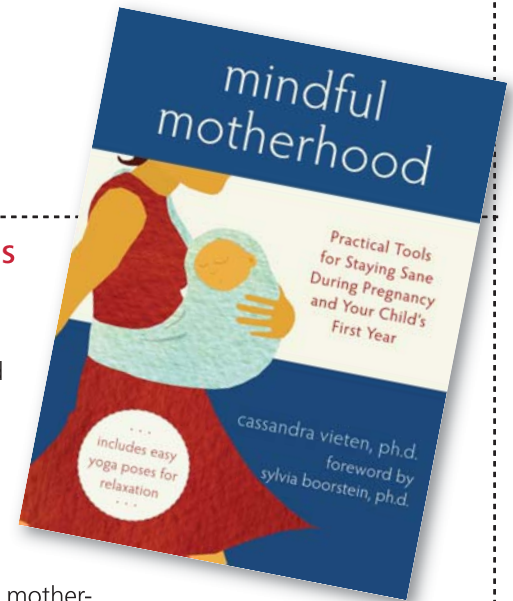


MINDFUL MOTHERHOOD

Practical Tools for Staying Sane During Pregnancy and Your Child's First Year

CASSANDRA VIETEN, PH.D.



W. JO MOSER PHOTOGRAPHY

Staying balanced through the ups and downs of motherhood

Along with the happy anticipation of pregnancy and the rush of new motherhood, women also must deal with the changes to their lives (and bodies!) that come with being a mom. In *Mindful Motherhood* author Cassandra Vieten explains how mindful practice can be easily integrated into your everyday life to help you meet the challenge of motherhood and approach each experience with your new baby with open eyes and an open heart.

The effects of stress and mood during pregnancy and early motherhood, & how mindfulness can help

A large body of evidence in both animal and human studies indicates that stress and mood disturbance experienced during pregnancy increases the risk for preterm birth, low birth weight, and other pregnancy-related complications. In addition, says Vieten, "Postnatal mood disturbance can interfere with attachment, healthy parenting behaviors, and child development. While a wealth of evidence supports all these facts, surprisingly little information is available to women and clinicians for reducing stress and improving mood in pregnancy and postpartum."

Mindfulness practices, Vieten explains, help cultivate the capacity to:

- remain present and aware in the face of change and difficult circumstances
- approach unfamiliar experiences with curiosity and compassion, as opposed to fear or defensiveness
- examine and explore the source of discomfort (rather than habitually avoiding it) without getting caught in rumination and preoccupation

... all of which are a part of good psychological health and emotional intelligence. These skills are fundamental to good parenting, and are conducive to experiencing the tremendous enjoyment and opportunity for adult development that becoming a mother offers.

CASSANDRA VIETEN, PH.D. is a licensed clinical psychologist, director of research at the Institute of Noetic Sciences, codirector of the Mind Body Medicine Research Group at California Pacific Medical Center Research Institute in San Francisco, CA, and copresident of the Institute for Spirituality and Psychology. Her research has focused on mindfulness-based approaches to cultivating emotional balance, the involvement of biology, psychology, and emotion in addiction and recovery, the role of compassionate intent and belief in healing, and the factors, experiences, and practices involved in psychospiritual transformation. Vieten has published several academic articles and chapters, has conducted numerous presentations at international scientific conferences, and is coauthor of *Living Deeply*.

Visit her online at:

WWW.MINDFULMOTHERHOOD.ORG

PUBLICITY CONTACT:

Earlita Chenault at 510-652-0215, ext. 6142 / earlita@newharbinger.com

ONLINE MEDIA CONTACT:

Adia Colar at ext. 6107 / adia@newharbinger.com

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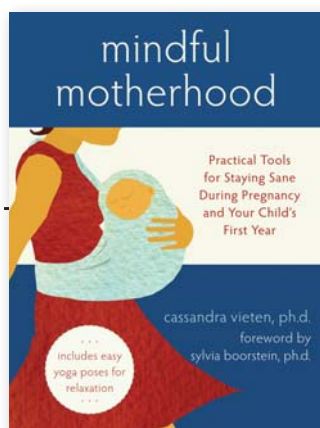
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Praise

"*Mindful Motherhood* contains what so many other parenting books omit: the consoling information that each mother has the ability to know, deep within, how to care for her child. *Mindful Motherhood* is a gem."

—**Christiane Northrup, MD**, author of *Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom*

"Wise, soothing, and helpful—this is really good stuff for new mothers."

—**Jack Kornfield**, author of *The Wise Heart*

"Read this book, give it as a baby shower present, carry it with you into the pediatrician's office—but most of all, take it in and savor its secrets for a richer life for yourself and your child."

— **Daniel J. Siegel, MD**, author of *Parenting from the Inside Out* and *The Mindful Brain*

"This book will inspire, guide, and reassure mothers in pregnancy and after childbirth. Nothing could be more important to our families, our children, and the future of the world. Dads will benefit, also."

— **Paul Ekman, Ph.D.**, coauthor, with the Dalai Lama, of *Emotional Awareness*

"I think mothers everywhere would greatly benefit from this book. It is honest, openhearted, straightforward and compassionate. *Mindful Motherhood* is an invaluable resource for moms at any stage in their parenting."

—**Sharon Salzberg**, author of *Faith: Trusting Your Own Deepest Experience*

"This is a beautiful book—deeply moving, intensely practical, and filled with wisdom."

—**Ruth A. Baer, Ph.D.**, professor of psychology at University of Kentucky

"This is a welcome and needed book. These practical meditations for women may be a great help with prenatal and postnatal challenges. These essential psychological practices come from a woman who has earned the right to teach a classical path of human development through motherhood."

—**Robert Bruce Newman**, author of *Calm Birth and Calm Healing*

"Vieten writes with love and tenderness about the mindful mother and the importance of staying in the present. Regardless of the age of your child, you will never go wrong by acting as a teacher of love and patience."

—**Jerry Jampolsky, MD**, coauthor of *A Mini Course for Life*

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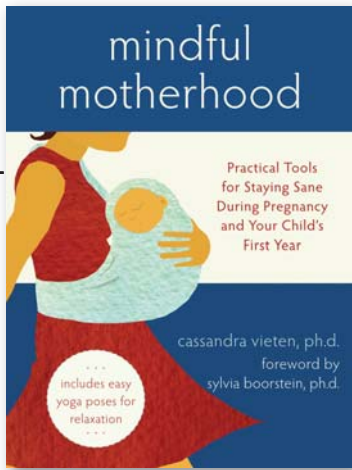
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Excerpt

A bit like attunement, **synchrony** is a way of paying attention to your baby that finds its roots in mindful awareness. You can learn your baby's "language" as it is being expressed through his movements, his breathing, his crying, and his attention—what he looks at and reaches out for, or when he turns within. Synchronous communication happens when you notice your baby's actions and engage with her in them. She sends you a signal, and you respond to it. She yelps, and you smile or jump a little or yelp back. She smiles, and you smile in return. She says "Oooh" and raises her eyebrows. You say "Oooh, oooh, oooh" and raise your eyebrows twice. This kind of repetition is baby-style play (Stern 1974). You show her with your body that you recognize her, you acknowledge her. You begin to notice what works and what doesn't by looking at the reactions you get from your actions.

As well-respected pediatricians T. Berry Brazelton and Bertrand G. Cramer (1990, 1) put it:

"As a mother learns that the rhythms of the baby underlie the capacity to attend to her, she synchronizes her own behavior to the infant's. She learns to match the infant's cues, to time her responses. She learns to turn away or to tune down when the baby does. And she learns that she can add a little bit of magnification to each behavior, which will lead the baby on. As the baby smiles, she smiles more broadly, teaching the baby how to prolong a smile. As the infant vocalizes, she adds a word or a trill, leading toward imitation. By matching her rhythms, her behaviors to the baby's, she enters the baby's world..."

Mindful awareness makes all of this possible and often makes it come quite naturally. Being present and in your body allows you to become more receptive and sensitive to the baby's cues in a way that can be more difficult when you're stuck in the thinking mind.

Interview Questions

1. What is mindful motherhood?
2. How can mindfulness help expectant moms and women adjusting to motherhood?
3. Can mindfulness actually help women be better mothers? How?
4. In your book you touch on the scientific research that shows the effectiveness of mindfulness in helping people deal with stress. Could you explain some of this research for us?
5. There are three primary practices that your book focuses on. What are they, and how is each important?

Mindful Motherhood provides pregnant women and early moms with:

- Accessible information based on science and sound clinical theory
- Easy, practical tools for incorporating mindfulness into everyday life
- Stories and examples to inspire interest and clarify points
- Exercises that will help them integrate the information with their own life experiences
- Current insights into the positive psychology of motherhood and mother-infant attachment

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