

ISSUE 3.1

# home birth *matters*

HOME BIRTH IN AOTEAROA

autumn 2016





## *Our editorial.*

*By Sian Hannagan*

*Mar 2016*

As Autumn folds away summer and we move into longer nights, we take this magazine issue to reflect on more challenging aspects of birth, including loss and trauma. There are some heavy going articles in this issue and you may want to prepare yourself before diving into some of the more difficult pieces. Go in prepared to hear the challenging stories that are so often stifled in birth culture, or used to scare and manipulate birthing women. We felt it was important include these topics because the voices of women who experience birth trauma and birth loss are so often hijacked or disregarded. We want to acknowledge this and give space for these narratives to be told in their own way.

For true choice, it is vital that women have agency through all birth experiences, including the hard ones. We recognise that hearing these stories facilitates healing for many women and allows them to meet these difficult spaces on their own terms.

While we talk about agency and empowerment I want to raise an issue that has been bugging me for some time. Through our birth experiences, the language we use matters. This is exemplified by how the medical terms used in gynaecology and obstetrics are often negative in nature, and this

language carries through to our birth culture. Many birth preparation classes take time to re-identify this language into more positive and affirming terms, and this matters on a number of levels. Words have the power to colour our perspectives and our reactions.

So, in that vein – when it comes to birth and what women do in birth, we have to stop using the word ‘trend’. Trend is a minimising word, a word that compares important parenting decisions to the latest hot colours in fashion or the latest skirt length. That is to say, that when people tell women they are taking part in ‘the latest birth trend’ that they are doing something that has little value. It implies shallowness and vanity. However, when it comes to birth we need to recognise that all decisions women make, no matter how minor they feel to others, have value. They have worth. Birth ‘preferences’ are not a choice between caramel and chocolate – they are key elements of an individual woman’s birth and they have great impact on how those women experience birth.

The experiences we have and the decisions we make in birth are vitally important. I argue that the way in which we experience birth is one of the key experiences in life that will profoundly impact the birthing woman and the baby she births. Why then do we intentionally use language which robs our self determination and undermines our agency? It needs to stop, and we need to stop accepting it.

And this concept goes deep. When we examine what is viewed as a ‘trend’ we see that universally it is a term applied to parents, and women in particular when we undertake parenting which sits outside of fairly tightly prescribed boundaries. Seen most often when we move away from accepting external guidelines, or stepping outside of the commercial parenting model. In birth we see women and their voices are consistently marginalised. Birth plans are mocked or ignored, we are told to manage our expectations and comply with hospital or DHB policy. This is done through the narrative of the demanding, entitled woman, who cannot be trusted to make reasonable, informed decisions for her and her baby.



*Sian Hannagan our Acting Editor*

Home Birth Matters

Volume 2 Issue 2

Published continuously since 2013

ISSN **2422-9946**

Editor: Sian Hannagan

Advertising and Editorial enquiries:

[editor@homebirth.org.nz](mailto:editor@homebirth.org.nz)



## *Our News.*

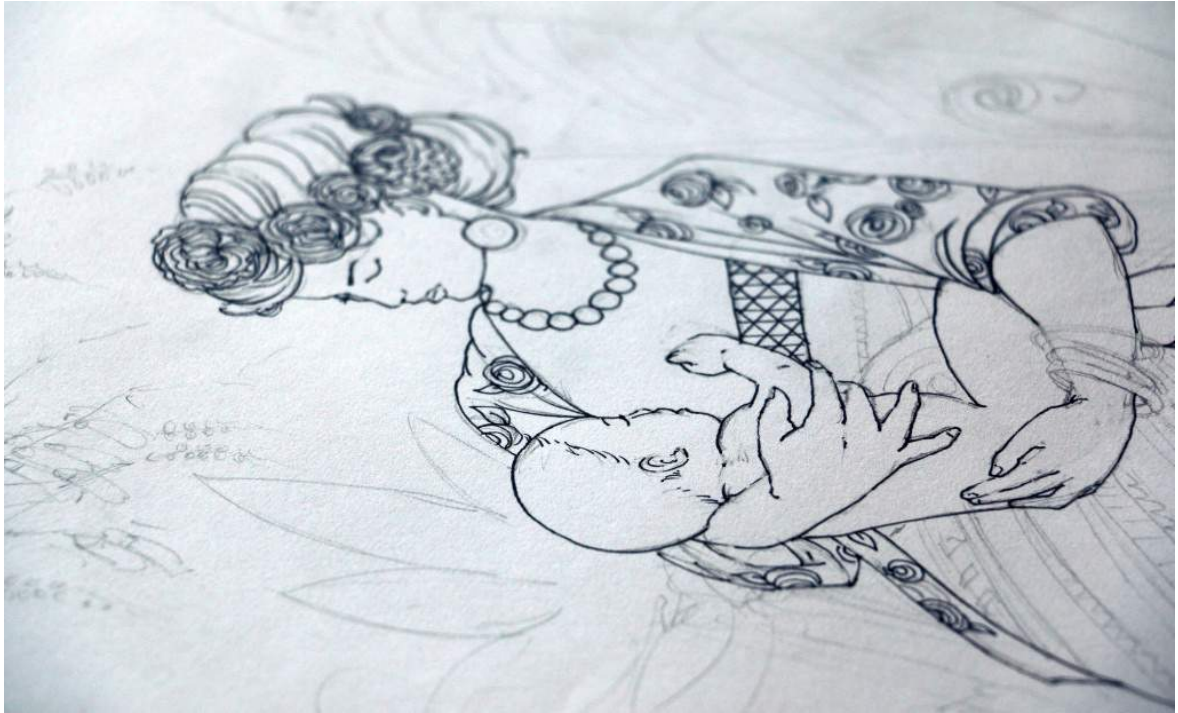
*By Home Birth Aotearoa*

*Mar 2016*

The beginning of the year always seems to be slow moving for much of Aotearoa. We have some exciting plans in Taupo for a birth series that will deconstruct some birth preconceptions which I sure we will all be hearing about soon. We are planning a national video conference meeting to support regions in similar endeavours so watch this space. Christchurch are looking for new committee members, if you are in this region then check out there facebook event.

While our regions are on an ebb following the holiday season we have been working on an exciting project that will come to fruition later on this year. We are hoping this is something that will be cherished by our homebirthing families as well as provide valuable resource and income for our regional groups. Here are some pictures to whet your appetites!







## *The Life Cycle.*

*By Amy Towle*

*Mar 2016*

Two things are certain in this existence, birth and death. We are all born, and we all die. Some of us are here for a long time, and some a very short time. When expecting a baby, there is most often a great deal of joy and anticipation. Much dreaming and wondering what this little life will bring, look like, be like, what will they do, who will they become. But for some, this will not eventuate.

Another midwife once told me, 'You must always remember, in every birth, death is in the corner'. This is by no means meant to detract from the amazing journey birth is for women, or how giving birth is one of the most "normal" things a woman can do. But it is a reminder that some babies, and mothers, happen upon birth and death in one breath... or less. I write this piece as I have been the midwife for three couples who have lost their baby at term in the last four months. All very different circumstances, causes and all in healthy, low risk women.

As the care provider for these families on a path so much bigger than what we all first imagined, some key aspects came to light as to how I could assist them to experience this with the least trauma, regret and pain as possible. And in doing so, initiating a healing process.

In one of the cases, the couple was planning a homebirth. At 37 weeks mum could no longer feel movements from her little one. There was no heartbeat. Due to other factors, this then became a hospital birth and an induction. The most important conversation I had with this couple was that this was still their birth, and we were going to do it their way. Prior to the labour commencing, the Doctors would talk about epidurals, and any pain relief she may need, she could have. She did not need to suffer, they would say. At this point I initiated a discussion about how important it is that she BIRTH this baby. To bring this baby earthside, and to feel the power of her body in doing so. To feel the emotions as they rise throughout the labour, to allow that process to happen. Being an incredible woman, she looked at me and said 'that would be best for my emotional wellbeing wouldn't it?'

This couple then laboured quietly and privately, and together birthed their first baby, still, in water. I could see the impact this had on their grief. The processing had begun, as well as the healing and the letting go. Later the father was thanking me, and he said 'this day was amazing and perfect, except he didn't breathe'.

Time was another key factor for all these couples. Being given the time to think, ask questions, process and to feel into what is right for them. Just because their baby was no longer with us, did not mean we had to rush things, or hand their bodies over to the medical system. With time, all couples were able to comprehend, and make informed decisions, and birth and grieve their way.

Informed choice of birth place does not create higher risk. Death comes at home and in hospital. We live in a society where death is not accepted, and when it occurs, there must have been fault. We have a great attachment to life, and with the medical technology of today, there is often a common misconception that death is avoidable, in all circumstances. I am not writing to scare women or families, but to shed a little light and awareness on what some families face when on the journey of pregnancy.

As a midwife and woman myself, walking beside these couples has challenged my core beliefs about birth, homebirth, life and most of all my

philosophy as a midwife. It has made me examine the very core of what I believe about birth. Under all the tears, anger, grief, frustration and fear, I realised I do not only believe that birth is normal, but I know women are made to birth. And I am here to support them in doing so. Taking the responsibility of being care provider into my hands is not easy. Being fully present with women on their journey is crucial to woman centred care, however this does not mean it won't be challenged. But as I have witnessed, these challenges make us stronger. They shape our practice, our care and our lives. Being with women in pregnancy, and birth, and death is a journey like no other.

Birth is yours, regardless of the circumstances. Yours to make the decisions, ask the questions, take the time, and yours to do your way. This is what births empowered women and mothers.



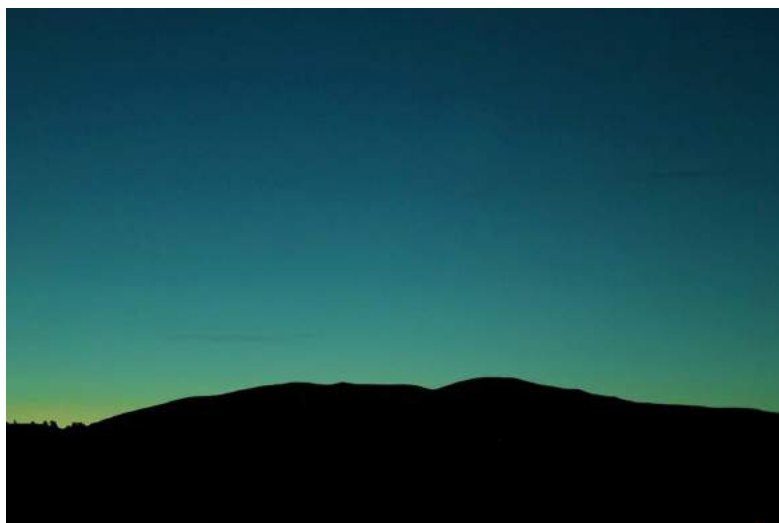


## *Materoto.*

*By Maakarita Paku*

*Mar 2016*

The intention of writing about *materoto* (miscarriage) is to encourage women towards processes relevant to them that aid in coping with the trauma of this type of loss and the associated issues around their well-being. For Māori women who are not familiar with tikanga or its place in their own circumstances of *materoto*, the most valuable and appropriate resources are within our whanau and I encourage you all to seek out that knowledge the best way you can.



**Tihewa Ngahuru**

Tis the season of the mists

**kinikini mai i tōku kiri**

prickling my skin

**Hoki mai Kohurangi e**

Welcome back oh Misty maiden

**Tihia ō matimati ki ōku makawe**

Rustle your fingers through my hair

**kei whiriwhiri ōku whenu**

so that each strand may be woven together

**Ko te aho tapu ahau**

I am the sacred thread

**Ihowhenua, ihorangi**

Umbilicus of Mother's essence, Father's essence

**Te pito o te whenua**

of the solar plexus, the centre of the universe

**Ko Tuangahuru e**

I am the harvest

**Nō waku tūpuna, nō waku tūpuna**

brought forth by my ancestors

Death is as sacred as birth and in this context is why *materoto* has a special place of treatment in Māori society. Like the passage of birth, the return of *whenua* (placenta) and *pito*(umbilical cord), we acknowledge the passage of death as part of the cycles of our creation according to the stories handed down by our ancestors. Some of this knowledge comes

from our oral histories, performing arts, traditional and contemporary visual arts.

Not often spoken about in an open way nor willingly, we are not commonly taught about *materoto* the way it used to be. The legal definitions prescribed as to what validates a real, live foetus prior to 20 weeks is insensitive from a Māori cultural perspective. This type of attitude is intrusive western ideology.

Due to the gestational duration of the pregnancy especially in the first trimester, it can be an awkward subject that both conflicts with beliefs, value systems and views that vary widely from gender to gender amongst diverse communities. In recent years I advocated for a woman in her workplace who was given the run around because her 'miscarriage' was NOT considered a bereavement. He was trying to justify what a human foetus isn't to a bunch of women who within our quorum have birthed 24 children. I challenged the male supervisor arguing the inhumane and cultural insensitivity of his actions to deny her bereavement leave. He backed down very quickly, swallowing his words with embarrassment. Cultural safety across all communities still has a lot of growing to do.

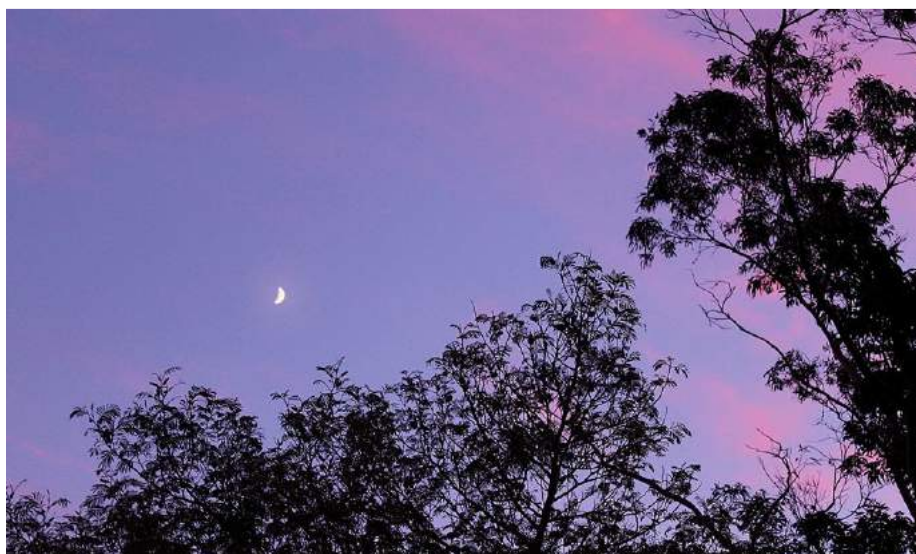
For some women a pregnancy that hasn't progressed past the first trimester can occur without any medical complications. For others it is a very difficult experience to come to terms with for varying reasons. Short and long term outcomes are dependent on the support women have access to, where we may otherwise become isolated and vulnerable.

However from a Māori view, one important aspect of our well-being is identity, inherent to our existence and expressed through *whakapapa* (genealogy). The traditional knowledge base of where our histories of the past and present form, are crucial to the strength of our children and their future generations.

Focus for many *whānau* (family), *hapū* (family groups) and *iwi* (tribal affiliations) of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is in nurturing the emotional, physical, mental and spiritual well-being of our people where we are working at rectifying

the daunting mortality rates of each generation that has been in decline since first contact. The *tikanga* (protocols/customs) we follow and reclaim are the frameworks and tools that assist us. For example *tikanga* beholden to *whānau* and *hapū*, where some still follow their own traditions ensuring safe closure for the mother, her child and *whānau* because of *materoto*. *Tikanga* is often conducted before, during and/or after hospitalisation, in the home or elsewhere. Sometimes lead by an elder, close member of the *whānau* such as a parent or sibling. In my own situation, women I am close to held a sacred space for me until my mother (a retired midwife) arrived to guide me through the journey and *tangihanga* (funeral). For our little *whānau* and especially our young sons at the time, it was a new and unique experience of understanding where their roles in upholding *tikanga materoto* are now instilled in them. They were 5 and 4 then. Even today they recall their memories of the days that followed as *whānau pani* (grieving family).

Rituals such as incantations, songs and blessings allow for the processes of grieving, healing and renewal to strengthen the woman and her *whānau*. In my own experience, the *tikanga* taught by my *whānau* during this time equipped me with a positive outlook and preparation guidelines to accept that in due course, conceiving another child would be a natural process. It didn't involve superstition of any sort, rather a period of internalisation, a resting time to commune.



There are similar routines and practices that we can adapt to with *materoto* in our recovery as we do in pregnancy through to the third trimester. Some are just acts of common sense or of a more ceremonial nature. Paying attention to the intake of various traditional foods, vitamins and medicines along with being active where appropriate and gradually increasing mobility, restores and rebuilds the whole being of the mother.

Forms of *mirimiri*, *romiromi* and *penapena* (massage techniques) are some of the ancient forms of medicine, specific knowledge keepers around the Pacific region are expert at in administering in the treatment of *materoto*.

Unfortunately these days access to pure grown traditional food is not as available as it used to be. With the impact of pollution, climate change and the introduction of processed food over generations, the natural nutrition we would usually consume is very expensive and many women rely on the hospitality provided by hunting gathering whānau members. There is no guarantee now that the seafood we eat is infection free and pregnant or lactating women are strongly advised to refrain from consumption. In at least the last 20 years introduced bacteria's and viruses infect our food or the environments they are grown or stored in, affecting our ability to protect and nourish our immunity systems in the consumption of *kaimoana* (seafood). For example, my great great grandmothers of Manawatāwhi (Three King's Islands) of The Far North only ever ate raw food throughout their lifetime consisting of seafood, sea birds and plant life. These foods weren't just delicacies but necessary for the growth and development of an unborn child. Because of their diet, their immunity was very strong and robust. My *Ngāti Kurī* (iwi of the Muriwhenua confederation) elders have shared with us that dried shark meat was their main vitamin and medicinal food source that kept infection and starvation at bay, consumed on a daily basis.

At the time of my first experience with *materoto* I was encouraged by an aunty to observe *tikanga* in order to protect and care for the state of my fertility. One of the first fears that came to me after undergoing surgery

for what was termed as an 'involuntary abortion' by doctors, was the question of whether we'd be able to conceive another child. I questioned everything I might have done wrong to seek answers for myself. From discussions with other women, it is a common and natural feeling after the out of control shock and trauma the body experiences knowing what the final outcome will be. Some yearn straight away to have another baby and I was one that wanted that confirmation, however chose to wait until I had healed myself and was strong enough.

Autumn and Winter in Aotearoa are the seasonal months when we retreat to *wānanga* (traditional school of learning). Some celebrate this period as *Mataariki* (Pleiades constellation rising) the traditional Māori New Year from May to July. It is when we reflect, honour and seek the learning womenfolk require for the changes of life. As the days become shorter and the nights much longer, the mists roll in and rise during this period where knowledge and understanding is sustained, clarified by elder kin. We stay indoors, gathering around the fire spending those long nights teaching our young of the tribulations that come and go within our female element.

As portals channelling the journey of walking on in birth for our children, we also hold vessel when they walk on in spirit. We are left behind to weep for them, to heal our bodies, our pain, our spirits and our swollen breasts which have to succumb to the absent latch.



My *whare tangata* (womb) continued to grieve for some time. My immediate whānau came to us and took care of us until we were able to cope with getting back to our family routines. I'd suffered a lot of blood loss and we have a family blood memory of anaemia. To this day when people ask how many children we have, the answer is always 8. Our little bundle rests at the feet of my grandmother and mother on the East Coast in *Uawa*. He carries an ancestral name so that our surviving children can connect his lineage to theirs when reciting *whakapapa*.



## *Dear Laurel.*

*By Eva Neely*

*Mar 2016*

Dear Laurel, looking down to you cuddled up and sleeping on my chest, and now 14 weeks old already, I feel so fortunate to have had such an amazing start with you.

The anticipation of your birth was unexpectedly a lot harder than with your sister, I was biased and expected your birth to be similar (despite knowing it could be completely different). Mara was born at 38 weeks and labour was just over 2.5 hours; how do you prepare best knowing that you could likely have another fast birth, or alternatively, have the opposite! Of course, our midwife prepared us for a very fast birth, but to keep the expectations balanced, also had to keep reminding us that each baby has its own birth, and that you could by all means take a lot longer.



From about 36 weeks you started teasing me, I started having mild cramps, like I did last time, although last time I wasn't that clear on what that meant. This time I knew it was my body preparing for labour. Some nights the cramps were so bad I really thought it must be starting; every time I went to the bathroom in the night I expected my waters to break on the bathroom floor, like they did last time. It felt quite unlikely that labour would start any differently than with my waters breaking, and probably it would also be a nighttime baby again - wrong! You clearly showed me that you were your own person with your own story. I was on maternity leave from 37+2 weeks, so I could enjoy the time waiting for you with your 3 year old sister, and with some time for myself. The twinges and pains kept teasing me psychologically, but I kept in good spirits knowing that you will choose the birthday of your liking. Of course I knew that it was silly to expect the same birth again, but I found it hard to separate myself from my previous experience. However, we did decide to set up the Christmas tree a tad early, on the 21<sup>st</sup> November, just in case you also wanted to be born under the Christmas tree like your sister. I also jokingly threatened you the next morning with shared birthday parties with your sister if you came too close to her birthday on the 11<sup>th</sup> December.



On the 22<sup>nd</sup> November, a beautiful, windless (in Wellington!) Sunday, Mara and I went to the local school fair, I pushed her up and over the hill in the stroller. You were lying so low that on our way home whilst walking downhill it almost felt like you were going to fall out of me. When we got home from the fair your great-grandparents came by for a cup of tea on their way into town. Whilst sitting there happily chatting away to them (around 2.30pm) I started to feel pains that noticeably came and went away again, different from the more monotonous enduring pains I had been having. I thought, this is probably it! But thought maybe I should not burst out to my grandparents that I was likely in labour. They (luckily!) left just after 3pm, by then I had decided that those were reoccurring contractions and that I better tell your Daddy and let our midwife know. Gosh this was so different from last time, no waters breaking, no middle-of-the-night adventures, and not feeling all that nervous about anything; just excited to meet you. Daddy tidied up around the house and started to fill the pool (last time he spent a large part of my labour running frantically through the house to fill up the pool in time; this time we were wiser and started filling straight away- a smart move!). After letting our midwife and student midwife know she might have to interrupt her weekend plans for a Sunday afternoon party at our house, I also called Zoe, who was going to be Mara's support person, and my mum, who lives up the Kapiti Coast and needed a little while to get there.

After letting all the important people know, I relaxed and enjoyed feeling my body preparing for your arrival. I lit our candles from my mama blessing, put on my birth beads and admired my birth blessing bunting- I smiled and thought how much I just loved doing all this in my own house! I felt awesome, I loved feeling my body, and even when the contractions started getting a little more intense, I relished the feeling. Until about 5pm, where I suddenly thought, damn yes, now I remember how intense this gets. In the moment I didn't realize that this was the transition I was going through and briefly questioned again how I had gotten myself back into this! In those moments I kept telling myself my favourite affirmation, that every contraction is necessary to get you into my arms.



At about the same time things got more intense both midwives arrived, as well as a student midwife (who took the best photos and videos of my birth, thank you!). Both midwives were fantastic and came to do my acupressure points on my feet and back immediately. Only about one fetal heart rate check and two contractions later I asked my midwife longingly if she thought I could get into the pool, as I couldn't wait for the warmth of the water to surround and relieve my body. She agreed immediately and I was in the pool by 5.20pm (yay for midwife notes, time is so elusive when in labour!). Around then I just heard the midwife call over to Daddy, "you better stop organizing, you're going to be having a baby here any minute". Bless your Daddy for always making sure everyone is looked after, the water temperature right, and the midwives have a cup of tea; but we certainly didn't want him to miss your birth. Mara had been watching the whole time with Zoe, she was holding her hand and had been explaining to her what was happening, I even managed to look up and smile at her in between contractions a few times; my little trooper stood and watched with amazement without fear. It meant a lot to me to have her there, especially since I remember both of my brothers' births and them being so deeply rooted in what I thought and think about birth.



Once I was in the pool I was gifted a few beautiful minutes of relaxation, feeling that beautiful sensation of warmth surrounding my body. Then the next contraction came on and I felt like pushing. You didn't muck around, and with the second contraction I pushed out your beautiful little fluffy head, in a leaning forward position. I carefully (well as elegantly and carefully as you can when you have a head stuck between your legs) turned to the back to be able to catch you when the next contraction came on. Then just a moment later I finally met you, I brought you up, right onto my chest. You were a beautiful little baby!

In your first few moments of life you gave us a good few cries, and let us well know that you had arrived. Once you had processed what had just happened, and had gotten remotely used to the feeling of being the right way up and not enclosed in my body, you realized it wasn't all that bad out here. You stared up and were so pleased to see your Mummy's face for the first time and recognise that voice you had been hearing all that time from within. I still break out in tears thinking about this ever so special moment of holding you in my arms for the first time. The gentleness, quietness and familiarity of the environment was so calming for us both; as we, encapsulated in love, got to cuddle for the first time. Your Daddy and sister soon came close to greet you into our family. Your big sister was a little shy and had to process what had just happened. It had been her job to tell us if you were a girl or a boy, but she was too shy in that moment, so we looked together. You were a girl! She was utterly delighted that you were a girl as the whole pregnancy she had been telling everyone she was getting a baby sister. Soon you found your way to the breast for the first time, it didn't take long for you to figure out the latch and you were very quickly sucking like a little champ. A little while later I birthed your placenta, which we placed into a container floating right next to us. I loved the space and time we had after the birth, nobody needing to interfere, and it all being on our time schedule.

Right about now your Nana arrived, too late for all the action, just as with your sister. You'll laugh as will you know her by now (she is always a little late for anything!). Shortly after we climbed out of the pool and relaxed on the couch, continuing cuddles and kisses. With your placenta still attached I carefully lay you on your Daddy's bare chest for cuddles while I took a hot shower in my very own bathroom, another reason I love homebirths. Then we all settled back on to the couch and we decided that it felt like a good time to cut your cord; you seemed settled and happy with your new home, ready to let go from your placenta. We used a lovely muka tie I had made for you to tie the cord, and your Daddy and sister cut your cord together. Then we put Nana to work cutting up a little bit of the placenta for a homeopathic remedy and the rest went into the freezer to plant under a cabbage tree on your naming day.



Your big sister had her first hold and had the proudest look on her face. Daddy got his beer out of the fridge and relaxed watching us. Mara, you and I snuggled up and you both had your first feed together, Mara was very happy to share her milky with you.

Wow what a Sunday afternoon, everyone even got back home for dinner. I really can't tell you what I loved most about birthing you at home; the safe, familiar environment, the lit candles giving off their beautiful light, not

having to go anywhere, the extended time and space we got to enjoy your arrival at our own pace, or the cuddling up on our couch afterwards. I could not have wished for a better birth experience. The gentle entry into this world gave us the best start we could have wished for and I feel so fortunate to now have two mind-blowing homebirth experiences that I will savor for the rest of my life. Welcome to the world Laurel Frances Neely.





## *Good Health in Autumn.*

*By Kate Fitness*

*Mar 2016*

As a Naturopath, I am always looking for effective treatments and ideas to keep our wee ones happy and healthy with as little fuss and if possible, with minimal trips to the Doctor. So here are some of the tips and tricks that I have used in clinic and for my own family over the years.

Autumn is a time of change and is often a challenge to children as they come indoors and have to deal with a change in tempo, temperature and all the immune and stress challenges that come up in their little busy lives.



First and foremost, it's always best to start with the basics. Food, sleep, and a routine that works well for your individual needs as well as for your family.

Good food. It doesn't have to be fancy, but it needs to be real food. I won't enter into what you should or should not eat here as there are simply too many opinions and options and everyone must make their food decisions for their family. If you do need help in doing this, then there are a great number of excellent avenues to consider ... Social Media Groups, Mothers Groups, Naturopaths, Nutritionists, etc. who are all just itching to help you. But for me, I would just say, make sure it's good, fresh, seasonal and with plenty of variety.

Why Seasonal Food ... When a local product is in season, there should be an abundance of it which usually means it's less expensive. It also means that it should have been picked recently and not come from long storage. It tastes better too. In addition, it's fairly well accepted that seasonal eating is healthier, as properly stored and transported in season produce will be fresher and therefore retain many more nutrients than those that have been picked too early for storage, treated, and sent long distances after harvesting. The longer a food is stored, the more loss of flavour and moisture ... it's just not as tasty. I'm sure we can all recall at least one time that we've picked up a piece of out of season fruit that looks great but tastes like cardboard.

And best of all, you don't get sick of eating the same foods over and over as you get variety all year long.

So let's eat what's in season this Autumn and take advantage of the best quality, best priced and most nutritional produce you can. Your family and your taste buds will thank you for it!

### **Seasonal Autumn Foods:**

Apples, Broccoli, Cabbage (red and green), Capsicums, Carrots, Cauliflower, Celery, Garlic, Kiwifruit, Kumara, Leeks, Lemons, Mandarins,



## COLD AND FLU RECIPES (FROM THE PANTRY)

### Lynette's wicked cold and flu brew: (for teenagers and adults)

Into a shot glass place; 1 teaspoon each of crushed garlic, ginger and Manuka honey. Add lemon to taste and cover with nearly boiling water. Throw the whole lot down 2-3 times per day to encourage the body to healthy immune activity.

This is best taken at the onset of any sore throat or feeling of a cold coming on.



### Onion remedy

Peel and chop onions (red onions are best) cover with some natural honey. Simmer for 10 minutes, then strain and use as cough medicine. Take 1 tsp hourly or as required.

Alternatively place one chopped onion in a bowl, Spoon honey over the top and leave to sit. After a few hours a liquid will form with the honey and onion juice, take 1 tsp hourly or as needed.

### **BEST TIP EVER:**

To stop a tickly cough in the night ... roughly chop a raw onion and place in a bowl near the head. The fumes from the onion lay down on the throat and soothe that cough. This helps you to get more sleep, and sleep is needed for a healthy immune response.



Another tool that I use in clinic and at home is my Homeopathy Kit. Homeopathy is a safe and natural way to address symptoms as soon as they arise which can mean a speedy return to health and less medical visits. Kate, our in-clinic Homeopath has some great information below.

### **Homeopathy for changes in Autumn**

The changing of the season is well known for bringing up coughs, colds and sore throats so I will give some recommendations, but first, some of the ideas behind homeopathy, for those who are new to it.

When treating a condition, it will fall into one of two categories: acute or chronic. There are specific definitions but generally acute means short term, say a cough and chronic is long term, eczema or asthma for example. So with a cough, you would take all the symptoms down, including what makes it better or worse. A cough that sounds like a barking seal, is croupy and it wakes him in the night with a suffocating feeling would be Spongia. Even with acute remedies, there is often a related mind symptom, like “irritable” or “clingy”.

For chronic conditions, the consultation is much longer, normally over an hour and takes in many facets from that person’s life. I will ask about childhood illness, any trauma in their life and their relationship with their family even if their chief complaint is gout, for adults clearly, or anxiety with a teen or child. The remedy will be a one off dose normally, so the patient will take it and then not have to think about it again until we check in with them about 4 weeks down the track.

### **Autumn Focus: Croup**

Croup does seem to come up around the changing of the seasons, so it would be worth a look at a few remedies and which symptoms they help with. I have already mentioned Spongia; Aconite is for symptoms that come on suddenly, your child will be anxious and restless. One cheek may be red and the other one pale. The cough is dry and croupy.

Children who may need Hepar-sulph will have a very sore throat and be hyper-sensitive to pain. They are dissatisfied with everything. The cough is barking or whooping and can come on after exposure to cold.

Drosera has violent fits of coughing, when they can barely breathe. The dry, croupy spasmodic cough can end in gagging or vomiting. It feels like they have got crumb or a feather in their throat.

Finally, Ipecac has nausea or vomiting with a loose cough and possibly a nose bleed. They will have great difficulty bringing up mucus.

It's a good idea to have a think about what kind of cough your child normally has, so that you can be ready before it strikes.

To make things easy, we have a kit of these remedies with an easy to follow guide on which remedy to choose, should you feel the need.

We hope you get through the Autumn in good health!



Kate Fitness (BSC Dip Hom), Homeopath at My Remedy and Lynette Hill (BNatMed), Naturopath at My Remedy Integrated Natural Medicine Clinic, Auckland.

For more information about Natural Medicine please find us at [www.myremedy.co.nz](http://www.myremedy.co.nz) or phone us on 09 486 2175.



## *Grief is a Place.*

*By Alison Barrett*

*Mar 2016*

Everyone agrees that the loss of a child is the worst kind of trauma, and every parent tries to imagine it. The minute you have that newborn in your arms, the second you know you are pregnant, the instant you think of even trying to conceive, practically the very next minute you imagine the worst thing that can go wrong. You move through infertility, miscarriage, and stillbirth: a mother's hierarchy of horrors. At the top of this list remains the thought that you might one day outlive her.

When that happens, you join a club that you never wanted to belong to. There are few members and you are enrolled for life.

A mother's grief is a place that few visit, but you can never leave.



Do you remember, when you were pregnant for the first time, how you wondered what giving birth was going to be like? It's a little like that when your child dies. You can't really know ahead of time. Once it happens people will try, without success, to give you pills and drugs to shut you up. The nice ones are trying to be nice, the not so nice ones have other motives, but each is trying to justify a certain choice. They don't understand why anyone would want to feel everything that life has to offer. Drug free privilege is a homebirth mamma advantage.

We know people who apply this epidural philosophy to the whole rest of their lives, people who are so scared of pain that they chose numbness over living. People who, at the end of their lives, might well ask if they have ever really lived at all.

When people ask me if I found childbirth painful, I used to tell them it was the most painful thing I'd ever done. When I gave birth to her, it was like having my leg sawn off without anaesthetic. At some point I realized I could actually have my leg cut off without anaesthetic in this way.

The pain went like this: huzza *huzza* **Huzz**. It quickly built up to a white hot burn. To my surprise, when the sawing stopped, I was perfectly fine. I told jokes and entertained my supporters.

Persons who knit will find the mechanism of labour familiar. You start out at the beginning of a single row, build up momentum in the middle and slow down at the end of it. And then you take a little break in the process to turn the piece of knitting around, before adding another bit to it. Then, eventually, a sweater appears.

The purpose of knitting is to produce knitwear, while the purpose of labour is to make one person's body into two people's bodies. It makes sense that painful sawing is involved. And it is just plain clever that the chainsaw of contractions operates under an ingenious, off-grid wind-up mechanism.

Something—who knows what — starts it off, then it eventually winds down, and there is a welcome break in the action for rewinding.

Huzza *huzza* **Huzz**. Stop. Huzza *huzza* **Huzz**. Stop. Just like this the pain stopped and started and stopped. Eventually, a baby appeared, along with a little bit of torn skin.

The pain of birth didn't exactly compare to the pain of losing her. She fell into the sky that day without leaving a visible mark. Even so, it is true that the pain of grief is even more intense. Your whole body hurts. Your heart hurts and you cry and cry and cry. Your teeth and joints come loose. Snot is running out of your nose and your eyes are swollen shut. It is as bad and as ugly as you imagine it.

But what you might not know is that I -and you—we—cannot sustain it.

The chainsaw of grief is operated by a similar mechanically wound clockwork apparatus. Our bodies run out of the stuff of grief. Eventually you are spent and you sit up and someone brings you a cup of tea. Some boringly banal thing happens in the midst of all this profundity and it calls you back. You smooth your clothes and pat your hair, and you decide to defrost a casserole for dinner. You tell jokes and entertain your supporters. The pain comes back, yes, but it stops again. In between the pains, as in labour, you find yourself coping. You find yourself marvelling at the design of it.

If you lose your child without taking the drugs they offer you to numb it, you also might find out, as I did, that you can have your heart removed from your body without anaesthetic. Here is what you also know, when your heart is eventually given back to you.

You will be sorely tempted to place it in a metal box, in order to prevent a second removal. This is why they talk of hardening your heart, under a protective coating of scar tissue. You will remember what it is like and you will fear it happening again. Like when you have a second baby. They say you forget the pain the minute it's over. But you do not. You never will.

The trauma is so severe that you rightly worry you would not survive a second loss. But you must risk it. Your sternum may indeed be made of steel now and you may possess a myocardium of iron, but there are a million other routes inside. You must turn your soft underbelly to the world and invite them to kick you again. You may well now be constructed of some artificial body parts but you need to be as fully human as you are able to be. She is dead and you owe her nothing, but nonetheless, you don't want loss to diminish you in that way. You want to honour her life with your best broken self. That means exposure. She would be- but of course, she cannot be- so proud of you.

There is no law of nature that says for every bad thing that happens a good thing of equal and opposite magnitude has to happen to you. But there is a law of parenthood that any greatly loved child will leave you—(and I hope she never does)— with equally great grief. That is just the way these things work. It follows by simple mathematics that one can measure the magnitude of loss by the magnitude of love. You will stop grieving the day you forget to love her. You will not forget.





Dr Alison Barrett BSc, MD, FRCS(C), FRANZCOG. has worked as a specialist obstetrician and gynaecologist for many years in both New Zealand and in Canada. She was the Chief of Obstetrics and Gynaecology in a rural hospital in Ontario, and an assistant professor in the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. She is currently working as a consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist in Hamilton New Zealand, where she is a RANZCOG training supervisor for junior doctors. Prior to entering medical school Dr Barrett studied ecology and biological sciences, and these two fields continue to inform her clinical work. She has served on many committees addressing maternal and infant health issues including the National Breastfeeding Advisory Committee for the New Zealand Ministry of Health and the Infant Feeding Advisory Group for Health Canada. She is a member of the Professional Advisory Group of La Leche League New Zealand.



## *Two ways with Pears.*

*By Sian Hannagan*

*Mar 2016*

As autumn arrives, pears begin to appear in abundance (yes I am so sorry for this joke) on supermarket shelves and at the farmers markets. So many different varieties and each one ripe with different but equally delicious qualities.

Much like apples some pears are better for cooking and others for eating. For a great overview on some commonly found pear varieties in New Zealand have a look at [this article on epicurious](#).

In honour of the multitude of pear flavours I am giving you two pear recipes. Both recipes can be made in advance and do well as additions to an evening meal or in picnic lunches and spreads.



## Pink Pear Slaw

### Ingredients

¼ Red cabbage

¼ White cabbage

3 firm green or red Anjou pears (slightly under ripe is better than over ripe)

1 cup Sauerkraut - I used my delightfully magenta tickled pink sauerkraut

1 Red onion

Optional: Some daikon radish to taste

### Dressing

1 tsp Dijon mustard

½ cup Sauerkraut juice or lemon juice

1 tablespoon mayonnaise or Aioli

Coriander (this can be replaced with parsley or marjoram for those of us who can't stand coriander)

A slug of olive oil

### Method

Finely slice the cabbage and red onions, then julienne the pears (and daikon radish if you're including this). I actually do this step in the food processor for ease of effort but a sharp knife does equally as well. Place in a bowl and toss with well drained sauerkraut.

For the dressing, place all ingredients in the blender and blitz for a few seconds. Toss through the slaw and refrigerate immediately or serve.



## Red Wine Poached Pears

### Ingredients

6 firm beurre bosc pears peeled but stems left on  
750ml (2.5 cups) of red wine (red grape juice is a good alternative for a non alcoholic version but reduce sugar by half)  
500ml of water  
1 cup of sugar  
1 cinnamon stick  
3 crushed cardamom pods  
2-3 slivers of orange peel  
2 bay leaves

### Method

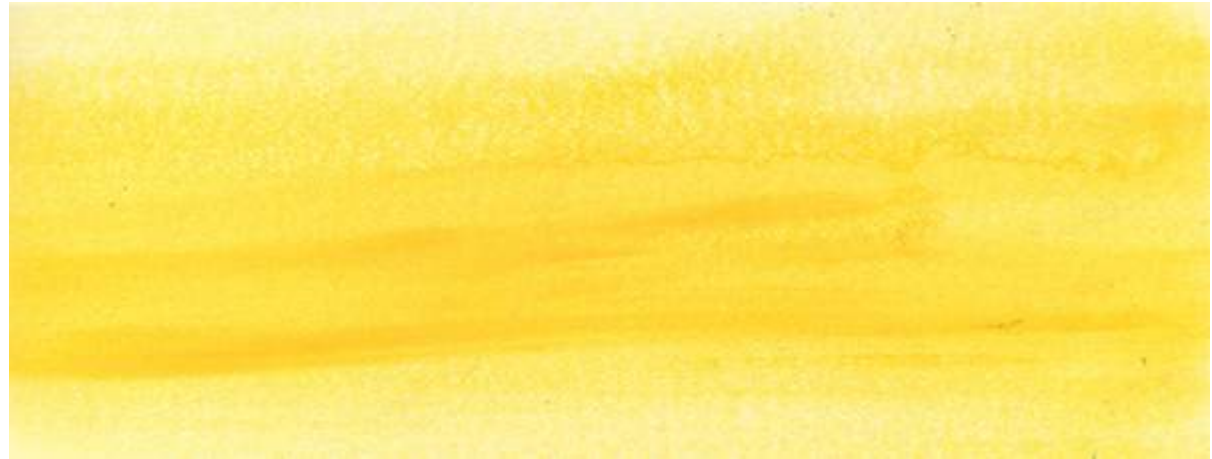
Place all ingredients in a large stock pot and bring to temperature before simmering for 30 minutes. (This will evaporate approximately 65% of the alcohol content) and then let the pears cool in the liquid before removing and chilling in the fridge using an airtight container.

Further reduce the remaining liquid by simmering for up to an hour hours until it is a vibrant red and delicious sticky syrup. (This should further reduce the alcohol content by 15%). This syrup should store well in the fridge indefinitely .

### To serve:

Poached pears make an excellent breakfast as well as a dessert. Taken camping they can be eaten with yoghurt, porridge or cereal. For a more luxurious meal you can serve them with mascarpone, red wine syrup and grated chocolate.





## *Affirmations for Life and Birth.*

*By Home Birth Aotearoa*

*Mar 2016*

The birthing woman today has serious job undoing the common cultural condition which we all endure. This conditioning tells us birth is to be feared, that birth is difficult and that women cannot birth without intervention. Birth affirmations are practical way to combat this effect, and there is plenty of evidence to suggest that they work. Positive affirmations are a key part of many birth preparation courses, including hypnobirthing, calm birth and lamaze with many women confirming their positive effects on labour. The evidence goes beyond the anecdotal however with a number of studies showing their benefits in performance environments - most notably in professional sports. So why are they so powerful in birth? Birth for the main part is an autonomic process, which means it is a non voluntary process. But as many women have experienced, state of mind can strongly affect how birth processes. Anxiety, stress and tension all inhibit these autonomic processes. Therefore, taking time to build a strong and powerful sense of our ability to birth is a worthwhile endeavor. To this end, Home Birth Aotearoa have created a series of great birth affirmations for you to use in your birth.



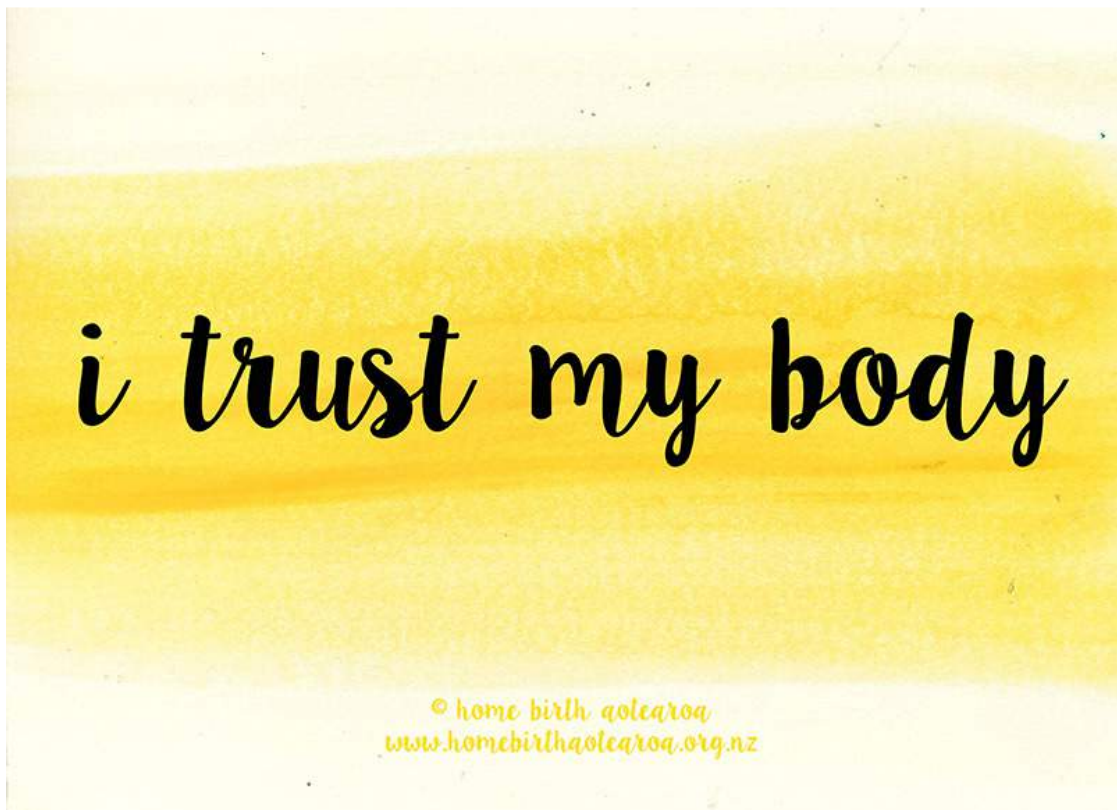
*Just Breathe*



*I can do it*



*Dance that baby down*



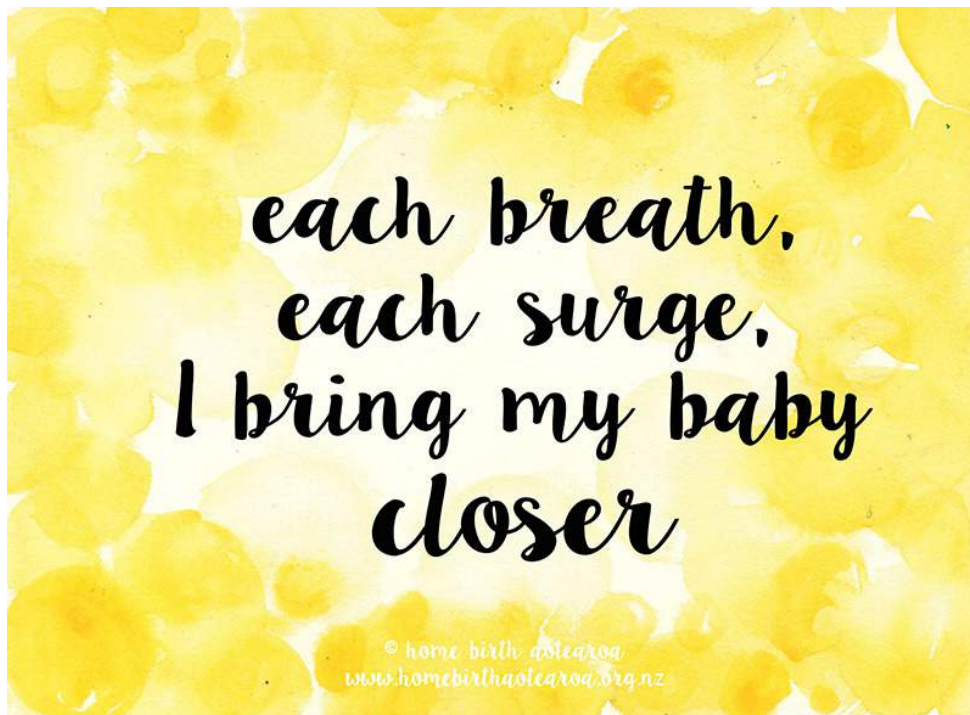
*I trust my body*



*I soften*

*I open*

*I release*



*Each Breath, Each Surge*

*I bring my baby closer*

*inhale  
exhale*

© home birth aotearoa  
[www.homebirthaotearoa.org.nz](http://www.homebirthaotearoa.org.nz)

*inhale*

*exhale*

*relaxed jaw  
soft cervix*

© home birth aotearoa  
[www.homebirthaotearoa.org.nz](http://www.homebirthaotearoa.org.nz)

*Relaxed Jaw*

*Soft Cervix*

*i do not  
fear this*

© home birth aotearoa  
[www.homebirthaotearoa.org.nz](http://www.homebirthaotearoa.org.nz)

*I do not fear this*

*I feel my baby  
moving down  
with each surge*

© home birth aotearoa  
[www.homebirthaotearoa.org.nz](http://www.homebirthaotearoa.org.nz)

*I feel my baby moving down with each surge*

it is not pain  
it is power

© home birth aotearoa  
[www.homebirthaotearoa.org.nz](http://www.homebirthaotearoa.org.nz)

*It is not pain, it is power*

each surge is a  
wave bringing  
my baby closer

© home birth aotearoa  
[www.homebirthaotearoa.org.nz](http://www.homebirthaotearoa.org.nz)

*Each surge is a wave bringing my baby closer*

rock those hips  
loosen those lips

© home birth aotearoa  
[www.homebirthaotearoa.org.nz](http://www.homebirthaotearoa.org.nz)

*Rock those hips, loosen those lips*

### The Candle

(imagine there is a candle in your pelvis)

As my contractions come, the flame burns brighter.  
My body is the wax of the candle, warming and  
yielding to the flame.  
The more I breathe, the brighter the candle burns.  
The wax melts and drips with each contraction.  
My body becomes looser and opens to the flame.  
I see my pelvis becoming soft and warm and pliable.  
I breathe. With each contraction, the candle becomes softer.  
I melt with the candle.  
My breath helps the candle burn brighter, melting quicker.  
I remain soft, warm, and yielding.

~ Barbara Harper "Gentle Birth Choices"

© home birth aotearoa  
[www.homebirthaotearoa.org.nz](http://www.homebirthaotearoa.org.nz)

*The Candle by Barbara Harper*

We've all been waiting for you.  
For you.  
Your arrival has been marked, has been recorded  
on earth,  
in the universe, in the galaxies, in all of space,  
in all of time.  
You come with a birthright, written in love and sung  
through all Creation in words which promise  
that no matter where you're at,  
you're home  
that no matter who you're with,  
you're welcome  
that no matter who you are,  
you're loved.  
Welcome.  
~ Rita Ramsey

© home birth aotearoa  
[www.homebirthaotearoa.org.nz](http://www.homebirthaotearoa.org.nz)

*Poem by Rita Ramsay*

*I can and I will*

© home birth aotearoa  
[www.homebirthaotearoa.org.nz](http://www.homebirthaotearoa.org.nz)

*I can and I will*

My mind quiets,  
my body opens.

© home birth aotearoa  
[www.homebirthaotearoa.org.nz](http://www.homebirthaotearoa.org.nz)

*My mind quiets, my body opens*

I trust my body.  
I trust my baby.  
I trust my birth.

© home birth aotearoa  
[www.homebirthaotearoa.org.nz](http://www.homebirthaotearoa.org.nz)

*I trust my body*

*I trust my baby*

*I trust my birth*



## *The Point of Natural Birth.*

*By Jane Hardwicke-Collings*

*Mar 2016*

My daughter, Ellie, seventeen at the time, came home from school one day telling me about a conversation that had happened in her art class. One of her friends asked the teacher about childbirth, “does it really hurt?”. She replied “I don’t know, epidural all the way for me.” Ellie, herself homeborn, asked me “Mum, what’s the point of natural childbirth?”

### *The Point of Natural Childbirth*

It is a commentary on the mindset and beliefs of our culture that I need to precede Childbirth with the word natural to be specific about what I mean, to clearly describe a simple physical process that has been high-jacked by medical technology.

Many women today, when making their choices around childbirth may well ask the question - “what is the point of natural childbirth?” Today in our modern high tech’ world, women don’t need to wait until their babies let them know, by the initiation of labour, that they are ready to be born.

Rather than be inconvenienced by this unable to be planned for birth-date, a mother can book in to the hospital for a procedure to induce the labour or surgically remove the baby from her on a chosen, convenient day.

Rather than endure the expected pain of labour and birth the mother can be numbed and feel nothing or choose a caesarean section and bypass the

birth process entirely. For many women who lead the fast paced, 'in control' lifestyle there needs to be a very good reason to seek an alternative to what sounds easier, faster and much more convenient. Besides, the doctor actually says its quite safe to have analgesia or anaesthesia or a caesarean section. So, it's the right question - "what IS the point of natural childbirth?" And the answers implicate the proponents of other than natural childbirth and asks the question "what really is the point of unnatural childbirth?".



To start with, when we move further and further away from our natural human state, that is the inborn, genetically programmed way, we encounter problems. Evolution is slow. Natural childbirth can be grouped with the rest of our natural bodily functions. The signs and symptoms of what happens when such functions are compromised or tampered with are all there. Two examples: We are realising (too late for many) that the over consumption of unnatural IE a long way from source, high carbohydrate

processed foods and sugar has led to physical problems such as diabetes, heart disease and allergies<sup>1</sup>. These diseases plague a generation or two and their misinformed descendents. We are realising that television and video games vs outside play and made up games for children, gives rise to physical, emotional and psychological problems that range from obesity to ADHD and depression.<sup>2</sup> Children are genetically programmed to run, jump and play, to be creative and inventive so that they grow and develop to their human potential, that is what comes naturally, is of their nature. When we don't feed and care for our children and ourselves according to our cellular needs, our natural, health-full way is replaced by lack of health and sickness (dis-ease) on many levels.

And so it is with natural childbirth. If women are robbed of the chance to give birth in their own time, in their own way, then how can they develop naturally as mothers? If they have to do it the way they are told to - by a certain date, within a particular timeframe, they will not know their own way, time and rhythm. With the stop clock on her labour a woman may not be able to notice the natural ebbs and flows that come and go in labour. She then may not be able to notice in any ebb (a slowing down or deviation) she experiences, an obstacle in the form of a fear, created in her mind. Through the process of natural labour and birth a woman accesses her inner programming for review. Her fear related obstacles are part and parcel of natural childbirth and are the creative opportunities to hone ourselves to be the best possible mother for our children. These are how we know ourselves more fully and can then be ourselves more (w)hol(e)-y. If Mother's are told to be in certain positions rather than hearing from within themselves how to be to best facilitate the natural birth process and if the process is disturbed and the Mother cannot do what is inbuilt to come naturally, then she is denied the opportunity that Nature provides to turn on all the instinctual and intuitive mothering behaviour, the primal system of mammalian mothering<sup>3</sup>. Without her intuitive mothering behaviour switched on, she will be looking outside herself for the answers to the questions that will come incessantly as a mother, looking in the wrong place for the answers that are really only found inside herself. The instinctual mothering behaviour that happens when a birth is undisturbed

has huge implications for the newborn. Each action the mother intuitively does, like lift the baby into her arms with his or her head in the crook of her left elbow, which approximates the baby's heart to hers and best facilitates eye contact, has a significant and nature programmed purpose. On 'hearing' the mother's heart beat, and this happens on more than the auditory level, the baby ceases to produce the stress hormones he or she did to help it through the birth and starts the physical adjustments to life outside the womb. The mother's touch and eye contact as well as a myriad of other things she will do if undisturbed, switch on the baby's five senses. If the baby misses out on this process, his or her senses will be switched on, but later than when nature intended<sup>4</sup> . When they find out all this, how will the Mothers feel, who chose, by suggestion and with support of their doctors, to bypass the birth process entirely? If Women are tempted by drugs to numb them of the pain of childbirth how will they ever know how strong they are? And that they can endure the challenges of Mothering, that they have an inner strength to draw on in the middle of the night, again and again. If they don't feel the depth and breadth and height of natural birth what will they draw on to understand their teenager? Animals that are numbed at birth reject their babies. Animal mothers of babies taken from them at birth, fail to recognise them when they are reintroduced and reject them. How will the Mothers feel when the truth is revealed that not only did the drugs rob them of the necessary experience to know their inner strength and power that would prepare them for Motherhood, the land of the strong and the brave, but that the drugs also taught their babies that when the going gets tough, get numb. How will the Mothers feel when they see the scientific studies that link drugs used in labour with drug abuse in young adults<sup>5</sup>, that invasive instrumental procedures used at birth (most often done because of the inhibitory effects of the drugs used, on the natural process) link to suicide in young adults<sup>6</sup> ? No one has ever died of the pain of childbirth. Pain is a gateway, and the part of the natural process that leads us to the altered states of consciousness where there is no pain, just birth and ecstasy.

Successful breastfeeding is more commonly associated with natural birth. How will the Mothers feel when they learn that breastfeeding turns on an

internal mechanism inside the baby that for life enables them to produce serotonin, the hormone responsible for happiness<sup>7</sup> ?

This is not an attempt to create feelings of guilt for what has happened, it's a call for informed choice and informed decision making for what is to happen. What has happened has happened and needed to for whatever purpose. Mothers have their 'potential' birth experience, and the lessons from the experience, there to be learned or not, are the gifts.

Childbirth is a rite of passage into motherhood, and what happens 1) informs the mother of her culture's values and expectations of her as a mother 2) creates the lesson and therefore the theme for her mothering, distilling the essence of her relationship as mother with that child and 3) creates her inner beliefs about herself as mother.



That all happens regardless of whether you bring consciousness to it or not. And one of the reasons why the system, as unjust and absurd as it is, keeps going on is because of this rite of passage effect. The modern birth informs the mother that she couldn't have done it without the doctor/hospital/drugs etc and what she subconsciously deduces from that is, it is because she doesn't have in her whatever she may need to do it without them. This perpetuates the system by creating a dependent out of the mother and she passes this on to her children. She doesn't trust her

inner knowing or inner strength, she hasn't even met it. 'Natural' birth is Nature's opportunity and invitation for the mother to do just that. When a mother gives birth naturally, she starts her mothering with all the switches on, knowing she is the best carer for her baby, that she as Mother - knows best. Childbirth is also the rite of passage for men to fatherhood. I wonder how many men who experience a typical hospital birth feel displaced and how this effects their relationships with both the child and the mother. I wonder what the relationship is between the father's experience of childbirth and longevity of relationship with the mother? I wonder how the hi-tech birth experience has effected man's relationship with the feminine. No need to wonder too hard, just look at the way the Earth (the feminine, our Mother) has and is being treated. And imagine for those men, who were, the effects of being circumcised on their relationship with their mothers who they 'thought' would protect them. Birth is also a rite of passage for the baby, setting a theme for it's life, creating their life "work". We know that babies imprint - learn responses to stimuli from their mothers - on everything that happens during their time in the womb, the birth and up to seven years old. What does a controlled birth experience teach this new (to this lifetime) person? How will the mothers feel when they come to know that they have unwittingly sealed an aspect of their baby's fate. But then, we know that souls make deals in 'heaven', to be part of life lessons for each other. Birth is one of those opportunities and the souls involved, the mother and the baby, have conspired together to create the perfect experience. Perfect doesn't mean 'really good', it just means perfect, right, appropriate to the given circumstances. So perhaps it's all 'sealed in heaven' and there's no real point in trying to change the direction. What a dilemma..... However, many women 'wake up' to their divine nature during their pregnancy as it pulls their focus to their centre, and as they do, their ears will open and they will hear what they need to hear at the time they need to hear it and so it is therefore that these words need to be spoken.

The multitude of unnatural birth experiences that are so much more the norm than natural ones, are nobody's in particular fault, but are rather the manifestation of the 'wounded feminine' that we see in our patriarchal

culture. Each birth that is allowed to be natural heals this wounded feminine, reminds us of the power inherent in the feminine and shifts the dominant model of suppression of that power.

This and much much more is the point of natural childbirth.

Natural birth is to be trusted, it is an ancient mammalian process that works. Natural birth is not dangerous or more dangerous than a monitored, controlled, high-tech medical experience, it is actually safer. When analysed, the mothers and babies of homebirths in the care of Midwives, the closest thing to an undisturbed natural birth (that has been analysed), fare better than the high-tech majority in the western world. The fact is 80% of the world's births occur "at home" with women as the primary carer, and the world is certainly not suffering a population problem.

I'd like to dedicate this to my daughter Ellie and to my mentor and friend the late Jeannine Parvati Baker, also a friend of Ellie's.

*1 Carbohydrates Can Cause Disease By Kent Rieske*

*http://www.shdc.com.au/downloads-links.php 2 "The Good, The Bad and The Educational - Television and our Children's Brains" by Heather Ostman, Big Apple Parent April 2005 (ParentsKnow.com) "Your Child's Growing Mind" by Jane Healy 3rd Edition, Broadway Books, 2004 3 Evolution's End, chapter 12, p115 by Joseph Chilton Pearce 4 Evolution's End, chapter 12, by Joseph Chilton Pearce*

*5 www.birthworks.org/primalhealth/databank.phtml?kw=\*drug+addiction*

*6 www.birthworks.org/primalhealth/databank.phtml?kw=\*suicide 7 "The Mood Cure" by Julia Ross Chapter 3 p 28 Viking Publishers*



Jane Hardwicke Collings is an independent midwife from Australia, who has been attending homebirths since 1984. She is herself a homebirth mother of four, a grandmother and a teacher of the Women's Mysteries. She gives workshops, writes books and has founded [The School of Shamanic Midwifery](#). Jane has trained in Shamanic practices with James M Harvey, aka Blackbear and has had many wonderful teachers including Midwife Maggie Lecky Thompson, Birthkeeper Jeannine Parvati Baker and Teacher and Author Cedar Barstow. Jane lives in the country of NSW with her husband, some of her children and many animal friends. As Jane says, she's working for the Goddess.



## *Shamanic Womancraft Retreat.*

*By Home Birth Aotearoa*

*Mar 2016*

Of interest to our Home Birthing community is this 5 day, Shamanic Womancraft retreat for women of all ages and stages of life.

Gathered and encircled by Jane Hardwicke-Collings, homebirth midwife and creatrix of the School of Shamanic Womancraft.

*“With ritual, ceremony and information sharing, through connecting to the land and our inner knowing, we will explore the heart of Shamanic Midwifery”*

**When:** April 4 - 8 2016

**Where:** Tauhara Centre - 60 Acacia Heights Drive (off Mapara Road)  
Acacia Bay, Taupo, NZ

**Cost:** \$950 NZD - fully catered, residential.

**Enquiries:** Rachel Pearson [rachelmariep76@gmail.com](mailto:rachelmariep76@gmail.com)

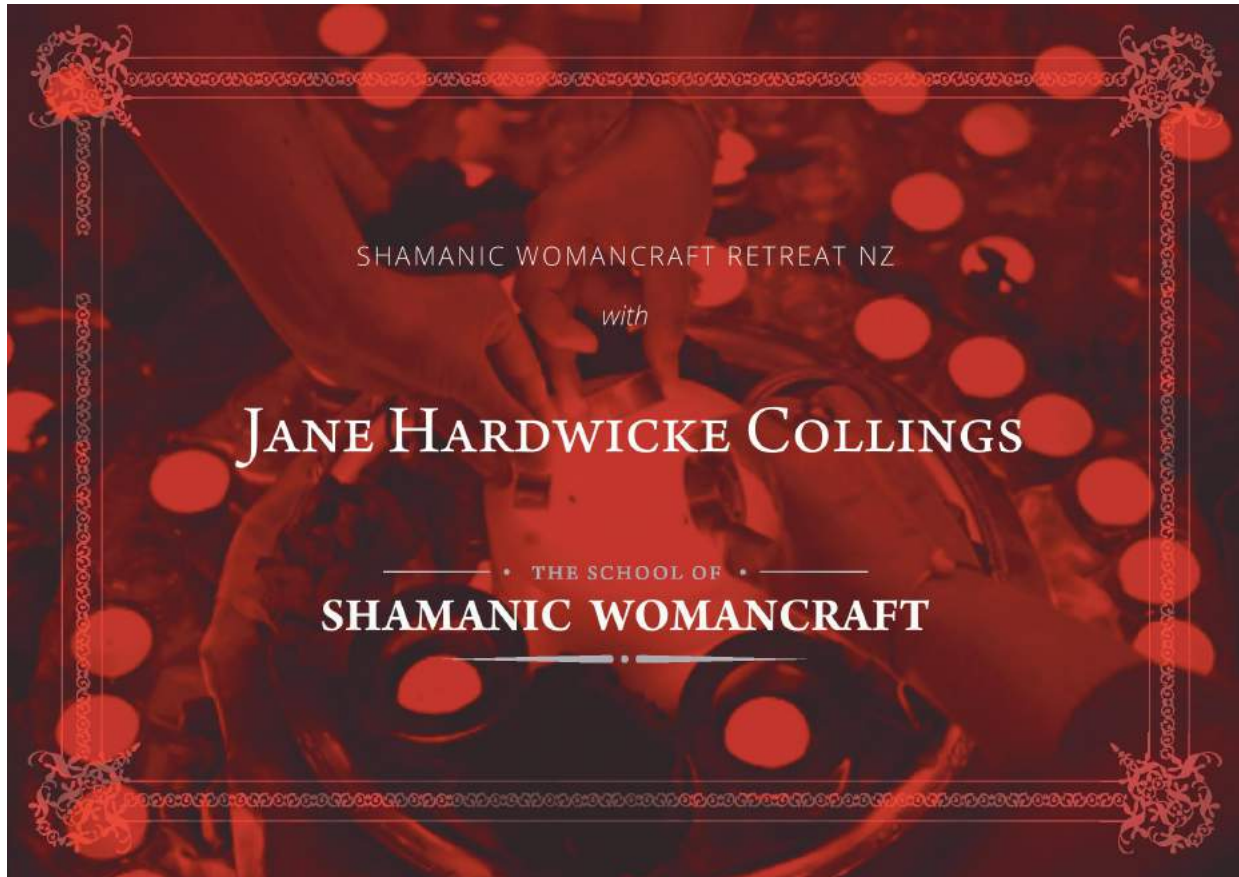


The retreat will be both a teaching and personal experience of shamanic womancraft practices to help the participant know herself more fully and take this work to her community and her practice.

*We will focus on:*

- ~ The cycles that influence our daily life – the menstrual cycle, the lunar cycle, the earth seasons and our life seasons.
- ~ The women’s mysteries – our rites of passage of menarche, childbirth, menopause and death, their impact and how to honour them.
- ~ How your own experiences of your rites of passage have influenced your life and how these experiences highlight your life lessons and soul journey.
- ~ The shamanic dimensions of pregnancy and birth.
- ~ The spiritual practice of menstruation.

The School of Shamanic Womancraft offers programs to women in Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom and France, teaching how to raise consciousness and help heal the wounded feminine and wounded masculine of our time.



With ritual, ceremony and information sharing, through connecting to the land and our inner knowing, we will explore the heart of shamanic womancraft.

The retreat will be both a teaching and personal experience of shamanic womancraft practices to help the participant know her self more fully and take this work to her community and her practice.

**We will focus on:**

- the cycles that influence our daily life – the menstrual cycle, the lunar cycle, the Earth seasons and our life seasons.
- the women's mysteries – our rites of passage of menarche, childbirth, menopause and death, their impact and how to honour them.

- how your own experiences of your rites of passage have influenced your life and how these experiences highlight your life lessons and soul journey.

- The shamanic dimensions of pregnancy and birth.
- The spiritual practice of menstruation.

The School of Shamanic Womancraft offers programs to women in Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom and France, teaching how to raise consciousness and help heal the wounded feminine and wounded masculine of our time.

**When:** April 4-8 2016

**Where:** 60 Acacia Heights Drive (off Mapara Road), Acacia Bay, Taupo, New Zealand

**Cost:** \$NZ 950 fully catered, residential

**Enquiries:** Rachel Pearson [rachelmariep76@gmail.com](mailto:rachelmariep76@gmail.com)





# *Moon.*

*By Anon*

*Mar 2016*

*crescent moon cradles*

*a dark heavy pregnancy...*

*almost touching earth.*





## *Felting Autumnal Crowns.*

*By Jorinde Robbers*

*Mar 2016*

Seasonal activities are a wonderful way to engage children in hand crafts that relate directly to their world. Children who play in nature frequently are seeing the world through the lense of wonder, and they get to experience the change in seasons first hand rather than through more abstract concepts. At this time of year, it is traditional to celebrate Easter which is a Spring celebration. It can be confusing for children who witness the falling of leaves and the tucking away of summer that happens in Autumn to then celebrate new fresh life, budding flowers and Easter eggs. So instead of a Spring celebration why not celebrate Autumn for the season it truly is. Instead of an Easter egg hunt, a nature scavenger hunt can be equally as fun. Baking bread is a traditional pastime in the harvest season so buns, breads and scones are still a great celebration food to make but instead of making Easter bonnets or decorating with flowers, why not make these beautiful Autumnal crowns.

Through working with natural fibres and found items that reflect those found in nature, children can connect with the world around them in a tangible way. Handcrafts that match the seasons are a wonderful way to set the rhythm of seasonal change.



*First of all we dyed some of our yarn to get some beautiful autumnal colours. This dye is made by boiling onion skins, which makes a delightful earthy egg yolky yellow.*



*Hot water is essential to the dyeing process as it helps to set the dye. It's important to be careful with little children nearby.*



*When the water is almost on the boil it is time to add the wool roving. Removing the onion skins first makes it less messy. We used plain white vinegar to set the dye but citric acid will also work well.*



*Our dye came out quite light, more onion skins give a richer yellow. If you don't have easy access to natural dye materials then food colour is a great non toxic option for dyeing with children. Food colour is an acid set dye, so ensure you mix vinegar or citric acid in with your dye bath.*



*Our finished wool drying on the line, we did not have any materials to hand that would make the reds we wanted so we elected to use food dye for the richer colours. New Zealand flax (*Phormium tenax*) flowers make a lovely rich rusty red colour if picked at the right time.*



*This yarn has been dyed to use as decorations for our crowns. The base of the crown will be made of a felted sheet of natural wool.*



*Next up we lay out our wool sliver, it is important to get a very even piece with different layers at right angles. This will allow the wool to felt effectively and reduce patchy areas.*



*Children love handling the fluffy wool. In this picture we are gently spreading the fibers to get our wool as even as possible.*



*Once everything is all laid out flat it is time to add hot water and soap. Before adding these it is a good idea to cover the whole work with a fine*

*mesh to prevent it all going to pieces, especially with little hands being involved. An old mesh curtain is perfect for the job.*



*This is the fun bit, everyone loves to get involved with the felting process. Plenty of soap and hot water makes for a great sensory experience! (note the layer of bubble wrap underneath the piece of felt to catch the water.)*



*The delight of soft sudsy water on your hands is hard to beat.*



*When the felt has been worked enough it is time to check for patches that need reinforcing and to turn it over so the other side is well felted too.*



*You can see in our picture that the wool has nicely felted together, this is the underside which has a slightly darker wool.*



*Once the felt is slightly more robust feet can be used to pummel it into a firmer form. Arguably the most fun element!*



*Looking almost done, the fibres have pulled together tightly and created a strong piece of wool. Hot water and friction is the fastest way to get wool to felt. Which is why washing knitted garments in the washing machine is a recipe for disaster.*



*Once the felt is holding together with strength it is time to complete the fulling process. This is about drawing the fibres even more closely together and 'fulling' the finished piece. This was often done to woven cloths for added durability, water resistance and warmth. It is also known as waulking. In older times this was done with boiling water or urine and the work of many hands. In more modern times we can use washing machines or dryers. To start this process we rinsed our felt and then rolled it up tightly in a towel.*



*Once rolled tightly and tied off it's time to put our wool piece in the drier. We fulled this piece for an hour on hot cycle. Be prepared for a lot of thumping!*



*Finished! At least the first bit. Once the wool is mostly dry it can be cut into crown shapes. It can be tricky to get them all even but a rustic look is part of the charm. If you prefer a more uniform look a template can be used*



*You can see the two different colours created by layering the sliver.*



*Stitching the edge in blanket stitch. This step is not essential but if you want an unfinished edge the felt will have to be very firmly felted otherwise it will slowly fall apart.*



*At this stage we used needle felting techniques to applique our pattern across the crown. We used yarn for the stems and vines and our dyed fleece for the autumnal leaves.*



*At this stage a fastening is added to the crown to ensure it fits. There are a variety of ways to do this. We chose elastic covered with a soft fabric. This allows the crown to fit a number of sizes without retying.*



*At this stage all loose threads are tucked in or trimmed and our work is done!*



*The finished item!*

Jorinde Robbers is a mother, adventurer and the managing director of Blossom Tree Home Based ECE. Blossom Tree provides a bridge between families and educators offering home-based Early Childhood Education for children up to the age of 6. Blossom Tree's philosophy is based on children engaging in free play, with simple toys in a loving domestic environment. Young children thrive in the presence of parents and other devoted caregivers who enjoy life and caring for children. Little children learn primarily through imitation and therefore need to be cared for by people with integrity and warmth who are worthy of being imitated.