

BY CARIDAD SAENZ

BEING MET

REFLECTIONS ON BIRTH, CHOICE, AND
BECOMING A MOTHER



A QUIET COMPANION FOR WOMEN
PREPARING FOR BIRTH AND THE LONG
BECOMING THAT FOLLOWS

INTRODUCTION

WHY BEING MET MATTERS

This book was not written to prepare you for a perfect birth.

It was written because too many women arrive at birth carrying the weight of expectation — to do it right, to stay calm, to be strong, to make the “best” choices. And when something unfolds differently than planned, they carry the quiet belief that they failed.

What often goes unnamed is this: birth does not unfold best when a woman is performing. It unfolds best when she feels safe.

Safety is not only physical. It is emotional. Relational. Nervous-system deep. It is the sense that you are not being watched, evaluated, or rushed — but met.

Being met means your questions are listened to without dismissal.

Your instincts are respected, even when they are uncertain.

Your body is trusted, even when it needs support.

This book is an offering for women who want to prepare for birth without turning themselves into projects. For those who want information without pressure, choice without hierarchy, and support that does not replace their own knowing.

You will not find instructions here.

You will find reflections. Reflections meant to soften the grip of “should.” To widen the space around fear. To remind you that there is no singular way to give birth — only ways of being held while you do.

Whether you are planning a physiological birth, a waterbirth, a medicated birth, a VBAC, or a scheduled cesarean, you deserve care that honors your experience — not just the outcome. And whether this is your first birth or one of many, you deserve to be met as the woman you are becoming.

That is where this book begins.

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BIRTH IS NOT A PERFORMANCE

Birth has quietly become something women feel they must succeed at.

Even when we say otherwise, the pressure remains — to cope well, to stay calm, to breathe correctly, to avoid intervention, to be grateful, to emerge transformed but intact. This pressure is rarely spoken aloud, yet it shapes how women prepare, how they labor, and how they remember their births.

But birth is not a performance.

It is not an audition for strength or a test of worthiness. It is a physiological, emotional, and relational process that unfolds most freely when a woman feels safe.

When a woman feels watched, evaluated, or managed, her nervous system responds accordingly. Her body tightens. Her breath shortens. Labor may slow, stall, or become more painful — not because she is doing something wrong, but because safety has been disrupted.

When she feels met, something else happens.

Her body releases. Her instincts rise. She begins to work with birth rather than against it.

This is why outcomes alone can never tell the full story of a birth. A woman may have achieved everything she planned and still feel unseen. Another may have experienced unexpected turns and feel deeply intact.

What matters is not how closely birth followed a script.

What matters is whether the woman felt held while it unfolded.

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Support is often misunderstood as action.

We imagine help as fixing, directing, reassuring, or intervening. In birth, this kind of help can sometimes do more harm than good.

True support is relational.

It is responsive rather than directive.

It listens before it acts.

Support means staying present when uncertainty arises instead of rushing to resolve it. It means tolerating silence. It means noticing when our own discomfort wants to override another person's experience.

A doula, a partner, or a care provider does not replace a woman's intuition. At their best, they protect it.

This requires restraint.

Restraint is the discipline of not doing something simply because we can. It is the ability to wait, to observe, to trust that wisdom emerges when space is not crowded.

Support that honors restraint allows a woman to remain inside her body rather than performing for those around her. It gives birth room to unfold in its own time, according to its own rhythm.

Support is not about taking over.

It is about staying.

WHAT SUPPORT REALLY MEANS



PREPARING WITHOUT CONTROL

Preparation is often confused with control.

Birth plans can become contracts with the future — attempts to manage uncertainty rather than meet it. When plans are held too tightly, they can become sources of disappointment instead of support.

Preparation that truly serves birth is not about predicting outcomes. It is about building trust.

Trust in the body's intelligence.

Trust in the ability to make decisions in real time.

Trust in the capacity to adapt when something unexpected arises.

Preparing without control means learning how birth works while remaining open to how it unfolds. It means understanding options without attaching identity or worth to them.

The most powerful preparation is not knowing every possibility.

It is learning how to listen — to the body, to intuition, to the moment itself.

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CHOICE WITHOUT HIERARCHY

There is no hierarchy of birth.

Waterbirth, medicated birth, planned cesarean — these are not measures of success or failure. They are tools and pathways, each with their own contexts, benefits, and limitations.

Water can offer warmth, privacy, and relief. Medication can offer rest, grounding, and support. Surgery can offer safety, clarity, and resolution.

What matters is not which option is chosen.

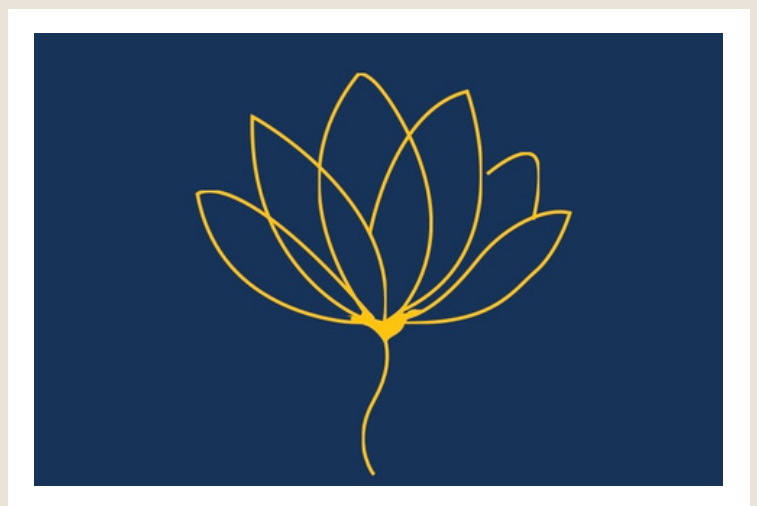
What matters is whether the choice is informed, respected, and supported.

When birth choices are placed into hierarchies, women internalize judgment. They begin to measure themselves against ideals that may not fit their bodies or circumstances.

Choice without hierarchy allows a woman to respond honestly to what she needs — without shame.

There is dignity in every path when it is chosen with care.

**"THE INTEGRITY OF
A BIRTH IS NOT
DEFINED BY THE
PATH TAKEN, BUT
BY HOW A WOMAN
WAS HELD WHILE
WALKING IT."**



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WHEN THE BODY REMEMBERS

VBAC PREPARATION

VBAC is not only a medical decision. It is an emotional one.

The body remembers previous births — especially those marked by fear, loss of agency, or trauma. Even when the mind feels ready to try again, the nervous system may still carry the imprint of what came before.

Preparing for a VBAC is not about proving anything.

It is about rebuilding trust.

This trust grows slowly. Through listening. Through acknowledging fear without rushing past it. Through honoring the body's need for reassurance rather than pressure.

Healing does not come from forcing confidence.
It comes from being met where you are.

THE EMOTIONAL LANDSCAPE OF POSTPARTUM

Birth does not end when the baby arrives.

Postpartum is a threshold — a time when identity, relationships, and self-perception shift. Many women feel surprised by the emotional intensity of this period, especially when the focus moves quickly to the baby.

Joy and grief often coexist.

Love and exhaustion intertwine.

Clarity and confusion share the same space.

There is nothing wrong with this.

Postpartum is not meant to be navigated alone or quickly. It asks for rest, integration, and compassion — not productivity. The question is not how fast you recover.

It is whether you are given the space to land.



THE PARTNER'S ROLE

A partner's role in birth is not to fix.

It is to witness.

To stay present.

To offer steadiness without agenda.

When partners feel responsible for outcomes, they often move into problem-solving mode. While well-intentioned, this can create pressure rather than safety.

Presence is quieter. It listens. It responds. It trusts the birthing person's process.

Birth is not something one person does while another helps.

It is something navigated together.

MOTHERHOOD AS INITIATION

Motherhood as Initiation

Motherhood is not a role to master.

It is an initiation.

It asks women to shed old identities and make space for something unknown. This process is rarely linear or tidy. It unfolds over years, not weeks.

Children do not arrive to complete us.

They arrive to reveal us.

Motherhood teaches patience not through ease, but through necessity. It teaches honesty by confronting us with our limits and tenderness.

There is nothing to bounce back to.

Only something new to grow into.



Caridad Saenz

I am a birth doula, educator, and guide for women and couples navigating pregnancy, birth, and the long arc of motherhood.

But more than that, I am a witness. I sit with women as they cross thresholds — not to lead them, but to help them hear themselves more clearly.

I work slowly.

I listen deeply.

I trust the intelligence of the body and the wisdom that emerges when it is not rushed or overridden.

My approach is informed by:

- Lived motherhood
- Trauma-informed care
- Embodied and intuitive practices
- Ancestral remembering
- Years of supporting families through birth and postpartum

I believe that birth is not just about how a baby arrives — it is about how a woman is met while she is becoming someone new.

TO THE MOTHER BECOMING

If you are reading this with a child inside you, beside you, or long grown, hear this clearly:

You are not behind.

Becoming a mother is not something to complete. It is something to live — slowly, unevenly, and with tenderness.

Birth may have unfolded exactly as you hoped.

Or it may have surprised you in ways you are still integrating.

Neither defines your worth.

What matters is not whether you endured or achieved.

What matters is whether you were met.

And if you were not — you are still worthy of care.

Motherhood does not ask you to disappear.

It asks you to remember.

May you be met — in birth, in motherhood, and in every quiet threshold that follows.

Caridad Saenz

971-55-102-5479