down on their back, face-up. Many families fear this position may be dangerous for their baby. On the contrary, we know that lying on their back prevents sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). When the baby is awake, you can place them on their stomach. This helps prevent flat head syndrome.

It's preferable for the baby to learn to sleep in their crib or bassinet, not with their parents. This is a very controversial point, and every family must find their own balance. For moms who breastfeed, it's very convenient to sleep with their babies, and many feel they can supervise them better. The truth is, sleeping with the baby does not prevent SIDS and exposes the baby to other dangers, like accidentally suffocating them while the parents sleep. Another disadvantage is that

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eventually, the child will need to transition to their own bed, and if they are accustomed to sleeping with their parents, it will be harder to promote this independence.

Sleep rituals should start from the very beginning. Pay attention to your own bedtime rituals. We all develop certain activities that lead us to sleep. From the moment your baby is born, it's important to begin establishing healthy behaviors that will help them eventually sleep independently.

In the first days, the infant is totally immature and has a number of reflexes and movements. Some irritate them, while others calm them. Reflexive movements of their arms and legs can startle them and wake them up too soon, which is why it's recommended to wrap their legs.

On the other hand, their sucking reflex calms and relaxes them. You can help them find their hand, or if you prefer, you can teach them to use a pacifier.

Last but not least is your loving presence. Use your calm, gentle voice to soothe them, sing lullabies, and express your love while rocking them in your arms. During this brief period in your baby's life, let them know that they are safe and that nothing is lacking because you are watching over them.

Feel the conviction in yourself that you can do it. The little one will immediately relax upon recognizing your confidence.

Building Their Future - Respect

Would you ever tell a friend they're clumsy if they accidentally spill coffee from their cup? Or would you call your guests destroyers if they accidentally damaged a plant in the garden? How about telling your neighbor they're a slob because they didn't bring the trash bin in as soon as the garbage truck passed? Probably not. Most likely, you treat strangers around you with respect because you expect to be treated the same way.

This fundamental rule of life also applies to your children. When you treat them with respect, you are planting the valuable seeds of mutual respect. When you mark your language with words like "thank you," "you're welcome," and "please," you're signaling to your child that they are worthy of your courtesy, that they are beings worthy of consideration and respect.

The value of respect goes beyond the obvious benefit of receiving respect in return. During formative years, children believe, absorb, and embody everything we tell them. Your words are engraved in their subconscious and determine their identity. When a mother calls her child clumsy, dirty, fat, ugly, or bad, there is no more powerful influence in the world than this.

"If my mom, who knows everything, says I'm clumsy, then I must be," thinks a young child in their early years. Unknowingly, this child ends up fulfilling their mother's emotional directive and will grow up believing they are clumsy, which will make them clumsier still.

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Another way to show respect to your children is through emotional congruence. What does this concept mean? It means that as parents, we have the ability to show appropriate feelings and emotions for the situation we're in.

When a child expresses joy or happiness, the mother responds with joy. When the child expresses sadness, the mother responds with compassion. When the child expresses fear, the mother responds with concern. It is then that the child feels understood and becomes part of the family system.

Can you imagine how you'd feel if, when expressing joy, your parents mocked you? Or if, when expressing fear, they reproached you for exaggerating? And what if, when sharing pride in a good accomplishment, they judged you as arrogant?

We all know how important our parents' opinions of us are and how much we seek their acceptance. What's crucial to remember is that young children can tell the difference between what we say genuinely and what we say insincerely. In fact, if a child is behaving terribly, telling them they're an angel won't be believed by them.

Honesty is part of the respect we offer our children. Inform them with compassion. Remember, in communication with your loved ones, honesty without compassion turns into cruelty.

Chapter 8

Depression – Praise and Criticism

Clara

“The divorce came later, but the detachment began the moment we left the hospital with our second daughter, Clara.

I felt it immediately as we entered the car. The preparations to return home had kept me busy, distracted from my relationship with her father, but now that we were alone in the intimate space of the car, I felt that an abyss separated us, that the distance between him and me was insurmountable, and that we were entering the final moments of our marriage.

We lived in a beautiful neighborhood in the suburbs of San Diego. The house was spacious, two stories, five bedrooms, a garage for three cars, and a pool with a Jacuzzi in the yard. It was certainly a stark contrast to the tiny apartment where we began our family life, laughing, crying, and loving each other with faith and hope for a bright future. We had achieved the American Dream!

We had made it. Through personal sacrifices, we built our little world. We had jobs, bought our first house, and welcomed Clara, with her blue eyes and curly hair, the sister of Sidney. The perfect family

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picture was completed with two semi-new cars and our cat, Maggie, who had been with us since our life in Michigan.

So why this empty feeling in my stomach? Why did words freeze on our lips even before they came out? Why did even the most ordinary gestures become forced, stereotyped, almost robotic? Because, I asked myself a thousand times, why? My mind searched desperately for an explanation, a reason to understand why my family was inevitably dissolving before my eyes. Finding no answer, I unconsciously decided that my children would always come first above anything or anyone, and that I would do whatever was necessary to save my marriage.

It only took a second for my internal commitment to bring forth the miracle of hope. I felt my whole body relax in the car seat, air filling my lungs, fresh, pure air. I looked out the window, saw the trees and houses passing by, the sky bluer than ever, the sun shining on the asphalt, everything took on a more intense and vibrant color, and I felt at peace.”

My final words to you, woman who just had a baby...

Be patient with yourself.

Your body and mind, which until a few hours ago were bathed in powerful hormones produced by the placenta, are now empty, dry, and

thirsty. You are in a transition called the puerperium. During this time, your body must find its own hormonal balance to move forward.

Important Data – Postpartum Depression

Approximately 60 to 80% of women experience some degree of depression or melancholy after childbirth. Interesting, right? For most women, motherhood is the culmination of many dreams and definitely a reward in their realization as women, yet a large number of mothers feel sad and melancholic in the first hours after birth and perhaps in the following days.

What causes this feeling of sadness and dejection? This sense of tiredness and sorrow?

Until just a few hours before giving birth, our body was flooded with powerful hormones, estrogen and progesterone, which were produced in large quantities by the placenta to sustain and promote the development of the baby. Suddenly, without warning, these hormones almost completely disappear from our bloodstream, destabilizing our emotional state.

But it's not only the hormones responsible for the melancholy. Our emotional universe is very complex. We have dreams, expectations, fears, and insecurities that will manifest as soon as our baby is born.

Our expectations of ourselves may be one of the reasons we suffer more in life. The birth of a child is no exception. If the birth was

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difficult, or if we had a cesarean, we may feel guilty or as though we've failed. If we dreamed of a perfect baby, we may feel disappointed when we see that the baby is swollen, very red, or has a health issue. This last part can make us feel guilty.

Another factor contributing to our sense of sadness is the emotional loss we feel when transitioning from woman to mother. We miss our independence, our previous way of being. We also miss our body. Until recently, we didn't mind being overweight because we had a precious load, the baby. Now that the baby is born, we feel like our bodies have changed so much that we'll never be the same again. To make matters worse, we are no longer the center of attention because the newcomer is taking up all the pampering. It's easy to feel desperate, displaced, and unarmed!

In most cases, the melancholy lasts only a few days, at most two or three weeks, and the mother recovers simply with the love and support of her family.

In 10 to 20% of women, true postpartum depression may occur. This problem is entirely different from the temporary sadness described earlier.

It can last from weeks to almost a year. It typically begins one or two months after birth, and the symptoms deeply affect the mother's life, causing changes in eating habits, sleep patterns, and relationships with the family. This type of depression requires immediate professional attention.

Building Your Future – Praise and Constructive Criticism

There's an old saying: "Man does not live by bread alone." When it comes to the well-being and emotional health of your children, this translates to: "It's not enough to feed your baby; you must also feed their self-esteem. You must nourish their self-concept, giving them the beliefs they need to think they are important, valuable, and capable."

It seems simple, yet this is a slippery slope where many families fail. Whether because they think they shouldn't spoil their children and fall short with praise or because they don't want to repeat the emotional patterns of their parents, who were very strict and praised excessively, creating selfish and out-of-control young people. The sweet spot is difficult to find. However, there are certain rules that, if applied consistently, yield very positive results.

First, each stage of your child's development has different needs. You cannot nurture a six-month-old the same way you would a school-aged child, nor a young adolescent. You must prepare in advance. The rattles of the first year will be replaced by puzzles and Legos for the child, and by research work, sports, and open conversations for the teenager. You'll feel helpless if you don't prepare. You cannot rely on your personal experience alone, as your children grow and develop so quickly, and they are exposed to an environment that moves at the speed of light!

My second piece of advice is that we must learn how to praise our children to avoid the excesses promoted by flattery or the extreme opposite, which is exaggerated and unfounded criticism.

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Praise should be sincere. Don't offer it unless you truly feel it in your heart, because your child will immediately recognize it as exaggerated. Praise that doesn't match the child's behavior causes anxiety and fear because, unconsciously, the child doesn't feel deserving of the praise.

Your praise should be specific and appreciate the child's activity or accomplishment, accompanied by our feelings: "It makes me so happy to see how you can wait your turn to get on the swing." In this sentence, the mother expressed her feeling about the child's ability to wait and delay their impulses.

If the mother had said, "You've behaved great!" or "You're a wonderful young man," the child receives a vague and emotionally charged message that causes confusion, as they don't understand why their mom is praising them.

As for criticism, it is just as necessary as praise but should never be directed at the child's personality. When we tell a child they are rude, dirty, clumsy, or lazy, we are creating a behavior pattern for the future. Remember, your words create the fundamental beliefs that shape your child's personality. "If my mother calls me clumsy or rude, then I must be," the young child unconsciously believes. This belief will drive the child to continue exhibiting behaviors that justify it.

To avoid this vicious cycle, your criticism should always be aimed at the behavior you don't want to see repeated, should be accompanied by an appropriate feeling of disapproval, and should offer an acceptable alternative for the family.

Instead of saying, "What a rude and whiny child," when the little one throws a tantrum on the floor, say: "I don't like seeing you on the floor crying. If you need to cry, you can do it in your room. I'll come with you." This alternative may be a bit harder because it requires emotional and physical involvement, but it gives the child the opportunity to express their emotions, feel that their negative feelings are acceptable, and at the same time realize that not all behaviors will be tolerated by the family. Setting appropriate boundaries gives the child a framework for future behaviors and makes them feel secure.

Finally, we must establish appropriate expectations for each stage of our children's development. When a child grows up thinking nothing is expected of them, they won't strive to achieve anything. Their short life will be empty of purpose. It's this purpose that pushes us to stretch our personal abilities and strive to conquer new horizons.

Throughout their life, your child will repeat the family patterns established in early childhood. Choose your praise carefully, select your criticisms with love, set ambitious expectations, and offer your encouragement honestly and with all your heart. You will then know that you've not only nourished your child physically but also with values and beliefs that will give them wings to fly.

Chapter 9

Returning to Work - Discipline

Clara

"It seemed like my sweet girl knew.

Since Clara was born, she knew that crying would get her nowhere. Clara understood that her place in the family depended on her being strong, stoic, and untamable.

Clara would open her big eyes, look at me, and gently ask for her food. In contrast to her brother Sidney, she never vomited a drop of what she ate and slept through the night from the first week of life. Clara knew deep down that her mother had reached the limits of her emotional reserves.

As the days and weeks passed, my body and mind entered a period of regeneration and optimism. The marital conflict that had preceded Clara's birth faded into the background, and a reconstructive and healing calm flooded our lives.

Sidney began his first year of preschool. Every morning, he eagerly went to school with his Ninja Turtle backpack. He was always the first to hop into the car, not wasting any time. His mission awaited

him in the classroom with his teacher and new classmates. He was thirsty for knowledge.

The father of my children resumed his responsibilities as a doctor and began a bright period in his professional life. The specter of addiction gave him the break he needed to offer his little daughter a stable home, if only for a few years.

One autumn morning, I looked at my daughter sleeping. She was about to turn two months old. It felt like I was dreaming. I lost track of reality and found myself bathed in the light of my happiness. I floated in the room, and from above, I saw my world, my children, and everything I had fought so hard for. In the blink of an eye, I regained awareness—the baby was waking up; it was time for her to eat.

I took her in my arms and kissed her. I felt the scent of her baby skin, soft and warm. In a few days, I would return to work, and it wouldn't be me, but someone else who would have that privilege. I got drunk on her scent, holding her tight against my chest, letting myself be carried away by the overwhelming sense of fulfillment."

My last words to you, woman who just had a baby...

Accept your doubts. Loving your child and loving your profession or work are not incompatible. As human beings, we possess infinite emotional complexity that allows us to live situations that sometimes

seem opposites, at the same time and in the same place. Respect your integrity as a human being, for in time, you will see that you are the most valuable thing you possess.

Important Points - Returning to Work

The mom who absorbs all the responsibilities of the home is as much a heroine as the one who gets up every day to face work with hope and optimism to support her family.

Do you feel an internal struggle when thinking about returning to work soon? It's not uncommon to question our motives when our professional vocation conflicts with our identity as mothers. The most important thing is to live in integrity with our values and act according to what moves us deeply.

If your passion is teaching and you are a teacher, there's nothing in this world that can quench your thirst for educating. If your passion is baking, you will only find peace decorating beautiful wedding or quinceañera cakes. If your passion is journalism or television, how do you think you'll feel day after day without contact with the world?

Does this mean you love your children less? Are you robbing them of your affection when you cross the threshold of your door to go to work? Am I abandoning them? Consider these questions frankly, as they may well be part of your inner dialogue.

It's not uncommon for a young woman to feel torn in this area. Many of us were raised with the notion that our most important purpose in life was to raise our children.

When it comes to returning to work, the most important thing is that the mother feels secure in the knowledge that her choice—whether to stay at home or return to work—is the right one for herself.

A happy, productive mother, content with herself, is a mother who can love her children intensely, raise them with love, respect, and be a role model. Both paths are difficult. There's nothing more difficult than facing the routine of home life, with endless cleaning, meal planning, and sometimes the loneliness and isolation of a world that keeps moving at full speed.

Of course, the privilege is being able to choose. In many cases, we don't have that option. It's then that we must accept the reality of our life and face the world with optimism.

When you're ready to choose a daycare for your baby, keep the following tips in mind:

A caregiver can look after three babies under 12 months. It's important to verify the type of supervision your baby will have.

Check the policies regarding discipline. What kind of discipline do they use with older children? How do they handle typical tantrums of the second year?

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As for activities: Is there a good place for the little ones to go outside, get sun, and fresh air? Observe if there's a TV and if it's on all day.

Is the physical environment safe? Look for potential hazards—small toys on the floor, exposed electrical cords, unprotected outlets.

Keep an open dialogue with the team caring for your baby. There will be conflict situations, and the most important thing is good communication.

Building Their Future – Discipline

In my mind, there is no greater humiliation for a child than the one they experience when their parents hit them.

I remember a saying my grandmother used: "Because I love you, I beat you." In her time, hitting a child for misbehaving was completely natural. Today, we know that hitting a child is the easiest and quickest way to lead them to failure.

The word discipline has a very broad meaning, so it is essential for us to clearly understand what it means to us. In this section, when I refer to discipline, I use the word in its most academic and compassionate sense. To me, discipline means organizing, educating, instructing, teaching, and providing clear, precise boundaries for children's behavior.

Our ultimate goal as parents is for our children to learn the art of self-discipline, so that when they grow up, they can set their own limits based on the values we instilled in them during their early childhood. This process takes time; it doesn't happen overnight and, above all, requires patience, as many times we will face attitudes and behaviors that challenge our personal integrity so deeply that we may feel like strangling our little ones. Calm down, the future of your children is more important than your pride and self-love.

Although it may seem impossible, discipline begins the moment your baby is born and evolves over time, reflecting the different stages of the child's development. Remember to prepare yourself, because if you don't, you will repeat the behavioral patterns of your parents, who did the best they could with the tools available to them. But in many cases, they also made the mistake of giving in to their impulses.

In the section dedicated to your newborn's sleep, we established that your baby uses sleep and crying as mechanisms to protect themselves from the environment. During these states, the child does not receive or accept any type of stimulation. They are closed off from the world around them. During their first days, the baby is completely disorganized, sleeping, crying, and waking up erratically. They follow no rules. But, surprise, by the third or fourth week, the little whirlwind of energy begins to organize themselves. Have you ever wondered why? Although you may not believe it, the reason is you. As parents, we provide the child with behavioral guidelines that they follow and respect from birth.

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Perhaps the most important guideline of all is what we offer when the baby cries. A baby's cry has different characteristics depending on their needs. Does it cry because they are tired? Do they want to neutralize the energy of the environment and shut out stimuli? Or have they just woken up and are calling for food? Have they eaten and wake up whining a bit and moving irritably for no reason?

Your response should be different depending on the situation, and yet, most mothers feel that every time the child cries, they must feed them. This is why the child learns that every time they cry, they get food or immediate attention and don't learn to calm themselves.

As the days pass after birth, you will learn to recognize the different types of cries your baby makes and should give them the opportunity to calm down on their own, thus establishing the first cue for self-discipline.

As the months pass, your innocent child will begin to examine their environment, and when they achieve independent mobility through crawling, your child will put your ability to set rules and discipline to the test. From this point on, the little one will create enough dangerous situations for you to exercise your new authority as a mother.

The following guidelines will help you establish healthy and productive discipline. The rules change as your child grows and must be adapted to each child's personality.

- Set the rules in advance. Children know what is expected of them. No surprises.
- The guidelines should be adapted to the needs of each child.
- Both parents must agree. Little ones are very astute and will immediately notice any gap between you and will, of course, use this to their advantage.
- Explain the rules clearly, not just with words but with your tone of voice and gestures. If you've never done this, practice in front of a mirror. Use your most authoritative tone.
- Be prepared for your child to rebel; it's in their nature to want to establish their independence.
- Always respond the same way. When you don't, your child will wonder why and will try again to break the rule to see what happens.
- Be prepared for the changes in your little one. Rules that work for a two-year-old are useless during school age and even more so during adolescence.
- Reevaluate your rules and expectations regularly. There is nothing more dangerous than being inflexible. Inflexibility breaks us physically, emotionally, and spiritually.
- Open your mind to the possibilities of loving and educating your children using all the talent and creativity you have as a mother.

Chapter 10

Medical Problems of the Newborn – Emotional Grief

Sidney

"Winter came faster than we expected.

The long, lazy summer days had spoiled me, and the brutal cold of Michigan caught me off guard. My baby was barely three months old when the first snowstorm arrived, and I had already been working for two months in outpatient clinics.

The morning routine became much more complicated than before. Not only did I have to get myself dressed, but I also had to feed, change, and ‘package’ my baby for our morning trip to the babysitter’s house. He would spend the entire day with Bonnie, a wonderful American woman who quickly became his second mom. But despite the warmth of our arms and homes, leaving our apartment at six in the morning, Monday through Friday, became a death sentence.

Although his little nose barely peeked out from under the blankets, signs of trouble soon started to appear: more whimpering than usual and clear mucus that didn’t leave him until the problem reached a crisis point.

When the alarm went off, as it did every morning, it found all of us awake—mom, dad, and baby—walking impatiently around the living room, wondering what to do with the little one who was having increasing difficulty breathing. Two pediatricians and one very sick baby, our son.

Fear clouded our thinking, and for several hours we tried to deny the reality of the situation, but the baby's chest didn't lie. With every breath, it caved in deeply, showing his ribs. His crying soon turned into a whimper that accompanied the wheezing of his labored breathing. The rosy color of his face faded into a pallor we could hardly recognize.

"We can't wait any longer," I said to his dad. With his sad eyes and haggard face, he nodded, and we made our way to the hospital—not as doctors, but as desperate parents.

Our son spent four days in the hospital. They were the longest days of my life as a mom."

My Last Words to You, Woman Who Has Just Given Birth

Allow space for your emotions. Being vulnerable is not being weak; on the contrary. When you take time to feel, your body relaxes, cleansing itself of fear, anxiety, and anger. Make room in your heart for a new hope, a new dream, a joy. When we suppress our negative emotions, we create an obstacle to growth and transformation.

Important Information – Medical Problems of the Newborn

We all expect a healthy baby. That's the rule. The exception is a baby with medical problems. And, like any exception, it is possible, so we must be prepared. Today, there are numerous prenatal diagnostic methods that give families the opportunity to know a great deal of information about their baby's health even before birth.

Many families prefer not to know and hide behind the idea that their baby's fate is predetermined. This fatalistic attitude is very characteristic of Hispanic families and comes from our religious heritage. Without judging it as positive or negative, denial does not help when we have to face our children's health problems.

Below is a brief summary of the most common medical problems in newborns. I will only mention the conditions that are most frequently observed after birth. Neonatology is a vast area of pediatric medicine, and it would be impossible to cover all of its aspects.

Transient Tachypnea of the Newborn is an extremely common phenomenon that causes alarm in families and concern among pediatricians, as it can initially resemble symptoms of infection. The word tachypnea means accelerated breathing, faster than normal. When it is marked, sustained, and does not disappear in the first few hours after birth, it can be a symptom of infection in the blood or lungs. Once infections are ruled out and if it resolves within the hours

following birth, tachypnea is considered transient and benign. In general, it occurs because the little one has retained some amniotic fluid in their lungs after birth, which leads to rapid breathing.

Sepsis (or Blood Infection) in Newborns is perhaps one of the most feared complications by pediatricians because its symptoms are very subtle at first, and the consequences of not treating it properly are devastating. The infection is generally caused by a bacteria called Group B Streptococcus, which is found in the mother's body. Many obstetricians test their patients to see if they are carriers of the bacteria, in which case they will receive antibiotics during labor to prevent the baby from getting infected. However, if the newborn shows signs of sepsis, their pediatrician will perform tests to confirm or rule out the infection and start administering antibiotics to the baby until the blood test results are available. If the infection is confirmed, the antibiotic treatment may last up to 10 days, depending on the baby. If the infection is ruled out and the baby is doing well, it's very likely they will be discharged in about 2 to 3 days.

Meconium Aspiration is another complication that can have serious consequences for your baby's life. Meconium is the first stool of the newborn. If the baby experiences distress inside the uterus, they may pass meconium, which then floats in the amniotic fluid and can be inhaled into the baby's lungs. Meconium is a very irritating substance and causes intense damage to the delicate tissue of infant

lungs. Like all conditions, meconium aspiration can range from mild to moderate to severe. In general, when a newborn inhales meconium into their lungs, their ability to establish normal respiratory function is significantly affected and will likely require intensive care.

Jaundice (or Yellowing of the Skin) in newborns is very common, and its severity, prognosis, and treatment depend on the underlying cause. The three most common causes (though there are others, less frequent) are: physiological jaundice, jaundice due to breastfeeding, and jaundice caused by neonatal hemolytic disease. Jaundice occurs due to the buildup of a pigment called bilirubin in the baby's blood. In physiological jaundice, bilirubin increases in the blood between the third and fifth day and then decreases until it disappears. In breastfeeding jaundice, the rise in bilirubin is more sustained and marked. Bilirubin levels can increase to critical levels, requiring treatment. In neonatal hemolytic disease, bilirubin increases due to an incompatibility between the mother's and baby's blood, causing excessive and premature breakdown of red blood cells. This is the most severe situation, and precautions are taken by performing laboratory tests on all mothers and babies whose blood types could pose a risk.

Prematurity: A baby is considered full-term between 38 and 40 weeks of gestation. Prematurity can be extreme, such as a baby born at 26 or 28 weeks of gestation, or it can be considered "late preterm,"

born after 32 to 34 weeks. Each situation presents different risk factors and typical complications, which would be unjustly covered in this chapter.

Congenital Defects and Genetic Conditions: In this vast area, what I want to highlight is the importance of prenatal diagnosis. There is no better way to face possible medical problems for your future child than with knowledge and professional support. Your obstetrician will recommend that you undergo ultrasounds, specific blood tests to detect congenital abnormalities, and, if necessary, amniotic fluid or fetal tissue studies.

Building Your Future - Loss and Grief

There is no greater loss in life than that of a child. Emotionally, we are prepared to lose our parents and other family members, but never a child. It is an unnatural fact.

With advances in science and preventive medicine, infant mortality and particularly neonatal mortality have dramatically decreased in the past decade. Most congenital defects can now be diagnosed in the womb, allowing for early and appropriate intervention.

However, one doesn't need to experience the death of a child to feel loss and grief.

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The most common loss mothers experience after giving birth is the loss of the ideal, of perfection. We all dream of holding our baby in our arms, gazing at their beautiful face, counting ten tiny fingers, feeling their smooth, warm, pure skin. It is our personal idea of perfection. The reality is often different.

First of all, humans are not perfect. Our anatomy has countless normal variations that in many cases we interpret as defects.

Another possibility regarding your baby's appearance is that labor and birth are often extremely difficult for the tiny newborn, and when we look at them for the first time, we may face a baby who, rather than appearing perfect, seems like a boxer who has just lost by knockout.

The next loss, in order of frequency, is the loss a mother experiences when discovering her baby has a congenital illness. The degree of shock and grief will depend on the severity of the problem and whether the mother knew beforehand about the medical condition. Prenatal diagnosis is extremely helpful because it allows us to prepare, both medically to care for the child, and psychologically to accept the condition.

The final loss to highlight is the loss of identity that a new mother undergoes. It is a subtle loss, which, amidst the excitement of childbirth, may go unnoticed, but it is no less important, especially for the woman. The process of conception, pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum is one of the most extraordinary biological processes in nature. Psychologically and emotionally, we enter this journey with one identity, and by the end of it, we have lost that identity completely.

Our body is different. We no longer have the freedom we once had, and our anxieties, concerns, and responsibilities have tripled. It's no surprise that, unconsciously, we are experiencing grief over our lost identity.

The following are the stages of emotional grief:

Denial: We refuse to believe what is happening to us. Depending on the degree of loss, the person may be in shock, disoriented, and unable to feel or express their emotions. At this stage, it is difficult to understand the complex details others try to explain, and of course, it is almost impossible to make clear decisions.

Rebellion: It is at this moment when we realize something terrible is happening to us, and we fill up with anger and resentment toward life. Sometimes we try to find someone to blame or feel guilty ourselves.

Bargaining: This is where we attempt to manipulate the circumstances and negotiate with life, nature, or whatever we believe could change our situation.

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Depression: A great sorrow overtakes us. We feel completely unable to move forward with our lives. We can't find meaning in things.

Acceptance: Finally, we reach an emotional balance. We accept our loss and learn new ways of coping with life. It's a new beginning. Accepting a loss doesn't mean forgetting it or diminishing its value. It means finding meaning and purpose in our lives even without what we've lost.

Throughout our lives as parents, we will encounter many satisfactions and opportunities to celebrate and enjoy our children. But we will also face obstacles, failures, disappointments, and losses. We must be aware that our children are our teachers and that they don't come into our lives just to bring us joy. When we embark on this journey, we commit ourselves to face the unknown and uncertain.

Epilogue

My mother always knew, but she never told me.

When we embark on the journey of motherhood, we do so consciously, innocently, and full of idealism. We don't know what our mothers find obvious. And even if we did, we would still move forward. My experience as a mother has always been very positive. On my path, there have been far more roses than thorns, but even so, I know that it was the tears shed by my children that transformed me as a human being.

When a young woman reaches the threshold of motherhood, there is no force in the world that can stop her from crossing that threshold. Do you think for a moment that anyone could have made you change your mind about your baby? We've all heard the excuses: "You're too young!" or maybe... "At your age? Your kids are already teenagers!" or maybe... "No job, and a baby on the way..." and yet in your heart, you know there is no other option.

In my own personal story, my children couldn't have come at more difficult times. Sidney during my first year of residency, and Clara when I was on the brink of divorce. And yet they filled me with energy and vitality. They nourished me with their affection and invited me to live with an open heart.

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In truth, it wasn't in the moments of happiness that I experienced the greatest transformation, but in the moments of change and adversity. It was in those episodes when my legs wobbled and I had a lump in my throat that I grew and was filled with blessings. It was my children's successes and failures, the tears and moments of loneliness, the abandonment, the losses, the dreams built slowly, and the realities that often fell short of our expectations. It was those moments that bent me inside, dissolved me completely, and gave me the strength to rebuild myself and become the mother my children needed.

My mother always knew, but she never told me. Like me, she also shed silent tears—tears that we, her daughters, never appreciated enough. And yet, even if she had told me, nothing would have changed in my life. As your little baby grows, you may remember this moment of their birth with a touch of melancholy. Over time, your baby becomes a child, then a teenager, and eventually they will fly from the nest. Allow them to transform you, open your heart and mind to the extraordinary process of motherhood.

You will be rewarded a thousand times over.