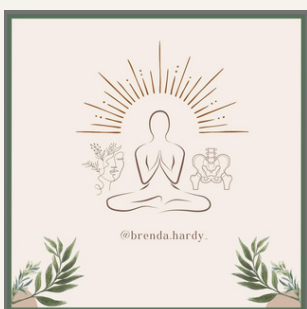




Fourth Trimester Guidance



To Mothers and those who care for mothers
A guide to navigate a mother's recovery in the first 40
days following birth and beyond.



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Foreword

This guidance was written by Brenda Hardy, BSc Hons Physiotherapy, with specialist interest in Trauma and Pelvic Health.

“I felt compelled to create this guide, due to my lived experience of navigating the weeks and months after birth and the difficulties that I faced. I often felt confused and unsupported when facing common physical and mental health issues. I feel that an evidence based guide would help so many mothers facing the same struggles.

I hope that you feel heard, seen and supported as you make this transition into motherhood, whether it's your first, or even your fifth time.”

In this guide, I use the biological term 'mother'. However, it is my wish that this guideline is used by anyone identifying as a birthing person.

Thrive Postpartum - Some Simple Tips!

Keep it simple:

1. Rest as much as possible
2. Hydrate often
3. Eat real food regularly
4. Have a simple morning routine eg; shower, put on comfy supportive clothing, do a few stretches, eat a nourishing meal that will set you up for the day.
5. A short morning walk outside will boost your mood massively, especially before noon!
6. Ask for and receive as much support as possible.
7. Listen to your body - give it what it needs.

When a flower doesn't bloom,
you fix the environment in
which it grows, not the flower.”
- Alexander Den Heijer

Brenda Hardy



Introduction

Congratulations! You have just grown and birthed a baby (or babies).

This is an event at the edge of human performance. You should be so proud of yourself. Your body is incredible. The six weeks following birth, historically, was a protected time where mothers were given the necessary time, space, loving touch, care and attention required, to integrate and heal from birth. Traditionally, a mother focused on sleep, feeding and getting to know her baby.

Early post-partum nourishment and support is vital for the long-term health of mothers. Mothers need warmth, nourishing foods, hands on healing and rest to optimise recovery. A beautiful place to begin is by preparing for post-partum, just as we prepare for baby.

The images of motherhood we receive are often those of the glowing perfect mother, with an effortless, natural maternal instinct, somehow doing it all. In reality, the transition into motherhood is a bumpy journey, full of ups and downs. Our hormones surge, bodies change and our identity and relationships shift.

It can be reassuring to know that feeling isolated and overwhelmed is common as you move through this period and adjust to your new role. Give yourself the time and compassion as you navigate this shift.



Connection

This work is being brought forward to help mothers reconnect. With themselves, their children, partners, families, health professionals and communities. We are not biologically designed to independently care for a new-born. Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness. Often, we don't realise we are disconnected.

Connection feels like:

- Being at ease in your body
- Feeling a range of emotions
- Being attuned to your body and its needs
- Feeling like you belong/that you are held and supported

You may consider connecting with

Yourself:

- How am I feeling?
- How could I be supported today?
- What do I need today?
- Would I benefit from alone time or time with my partner/friends?
- Would I benefit from connecting with my body through exercising, journalling, breathwork, or in a way that is enjoyable for you?

Remember, even when it looks like you are doing nothing, simply being with your child and interacting with them helps to build their brain and nervous system.

Your Notes:



Connection

With your baby:

- Keeping your baby close
- Resting and feeding your baby
- Taking time getting to know your baby, gently inviting your baby to adjust to a world outside the womb

You may enjoy dimmed lights and creating a warm, cosy space where you can relax. You may wish for those around you to give you gentle light touch. All of this can help you integrate your birthing experience.

With friends/those around you:

- Knowing when to say no to visitors
- Making a note of who can help you with specific guidance, support or tasks
- Gentle socialising in the later weeks if you wish
- Connecting with other mothers, such as a local mum and tots group

With professionals:

Midwife, obstetrician, health visitor, GP, support groups, organisations, mental health specialist, pelvic health physiotherapist.

- If you have a partner, maintain open communication around your needs.
- Remember, self care is essential. You cannot pour from an empty cup. All the evidence in this area shows that when a mother is well nourished and thriving, that her children have a directly positive impact.

Your Notes:

