

POSTPARTUM DOULAS; THEIR PURPOSE AND THEIR VALUE TO YOUR FAMILY.

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So much excitement, worry, and care surround the first three trimesters with a focus on bringing a healthy baby earth side.

Birthing parents and their partners need just as much care and support once their baby is born; if not more.

A postpartum doula supports the family as they get to know their newborn, as they adjust to life now with multiple children, and as they get to know themselves again following this new addition to their lives.

When a family is born or enlarged it is a profound and permanent life change for the entire unit. Postpartum doulas hold space for who the birthing and non-birthing parent were before the birth of their new baby. Many parents fear judgment or feel dread at the thought of admitting how hard the early days are. When in reality, a period of grief can be expected as parents' life transforms to include a new baby. Finding time for themselves becomes more challenging, finding time for each other as a couple sometimes feels even more challenging. A postpartum doula's role is to listen non-judgmentally to these worries, reassure all parents that their feelings are valid, and work with the family to find solutions for balancing their old life with their new life.





THE VALUE OF A DOULA

Postpartum doulas bring tremendous value to families in early days by lifting some of the weight. By ensuring the family is well fed, getting enough water, rest and moments of joy together. Hormonal and physiological realities make early days hard enough, postpartum doulas help remove the added stresses of hunger and exhaustion.

Research has indicated that postpartum doulas play a role in reducing postpartum mood disorders, and can increase breastfeeding success. In Sophie Messenger's, *Why Postnatal Recovery Matters* (2020, 104-105) she summarizes;

"There isn't as much published evidence on postnatal doulas, but there is plenty of evidence that having postpartum support affects the experience of the new family positively, including having a protective effect on mother-baby interactions, mother-partner interactions and postpartum depression (Grigoriadis et al, 2009; Uvnas-Moberg 2013). There is some evidence the postnatal doula support positively impacts postnatal mental health (Gjerdingen et al, 2013). Another important aspect of postnatal doula support is that doula-supported mothers are more likely to be able to breastfeed." (Edwards, 2013; Stockton 2010).

EVIDENCE-BASED ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS & RELIABLE REFERRALS TO SPECIALISTS

A doula is a family's personal search engine, keeping them from scrolling online for answers about newborn life in the wee hours of the morning. A doula is an expert in the changes a family faces following the birth of their baby. By following the guiding principles to be NEAR (nurture, educate, assess and refer), postpartum doulas reassure where needed, find answers when worries arise and connect families to specialists where required. They are familiar with newborn characteristics and care. While they may assist parents in becoming familiar with the routines of life (bathing, changing, feeding), they do not take over but rather support the family to become confident doing these tasks independently/together.

Their role is to have a reliable and up to date resource/reference library that they can turn to when the time comes to connect the family with a trusted professional. This may include but is not limited to; pelvic health physiotherapists, psychologists/counselors, lactation consultants, massage therapists or naturopaths.

REST, REPLENISH, RESTORE.

There has been a shift in modern Western culture away from a supported postpartum being the norm. Far too many families are being swept up in the current of our fast paced and uber competitive world. This is leaving families depleted. But this does not have to be the norm, around the world it is not, "in many cultures, there is an acknowledgement that the weeks after birth represent a unique window during which, if properly cared for, a woman has a chance to replenish herself-to reset- with long term consequences for her health and wellbeing" (Messenger: 16). The combination of our societies obsession with not appearing weak and our shift away from 'togetherness' has created a worrying environment for new parenthood, one that is isolating, lonely and unsupported. The DONA Position Paper indicates;

"in our society, many new parents find themselves ill prepared for this transition and isolated from caring, knowledgeable helpers and advisors. In past times, new parents could usually depend on their own parents, other family members, or friends to assist them. While these resources are still available today, they are frequently spotty and inadequate, due to great distances between new parents and their loved ones, and other demands on loved ones that take priority".



WE ARE NOT MEANT TO DO THIS ALONE.

Recent years have shown more than ever the challenges that arise when we are isolated and unsupported during times of large life transition. We are not meant to go through huge changes alone, we are not meant to welcome new life to our family in isolation.

Parents are looking for support, answers to their questions and extra help during newborn days ; and postpartum doulas are transforming parents' early days for the better.

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