

What Mothers can do when they're in the middle of post partum difficulties? Understand that you need to use more than one tool to heal yourself for long-lasting effects. You want to couple them with others to make your support system for yourself that much “stronger”! Practicing these techniques with your husband or another support person would make these tools even more “powerful”! These tools are to teach you how to LET GO OF GUILT. LET IT GO from sitting on your shoulders, wrenching your gut, squeezing your chest so tight, and hurting your mind with hurtful thoughts. Release it by acting on some of the following that worked for us, and continue to do so...

- **Take responsibility for your health** by seeking medical or physiological treatment first. If you find your doctor or counsellor is not enough, let him or her know. Be “persistent” and find one professional that resonates with you. Discuss medications with your doctor and which have been successful for others. You can also complement western medicine with alternative or complementary therapies like naturopathy, homeopathy, acupuncture, therapeutic touch and massage, Quantum Biofeedback, Angel Therapy counseling, Bodytalk, and Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) etc.
- **TALK, TALK, TALK** to whoever will listen, and will listen with a compassionate heart. You know you've found someone when the person can simply sit and nod her/his head and say you're still the best Mom for your baby.
- **Relinquish control.** Other people can most certainly take care of your baby, too. In fact, it's good for your baby to experience other people. And relinquish how everything has to be perfect and the idea that no one else can help you!
- **Write down what you are thankful and grateful for EVERY day.** By doing this simple action, you will only attract more of this goodness to you!
- **Do not compare yourself to other Mothers!** Do not compare your baby/child to others! **HONOUR yourselves** by accepting who you both are and your unique traits.
- **DEEP BELLY BREATHING** – understand that when your body is under high stress your breathing becomes shallow and your body starts to lack oxygen. As a result, you'll experience chest pain, shortness of breathe, muscle aches, clenched jaws and hands, tooth grinding, tiredness, sleep problems, sex problems, and more. To counteract with the low oxygen in your body and your body's temptation to “fight or flight”, DEEP BELLY BREATHE by...
 - Closing your eyes and putting one hand on your chest and the other on your belly.
 - Then slooowly breathe through your nose and into your belly until you can't anymore. Make sure the hand on your chest is not moving, and the hand on your belly is rising up.
 - Hold your breath for five seconds.
 - Slooowly release your breath through your mouth.
 - Repeat this technique until you feel your pulse slow down and the tightness in your chest release.

- **Definitely join a PPD Support Group or a Bible Discussion Group.** These settings not only validate what you're going through, but everyone can work toward moving forward – there's so much power in a group setting!
- **Meditate and pray** anytime you get the chance...even if you just have 30 seconds or one minute's worth to spare – they add up in a day! Repeat a phrase or word like, “breathe in, breathe out” or “I am surrounded by God's love” or “Ohm”!
- **Move your body!** Get those endorphins moving around in your brain! Get a mini-trampoline for your family room. Stretch your body out.
- **FORGIVE YOURSELF.** Allow yourself to understand that you're going through a substantial change for a PURPOSE. But you have to learn how to stop operating out of fear (GUILT, hate, anger, jealousy, self-doubt, anxiety, uncertainty, etc.). You have to learn how to operate out of love (feeling self-acceptance and compassion, feeling clear, feeling content) by:
 - Feeling the emotion in the moment, and then forgiving yourself by even simply saying, “I forgive myself of the (negative emotion) I'm feeling right now.”
 - Envision this feeling leaving your body – just let them go!!
 - **Repeat as many times until you feel relief.**
 This process allows for healing by making room for positive vibes to rise up; to raise your awareness. Operating out of love allows you to feel RELIEF and that is vital to good health.

May we say this, again...LET GO OF the GUILT sitting on your shoulders and in your chest!!

- Hire yourself a “**doula**” for even AFTER you have baby - a non-medical assistant who provides various forms of non-medical support in the childbirth process. Doulas can make themselves available to provide you rest and comfort for the first few weeks of having your child so you can ease into your new role or as a second time mom.
- Even something as simple as **taking a lavender bubble bath** by candlelight will help you sleep or even relax with more ease.
- **Read and watch positive books and movies** like “The Secret” by Rhonda Byrne, “You Can Heal Your Life” by Louise Hay, “The Power of Positive Thinking” by Norman Vincent Peale, and “The Moses Code” by James F. Twyman. Even having one of these movies on during the day would make a difference. You'll catch certain phrases that may give you that “aha” feeling, and it helps the background music is uplifting.
- **Write your own story without editing**...just get those feelings OUT so you can move forward with the healing process and forgive yourself.
- **Set yourself up to WIN!** Surround yourself with “balcony” people – people who are your cheerleaders! Reduce or lose your connection with “basement” people – people who just don't know how to be supportive or positive. Yes, sometimes these people are in your family...know it's okay to limit your time with these people; it's

for your and your child's well-being. *"Basement" people can certainly use some of the listed techniques!*

- **Realize just how powerful your thoughts are.** Your today is a result of your thoughts from the past – imagine what kind of future you can create!!
- Go through the ABCs of countries or foods or whatever to turn your mind off.
- **Visualize the “stop sign”** when you're angry or having invasive thoughts or repeating negative self-talk. Replace these actions with positive phrases so you're changing the old programs in your head!
- **Use your voice for what it was given for...TO SPEAK!** Be clear and focus on the type of help you need. Make a list. Spell it out. Is it someone coming to clean your bathroom? Or doing your laundry or taking your baby/child for an hour or two so you can refocus or vegetate? Is it someone reading a book to you? Or is it someone going to get groceries for you? Is it asking your husband to be more helpful...then describe in detail what that help would look like to you? Maybe it would it help to have someone come over to pray with you, regularly?
- Remember...**you are #1** in your baby's eyes!
- When you're worrying ask yourself, “What is the probability of this situation really happening?”
- **TRUST YOUR INTUITION!** Don't go gangbusters reading too many parenting books; eventually you have to trust your instincts and follow through with them to learn what works for you and your baby.
- **Eat as healthy as you can** – introduce more fresh and raw foods into your diet and drink LOTS of water to help flush the toxins out of your system.
- **Take Vitamin B supplements** - vitamins B1, B2, B3 and biotin serve to produce energy, vitamin B6 is essential for proper metabolism, and Vitamin B12 and folic acid play a lesser role in cell division.
- When you're emotionally stronger, find a role model or confidant who can mentor you through this trying time.
- **Dance** to music with your child! Music has healing properties.
- **Read** lots to your child – the rhymes will soothe the both of you as would singing lullabies. Plus, you're doing something together.
- **Scream** into or **punch** the hell out of a pillow when you've just had enough! Let that negativity OUT!
- Limit the negative influences in your life by **shutting off the TV.**
- Watch funny movies or do anything that will make you **LAUGH!**

- Do things for yourself that make you **feel attractive** – do your hair and makeup and wear something other than sweats!
- **Nurture your self-esteem.** We have found that a low-self image determines how quickly you heal. There are MANY programs available to teach you how to nurture a healthy image of yourself. *Ask your Counsellor or Psychologist or support groups of which programs they find work best. We got a few up our sleeves, too...just ask!*

Remember...**it is natural to have relapses on your healing journey.** You just have to STAND RIGHT BACK UP and be positive with yourself, again! Keep moving forward by practicing the tools until they become second nature! And they will!!

Breathing practice – How to do it!

Pay attention to your breathing. Place one hand on your upper abdomen, the other on your chest. Take a full, deep breath in and notice whether your abdomen rises. If it doesn't and your upper chest and shoulders rise noticeably, expel the breath and this time, when breathing in, push out your stomach to release your diaphragm allowing your lung to fill completely. As you breathe in, your chest and shoulders should stay almost still. As you exhale, your belly settles inward. You may need to practice this way of natural, relaxed breathing a few times. Watch yourself breathe in front of a mirror. Remember, you want to see your shoulders and upper chest remain almost still, while you feel your upper abdomen moving outwards as you inhale and then relaxing inwards as you exhale.

Practicing conscious diaphragmatic breathing can:

- Reduce your immediate and habitual stress levels
- Loosen and relax your sore muscles, especially those in your upper back, chest, shoulders and neck reducing stress related headaches
- Enhance mental concentration and increase physical health
- Face and manage your emotions without repressing them
- Contribute to ongoing health and well-being through simple self-care

Take 2-3 tummy breaths, 12-15 times per day: when you wake up, before and after you eat, when waiting in a line, at red lights, when you look at the time, during TV commercials, when you're feeling frustrated or angry or bored or unhappy. To relax your autonomic nervous system: lengthen your exhalations and shorten your inhalations: inhale (count 1, 2, 3) and exhale (count 1, 2, 3, 4, 5). Find your own best rhythm. To energize lengthen inhalations and shorten exhalations.

Compiled by Maureen Murray, MA. 2004