

Karen Atkins  
Your Vibrant Pregnancy 



Module 4  
**POSTPARTUM**

**What do I want for my baby's first moments?** . . . *w/ Dr. Lauren Brim*

**How do I recuperate from birth?** . . . *w/ Elzabietta Kosmicki*

**How do I accept if birth didn't go as hoped?** . . . *w/ Dr. Lauren Brim*

**How do I prevent Postpartum Depression?** . . . *w/ Dr. Shoshana Bennet*

**What is the 4th trimester?** . . . *w/ Michelle Wuerthner*

**How do I bond with my baby?** . . . *w/ Dr. Lauren Brim*

**Why should I breastfeed?** . . . *w/ Adelaine Fox*

**What kind of care do I need postpartum? Part I.** . . . *w/ Adelaine Fox*

**What kind of care do I need postpartum? Part II.** . . . *w/ Adelaine Fox*

**How can I effectively co-parent w/ my partner postpartum?** . . . *w/ Adelaine Fox*

**How can I manage the shifts in my relationship after birth?** . . . *w/ Michelle Wuerthner*

## What do I want for my baby's first moments?

### THE FIRST MOMENTS ARE POWERFUL

A baby's first moments in the world strongly impact him/her on a physical and psychological level:

- Babies start to form belief systems about life based on how they're treated and the information that comes to them through their sense organs (i.e. your baby should smell you rather than chemical antiseptics)
- Take time to think about what your baby's experience will be like in the birth environment you are choosing.

### CRUCIAL: THE RIGHT CARE PROVIDER

Choose a care provider who trusts the body's process (midwives tend to be more this way than OBGYNs).

- He/she must be **patient in allowing the birth to move slowly** so your perineum has time to stretch and the baby isn't pulled (YOU deliver, they just catch.)

**Immediately after birth, it is your care provider's job to calmly and gently transfer the baby to you, skin-to-skin.**

- Your baby should see your face and be held by you right away, while the umbilical cord is still pulsating.
- Fluids will drain from your baby's nose naturally. They do not need to be sucked out before you've bonded.



### GET HELP FROM ANOTHER MOM

Find a mother who has worked with the care provider, and ask what they were like. Key points to listen for:

- ◆ "He/she **trusted my body**"
- ◆ "...had a **calm presence**"
- ◆ "...helped move the baby **very slowly**"

**Choose wisely; ask a lot of questions.**

In the first moments of life, your practitioner has the control. These are decisions you can't really make in the moment, so **you need to be aligned with your care giver.**

### FEAR SETS UP ISSUES

**When your baby re-engages with you and feels safe in those first moments, he/she begins life engaged.**

**On the other hand, if your baby feels unsafe/disconnected, he/she begins life fearful.**

- So many people's issues come from those first experiences in life (*learning disorders, A.D.D., insecurity, etc.*)

**BodyTalk** is a great way to work through these issues and more if your own birth was a less connected experience than you would have wanted. It's best to start off on the right path, but it's also never too late!

**Think about your baby's experience in the birth environment.**

## How do I recuperate from birth?

### THE “BABYMOON” PHASE

**This is a one-time-only event, like a honeymoon, but with your baby.**

This means spending the first two weeks in bed with your baby, *resting*. So many crucial things take place during this time:

- 1) Your baby can gently transition from the womb to the world (a warm, dim, protected environment with Mom imitates the womb).
- 2) It's a good time to start the practice of breastfeeding as well as addressing any issues you may have with breastfeeding.
- 3) This is especially a good time for getting to know and bonding with Baby.

### TAKE A BREAK FROM SHOWERING

**Taoist practices teach us that the body needs to be kept warm to heal properly.**

Water (even when warm) has a cooling effect and can pro-lapse your uterus's healing.

Connecting with Mother's natural odors is an important primal bonding process for Baby.

If you feel you must shower, refrain from washing your hair to retain the smell of your natural oils.



### EATING RIGHT

**Make sure to elicit help from others.**

Have your partner, Mom, or a friend prepare and bring your meals to you. It is important that you stay resting.

**Eat warming foods**

(i.e. chicken, soups, ginger) and avoid obviously cold foods like ice cream, but also raw foods which require your stomach to use extra energy to warm up.

Avoid processed foods, refined foods, & sugar.

**Eat when Baby eats.**

You need to keep up with enough calories to produce milk and stay energized, even if you just have a snack or something to drink while you're nursing.

### ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR KEEPING BOTH YOU AND BABY HAPPY:

Even after the babymoon, keep your baby at home for the first month. Baby needs protection from bacteria and viruses, but also peoples' energies. Babies are very open emotionally and energetically. Keep him or her covered and warm.

When you do begin bathing again, Sitz baths with Baby are excellent (sitting in water up to hips). You can add boiled herbs, relax, and bond!

***Spend the first two weeks in bed with your baby, resting.***

## How do I accept if birth doesn't go as hoped?

### IF SOMETHING UNEXPECTED HAPPENS DURING LABOR:

- It's very important to work to accept the direction it's going
- Don't waste time and energy resisting it or feeling disappointed
- Continue to focus on and connect with your baby; this is also his or her experience
- Try to stay positive: no matter what happens, you're having a baby! Stay focused on that!
- Processing events from the birth in the postpartum period
- It's common to look back at your birth and feel unhappy or confused about some things that happened

### IT IS SO IMPORTANT TO PROCESS YOUR EXPERIENCE:

**Talking about it with someone supportive and loving who will really listen**

Your doula and your partner can help you:

- recollect
- answer questions
- come to a place of acceptance and positivity

**Give yourself permission to revisit any charged events as many times as necessary, until you can work through it**

### IF YOU'VE BEEN SUPPRESSING FEELINGS ABOUT THE BIRTH, THEY'VE BEEN STORED IN YOUR BODY

- Crying, laughing, and expressing your feelings can be very physically healing
- BodyTalk is a wonderful practice in which *your body* communicates with *you* about where (even subconscious) emotions are being stored, so you can release them



***Expressing your feelings can be physically healing.***

## How do I prevent Postpartum Depression?

### TALK ABOUT YOUR EXPECTATIONS AND WISHES

**Discuss how you'll share childcare with your partner or whomever will be with you through the days and nights**

Arrange for regular time off throughout the week

- Put it on the calendar
- Honor it!

### MAKE SURE TO GET YOUR NIGHTTIME SLEEP!

**By itself, sufficient sleep can prevent PPD**

Set up a nighttime schedule of who will be on duty

- You can split the night into two shifts
- OR have one night on, one night off
- Have pumped bottles ready when you're off-duty if breastfeeding

Key is to get a minimum of 5 hours uninterrupted sleep

**Daytime sleep does not replace nighttime sleep  
Nighttime sleep is when the brain restores its serotonin levels**

### EAT WELL

**Keep your blood sugar balanced to balance your moods:**

- Snack on high-quality protein throughout the day
- Avoid eating carbs by themselves
- Drink lots of water
- Dehydration exacerbates anxiety
- Take Omega 3 fish oils w/ EPA and DHA for treatment and prevention of PPD

**Keep up with therapy**

- Even if you're feeling good, continue with sessions for at least 3 months postpartum

**Keep being monitored...**



***Remember nighttime sleep is when the brain restores serotonin levels.***

## What is the 4th trimester?

### AN IMPORTANT WINDOW OF TIME!

**The 4th trimester is the first 6 weeks (or 42 days) after your baby is born**

All indigenous cultures emphasize the significance of this time

- The first 42 days determine health for the next 42 years, according to Ayurveda

**This is the time when you can rewire your health as well!**

### THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Sleep whenever your baby does
- Eating lots of healthy fats
- Create an environment of love, comfort, and trust

### PREPARE IN ADVANCE

Consider all 5 senses (yours and Baby's!)

Switch out light bulbs to create cozy ambience

Have on hand: Candles, soothing teas, support pillows, plenty of warm, soft blankets

Make sure the clothing you and your baby will be wearing is soft, breathable, and made of natural fibers (cotton, wool, or silk)

### THINK CONSISTENCY AND RHYTHM

This is a period of drastic adjustment

Find simple ways to ground yourself consistently and your baby will feel settled too

Observe and trust your baby's innate rhythms--he or she will show you when something is needed!



***Find simple ways to ground yourself... your baby will feel settled too.***

## How do I bond with my baby?

### THE FIRST CRITICAL STEP

#### Have immediate skin-to-skin contact

This has so many benefits to your baby and yourself!

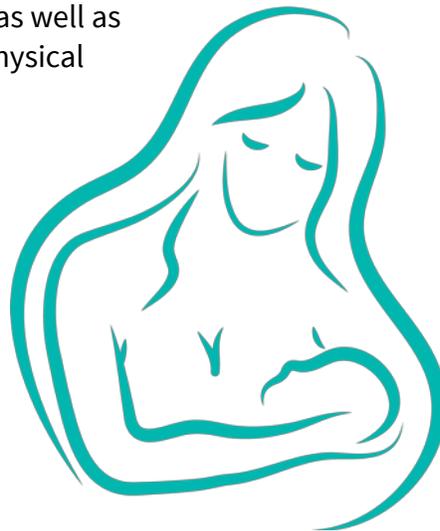
- Promotes the production of your natural hormone oxytocin, which in turn:
  - physically helps your uterus contract,
  - lessens bleeding
  - helps expel placenta
  - is responsible for the joyful bonding between you and your baby, as well as with other family members in the room
  - helps lessen the probability of postpartum depression
- Syncs up your baby's sleep cycles with yours, and helps regulate Baby's body temperature and heartbeat naturally
  - Mama's body is the best incubator-- premature babies do better with skin-to-skin contact than in the NICU
- Is recognized as critical by midwives as well as hospitals for both Mom and Baby's physical and psychological health

### IF POSSIBLE AVOID PITOCIN

- It is the synthetic version of oxytocin often used to induce labor
- Inhibits your natural oxytocin production

### AND TO CREATE MORE OXYTOCIN

- Receive sensual touch and connection or nipple stimulation
- In the weeks following birth, ask others to help with chores so you can remain touching or close to your baby



***Have immediate skin-to-skin contact!***

## Why should I breastfeed?

### FOR YOUR BABY!

Breastfeeding naturally provides all the nutrients your baby needs for development.

#### IT JUMP STARTS BABY'S IMMUNE SYSTEM:

- Breast milk contains a sugar that is not digestible by your baby - it **IS** digestible by healthy bacteria in his gut
- Having enough healthy bacteria in the gut=85% of the immune system
- It brings the two of you closer together
- Breastfeeding produces the hormone Oxytocin, which inspires feelings of love and bonding. It is also present when hugging someone, making love, and giving birth
- It's the perfect way to begin and continue bonding with your baby!

### FOR YOURSELF, SHORT-TERM

#### Speeds up your postnatal recovery

- You will be sitting or lying frequently to feed your baby, which is exactly what you need to do to heal

#### Speeds up weight loss

- Your body uses a ton of calories to produce milk

#### Lowers your risk of anemia

- You lose a lot less iron since breastfeeding generally keeps your period at bay



### BREAST MILK VS. FORMULA

Breast milk is readily available no matter where you are— you can go anywhere with your baby and don't need to pack food

- You can simply roll over in the middle of the night instead of measuring, mixing, and warming up formula
- Formula is expensive and breast milk is free!
- Formula is a synthetic replacement for nature's perfect medicine
- Formula companies cannot figure out how to replicate the sugar found in breast milk which feeds healthy gut bacteria

### FOR YOURSELF, LONG-TERM

Lowers your risk of:

- ✦ reproductive cancers
- ✦ osteoporosis
- ✦ diabetes (mothers who are currently diabetic can also regulate their blood sugar by breastfeeding!)

Nature supports you for a lifetime for making this good decision.

### IF YOU HAVE DIFFICULTIES

There is a lot of breastfeeding help available.

Many lactation consultants & organizations (like **La Leche League International**) are willing to teach mothers to breastfeed for free. Visit [LLL.org](http://LLL.org) for more info!

***Breastfeeding is good for you and your baby.***

## What kind of care will I need postpartum?

### HOW YOU TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF NOW WILL AFFECT:

- How quickly you recover
- Your relationship with your child
- Your relationship with your partner
- How you feel about yourself
- Your long-term health

### REST

**This is the most important thing you can do!**

- Do not rush back to your other responsibilities
- This is the time to bond with your baby
- Rest when your baby rests

### INGEST YOUR PLACENTA!

The placenta has been viewed as a valuable food, medicine, and source of nourishment by cultures all over the world for generations

- It replenishes your energy
- It replenish vitamins and nutrients you lose at birth
- Since no animal has to die, even many vegetarians will eat this “meat”

#### How do I ingest it?

There are many ways you can take in the Ingest a small piece right after birth to increase your energy:

- Freeze it for later use
- Put it in smoothies
- Businesses will encapsulate it for you if you do not want to eat it

**OR you can bury it in your garden!**

### Part I & II

### DECIDE WHO BENEFITS: THE HOSPITAL OR YOU?

**If you are having a hospital birth, remember:**

- Your placenta belongs to you
- It is something that is connected to you and your baby
- The hospital understands its value:
  - Pharmaceutical companies use it to make expensive medication. You may need this valuable medicine someday and end up paying a lot of money for what you let them take. You need to ask for it!

### NOURISH YOURSELF!

Choose foods, environments, and people that nurture and support you and your baby in this critical time.

- **Eat:** Organic fresh fruits and veggies, grass-fed meats, food prepared by family with love, the same foods you sought in pregnancy, but even more of them! — The food and calories you eat are converted to milk directly.
- **Avoid:** Fast food, pre-packaged food, sweets
- Your environment and company should be as peaceful as supportive as possible
- Ask those close to you for what you need; this is your time to find your voice — ask close loved ones to help!
- Set boundaries about contact with baby
- Be selective about who visits you— only positive and supportive people



***Rest is the most important thing you can do.***

## How can I effectively co-parent with my partner postpartum?

### COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR PARTNER BEFORE YOU HAVE THE BABY

#### Partners have differing expectations and priorities when it comes to parenthood

- If these are not communicated, resentment and negative feelings will result

Have conversations prior to birth about who will be responsible for what. Make lists of what's most important to each of you and decide together.

#### Big things to consider beforehand:

- How you will diaper?
- What kind of healthcare will you choose?
- Who will be Baby's healthcare provider?
- What kind of religion or spirituality will you expose the child to?
- Will you circumcise?
- Will the child be raised vegetarian?

The more conversations you have beforehand, the less conflict will arise later.



### EFFECTIVELY RESOLVING CONFLICT ONCE YOUR BABY'S HERE

#### When conflict surrounding responsibilities arises:

##### Don't talk about it when:

- the baby is crying
- in the middle of the night
- when something actively needs to be done, such as feeding or changing the baby
- you're both exhausted

##### Schedule the conversation for:

- after the baby's needs are met
- emotions have calmed

#### Allow your partner to step in to help and support you

Let him take care of the baby in his way

Try not to fixate on how you think he should be doing things:

- This will allow you the space and rest you need encourage a trusting relationship between you and your partner
- encourage a trusting relationship between your partner and the baby

Let go of your "fairy tale" family and embrace your real family dynamic!

**Begin having conversations prior to birth...**

## How can I manage the shifts my relationship after birth?

### HONORING YOUR RITE OF PASSAGE INTO PARENTHOOD

#### 1) Letting go of the old way of being

- Shifts always happen after a baby is born, no matter how many you have
- This doesn't have to be a bad thing
- It's all about growing and expanding your views of the world and who you are

#### 2) "The phase between worlds"

- In-between letting go of your old role and stepping into your new one
- You are receiving information/knowledge which allows you to move into the next step

#### 3) Re-entering into your community

- With your new knowledge, in a new way, in your new role
- All indigenous cultures emphasize the importance of community at this time, for guidance and support
- Lack of community can lead to feelings of isolation, struggle, confusion, depression, and insanity
- Be sure to reach out and ask for the help you need



### IMPORTANT PRE-BIRTH CONVERSATION TOPICS:

#### Expectations

- What each partner's roles and responsibilities
- Each partner's "non-negotiables"
- How can you go into this as a team, supporting one another?

#### Finances

- What does the budget look like?
- Will each partner be working?
- Is there the ability to stay home?

#### Sex

- How will you connect and be intimate if you are not ready to have sex?
- What are other ways you can demonstrate affection?

### HEALING IN THE POSTPARTUM PERIOD

- Take the time to honor emotions that come up surrounding the birth, your partner, your own childhood, etc.
- Slow down and nourish yourself
- Get as much sleep as possible
- Again, ask for support from your community

**Take time to honor emotions...**

## Module 4

# Speaker Bio's



**Dr. Lauren Brim, Ph.D** is an Author, Mother, Coach, Sexologist, Student Midwife, and Advanced BodyTalk Practitioner. She has been practicing alternative medicine since 2004.

More about Lauren can be found at [www.laurenbrim.com](http://www.laurenbrim.com)

**Adelaine Fox** is a childbirth doula, childbirth educator, pregnancy coach, birth consultant, and midwifery student. She birthed five children at home and supports parents' choices in pregnancy and birth. She lives in the Pacific Northwest with her family of five. She works with clients across the country to support their increased knowledge about birth and informed decision making.

More about Adelaine and her work can be found at [movingtomotherhood.com](http://movingtomotherhood.com)



**Elzabieta Kosmicki** is an integrative health practitioner, BodyTalk Access instructor and Doula with a focus on childbirth education, women's care and community health education. She also has advanced training in massage therapy and structural integration, Classical Chinese Medicine and is a mother of 2 girls. Her childbirth education and integrative practices support whole healing through the child bearing year with clients and their family.

More about Elzabieta can be found at <http://advancedwellnesspartners.com>



**Shoshana Bennett, Ph.D** (“Dr. Shosh”) from the popular DrShosh.com Radio Show is the author of “Pregnant on Prozac,” “Postpartum Depression For Dummies,” and co-author of “Beyond the Blues: Understanding and Treating Prenatal and Postpartum Depression & Anxiety.” She is also the creator of the new mobile app PPD Gone! Her newest book, “Children of the Depressed,” National TV shows including “20/20,” “Discovery Channel,” “The Doctors” and “The Ricki Lake Show” feature Dr. Shosh as the pregnancy and postpartum mood expert and news stations such as CNN consult her. She’s been quoted in dozens of newspapers and magazines such as The Wall Street Journal, WebMD, Boston Globe, Fit Pregnancy, Glamour, Parenting, Psychology Today, New York Post, Self, Cosmopolitan, and the Chicago Tribune.

*Learn more at [drshosh.com](http://drshosh.com)*



**Michelle Wuerthner** is the Founder of Presently Parenting, providing support and guidance to women and families from pregnancy through postpartum as well as Parent Education, Parent-Child Classes & Coaching.

*Learn more at [presentlyparenting.net](http://presentlyparenting.net)*



## **Karen Atkins, LMT, Adv CBP, Adv CBI, Certified Wudang Qigong Instructor**

Karen is a vitality lifestyle expert and singer-songwriter who specializes in helping people uncover their latent potential for optimum energy and fulfillment through transformational tools like BodyTalk, Qi Gong, Essential oils, Music, Nourishment, and other Therapeutic Practices. In her Vital Qi TV series, Karen provides practical tips and solutions to generate lasting vitality and fulfillment and create the lifestyle of your dreams.

Karen has been featured on Ted Talks and Good Morning America and is also an award-winning musician.

*More about Karen can be found at [karenatkins.com](http://karenatkins.com)*

Your Vibrant Pregnancy

