

# The Doula

Formerly Doulaing  
A DOULA UK PUBLICATION



## IN THIS ISSUE

The Interview - Milli Hill

From Doula to Midwife

Toxic Relationships



**Doula UK**  
Positive birth.  
Supporting families.

WINTER 2016 ISSUE 29

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## Credits & Acknowledgments:

Cover picture: Jerusha Sutton & baby Rudi.  
Courtesy of Anna Todd Photography

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Thank you to everyone who contributed their time and energy to this edition. Please note that opinions expressed in The Doula are not necessarily those of Doula UK as a whole.

## Next Edition

If you have any doula stories, experiences, poems, photographs or articles that you would like to share and see published here, please send them to [doulaing@doula.org.uk](mailto:doulaing@doula.org.uk)

**Deadline for next issue: February 2017**

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# Letter From the Editor

The Holiday Season is upon us again. Is it just me or does it seem to come around quicker every year? Along with the consumerism, overeating and drinking is the notion of being in the 'festive spirit'.

There are parties to attend, endless school events, children to please and pressure put upon many mothers to make Christmas "perfect". The default position is "jolly" but what if you're not feeling so jolly? 2016 has been full of hugely eventful unexpected and, for many, unwanted changes in the world.

Enforced and extended time spent with family members can regurgitate historic unresolved issues and patterns of behaviour; combine those with alcohol and you have the perfect recipe for bubbling resentment and arguments to surface. So, instead of tree decorating tips and how to make baubles from old toilet rolls we are offering practical advice by tackling the subject of toxic relationships and how to extricate yourself from them; whilst therapist Sarah Flax gives us a guide to surviving Christmas in the age of social media.

The Doula delights in bringing you the following stocking fillers: Matt Davis returns to discuss Christmas through the eyes of a parent to an autistic son. Lisa Roukin shares some healthy Winter recipes to counterbalance all those mince pies and Quality Street. Milli Hill tells us about the Positive Birth Movement and we even wrapped up the legend that is Beverley Beech to feature in our '10 minutes with...' page. If you are still looking for gifts to buy then our beauty page returns with make up that won't harm the environment or animals in order for you to look cute.

So what about your spirit this Christmas? What does it need to make you feel warm, safe and nurtured? Along with giving to your family and clients, how about we all consider giving a gift to ourselves in order to make this December one that we can embrace and enjoy?

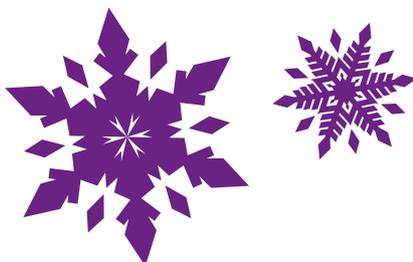
I am not one for New Year Resolutions, but I do think that if we can take anything from the clean blank page of a new year ahead of us, it is to recognise what we need and start to make changes to help ourselves thrive rather than repeating patterns that no longer serve us or our spirit.

As always we welcome your feedback from this issue and your ideas and submissions for our Spring edition. Get in touch and get involved. [doulaing@doula.org.uk](mailto:doulaing@doula.org.uk) There's a prize up for grabs for the best letter.

Lastly, I wanted to give a special shout out and respect to those doulas who choose to spend Christmas Day away from their loved ones in order to support birthing mothers. Your selflessness and love is inspiring and makes the world a better place for us all.

Wishing you all a peaceful season and a happy and healthy New Year.

**Lauren**



## Lauren Mishcon Editor



**Biog:**

Lauren has been a member of DUK since 2007. She lives in North London with her husband, 3 sons and Barker the mad Spaniel. This December she will be found as usual surrounded by sticky tape & ribbon, wrapping gifts whilst watching It's a Wonderful Life, mainlining cinnamon buns, feeling bereft that there is no Downton Xmas special and hoping very much to find Patrick Dempsey wrapped up under her tree on Christmas morning. (Note to Santa: she has been a very good girl this year.)



## Bryony Pengelly Sub-Editor



**Biog:**

Bryony became a member of DUK in 2012 and lives in Somerset with her husband and two children. A lover of reading and the creativity of writing, she enjoys reflecting on childbirth, human nature and the beautifully simple everyday steps that can help save the planet. Will be recognisable this December by the slightly unhinged Elf-like expression on her face and thumbs taped together in the annual gift wrapping mishaps.



# Letters Page

**Dear Doulaing,**

The last issue of Doulaing was a credit to the organisation and really shows us as a leader in the birth world. It made me feel really proud to be a part of Doula UK. The article that struck a chord with me was the piece about autism - I'm not sure what my boy is - different - and I resonated with so much in it.

Thank you for all your hard work.

**Samantha**

## LETTER OF THE SEASON

**Dear Doulaing**

I was given a copy of your magazine by my birth doula. I read the article Transitioning by Kate Medlin with great interest. As a first time new mother to a 4 week old daughter, the article resonated deeply.

As an older mother, I have wondered since the birth if being more tightly wedded to my identify has made it harder for me to make the transition to motherhood. Kate's comment about feeling ambivalent about motherhood also struck a chord. It feels like a huge taboo to admit to such feelings, especially in groups of gushing mothers seemingly madly in love with their babies. It's reassuring to know that these feelings are completely normal."

**JC – London**



**Dear Doulaing,**

I am loving the new look of the magazine. The photos, the images and the more varied articles have really brought it to life, this was especially obvious with Maisie's story in My Joyful Birth. What an uplifting tale and the photos were just divine! It's so great to have stories out there to show women just how positive, powerful and joyful birth can be. Looking forward to the next one.

**Love Anne**

**Dear Doulaing,**

I was delighted to receive the most recent issue. I always look forward to it landing on my mat. The new makeover looks great and also inspired me on a cold wet Wednesday afternoon to make Lisa Roukin's Butternut squash and carrot soup. Delicious! I hope to see her feature in forthcoming issues.

With thanks

**Laura**

**Dear Doulaing,**

I just flicked through the new mag and want to say THANK YOU! It's awesome, informative, enjoyable, nurturing, a real sense of connection to my dear doula sisterhood that I seldom feel, being a lone doula in the depths of North Devon!

So thank you for your efforts as editor of this fab mag and may your Autumn be gentle...and blazing!

In doula sisterhood,

**Hilary**

## HAVE YOUR SAY:

If you would like to respond or comment on any of the articles featured in this edition then please write to us at [doulaing@doula.org.uk](mailto:doulaing@doula.org.uk)

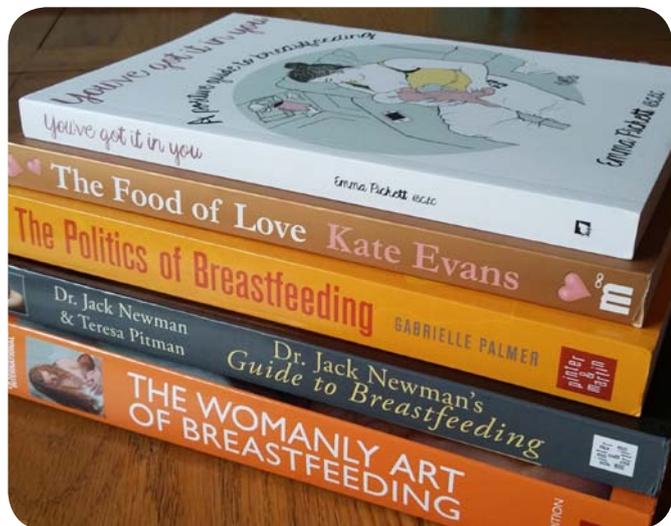
**Letter of the Season will win the Top 5 Breastfeeding Books that were featured in our Autumn issue, worth over £55!!**

Many thanks to Pinter & Martin, Myriad Editions and Matador Publishing Houses for kindly contributing these amazing prizes.

[www.pinterandmartin.com](http://www.pinterandmartin.com)

[www.myriadeditions.com](http://www.myriadeditions.com)

[www.troubador.co.uk/matador](http://www.troubador.co.uk/matador)



# The European Doula Network

**CONNECTING \* SUPPORTING \* INFORMING**

Imagine a continent that covers nearly 7% of the land area of the entire world and contains 11% of the world's population, bordered by water on three sides, includes around 50 countries and is second in size only to Asia. Welcome to our home: Europe. And for clarity we are talking about the continent not the EU political entity and current topic of much media controversy!

While doulas have been working on this continent for many years, from the beginning of time you could say, they have often worked on their own, or in small groups within their local communities, often unaware of how birth culture was in other countries. And with such a diverse range of cultures, local customs, traditions and laws it is inevitable that the experiences of supporting birth are also widely varied.



The EDN is officially an umbrella organisation open to doula associations and trainers from all over Europe. If there is no such organisation in a

country, EDN supports & mentors 'pioneer doulas.' There are currently 22 countries and 37 member associations and training courses, with many individuals also joining as 'friends'. The EDN provides newsletters, discussion forums, peer support and sharing experiences. It supports doulas and midwives under persecution while also raising awareness via press releases and statements.



*Current European countries that are members of EDN are highlighted in Red*

## EDN Member Countries

Austria  
Bulgaria  
Czech Republic  
Finland  
France  
Germany  
Greece  
Hungary  
Italy  
Netherlands  
Poland  
Portugal  
Russia  
Slovakia  
Spain  
Switzerland  
Turkey  
Ukraine  
UK

Since the first presentation of EDN in 2011, each year a member country takes a turn hosting the annual meeting in September. This is a dynamic opportunity to meet a wide range of doulas, exchange experiences, learn from each other, optimise work as well as raise the profile of the work of doulas across Europe and beyond. And there is always a birthday cake! Doula UK hosted the event in London 2015 which many of you may remember as it coincided with our own AGM. During the EDN meeting the creation of a code of ethics was finalised.

In 2016 it was Spain's turn to host in Barcelona, organized by Quiero Ser Doula. The excellent two-day conference was attended by over 80 doulas, two midwives, an obstetrician- gynaecologist and a few mothers of young children from 20 countries of origin, speaking 23 languages altogether. A truly vibrant mix of abundant birth keeper energy – imagine the feeling in that room!

This was my second EDN conference, and again I was struck by the diversity but also the commonality. Despite the differences in language, heritage and cultures it felt like we all shared a common language – the acknowledgement and understanding of the Energy of Birth. And that thread



## EDN Code of Ethics

The European Doula Network was established in 2011 to connect doula organizations across Europe and to share a common Code of Ethics.

Doulas support parents and families in their autonomous choices in pregnancy, childbirth and early parenting.

A member association, training course or friend of the EDN agrees to the following definition of the role and ethics of a doula:

- Doulas provide emotional and practical support to parents and families.
- Doulas do not perform clinical tasks, make medical diagnoses or give medical advice.
- Doulas support informed choice and informed consent without directing parents' decision making.
- Doulas conduct themselves with integrity and transparency with respect to their experience, skills and boundaries.
- Doulas respect the privacy of clients and hold in confidence all information obtained.
- Doulas treat parents and families, and all other professionals with respect and courtesy.
- Doulas engage in continued personal and professional development.
- Doulas contribute to local and wider communities.

### Translated into French-Czech - German-Bulgarian-Spanish (1)

seemed to unite us beyond the surface level of meeting & greeting to a deeper level of understanding. Indeed, as doulas much of our work is not about what we say, but how and when we say it, and often it is the space of silence we give that is a gift to the women we work with. I know I shouldn't generalise but in my humble opinion doulas understand energy whether consciously or not, and in a room where there are 23 languages being spoken and the conference language (English) is the second or third language for many people, there is still an incredible feeling of unity and understanding.

On the Friday evening the Spanish doulas organised a Temascal for any participant who wanted to join. Temascal is a Mesoamerican sweat lodge used for spiritual and health reason to cleanse mind, body and spirit in sacred ceremony. Inside the low tent-like space it is dark and hot: fire baked red hot stones are brought in, splashed with water and it gets hotter. We sang for each of the four directions, gave prayers for mother Earth and for the Energy of Birth. We were all birth-workers, united in song, praying for birth to be peaceful and for women to be strong. This wasn't about religion but a spirituality deeper



than skin. My soul felt deeply nourished and the profound experience of crawling out of the Temascal naked and with the full moon rising felt very symbolic of being re-born.

The Barcelona conference itself was rich food for the mind: intellectually stimulating ideas bounced around with presentations about many things including birth culture in Spain & Poland, Vanessa Brooks shared her experience of being a lay-midwife for 23 years, Dr. Amali Lokumage author of Heart in the Womb and consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist working in a London NHS Hospital spoke about normalising birth from within the NHS. There were other inspiring speakers and lots to think about. In fact, it felt like the aim of the yearly conference is the EDN strapline in action:



Being involved in the European Doula Network means that wherever you go, either on holiday or for a more permanent move, you will always have a network of birth workers to tap into. This could mean something as simple as meeting for a cup of tea to share your personal experiences being a doula. It is about widening our circle and being united. Anyone can join the EDN as a 'friend' to formally connect to the network and be part of a huge community of knowledge and support. Find out more:

[www.european-doula-network.org](http://www.european-doula-network.org)

Join us for the next EDN in Warsaw, Poland, 22-24 September 2017

Follow EDN on Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/europeandoulanetwork](https://www.facebook.com/europeandoulanetwork)



Hazel Tree is Doula UK's rep for the EDN. She has spent many years living abroad, and started her doula path in Guatemala. She loves the opportunity to connect with international birth workers and share the doula love.

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[www.authenticbirth.co.uk](http://www.authenticbirth.co.uk)

[www.worlddoulalove.wordpress.com](http://www.worlddoulalove.wordpress.com)



# The Positive Birth Network



The Positive Birth Movement is a global network of free antenatal groups. It connects pregnant women to share stories, expertise and positivity about childbirth, the purpose being to challenge the epidemic of fear that surrounds modern birth, and help change birth for the better. There are currently groups in over 36 countries with over 250 in the UK.

Milli Hill, the founder of the PBM shares with The Doula the vision that created the network, her top tips for pregnant mothers and the key to a positive birth experience.

## How did the Positive Birth Movement start? What inspired you to launch it?

Well I always say it started by accident! Nobody sits down one evening and decides to launch a global initiative to change childbirth! I had just done some doula training and I wanted to start connecting with pregnant women in my

area. I had a background as a group therapist so I was very interested in the power of the group to bring about positive change. I just felt that if women got together and actually talked openly, honestly and without judgment about their birth plans and choices, then this could actually be quite transformative. It could challenge fear, it could raise awareness of choice, it could tackle isolation... all kinds of things. Within a week or two I'd set up a facebook page and a free website, and the rest is history.

As far as what inspired me to launch it goes, I guess a number of things. As a feminist I had felt for a long time that something odd was going on when it came to women and birth – all this talk of 'they didn't let me' and 'I was not allowed' from women who didn't normally take such a passive stance in life! I was influenced by ideas I'd read from Germaine Greer and others about the way the female body is 'pathologised' and we are made to feel as women that we need to be rescued from our femaleness by the wonder of medicine at every stage of life. So I felt there was a wrongly weighted power dynamic in birth that needed women to come together and address. I also had a LOT of fear of birth in my own first and second birth experiences, and felt that I hadn't really had a space to address this – I had never really heard anyone, my whole life, say anything positive about birth, and I really craved that.

## What are the key principles of a PBM group and what does it offer to mothers?

Positive Birth Movement groups have two main criteria, they are free to access, and positive about birth! They



are a place for all pregnant women - regardless of their background, experience or choices - to come together and share experiences, thoughts, feelings and insight about childbirth. There is often also tea and cake! The groups aim to be a helpful part of a woman's pregnancy; a warm and welcoming place to hear stories and ideas, to consider what they really want from their childbirth experience, and to challenge any fears or negative expectations they might have.

A positive birth means a birth in which a woman feels she has freedom of choice, access to accurate information, and that she is in control, powerful and respected. A birth that she approaches, perhaps with some trepidation, but without fear or dread, and that she then goes on to enjoy, and later remember with warmth and pride. A positive birth does not have to be 'natural' or 'drug free' - it simply has to be informed from a place of positivity as opposed to fear. The Positive Birth Movement is woman-centred and as such respects a woman's human right to choose where and how she has her baby. You can birth with positivity in hospital or at home, with or without medical intervention. You can have a positive caesarean, or a positive home water birth. Positive Birth is about approaching birth realistically, having genuine choice, and feeling empowered by your experience. The Positive Birth Movement believes that communication is the key to shaking up birth. By coming together, in real life and online, and sharing experiences, feelings, knowledge and wisdom, women can take back childbirth.

### How does a PBM meeting differ from a regular pregnancy group?

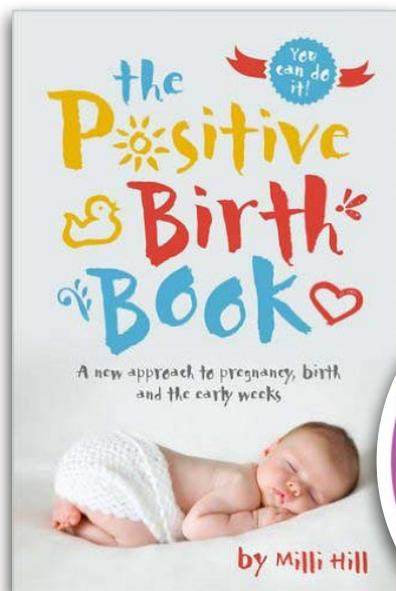
I think the main difference is that everyone present is considered to be an expert. Unlike traditional 'antenatal classes', in Positive Birth Movement groups, women listen to each other, rather than to a teacher. I hope that the way that we break down the dynamic of 'person who knows about birth' versus 'people who don't know about birth' will have the subtle effect of seeping into the birth room or labour ward and encouraging women to feel that they probably have more knowledge, wisdom and expertise than they realise.

### What changes would you like to see in the maternity care system?

Better birth environments. Whether home, hospital or birth centre - dimly lit, calm, quiet and no chit chat. Reverence and respect from all HCP's. Less poking and prodding and more understanding of oxytocin and mammalian birth. A big bee I have in my bonnet at the moment, too, is that I'd like to see more ownership taken for the really dreadful birth experiences that so many women are having. I see a lot of distancing going on - which is an understandable defense mechanism. People will hear an awful story and say, "well thank goodness things like that don't happen where I work!". It seems like all this birth trauma, women not being listened to, lack of consent etc, is all happening 'over there', but not 'here'. Well I'm sorry but we need to take some kind of collective responsibility for what's going on and really listen to women. The current average birth experience for UK women is often simply not good enough - and we can do better.

### If you could give one piece of advice to a pregnant woman what would it be?

Don't let anyone discourage you from taking an active interest in your choices. The whole idea of 'going with



the flow' can often just be code for 'lie back and think of England'. Yes, of course we all need to be flexible, but it's a huge mistake to think that what happens to women in labour is just luck of the draw. So learn about your rights, get informed, and think about what kind of birth you really want and how to maximise your chances of getting it.

### What is the key to a positive birth experience?

True freedom of choice. This is not as simple as it sounds! For example, people sometimes get annoyed with me for saying 'Get off your back and get off the bed!'. They say, 'If a woman wants to give birth in this way it's up to her!'. But the trouble is, if every TV image you've ever seen of a woman giving birth she was on her back on the bed, and when you get to the hospital, the bed is right there slap bang in the middle of the room, and a midwife asks you to hop up on it, then is the choice to give birth in this way truly free? We need to peel away the layers - cultural, personal, familial - before we can analyse whether we have true freedom in our choices. When women find the confidence to do this for themselves and to think outside the box, these birth experiences are usually the ones that are most likely to be described as 'empowering'.

### Tell us about your forthcoming book!

I'm just finishing work on The Positive Birth Book which will be published in Spring 2017. It addresses misconceptions about birth and gives woman to woman information about what giving birth is actually like. There is lots of info in there about building a really brilliant birth plan, and about having a positive birth in any setting or eventuality. I'm very excited about it!

Milli is a freelance writer, columnist for Telegraph Women, mum of three small children and the founder of the Positive Birth Movement. She lives in Somerset.

To find your nearest Positive Birth Movement group or for information on starting up a group yourself visit [www.positivebirthmovement.org](http://www.positivebirthmovement.org)

# From doula to midwife and vice versa

## A CONVERSATION DEBRA VIRCHIS - MIDWIFE



Debra is a 47 year old midwife, wife and mother of 4. She lives in North London. In her past life she was a gymnast, riding instructor, advertising researcher and distributor of luxury coffee machines before Starbucks was on every high street. Following being a full time mum she became a doula, Doula UK board member and DM. She enjoys running with her dog, cycling to work and baking cakes for her always hungry family and friends.

### How long were you a doula for?

7 years

### What inspired you to make the move to train to become a midwife?

I wish I had a really inspiring story but to be honest it wasn't like that at all. I was a DUK board member at the time and 2 other board members had been asked to attend a midwifery information day. On their return I was talking to one of them about it and she admitted that they were both enthused by the day and had decided to pursue midwifery further and I said, without thinking that I would love to join them – I have no idea why and I have even less idea why I didn't think about it and decide not to do it. However, once I decide to do something I am single minded and determined until it is done. I have tried to rationalise it since and I'm sure it may have had something to do with frustrations I had with doulaing, with where I was in my life, and what I had seen in the NHS, but I genuinely think these were sub-conscious thoughts rather than a well thought out plan.

### How did you find the process?

Challenging – physically and emotionally. Whether you undertake a midwifery degree as a school leaver, mum with very young kids or a “mature” student such as myself starting university at the same time as my kids! There are unique challenges that are posed with this particular course alongside the normal challenges of a university degree. It is relentless and time consuming – working full time and studying between long NHS shifts, it is draining both intellectually and emotionally but worth it, if only for the sense of achievement upon completion. I have found it so interesting. I don't yet feel worthy of the title midwife but I know that I intend to ensure that every woman and family I care for receive the best treatment I can give.

### How long have you been a midwife for?

Two months. I have been a student midwife for three years.

### What do you enjoy most about the job?

The opportunity to make a difference to every woman I meet, this could be just one kind word, action or thought but I know they will remember that and how it could affect

them for the rest of their life. Also, I thrive when working under pressure and this is an extreme version of it!

### What do you find most challenging?

The politics of maternity services, the lack of resources to provide the care each woman deserves and the challenges in giving truly women centred care in our current culture when we are not able to be the autonomous practitioners we are qualified to be.

### What skills from your doula days have you taken with you?

I don't think that I can separate my doula skills from me as a person and say that a specific set of skills came from doulaing and that I actively use them in midwifery. I know that when I started I would often receive feedback that I was very comfortable with women and their families and an effective and kind communicator. I was also more comfortable in the hospital environment although this was sometimes criticised as being overconfident in my first years. I think that my existing knowledge about birth and the post natal period was a definite advantage and that I already had a passion for anything birth related.

### Do you miss any aspects of Doula work?

Yes, I miss getting to finish the story – although continuity of care is what we strive for, the reality is that as a jobbing NHS midwife often you do not know what happened in the end. It is not quite continuity, although I do miss that, but more wanting to know how the story ended. Continuity makes the journey more worthwhile and enjoyable for both midwives AND mothers whilst achieving optimal outcomes, I do miss that.

### What advice would you give any doulas thinking of making the transition to midwife?

Don't overthink it (and I am the queen of overthinkers!), if it feels right go for it. It will always be a crazy idea, always hard, always demanding and never financially sensible or even viable, in most cases, but you will find a way if you are determined that this is what you want to do. On a more practical level I also chose convenience of location over my favourite choice of university despite having offers at both and in hindsight I know I will always lust after the other course. So make the choices that make it as easy as possible for you.

# From midwife to doula

**PAT WOOD - DOULA**



Pat is a doula, mother to four grown up children and grandmother to 6. She lives in Bedford with Tim, who she married last year. She enjoys walking her dogs and occasionally going fishing (a bit like birth, a lot of sitting around, then bursts of excitement!). She also helps Tim with his business, as well as teaching Hypnobirthing.

## How long were you a midwife for?

I was a midwife for nearly 20 years. Before this I was a nursery nurse and a mother to my own four children.

## What inspired you to make the move to train to become a doula?

That's a strange one, as it wasn't something that I ever planned to do. My husband had mouth cancer for 4 years and during that time had 2 reoccurrences involving surgery and 6 weeks radiotherapy each time. I was not 'allowed' any time off during these episodes so I worked all weekend then was travelling to treatments Monday to Friday. I felt very unsupported by my employers. When he was given a terminal diagnosis with no further treatment, he desperately wanted to stay at home to die. Everyone thought he had a few weeks to live, but for 3 months I cared for him on my own. I had to beg and steal the equipment from the hospital as no one could provide it for me and also had to take time off 'sick' as I was not given any time off work. I lost my faith in the NHS. When he died I was given 3 days compassionate leave.

Being back at work was stressful. After completing a hypnobirthing practitioner's course I decided to take early retirement and teach that instead. I was asked if I would doula for someone and my first reaction was I wouldn't know what to do. I soon realised that this was a way I could still give the support that I loved, without the restrictions of the NHS. I also didn't have the paper work to do! So the doula thing really chose me.

## How did you find the process?

I really enjoyed my doula course and found it undid a lot of my midwifery thinking. I love giving long term support throughout the pregnancy and the whole of the birth process. I enjoy caring for just one couple rather than juggling 2 or 3 couples at once. I use new skills of listening and watching and understanding, not 'doing' observations and filling in forms.

## How long have you been a doula for?

I have been working as a full time doula for 5 years now.

## What do you enjoy most about the job?

I enjoy the sense of freedom, I can choose when and where I work. I love the fact that I can have a real relationship with the families I work with, and fully understand what is important to them. I like not being restricted by policy, protocols or paperwork. To be able to give a cuddle if needed or speak bluntly if necessary. To be able to give care to people without worrying about machines or upsetting doctors or managers.

## What do you find most challenging?

I used to find being on call most of the time stressful, but I have now settled into that and am pretty chilled most of the time. The financial insecurity can be a worry. I swing between worrying no one will employ me to worrying that I have too much to do. It also took me quite a while to get to grips with the business side of things.

Long births can be such a strain. As a midwife your shifts are limited to 12 hours. The longest I was away from home was 51 hours. When I see poor care or bad advice being given I do find it frustrating.

## What skills from your midwifery days have you taken with you?

I think the best skill I have taken with me is the ability to listen and quickly build relationships with people. Patience and remaining calm in any situation come in useful in all aspects of life.

## Do you miss any aspects of midwifery?

I miss my colleagues, and the support they would give, being a doula can be a lonely place at times. I thought I would miss being a midwife as opposed to working as one, as in losing my identity. I was also worried that I would have wasted the sacrifices my family made by giving up, but in fact this hasn't happened, my skills are still respected and I feel the work I do is even more valuable.

## How do you feel about being hands off now and not using your skills as a medic? Is there ever any frustration there?

I would be lying if I said I've never wanted to have a listen to baby's heart when no one else is interested because it's 'too soon'. Also sometimes vaginal examinations can be good detection work for many unusual situations not just dilation.

Overall though no; I am happy to hand those jobs over to others. Not doing those things makes you much more skilled in using your eyes, ears (and nose) in assessing situations. I am now very aware of how little "help" most women really need.

## What advice would you give any midwives thinking of making the transition to doula?

Make sure you have a healthy bank balance, or another source of income. Be prepared to be surprised by some of the bad practise that you see. Learn to step back and concentrate on supporting the woman. Get a good support network around you.

Get a good bottle of wine for when you are off call!



# My Joyful Birth

BY CAMILLA MOORE

I had been to see the midwife at 40 weeks, I wanted her to magically tell me when I was going to have the baby. I was big and uncomfortable, tired and nervous. She said to me 'Not yet, you don't look fed up enough.'

Just shy of week later I was fed up, truly fed up. By the end of the day I texted a friend and asked if we could go for a walk, I had been struggling by late afternoons, I suppose because I was tired, but also because my mind was in overdrive and I was frightened. I had never feared birth before and I had done it three times, that said two of those births had resulted in retained placentas and manual removals. For me it was the spinal block that I didn't want, both removals had followed completely natural births and the spinal felt ironic, but most of all frightening to me. I had made two big decisions for my fourth baby, the first was to have a home birth, and the second was to leave the placenta and to allow it come when it wanted to. I had spoken with consultants and I agreed to a plan whereby if the placenta did not come after an hour then I would go to the hospital and that if it had to be removed I wanted it done without the spinal. The walk was really lovely and that night when I returned home, although having tried and failed at the 'having sex to encourage baby to come' routine before, Rob and I gave it go and then went to sleep.

At 1.35am I woke up to turn over. But as I lay there I felt a trickle... remnants of our 'induction' attempt? It felt like rather a lot so I got out of bed and went upstairs to the toilet, but more and more was coming out. I stood looking down at the floor and realised that my waters had gone. I called the labour line to let them know I was having very mild irregular painless contractions, I relaxed and wondered around the house, got on my ball and did all I could to encourage the baby into the optimal position. At 5am, the midwife came to check me. I was 5cm. This was very exciting as I felt like this dilation was 'for free'. The baby's head however was still very high. The contractions (still so mild they were barely noticeable) spaced out and became even more irregular. Rob took our eldest child to school, then returned and my friend came over too. Rob looked after the other two kids whilst my friend and I walked around the garden. Another friend came over to take over watching my kids. It was all very relaxed.

At 9.30am the midwife checked me again, I was still 5cm and the baby's head was still really high. My friends had decided to take the kids for a walk and so Rob and I thought we would join them.. I had a bite to eat, got dressed and it was 11am by the time we were ready to go. I started walking towards the door and as I did had a really powerful contraction. One of my friends suggested I might want to stay at home, I agreed.. I headed to the garden, as I did so another very intense contraction hit me. I thought at this stage a bath might be a better idea and so the midwife went upstairs and ran me one. I got in and as I did my whole body just completely melted



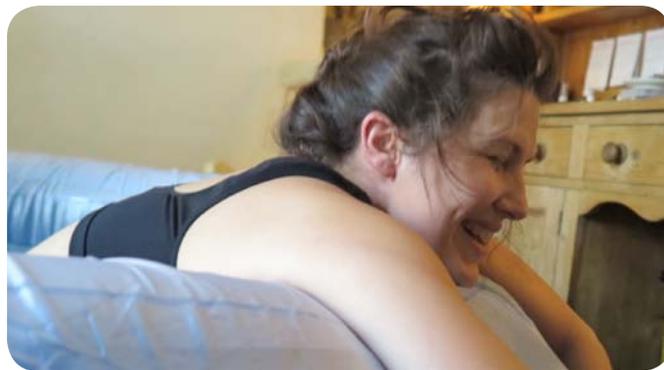
away along with the contractions.. Then at 12.30 a huge contraction came again and I knew I needed the gas and air. Contracting in the bath didn't really work for me, I felt stuck. I returned to my bed, the contractions kept intensifying and I knew I would need the pool soon so Rob and the other midwife went downstairs to start filling it. By 1.10pm I got in and there I was in heaven.. I remember laying over the edge and looking out of the window. It was the most beautiful February day, the sky was so blue, I felt incredibly happy. My husband was by my side, we joked and spoke about the fact this was it, our baby was coming. Very quickly the pressure came, 'Oh, I remember this feeling' I said to the midwife. I was calm, I knew the baby was coming but I had no concept of where in the labour I was completely immersed in the intensity.

And then the gas and air ran out. I just wasn't expecting it. I felt like I needed it but my husband said 'you're doing it', and sure enough the baby's head popped out, followed just moments later by the rest of the body. I held my baby up to my chest and just felt the love rush over me. Moments later I held the baby up and said 'It looks like Finn' (my second son) to which the midwife said 'Oh we don't know what it is, shall we have a look?' I started to lift the baby up and as I did I said 'I think it's a boy, but I'll have a look', which was quickly followed with 'Oh my goodness it's a girl!'. Soon after my friend came in with our two middle children, it was just so special to have my kids there. I stayed in the pool for a bit and wallowed in the joy of this new precious life. But soon the focus shifted to my placenta. I got out of the pool and went upstairs to my bed where we waited for the placenta to come but after half an hour there was no indication it was and so the midwife suggested the injection with some very gentle cord traction. She made a few gentle attempts and then waited before trying again. She was calm and patient. The time was passing rapidly and in one minutes time it would be an hour since the birth and our agreed transfer time to hospital. The midwife, so sweet and determined, said 'Let's try one more time,

but this time the placenta came out. I was so incredibly happy! For me this was such a huge accomplishment. I had managed to have my baby at home and deliver the placenta naturally.

The whole birth was perfect. I had liked the idea of a homebirth but hadn't anticipated just what a superior experience I would find it. My eldest got back from school at 3.30pm and came upstairs to find me and the new baby snuggled up in bed. It was all so easy and natural and no big deal, whilst at the same time being completely life changing. My baby girl fed well and I didn't need any stitches.

Because we were so sure she was going to be a boy she was nameless for a few days. Eventually we decided on Demelza Amy Rebekah Moore. She weighed 8lb 1oz (our smallest baby) and was born on the 4th February at 41 weeks. Rob filmed her birth so we are lucky enough to have the privilege of watching her enter the world over and over again.



# Creating our own Christmas Traditions

**PAULA CLEARY**

Christmas is a time that families draw together. For many, this is a happy thing to do. For others, the very thought makes us feel stressed, anxious and even depressed.

For the last few years, I have been in the latter camp. My anxiety about how to negotiate and actually enjoy this holiday whilst keeping different family members happy has taken its toll on my mental health. I hate to feel like a party pooper. But the truth is that big family gatherings have sometimes left me feeling upset, disappointed and resentful for many weeks after – for a variety of reasons. My happiest Christmas in recent years was when my little family were travelling to Spain in our bus and we stayed at a campsite in Grenada for the Christmas period. Without telling the children, we hired a little wooden log cabin for two nights, close to our pitch. We secretly decorated it with a little tree, got some fairy lights and surprised them on Christmas Eve morning with our Christmas cabin. It was so much fun. For once, Christmas felt genuinely relaxing! Stripped back and simple.

On Christmas day itself we had a simple dinner out on our veranda and in the evening we opened our doors and hosted a little Christmas party with some friends we had made on-site, a lovely older German couple (who reminded me a little of Ina May and Stephen Gaskin) travelling the country in their bright yellow American hippy school bus, and an adventurous English family who told us tales of their many travels. On Boxing Day, a wonderful English family we had recently spent the week with in the nearby Alpujarra mountains, came to stay in our log cabin and we stayed in our bus next door to it. For two days, the children ran around together having a grand time, while we chatted and cooked and enjoyed a few drinks together toasting our new friendship.

It felt totally liberating to break with convention, and spend time without all the emotional baggage or expectations that can come with family. For once, we didn't have to play along with the Catholic Christmas rituals that have been the backdrop to every family Christmas since childhood. As a non-Catholic, this aspect of celebrating the season has not sat comfortably with me for some years.

Stripping away family traditions that no longer light my fire is something that makes way for something more meaningful to emerge. Simply doing things because that's how they've always been done isn't a good enough reason to cling to them. There has to be something more than that. For me, Christmas is a celebration of light, a time of peace and gentle fun.

At the age of 40, I am learning finally that it is not only ok to not want to continue our family's traditions but that it can be a healthy and revitalising thing to do this. It isn't easy. My mother will no doubt sulk and make us all 'pay' in some way for daring to turn our backs on the way things have always been done. Other family members may also feel a sense of betrayal that we are striking out on a different path. But when the days we hold sacred are not celebrated in a way that is sacred to us, or in a way that doesn't respect or reflect our or our children's own needs - it is time to walk away.

It's certainly easier to get out of family get-togethers when you have the excuse of being abroad. It will be trickier trying to justify it if we are simply staying at home, but for my sanity and happiness, I know we must!



# A Human Being's Guide for Surviving Christmas in the Age of Social Media

**SARAH FLAX**

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In my psychotherapy practice I have increasingly noticed the impact of social media upon my clients. This is especially true around annual 'trigger points' such as Valentines Day, Mother's Day and of course, Christmas.

**At such times, Facebook and Instagram are plastered with photos of people being happy. A girl you went to school with has got engaged in Paris. Your second cousin has won a prestigious science award. This one's had twins. That one's moved to a country idyll. Your ex and his family are enjoying their turkey dinner, all dressed in ironic - at least I hope they're ironic - Christmas jumpers. Joy, everywhere! Accord! Unity!**

Clicking through link after link of this stuff, it can begin to feel as though the rest of the world has been granted the secret password for a perfect Christmas. If we are feeling vulnerable, if we are going through a difficult time, if our own lives feel less than perfect, each post can feel like a party popper in the eye.

But it's important to remember that nobody ever posts bad photos. You don't see the ones which got deleted. The ones showing the double chins, the eyes-half-shut, the bag-lady hair. Nobody seems to post about their divorce. About their miscarriage. Their bankruptcy. Their kids being expelled. But all of our lives do include such difficulties, even if our Facebook pages tell a different story.

Last Christmas, one client of mine came to recognise how looking at social media sites triggered deep feelings of sadness and isolation. So she removed herself from Facebook and Instagram. This was a fairly extreme response, but it was right for her. For most of us, social media can serve a positive function. It can bring us closer to friends or family who are far away. It can create a sense of community. But it is important that we keep checking in with ourselves about how we are being impacted emotionally, by what we see up there in that virtual world.

If your Christmas is less perfect than the the ones you see plastered all over Facebook, just remember; So are theirs.



**Sarah  
Flax**

**Biog:**

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# A Dad's Perspective

**MATT DAVIS**



## Could Christmas get Isaac's vote?

I rarely reminisce about Isaac's pre-school years. In fact, in my more subdued moments I feel robbed of having fond memories, a victim of autism's indiscriminate nature. Where there are few landmarks to joyously recall; just some shaky ground of part relief, part fear when Isaac's words trickled then tumbled awkwardly and interaction was intermittent at best. There are no magical times conjured by a curious crawler and chatty toddler. Comparisons with proud parents as wide eyed as their experimenting offspring sent me into mild torment. They grow up so quickly, people would preach. Cherish it. Really?

Any traces of what could well be warm collections are clouded by what I know now but didn't then. I shudder at the sheer vulnerability of my family battling with Isaac's behaviour, blind to what was going on. Holidays and birthday parties in my mind are the stuff of nightmares.

Christmas could so easily fall into this camp; we have experienced quite a few. When, unlike his peer group, presents were too abstract for any kind of appreciation. Sparkly trees and decorations were invisible or irritating to him. And the big Christmas dinner, where sitting with all the extended family, pulling crackers and cracking up at simple and silly word play was as alien to him as the gravy-drenched turkey and trimmings that didn't pass his lips.

But quite gloriously I have wonderful memories of Christmas 2011 – that stand toe to toe with my maudlin memories of Isaac's early years. It glows like a diamond in my mind and I am all the more grateful for it.



That Christmas came just shy of a year after diagnosis. A time when the recalibration of our lives was taking shape, if not complete. Crucial to his development and learning was actually our learning. Of him and his mind. And it was this which enabled the Christmas I wasn't sure we'd ever have. At a time when all the Christmas mores of countdowns and anticipation and present giving still made little sense to him (they do now in an endearingly methodical manner –using them as an information gathering and processing exercise.)

My wife would prove to have the most liberating of revelations at the most relevant of times. Planning for the unknown can be as paralysing for us as experiencing the unknown can be for Isaac. We catastrophise what may happen to such an extent that we end up stuck mentally and stuck indoors. The elation of being invited to a once-in-a-lifetime Christmas party at Downing Street was swiftly replaced a swirling, spiralling avalanche of anxieties - Isaac not wanting to go in, then not wanting to leave, being in a place seething with protocol, rooms that were strictly no entry, realms of other children roaming, hailing a taxi in a busy street. Our catastrophising left us on the cusp of not going all together. But we did. My wife had the revelation. We allowed ourselves to not be overwhelmed. To think of how great it could be. How much Isaac's come on. How we would be denying ourselves and him. How we'd have strategies in place for all eventualities. Maybe what also pushed us in the end was the fact that we were invited as guests of the Special Yoga centre that was soothing and nurturing Isaac so well. Which meant Isaac was invited as he was a child with autism. Not going to 'number ten' would have been criminal.

We prepared meticulously of course. Isaac was 'going to Samantha's house, which has a black door that says 10, in a black car'. There would be 'balloons and chocolates and cakes and singing and no bed and no bath'. Father Christmas would be there too, but we didn't dwell on that – Isaac wasn't a fan.

It's a strange sensation, doing something personally historic whilst fretting about Isaac. I only half took in the imposing portraits of Prime Ministers. I breezed through number ten to keep up with Isaac, instead of slowly, deferentially shuffling in. But this day was not about deference, it was a free for all in the best sense of the phrase. A democratic and dreamy event where all the kids could be free and just be.

Isaac loves to scamper around which, despite the grandiose chandeliers and ornate sofas, this slightly creaking, ludicrously vast space practically encouraged. We let him bound around confident that nowhere was 'out of bounds' – with no despairing glances from other parents saying Isaac had no boundaries.

The whole party was fantastically autism friendly. Christmas oozed, but only if you sought it. Bright balloon trees, tinsel, treats were in abundance. Equally there was space, quiet, a floor to lie on, air to breathe. A sensitive natural light in side rooms. There was none of the claustrophobia and sensory intensities of parties that are so punishing for children like Isaac.

In places he's never been to before, Isaac seeks familiarity. It's his oxygen for staying serene and composed. Hence the presence of delightful kid-loving adults who he knows so well with their smiley and cuddly personas – from Mr. Tumble, Fireman Sam, to TV presenters - was fortuitous. Samantha Cameron actually played a back seat role, engaging with the children more than the adults. No pomp or greeting.

Many children, with myriad needs, milled about calm but excited. You could practically sense the relief of parents that here, in this monument to law, rules and etiquette, no-one was judging anyone. For parents whose lives must be more exhausting and challenging and upsetting than ours, there was a joy and, perhaps, contentment.

Isaac wanted to know that Father Christmas was there, but didn't want to see him. Instead we played games in the side rooms with giant, multi-coloured balloons which he adored - him letting them float up to the chandeliers; me jumping up to grab them. Chandeliers in peril? Samantha Cameron smiled, willing us to carry on playing. By the end, Isaac defaulted to 'self-stimulating' behaviour, running up and down the oak walls, intently staring. His version of downtime. And handled sensitively, our time to take him home. Which he understood would be in 'another black car', with the promise of 'trains on the computer' when we got home.

And in the black car, as we ventured home through a Christmas lit-up London, our faces lit up with euphoria at a party to remember for ever.

I was on the verge of tears from start to finish at this Christmas party that considered its guests exquisitely. For probably the first time since diagnosis, we genuinely felt that nothing could go wrong. We witnessed Isaac

have a little bit of the heady thrill of a kid's party for the first time. At the last party we'd braved, I was on the verge of breaking down from start to finish – it was cluttered, chaotic and therefore cataclysmic for me and Isaac. And it's the fear of those cataclysmic episodes that makes us catastrophise forthcoming events. But our lesson – thanks to my wife's revelation – was to plan for the unplanned, not be scared of it to the point of inertia. That was liberating.

Equally as liberating is knowing that sometimes it's ok to not go out. We do a risk assessment; too many imponderables mean we can make an informed choice to stay at home, safe in the knowledge it's the right thing to do.

The upshot? Leaving the house, for however tiny a trip, will leave us with the memories we've so yearned for and will reminisce about for years to come. Whatever's round the corner.



## A dad's perspective

**Matt Davis is a Parent Patron of Ambitious about Autism. His son Isaac is nine years old and he was diagnosed with high functioning autism just after his third birthday.**



# Toxic Relationships

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When a DUK member looking for some support from her doula sisters posted a very personal message about a toxic relationship with her mother, an unexpectedly lengthy thread began. It seemed that so many are living and dealing with a situation like this in our families and with the holiday season upon us we thought it might be inspiring and helpful to explore this issue for others finding it hard to see a clear path forward. We thank all the women willing to share their very personal stories.

Toxic relationships. The term is difficult and holds so much ambivalence. It refers to the emotional and sometimes physically damaging behaviours of a person but can manifest in a thousand different ways. It induces guilt when thinking of a loved one in such a light but also brings quiet empowerment when stepping back and taking a healthy look at our own mental and emotional well-being. On a planet rife with confusion and with so little support in how to grow healthy relationships it is no wonder so many of our loved ones are slipping into a vacuum of unbalanced coping strategies. However, this impartial understanding is hard to keep close to mind when one is in the thick of abuse and emotional manipulation.

Knowing when to fight for a relationship and put personal boundaries in place, and knowing when it is time to say goodbye but doing so calmly without being emotionally dramatic or appearing self centred is hardest of all, especially when strong emotions are present. Nobody can help us make that decision, we have only our gut instinct to show us the way. But finding that balance and holding our own is when we are truest to ourselves and valuing our own self worth.

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‘When we forgive, we allow space for the pain to be replaced with joy’

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Sending love and wishing positive healing thoughts helps us to remain free from resentment and stay undamaged in the process of releasing toxic relationships. Guilt is a heavy burden, especially when we are saying goodbye to people we have loved and who we are still concerned for, but healing and self forgiveness help us move forward and prioritise ourselves and our emotional well-being. If we remain observant and choose to mindfully forgive both ourselves and those we are saying goodbye to, it creates the peace we need to start on our healing pathway. When we forgive, we allow space in our hearts for the pain to be replaced by joy.

Re-learning what love is, how to love unconditionally, and how to healthily negotiate disagreements in future relationships are of the highest importance in our healing process when we have grown accustomed to distorted views. Discovering how to manage healthy relationships is the massive learning

opportunity that comes from the ashes of living with toxic relationships and something to be mindful of as we move forward. Whatever others may have had us believe in the past, we are worthy and deserving of non-judgemental love, respect and freedom to live our lives as we choose. Remembering this is crucial when dealing with toxic relationships and redefining ourselves and our new-found boundaries according to what we find acceptable or no longer tolerable.

Christmas can be hard for those who have released loved ones in this way and we have to reconsider and reinvent our understanding of the holiday. It is the societal norm to accept and even embrace the arguments and tears that Christmas can bring, and of course every relationship has its disagreements, but when we are feeling persistently emotional compromised then it is ok to make the changes which will bring us peace. Forgive yourself for upsetting people and putting yourself first. It is your Christmas too!

Alternatively if you are in the midst of a less than ideal relationship then remember this Christmas Day that you are not alone. Across the country emotions will be running high and expectations will be plentiful, it is the perfect cocktail for breeding resentment and anger. But remember who you are deep within yourself and be mindful of your responses. If you find yourself a target for someone's negativity then remember to breathe, relax and be mindful of the emotions it brings up in yourself. Try not to take it personally, it is human nature to reflect outwardly the emotions one feels inside. It is all a learning opportunity and we can grow through each relationship and cherish the lessons these people are gifting to us.

## Bryony Pengelly

**Having someone toxic in your life is very challenging, especially if it is your own twin sister. Everyone seems to have the view that blood is thicker than water which gives rise to family members having an excuse to treat you any way they please yet still assume you will always be there. It took me many years to realise that this is not ok. I won't go into what my sister did, as I don't think you would believe me, just as others have not believed me as her behaviour was so awful.**

I had grown up thinking that this way of life was 'normal' and so carried on until it got so bad that I had to tell her

I would walk away. We didn't talk for over a year and she swore that she had changed. She hadn't. I went through this same dance a number of times, each time her behaviour getting worse. Finally she was so rude, that I just said we were over.

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## 'I had to put myself first - and so we got 'divorced'

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Strange how it sounds, a little like a divorce, but actually there are similarities. I had felt dutiful, loyal and somehow tied but I'd had enough of the emotional abuse, I had to put myself first, and so we got 'divorced'. Once I had made this decision, there was no going back.

It is now more than 17 years since we 'split' and I still do not regret my decision. It is sad that as a result I am seen as the black sheep (she has told family it is my fault and I will not waste my efforts trying to persuade them otherwise). She has missed out on sharing my children's lives and sadly they are better for it.

I have learnt that as the saying goes 'you can choose your friends but not your family'. Luckily I have found we can change this belief system. I now have a wonderful family of my own making and I feel that the experiences have made me more emphatic to my clients and friends alike. I have brought my children up to love and respect each other and to treat family better than friends as you want them to be in your lives forever. My children adore and respect each other, and for this I am grateful.

**Katie, London**

**For me, the meaning of a toxic relationship is one that makes you question yourself in a frequently negative way and can leave you feeling less than you are worth. It stops the natural flow of who you are. The questions it can raise in your own mind can distract you and pull your energy from focussing on the very basics of everyday existence, as well as your dreams, aspirations and ambitions. It affects happiness and creativity. It can disempower and immobilise you, even bury you deep in something that, quite frankly, can suffocate you.**

She is my sister...

I have no idea what started it. As far back as I can remember, there have been things said that have made me feel 'dark' inside. Most people who I shared my upset with said it was jealousy, but this didn't make sense. On paper her life seemed far more balanced, stable, 'normal' and socially acceptable than mine.

It was confusing too because on the one hand she was loving and generous, but then made underhanded, side swiping comments. It was this discrepancy that ate away at me. Putting a kiss at the end of a shitty text for example is just confusing. It felt like a case of feeding with one hand and slapping with the other.

The 'slaps' came in the form of little digs to highlight her perceived downfalls, failures and weaknesses in me, picking only on the things that she knew would hurt. Things a friend might not mention or would reframe to encourage acceptance of a situation or learning within it. Maybe some people just doesn't have this skill..? Whatever the case, it just didn't make sense that someone so close could be so hurtful whilst acting in many ways, so lovingly.

Many years of challenging relationship issues culminated in a massive argument whereby I decided there are only three options for me to move forward with it all. One is to continue as we are, accept who she is and love her regardless of the impact on me. Option two is to stand and work through our issues together. Or option three; run and hide.

I love the idea of being peaceful and loving but until now this hasn't worked and I'm finding it emotionally challenging and draining. It makes me miserable, it takes up my time when I'm sharing my upset with my friends and it makes me dread family occasions.

The second option hasn't worked for us either; no acknowledgment of needing to work through our issues makes resolution impossible.

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## 'Sometimes we have no control over things outside of ourselves'

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The third option of walking away, which feels to me like 'running and hiding', feels powerless, but maybe the cliché "you can take a horse to water but can't make it drink" was created for these very moments, to consider that sometimes we have no control over things outside of ourselves.

I'm not afraid to take responsibility for the part I play in this relationship. I am also very clear that the issues cannot be solved by me alone. This has brought me to the realization that all I can do is retreat and focus my energy on my own family and my own self preservation and development.

With Christmas and a big 21st birthday celebration for my son just around the corner, I'm not sure how everything will pan out. Right now though I am clear that I need to steer clear of the energy that constantly seems to surround our relationship and so for me, the best option is to retreat and surround myself with the beautiful, non toxic, healthy and loving relationships with the many beautiful sisters I have chosen to be in my life.

As sad as I am to feel this way around my biological sister, I also feel a sense of relief knowing that I don't have to accept the toxicity that surrounds our current relationship. That, feels like a peaceful resolve and I feel comfortable and healthily empowered in making this decision.

**Sas Tame**



# Natural Wonders...

## DOULAING'S TOP PRODUCTS FOR THE BODY BEAUTIFUL

We all love to pamper ourselves, our friends and our pregnant & new mamma clients but it's often hard to find great products that not only look lovely but are only made from lovely ingredients. Well, we have done the ground work for you to find some of the best natural and ethical products in the UK that really work as well as being kind to skin, the environment and our wallets.

**This issue: make-up for the party season ahead.**

### 1. LIP SCRUB

LUSH Sugar Plum Fairy Lip Scrub

£5.50

This vegan friendly and cruelty free product containing caster sugar, jojoba & sweet wild orange oils works magic on dry cracked winter lips. It also smells and tastes delicious!

[www.lush.com](http://www.lush.com)



### 2. MULTI STICK

Ilia Multi Stick

£30.00

An organic, carmine free vegetarian luxury multi tasking stick for eyes, lips and cheeks. Soft and creamy, it comes in a selection of shades to suit all skin tones and is easily blendable. We like All Of Me – a great all round watermelon colour.

[www.naturisimo.com](http://www.naturisimo.com)



### 3. EYE SHADOW

Yunique Moodstruck Mineral Pigment Powders

£10.00

The company was founded in 2012 by a brother & sister team with a mission to uplift, empower and validate women across the globe. Made from finely milled minerals and amino acids and with 34 different shades to choose from, these eye shadows can be used wet for a more intense colour or dry for a soft look. We love Adorable – a warm copper tone.

[www.yuniqueproducts.com](http://www.yuniqueproducts.com)



### 4. LIP GLOSS

Saturated Colour

£7.00

A rich liquid lipstick with extreme pigmentation and a high coverage gloss finish, this product gives you a slick shine of colour without the stickiness of a lip gloss. Can provide a bold statement or a subtle glossy look if blended out. We loved caressing red – a bright Marilyn Monroe lip perfect for Xmas.

[www.saturatedcolour.com](http://www.saturatedcolour.com)

### 5. BLUSHER

Green People Mineral Powder Blush

£17.95

Offering 100% natural certified organic products. Registered by the vegan society and suitable for vegetarians. This blendable mineral powder blusher allows skin to breathe whilst giving a healthy, soft glow. Highly pigmented formula means a little goes a long way. Natural finish and gives a lovely flushed look.

[www.greenpeople.co.uk](http://www.greenpeople.co.uk)



# Doulaing's Top 5 Books for children expecting a sibling

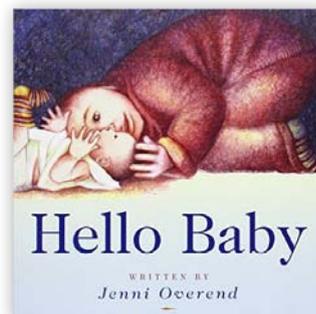
## AS RECOMMENDED BY DOULA UK DOULAS

### Hello Baby by Jenni Overend

On a winter night, in a cottage far away from the town, Mum's baby is ready to be born. The midwife arrives and the whole family prepare for the home birth.

Hello Baby is a book for the whole family to share in preparation for a home birth or the arrival of a new baby. Soft, natural illustrations with gentle yet accurate text. Includes authentic images of baby's head emerging, the cord and the placenta but are not overly graphic. A beautiful book to welcome a new baby to the family.

1

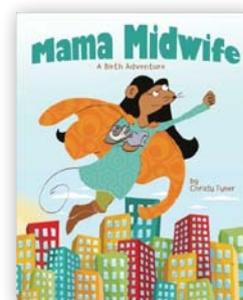


### Mama Midwife by Christy Tyner

Mama Midwife is the story of young Miso the mouse, whose mother is a midwife. When Mama rushes out of the house in the middle of the night during a slumber party, Miso's friends are intrigued! Is Miso's mama a superhero? A secret agent? When Miso's dream of attending a birth in the forest comes true, she learns more about birth than she ever could have imagined.

Mama Midwife is a hip and tender story that introduces children to midwifery, while celebrating and affirming our ability to birth.

2



### Our Water Baby by Amy Maclean

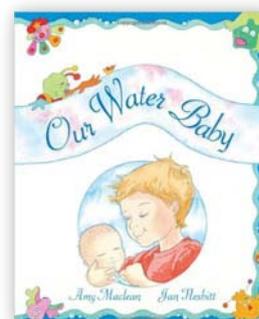
The baby was going to be born in water, in a special pool in the kitchen.

"Will the baby know how to swim?" asked Oliver.

"When babies are born in water, they know how to hold their breath. The baby will not have to swim on his own," said Oliver's daddy.

Our Water Baby introduces using water at home for labour and/or birth in a tasteful, beautifully illustrated style with a simple story of a young boy helping his parents prepare for the birth. A refreshing introduction to water birth for children.

3

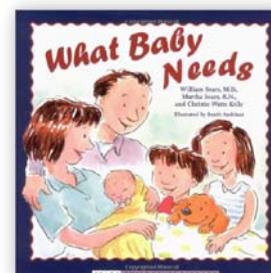


### What Baby Needs by William Sears, Martha Sears & Christie Watts Kelly

When a family brings a new baby home, there are many changes. Older siblings may find it hard to understand the needs of the new baby, as well as the demands placed on mom and dad.

Based on the attachment-parenting theories of William Sears, M.D., and Martha Sears, R.N., this book clearly explains baby's needs. The text emphasizes how siblings can be helpers to both baby and parents, while forging their own relationships with "their baby," and outlines the positive aspects of being an older girl or boy. Here is a warm, insightful book that will help the whole family joyously and lovingly welcome the newest member into their lives.

4

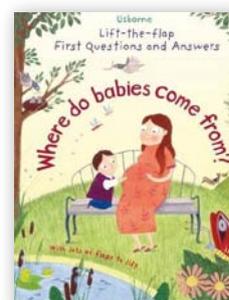


### Where Do Babies Come From? by Katie Daynes

Where Do Babies Come From? is an engaging and colourful lift-the-flap boardbook for young children featuring homebirth, breast & bottle feeding and baby wearing.

A delightful way for young children to discover where babies come from - from baby humans to kittens, caterpillars and kangaroos. Young children can lift the flaps to find out how babies are made, when they are born, what new babies need and how they grow. A charming, age-appropriate introduction to the facts of life to share with young children.

5



# The Doula Walk

*I walk the long, dark corridor, heavy bag on my back,  
heavy heart full of love.*

*It's midnight, I arrived here at midnight the  
night before.*

*Fuelled by coffee, tea, toast and oxytocin I paced  
this corridor...*

*Walking the Labour walk, feeling her contractions  
with her, keeping focus.*

*Through the night and through the day we held on  
to each other,*

*The moment is near that we've been working  
together for.*

*Time stands still, is it night outside or day?*

*Time is her and time is this.*

*In and out, up and down we ride the waves  
together until she can bear no more and I hold her  
gaze with all of my strength, telling her that she can  
and is doing this.*

*Tears flow, fear, desperation, excitement...  
All of these things fill the room.*

*All of these emotions fill the room and our hearts until  
the little one is born.*

*Then all at once life feels even more full. Another  
little human, precious little soul. The one we've been  
working with but now have only just met is here and  
now, just for now, my work is done.*

*After hugs, thank yous and farewells it's just me....*

*Walking this long, dark and lonely corridor without her.*

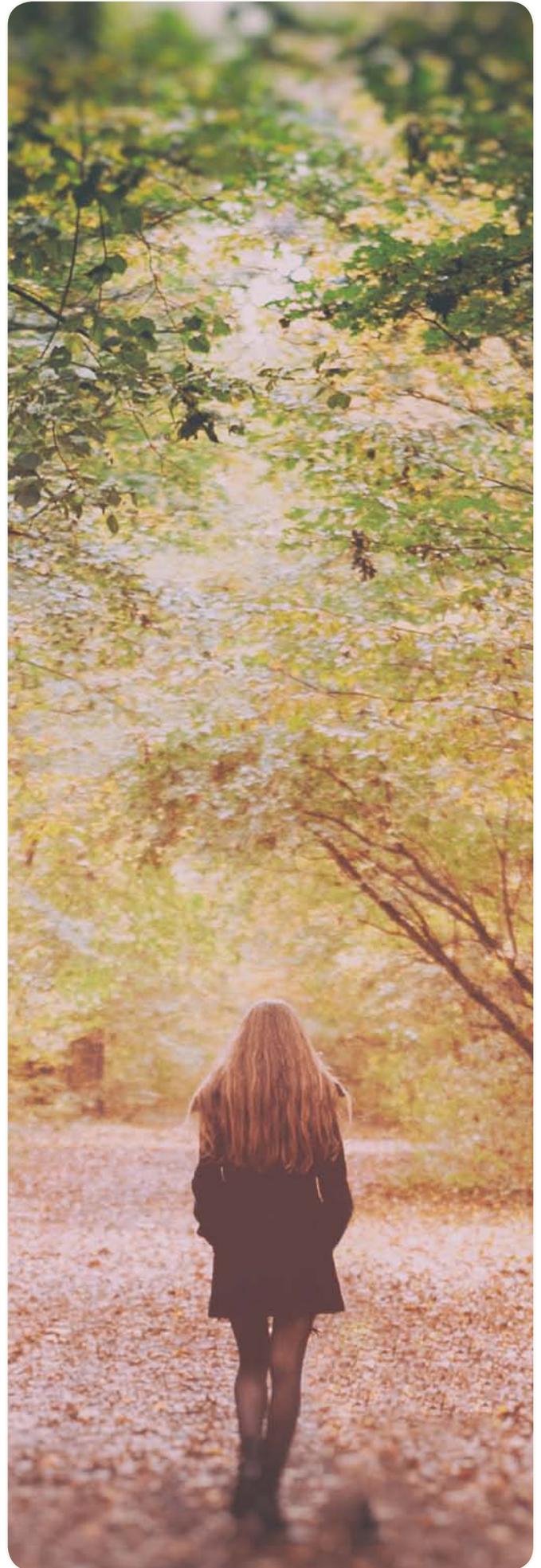
*Preparing myself for the tired journey home.*

*From there I will feel for the next few days that I  
birthed a child, yet the child is not mine.*

*The end of a chapter with a mother, her baby and  
her dreams.*

*The doula walk.*

**Jo Hollands**



# Baked Crispy Honey Soy Sesame Chicken

'Sticky fingers is what you'll have when serving up this crunchy take on a restaurant all time favourite! Make sure to serve with plenty of napkins!'

## ingredients

4 chicken breast, cut into 1-inch cubes  
20g cornflour  
200g polenta, coarse (organic)  
1 large, egg  
1 tsp. Dijon mustard (wheat-free)  
sea salt  
white pepper  
paprika  
garlic granules

## honey sauce

5 tbsp. rice wine vinegar  
4 tbsp. tomato puree  
6 tbsp. honey  
2 tbsp. tamari soy sauce, gluten free  
2 tsp. sesame oil

## glaze

4 tbsp. honey  
2 tbsp. tamari soy sauce, gluten free  
2 tbsp. toasted sesame seeds

**Preparation time – 30 mins,  
cooking time – 30 mins**

Preheat the oven to 425°F, gas mark 7, 220°C (200°C fan-assisted).

Line a large baking tray with My Relationship with Food silicon baking mat or parchment paper.

Cut the chicken breast into 1-inch cubes. In a large oval dish add the cornflour and season generously with paprika, white pepper, sea salt and garlic granules and mix well. Place all the cubes into the seasoned corn-flour and, stirring with a spoon, make sure they are covered in the flour.

In a separate bowl beat the egg and add 1 tsp of Dijon mustard.

On a flat large plate, scatter the polenta. Dip the seasoned chicken into the egg mixture and then press into the polenta to cover all sides and place on the pre-lined tray. Repeat with all the chicken.

Bake in the pre-heated oven for 20 minutes, turning the chicken pieces over after 10 minutes.

To make the honey sauce: add rice vinegar, tomato puree, honey, tamari soy sauce and sesame oil to a large mixing bowl and stir until smooth.



Remove the chicken from the oven and toss the chunks into the honey sauce to coat all over. Then return to the oven on a clean baking tray.

Increase the oven temperature to 475°F, gas mark 9, 240°C (220°C fan-assisted) if your oven is very hot only increase by 10 degrees, as you don't want to burn the chicken.

Place back in the oven for a further 10 minutes, turning over after the first 5 minutes.

To make the glaze: gently warm the honey and tamari soy sauce in a small saucepan on a medium heat (do not over heat). Remove from the heat and add the sesame seeds.

When the chicken has cooked, remove from the oven, place on a serving platter, drizzle over with glaze and serve!

Enjoy!

## LISA'S TIP

These are the perfect healthy indulgent take on a restaurant classic! They are gluten-free and have a wonderful crispy crunch, juicy and succulent inside. They are perfect for the little ones, and adults too would be asking for seconds! I would suggest serving with some egg fried rice or sliced up and thrown into a salad.

If you're serving this to adults, and want to add a spicy kick, add some shredded chillies.

# Swiss Chard Lentil Sundried Tomato Soup

During the winter months as the earth grows colder I love nothing more than a big bowl of soup. The simplest plant-based ingredients are often most nourishing and can fill you up in one clean-tasting serving.

## ingredients

200g red split lentils, (rinsed thoroughly through a fine sieve)  
300ml cold water (to cook the lentils)  
2 tbsp. rapeseed oil  
1 onion, finely chopped  
1 leek, finely sliced  
2 carrots, cut into small cubes (brunoise, tiny cubes)  
400g swiss chard leaves and stems, sliced ½ inch strips  
2 vegetable stock cubes (gluten-free) I've used Knorr stock cubes  
2 ½ pints boiling water  
150g sun-dried tomatoes, sliced  
sea salt or herbamare  
white pepper  
cracked black pepper

**Preparation time – 20 mins,  
cooking time – 25 mins**

Add the thoroughly rinsed red split lentils to a medium sized saucepan together with 300ml of cold water, bring to the boil then cook over a medium heat for 10 minutes. Drain the lentils through a sieve under cold running water to release the starch, then set aside.

In a large 4 litre saucepan sauté the onions and leeks in the oil until soft and translucent. Add the carrots and continue to cook for 3 minutes, season with sea salt and white pepper.

Dissolve the vegetable stock cubes in 2½ pints of boiling water, and then add to the vegetables.

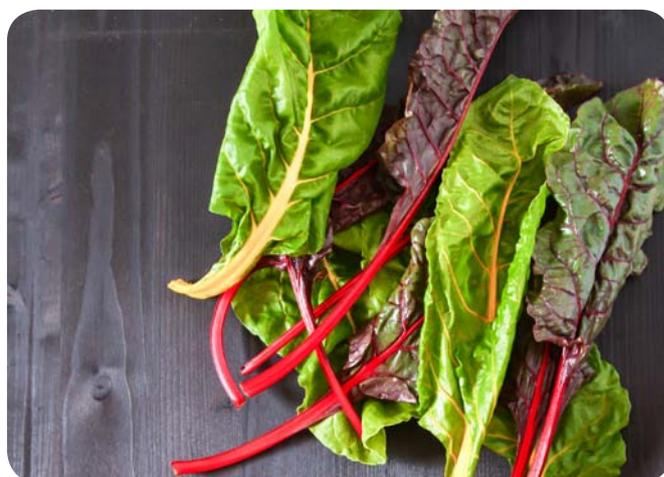
Cook the stock for 5 minutes then add the lentils and sun-dried tomatoes and cook for a further 3 minutes. Add a touch of cracked black pepper and salt if needed then fold in the swiss chard leaves and stalks. Cook for a further 2 minutes and the soup is then ready. Serve with some fresh or warmed bread.

Enjoy!



## LISA'S TIP

This is a wonderful hearty soup, packed with an abundance of tasty veggies and plenty of protein and fibre from the lentils. To keep the greens fresh looking just add towards the end of the cooking process, you can also substitute for kale or spinach. If you're wanting to bulk out the soup a little, just add an extra ½ pint boiling water, then you have room to add some cooked gluten-free pasta or quinoa. Also lovely with a little grated Parmesan on top.



'Lovely with a little grated parmesan on top'



# Healthy Honey & Pecan Muffins

A gluten-free healthy muffin to compliment a hot drink without the overload of refined sugar.

{makes 12}

## ingredients

2 eggs, large  
200ml rapeseed oil  
1 large ripe banana, mashed  
240ml cold water  
250g honey, agave or maple syrup  
1 tsp. vanilla bean paste or 1 whole vanilla bean pod deseeded  
130g buckwheat flour, sifted  
130g brown rice flour, sifted  
1 tsp. baking powder (gluten-free)  
1 tsp. bicarbonate soda  
2 tsp. cinnamon  
½ tsp. ginger  
2 pinches sea salt  
60g raisins

## topping

100g pecans, whole

**Preparation time – 20 mins,  
cooking time – 25 mins**

Pre-heat the oven to 350°F, gas mark 4, 180°C (160°C fan assisted).

Line a 12 muffin tray with tulip muffin cases (available on amazon or from kitchenware shop).

By hand, mash the banana until smooth. Whisk the eggs in a separate bowl and add to the mashed banana. Then add the honey, oil, water, bean paste, and mix until smooth.

Add the sifted brown rice and buckwheat flour, baking powder, bicarbonate of soda, ginger, salt and cinnamon and mix all together. Fold in the raisins by hand.

Spoon or pipe the mixture into the tulip muffin cases, top with whole pecans and bake in a pre-heated oven for 25 minutes.

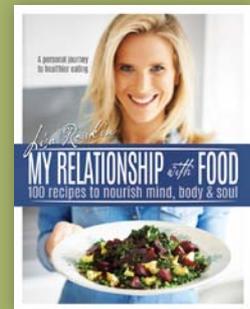
Take out of the oven once cooked and leave to cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Either eat straight away or, as the flavours improve the following day, save for a treat with friends. Keep covered with foil.

Enjoy!



## LISA'S TIP

These delicious, light muffins are packed with protein, potassium, vitamin C and dietary fibre. I'll often grab one of these for my breakfast! The buckwheat flour gives you slow releasing energy perfect to see you through until lunchtime or dinner. They do not contain an overload of sugar, but if you fancy you could serve with some chia seed jam on the side, or a spoonful of cashew butter!



Lisa Roukin is a chef and an author. Lisa's main focus is developing healthy, gluten and wheat free recipes with minimal use of refined sugars which resonates in her cookbook My Relationship with Food which is packed with seasonal recipes, helping you make the most of the best produce available to create nourishing and wholesome meals. Perfect for those wishing to build on their repertoire, introducing you to some inspiring breakfasts, lunches, soups, sides, dinners and treats, aimed at bringing the family together over meal times. For more information on Lisa you can visit:

[www.myrelationshipwithfood.com](http://www.myrelationshipwithfood.com)

Instagram: [@myrelationshipwithfood](https://www.instagram.com/myrelationshipwithfood)

Twitter: [@cookwithlisa](https://twitter.com/cookwithlisa)

Facebook: [My Relationship with Food](https://www.facebook.com/MyRelationshipwithFood)

# 10 Minutes with...

BEVERLEY BEECH

The legendary maternity activist and one of our heroes of the birth world shares her insights and passions.

**If you could give one piece of advice to a pregnant woman what would it be?**

That this birth will affect you for the rest of your life and understanding what you need for a good birth experience is vital. Don't assume that what you are told and offered is best. Do your own research and get informed.

**Tell us about a day that changed your life.**

I suppose it was the birth of my first son, but it was only later when I discovered that half the village had the same awful experience as I did that I got angry and joined AIMS.

**What drives you?**

A sense of injustice. I hate injustice. On the other hand, it drives me to continue when women come back and say that they got the birth they so wanted.

**What is the key to a positive birth experience?**

I think if you and your baby are fit and healthy then stay at home or book into a freestanding midwifery unit. If there are not any in your area then start campaigning for one! And a good midwife who you have gotten to know through your pregnancy is also key.

**If you could make a change to our current maternity system what would it be?**

Freestanding midwifery units with case loading midwives in every single community. Caring for individual women and getting away from mechanised birth.

**What is your top tip for new mothers?**

Get informed. Don't accept that what is on offer is the best. Question it.

**Who do you most admire and why?**

Jean Robinson. The President of AIMS, she's an amazing woman who has such wisdom and such an ethical stance. Her drive is the right of women to make their own decisions. She really is an unsung hero and a national treasure.

**What makes you happy?**

Being with my family. Sailing. Chocolate (dark).

**What do you wish you knew 25 years ago that you know now?**

I wish I had known about AIMS before I got pregnant. Also that birth in a hospital for a fit & healthy woman is playing Russian Roulette with you and your baby's health.

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'Don't assume that what you are told and offered is best. Do your own research and get informed'

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Maternity activist Beverley Beech joined AIMS in 1976 following the birth of her second son and since then has campaigned tirelessly to improve maternity care. A researcher and writer, Beverley was a lay adviser to the National Perinatal Epidemiology Unit at Oxford, a lay member of the Professional Conduct Committee of the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) and a member of the Midwifery Committee of the NMC.

She was also a lay member of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists Maternity Forum, and a founder member of CERES (Consumers for Ethics in Research). She lectures, both nationally and internationally, on consumer issues in maternity care and the medicalisation of birth. She initiated the debate on normal birth and provoked the RCOG to launch their Normal Birth Campaign in 2003.

She is now the honorary chairman of AIMS (the Association for Improvements in the Maternity Services) and the author of Am I Allowed? (She would like every woman to be given a copy when she gets pregnant!) She lives in Surbiton and is mother to two sons and grandmother to three.

AIMS website: [www.aims.org.uk](http://www.aims.org.uk)

# Doula UK News

## Events Calendar



January	Event	Location	Details
7 Jan/28 Jan	Birthing Wisdom Doula Fundamentals Course	Totnes and Liverpool	<a href="http://birthingwisdom.co.uk">birthingwisdom.co.uk</a>
9-11 Jan	Younique Postnatal Preparation Course	Surrey	<a href="http://yuniquepostnatal.co.uk">yuniquepostnatal.co.uk</a>
14-Jan	Marketing Yourself Seminar with Naava Carman	Birmingham	<a href="http://nurturingbirth.co.uk">nurturingbirth.co.uk</a>
14-Jan	Doula UK Introductory Workshop	London	<a href="http://doula.org.uk/introductory-workshop">doula.org.uk/introductory-workshop</a>
16-19 Jan	Birthbliss Academy Preparation Course	Bristol	<a href="http://birthblissdoulacourses.co.uk/enrol-now">birthblissdoulacourses.co.uk/enrol-now</a>
20-22 Jan	Red Tent Preparation Course	London	<a href="http://redtentdoula.co.uk">redtentdoula.co.uk</a>
20-23 Jan	Nurturing Birth Preparation Course	Portsmouth	<a href="http://nurturingbirth.co.uk">nurturingbirth.co.uk</a>
23-Jan	Life of a Birthkeeper Advanced Doula Enrichment Workshop	London	<a href="http://redtentdoula.co.uk">redtentdoula.co.uk</a>
25-Jan	London Perinatal Mental Health Networks Conference	Royal College of Psychiatrists, London	
29-Jan	Life of a Birthkeeper Advanced Doula Enrichment Workshop	Edinburgh	<a href="http://redtentdoula.co.uk">redtentdoula.co.uk</a>
30 Jan- 2 Feb	Nurturing Birth Preparation Course	Swansea	<a href="http://nurturingbirth.co.uk">nurturingbirth.co.uk</a>

February	Event	Location	Details
01-Feb	Younique Postnatal Twins and More Workshop	Surrey	<a href="http://yuniquepostnatal.co.uk">yuniquepostnatal.co.uk</a>
2-5 Feb	Nurturing Birth Preparation Course	Dubai	<a href="http://nurturingbirth.co.uk">nurturingbirth.co.uk</a>
4,5,17-19 Feb	Developing Doulas Preparation Course	Cambridge	<a href="http://developingdoulas.co.uk">developingdoulas.co.uk</a>
6-9 Feb	Birthbliss Academy Preparation Course	London	<a href="http://birthblissdoulacourses.co.uk/enrol-now">birthblissdoulacourses.co.uk/enrol-now</a>
6-9 Feb	Nurturing Birth Preparation Course	Birmingham	<a href="http://nurturingbirth.co.uk">nurturingbirth.co.uk</a>
11-Feb	Doula UK Introductory Workshop	Newcastle	<a href="http://doula.org.uk/introductory-workshop">doula.org.uk/introductory-workshop</a>

March	Event	Location	Details
10-12 Mar	Red Tent Preparation Course	Wales	<a href="http://redtentdoula.co.uk">redtentdoula.co.uk</a>
13-16 Mar	Birthbliss Academy Preparation Course	Leeds	<a href="http://birthblissdoulacourses.co.uk/enrol-now">birthblissdoulacourses.co.uk/enrol-now</a>
13-16 Mar	Nurturing Birth Preparation Course	Manchester	<a href="http://nurturingbirth.co.uk">nurturingbirth.co.uk</a>
15-17 Mar	Conscious Birthing Advanced Course	Edinburgh	<a href="http://doulatraining.co.uk">doulatraining.co.uk</a>
17-19 Mar	Red Tent Preparation Course	London and York	<a href="http://redtentdoula.co.uk">redtentdoula.co.uk</a>
18-Mar	Doula UK Introductory Workshop	London	<a href="http://doula.org.uk/introductory-workshop">doula.org.uk/introductory-workshop</a>
20-24 Mar	Conscious Birthing Preparation Course	London	<a href="http://doulatraining.co.uk">doulatraining.co.uk</a>
22-Mar	World Doula Week		<a href="http://worlddoulaweek.com">worlddoulaweek.com</a>
25-Mar	DUK Conference	Manchester Renaissance Hotel	<a href="http://doula.org.uk/conference">doula.org.uk/conference</a>
27-31 Mar	Developing Doulas Preparation Course	Manchester	<a href="http://developingdoulas.co.uk">developingdoulas.co.uk</a>
31 Mar-1 Apr	Life of a Birthkeeper Advanced Doula Enrichment Workshop	Co. Wicklow Ireland	<a href="http://redtentdoula.co.uk">redtentdoula.co.uk</a>

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