



fireweed
COUNSELLING

Postpartum guide



A TOOL FOR NEW PARENTS TO HELP PREPARE FOR THOSE FIRST DAYS.

Hi, I'm Jenna

Supporting women and birthing people in all stages of their parenting journey is my passion. That's why I created Fireweed Counselling.

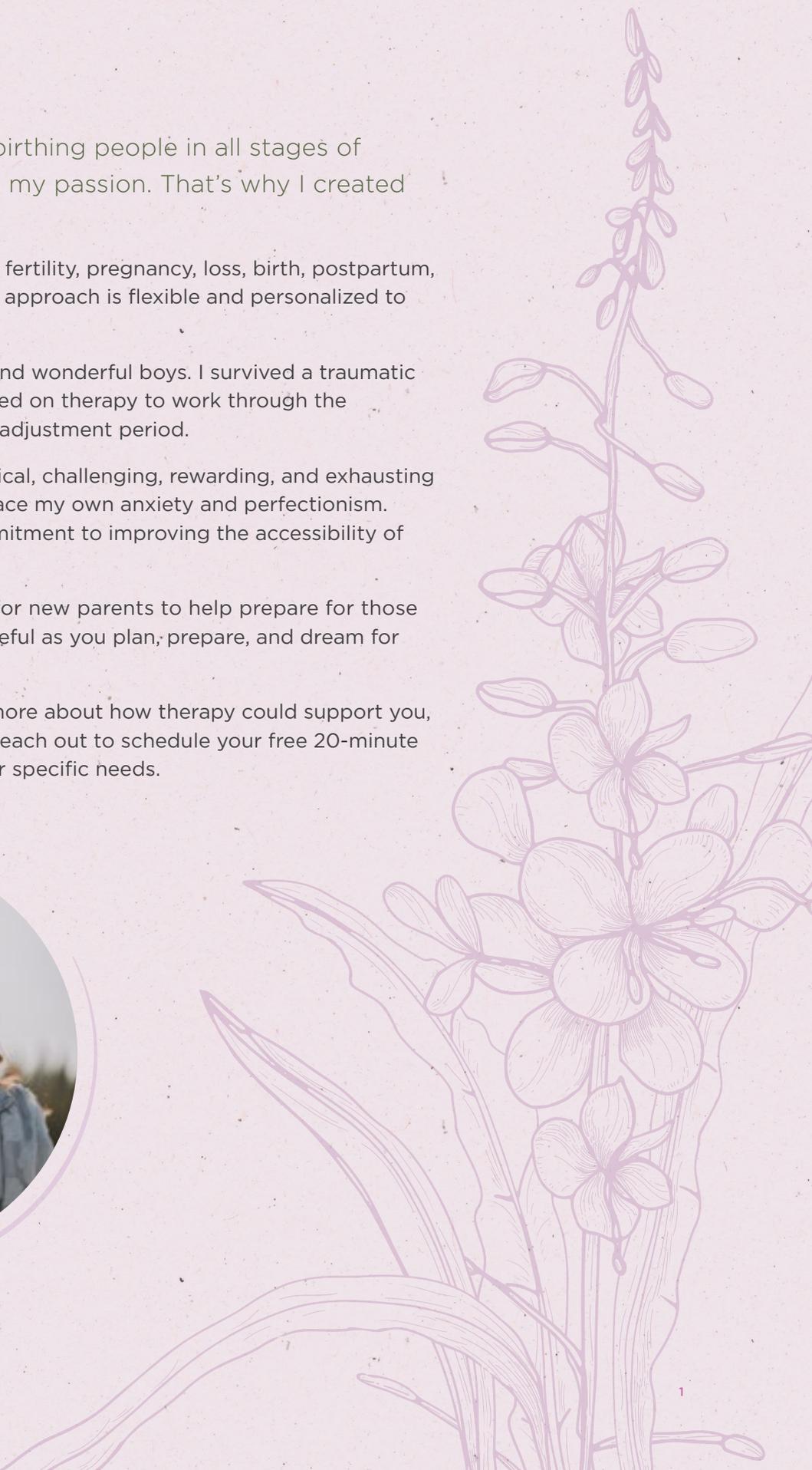
I specialize in issues related to fertility, pregnancy, loss, birth, postpartum, and parenting. My therapeutic approach is flexible and personalized to meet your unique needs.

I'm also a mom to three wild and wonderful boys. I survived a traumatic birth with my first son and relied on therapy to work through the emotions that came with that adjustment period.

Being a mom is the most magical, challenging, rewarding, and exhausting role. It has challenged me to face my own anxiety and perfectionism. It has also cemented my commitment to improving the accessibility of maternal mental health care.

I created this guide as a tool for new parents to help prepare for those first days. I hope you find it useful as you plan, prepare, and dream for this exciting new chapter.

If you are interested to learn more about how therapy could support you, today or in the future, please reach out to schedule your free 20-minute consultation to talk about your specific needs.



Make a plan

Take some time to identify and write down some of your resources before your babe arrives. Having an organized, visual reminder of your support network will allow you to feel prepared and comfortable as you welcome this new season.

If you identify gaps in your anticipated needs, now is a good time to fill those in. Few things in life are as monumental as welcoming a new baby. Use this time to give yourself the gift of peace, calm, and preparedness. I like to use the **NESTS** acronym for self-care.

N

NUTRITION

E

EXERCISE

S

SLEEP

T

TIME

S

SOCIAL

NUTRITION + WATER

You will need to eat and stay hydrated, and this might be difficult to accomplish in the first days. It's unlikely that you will feel like preparing and cooking food while your little one is still brand new.

Friends, family, social groups, church groups – all are great resources for helping prepare food and bring it to you. It's okay to ask for help in this area, and to be specific about what you want. Most people are happy to help in some way, especially with direction. Setting up a meal train or asking a friend to set one up for you is a great idea to share the load.

It's also a great idea to make a goal of how many freezer meals you can make in advance, and work up to making that many before the baby arrives. Consider subscribing to a meal delivery or meal prep service if it's financially feasible. Anything you can do to make it easier to get easy, nutritious meals is going to help you and baby in those early days.

Make a list of:

- Contacts who would be willing to prepare or bring food
- Ideas for easy-to-prepare meals
- Nutritious and affordable takeout or delivery options



EXERCISE

This is not meant to be intense, or to promote some celebrity-style “snapback.” Movement is incredibly helpful for physical healing, and just getting out for a short walk in the fresh air can be a game-changer in those early days.

It’s also helpful for sleep and mood. Think of some ways that you can make movement enjoyable while you make this adjustment. Write down what you plan to do in the early days to keep your body moving.



SLEEP

The first days and weeks are notoriously tough. This new little person will likely provide you with a brand new definition for the word “tired.” Identify who might be able to help so that you can get the rest you need. Ask your family and friends in advance if they would be willing to support in this way – most people want to help, you just need to be clear about what you need.

Sleep Hygiene Strategies:

- Even if you can’t sleep when the baby sleeps, resist the pressure to turn to your to-do list and prioritize rest and self care during this time.
- Consider taking shifts with your partner throughout the night so that you can each get longer blocks of uninterrupted sleep.
- Limit or avoid caffeine at least six hours before bed, and alcohol at least four hours before.
- Avoid phone and other screens at least 1 hour before bed.
- Try to go to bed at the same time each night and follow a consistent bedtime routine that will help your body and mind mentally prepare for sleep.

TIME FOR SELF AND OTHERS

You may be surprised by how much the dynamic between you and your partner changes when the baby inserts him or herself into the picture. It will also become increasingly difficult for you to preserve “me” time.

Write down some ideas for ways to protect your relationship as a couple, and brainstorm some things you might like to do together.

Continued on next page >



Similarly, talk with your partner about each of you having some kind of alone time each week once the baby arrives. It will work wonders for your mental health and preserving your sense of self.

Now is also a good time to think of who you trust to look after the baby when the time comes. Being able to go out and enjoy an adult meal with your partner is a great way to maintain connection.

Note down some techniques for creating space for yourself. Journaling, mantras, breathing exercises, meditation – writing down a list of things you can do to stay grounded will help if you find yourself having a difficult day.

If you have older children in the home, try to anticipate what you think they will find the most difficult part of this adjustment. It will take a bit of time for your family to find your rhythm while incorporating a new member. Remember that this is normal and temporary.

If there are rituals that your children are used to, such as bedtime or meal times, try to keep these intact to ease the transition. Think of special ways that your older children may be able to help so that they feel included and seen.



SOCIAL AND HEALTH SUPPORT

Those early days as a new parent can feel very lonely, even if you're now never alone! If you have existing friends with babies or young children, that's great. Being able to talk to someone who can empathize with what you're going through is tremendously helpful.

If you don't, brainstorm where you might make these connections. Postnatal fitness classes, mommy and me classes, or online discussion groups are great places to start.

Furthermore, questions will inevitably come up in the first few weeks, and you may find that you feel anxious about caring for your new baby. You may find researching who to call overwhelming, or you may just be stuck to your chair with a (finally!) sleeping baby on top of you, scared to move a muscle. Prepare a list of support resources in advance so that it's readily available.

Create a list of contacts and how to reach them including:

- Breast/chestfeeding support
- Medical support (for baby and for your own healing)
- Mental health support



Stock up

Gather some creature comforts to have on hand for the earliest days to make things easier on yourself. You may spend more time glued to your chair than you're used to, and having things on hand to make yourself more comfortable will feel like a huge win.

CARE BASKET

Grab some kind of container, and fill it with things you can keep at arm's reach in the area where you plan to feed baby.

Be sure to include:

- Snacks for you (non-perishable, easy to open with one hand, and delicious)
- Water in a cup you can use with one hand
- Cloths for leaks or spit-up
- A pack of wipes
- Pacifiers if you plan on using them
- A place to charge your phone
- Reading material
- TV remotes
- Anything else you think you might find comforting while enjoying the newborn phase



Suggested books + podcasts

True, it's likely that your baby will fall asleep on top of you when you are just out of reach of all the goodies you prepared in advance. Your phone will probably be just one inch further than your fingertips can reach. While this is a great opportunity to just rest and enjoy, if you want to get some reading in, below are some of my favourite books for the newborn period.



BOOKS

Best funny book: 'Cat and Nat's Mom Truths: Embarrassing Stories and Brutally Honest Advice on the Extremely Real Struggle of Motherhood' by Catherine Belknap and Natalie Telfer

Best mental health book: This Isn't What I Expected: Overcoming Postpartum Depression by Karen R. Kleiman

Best data book: Cribsheet: A Data-Driven Guide to Better, More Relaxed Parenting, from Birth to Preschool by Emily Oster

Best normalizing motherhood book: Good Moms Have Scary Thoughts: A Healing Guide to the Secret Fears of New Mothers by Karen Kleiman (Author), Molly McIntyre (Illustrator)

Best cultured book: Bringing Up Bébé: One American Mother Discovers the Wisdom of French Parenting by Pamela Druckerman

Best mental load of motherhood book: Fair Play: A Game-Changing Solution for When You Have Too Much to Do (and More Life to Live) by Eve Rodsky

Best mindfulness/meditation book: Breathe, Mama, Breathe: 5-Minute Mindfulness for Busy Moms by Shonda Moralis

PODCASTS

Best motherhood podcast: Happy as a Mother by Psychotherapist Erica Djossa

Best mental health podcast: Therapy Thoughts with Tiffany Roe

Best parenting podcasts: Respectful Parenting: Janet Lansbury Unruffled & Good Inside with Dr. Becky

Emotional wellness

Difficult thoughts and mood disorders are surprisingly common during the postpartum period. The good news is that they are temporary and treatable. The following pages outline some signs to look out for and some resources to get help.

PERINATAL MOOD AND ANXIETY DISORDERS VS. “BABY BLUES”

Perinatal means the year encompassing pregnancy and the first year postpartum. It is a period of significant change. Physically, hormonally, mentally, emotionally, and socially. Having a baby can turn your world upside down, in both joyful and challenging ways!

Approximately 1 in 5 birthing people experience a perinatal mood and anxiety disorder, whereas 3 in 4 birthing people experience the “Baby Blues”. The “Baby Blues” are a period of emotional change in the first few weeks of postpartum typically caused by hormonal changes, stress, lack of sleep and the new demands of caregiving.

What are typical feelings associated with this period of adjustment and when might extra support and resources be needed?

- Baby Blues may last between 1 to 3 weeks postpartum and will usually improve on their own.
- Baby Blues may result in moments of overwhelm and tearfulness, but they are not the dominant emotions over the course of the day.
- Baby Blues usually do not interfere with your ability to bond and connect with your baby.
- Baby Blues usually do not interfere with your ability to complete daily tasks, such as taking a shower, meeting with friends, or eating as usual.

Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders are persistent and usually require additional support, such as therapy and/or medication. If left untreated, symptoms may worsen and persist for longer periods.

Postpartum Depression (PPD) feels like there is a cloud hanging over your life. Everything feels heavy and simple tasks feel tremendously difficult. You may also experience symptoms of anxiety and intrusive thoughts. Other common symptoms:

- Low motivation or feeling slowed down.
- A loss of interest in things that would normally bring joy.
- Significant changes in weight or appetite.
- Restlessness, jumpiness and edginess.
- Excessive feelings of guilt or worthlessness.
- Thoughts of death, suicide, or self-harm.

Postpartum Anxiety (PPA) can be tricky to distinguish from normal worries during this stressful period in your life. So how can you tell? Common symptoms of PPA:

- There are multiple, persistent worries (you can't distract yourself from them).
- Feeling that something bad is going to happen.
- The worries feel completely overwhelming.
- Worries are accompanied by persistent irritability and/or strong feelings of anger or rage.
- Physical symptoms like dizziness, hot flashes, nausea, and tension in the neck, back and jaw
- Worrying is impacting your daily activities and affecting your ability to be present and bond with your baby.

Common symptoms for those experiencing both PPD and PPA:

- Sleep disturbance not caused by waking baby and excessive fatigue.
- Difficulty concentrating and inability to think clearly.
- Inability to sit still or relax.

Red flags

Rarely do moms say, "I have postpartum depression" or "I am anxious". Usually it is expressed as:

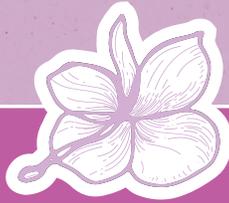
- "I can't do this"
- "I don't feel like myself"
- "I want to run away"
- "This was a mistake"
- "I am not cut out to be a mom" or
"I am not the best mom for my baby"



Trust your intuition.

If whatever you are experiencing feels like a problem for you, that is enough.

Whatever the symptoms, you are not alone in your experience. You don't have to face these challenges alone either.



Postpartum toolkit

Therapy is a critical tool to many that experience perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (PMAD).

Whether you find a therapist through Google or based on a referral from someone you trust, it is critical to find someone with an approach that works for you.

I believe that therapy should be relatable, so I aim to create a safe, non-judgemental space where you are free to show up exactly as you are. In my sessions, there is room to laugh, cry, vent, and everything in between. I also believe therapy is a collaborative process. You are empowered to recognize and harness your strengths and self-knowledge. I bring my mental health expertise and experience as a mama to get you where you want to be.

Free consultation

If you are on the road to parenthood, a new parent, or navigating relationships, I offer a free 20-minute consultation to talk about your specific needs.

[CLICK TO BOOK YOUR FREE CONSULTATION](#)

Resources

Postpartum Support International: www.postpartum.net

Pacific Postpartum Support Society: postpartum.org

Postpartum Progress: postpartumprogress.com

Anxiety Canada: anxietycanada.com/articles/moms-to-be/