

BEFORE YOU BIRTH

The Confidence Guide



DANALISE

A Quick Note of “Hi, Thank You For Being Here”

If you've found your way to these pages, I already know something about you. You've felt that quiet pull. The one that says there might be more to this whole birth thing than what they've been telling you. The one that whispers, maybe my body isn't the problem, maybe it never was.

I'm not here to convince you of anything. I'm also not here to tell you where to birth or who to trust or what choices to make. Those decisions are yours.

I'm here because I remember what it felt like to sit in the middle of all the outside noise and wonder if I was crazy for wanting something different, for wanting something more instinctual and life-affirming. I remember feeling that if I just read one more article, or watched one more video, somehow I'd finally feel confident enough to begin.






But that never happened because that's not how it works.

This guide is the map I wish someone had left on my doorstep. It's not a textbook, nor is it a rulebook. It's a conversation between us, friend to friend, about what really happens when you start untangling the fear and start building the confidence to trust yourself and your body.

There's no test at the end and no right way to read this. Just take your time. Read what calls to you, skip what doesn't, and know that you already have everything you need to begin.

With love,
Danalise @thebirthlab ♡

*Here are a few resources that might help you:

-  [Books that helped me here](#)
-  [Start your free newsletter with Beehiiv here](#)
-  [Host your Ghost blog with Magic Pages here](#)
-  [Create your own website + course + sales pages + more here](#)
-  [Build your privacy shield: email + storage + VPN + more here](#)

*these are affiliate links, I may earn a commission if you click through and purchase

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Before *We* Begin

// JUST BETWEEN US.

Most women don't plan to catch their own 13-pound babies at home without a doctor, nurse, or midwife. I did. Of course, I didn't know how much he was going to weigh, but I didn't know a lot of things - and I was okay with that.

People hear that number and their face contorts into the proverbial deer-in-the-headlights look that awkwardly blends confusion with "Are you stupid, or what?" They lean back slightly, like the information itself might be contagious. They ask if I'm serious, if it was an accident, if I knew how dangerous that was. Some get quiet, unsure what to say. Others launch into stories about their own births - the interventions that "saved" them, the emergencies they narrowly avoided, the reasons they could never do what I did.

But it wasn't an accident. It wasn't reckless ignorance or blind faith or some adrenaline-fueled moment of poor judgment. I chose this. I prepared for it - not with checklists and hospital bags, but by

learning to trust my body, regulate my nervous system, and distinguish between real danger and borrowed fear. I wasn't ignoring the risks; I was simply the only one in the room who truly knew the difference between a medical emergency and a powerful transition.

And when the contractions started wrapping around my belly like waves I couldn't ignore, when my body opened and he made final preparations for his miraculous reveal, I was ready.

My mom, a.k.a., Nana, sat nearby - not coaching, not intervening, just holding her own state of peaceful presence. She's not a nurse or a formally trained professional, either; she's just my extraordinary mom who oh-so-lovingly agreed to be my

unexpected helper for the birth of her 13th and youngest grandchild, the only one born at home. I hadn't even told her of my plans until a few days before labor started when she asked, "When do you plan to go to the hospital?" And I said, "Uhhh.. see that's the thing, I'm not. Surprise, surprise."



She wasn't there to save me; she was there to witness the torch being passed. In her presence, I felt the invisible line of women standing behind her - my grandmothers and great-grandmothers who birthed in fields, in kitchens, and in forests. She was the anchor, but they were the wind at my back. I wasn't just birthing a son, my third one, I was claiming my seat in the ranks of the formidable women who made my existence possible.

Not the kindest move on my part, and we laugh about it now, but I know she definitely wasn't laughing then. Just as I settled into my decision a few months prior, she settled into my decision quite nicely as well. We knew how to trust, now it was time to put it to the test. So it was just me, my body, and the quiet knowing that I, and my baby, were going to be okay.

Seconds after he settled into position, he whispered gently into my spirit, "Now, Mama!" and I slithered my naked belly mountain off the bed as gracefully as I could, planted my knees, leaned against the bed, and four involuntary pushes later, we met soul-to-soul in a state of perfect reverence and awe.

“

*Thirteen point two
pounds of healthy baby
boy, born on a bedroom
floor covered with
garbage bags and old
sheets...*

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Thirteen point two pounds of healthy baby boy, born on a bedroom floor covered with garbage bags and old sheets, in a low-income apartment where miracles aren't supposed to happen. There were no monitors, no bright lights, no one telling me what to do or when to do it. The whole thing felt simultaneously ordinary and impossible - like I was doing the most natural thing in the world while also doing something most people would call reckless, dangerous, irresponsible.

I wrote the bones of our birth story a long time ago, then tucked it away like a secret I wasn't sure I wanted to keep explaining, and moved on. That's not the kind of story you tell at playdates or school pickup lines or anywhere someone might call CPS just for mentioning it. I left it to have a life of its own on the bookshelf of my untidy life, collecting dust alongside all the other parts of myself I learned to keep quiet about. Safe from judgment. Safe from questions I didn't want to answer.

My son is seventeen now. Seventeen. Old enough to roll his goofy eyes and eat everything in the refrigerator and the grocery store without apology. Watching him grow into an incredibly handsome, kind-hearted, and divinely confident young man, I've realized the most valuable thing I gave him wasn't a gentle birth or a natural start - it was learning how to trust myself enough to choose my own path, even when it terrified me. That's the inheritance that matters and I've always encouraged him to do the same.

That confidence - the kind I had to build from scratch inside a body I hated and was still learning to trust - is what the following words are actually about. Maybe you're standing in front of the mirror right now, not recognizing the skin you're in. I need you to know: your body doesn't need to be 'perfect' or even 'liked' by you for it to be powerful. It just needs you to get out of its way.

This guide, and the underlying principles we will work through together, is something I wish someone would have left on my doorstep before I ever got pregnant. Before I ever became an adult, honestly.

So I'm going to tell you what *they* didn't tell me: A single mother on welfare had her 13.2 pound baby on her bedroom floor. She didn't fall apart, nobody died, and the earth didn't tumble off its axis. Life outside her front door hadn't changed; still difficult, still complicated. It wasn't courage that did it. It wasn't luck either. It was something softer and more dreamy than both.

And it's the same something that's already inside of you, waiting to be held, ready to be seen. I'm not here to give you power. I'm here to show you where you've been hiding it.

“

It wasn't reckless. It wasn't accidental. I chose this.

”

One hour old



Seventeen years



CHAPTER 1

Wait, What Did I Just Do?

//YEAH, THAT JUST HAPPENED.

Birth was one initiation, one soulquake among many. It cracked me open, yes, but I never wanted it to become my entire identity. I am more than a birth story. And yet, the older I've gotten and the more I've come to understand my purpose here, the more I know that what happened in the months surrounding his birth created the necessary framework for a life of wild curiosity and beautiful surrender. It taught me how to stand inside uncertainty without anxiety or panic, and how to listen to my own voice when the world grew too loud and discouraging. I was no longer defensive or scared, and only slightly... slightly rebellious... which I say with a cheeky grin.

And by "slightly rebellious," I mean I purposefully birthed a thirteen-pound newborn toddler with my handy-dandy crock pot warming towels like it was hosting spa day, dental floss on standby as the world's most low-tech medical device, and a pile of clean towels that stood high on alert, waiting eagerly to be of service. *Like, who does that? Ummm hello, it's me, and I'd do it again in a heartbeat.*

My bedroom became an improvised throne room of feminine grit, where the veil between worlds got thinner and a woman's body, my body, did what it was always meant to do. But, you know, for me, it was just a casual Saturday dripping with biscuits-and-gravy Tennessee flavor.

Forty-five minutes after he was born, I squatted over a metal mixing bowl from the kitchen, pushed out the child-sized placenta, grabbed an overripe banana, then took a hot shower (with my diamond-laced crown upon my head, of course) while Nana worked her magic in the kitchen, filling the house with the smell of Cracker Barrel on steroids - sausage, eggs, homemade biscuits and gravy, and hands-down, the best orange juice I had ever tasted. I was lit-er-a-lly in heaven. There was no jello or popsicles or bland toast and water. No salads or cold soup. Nah, this mama was dining in plentiful admiration to her Powerhouse, like the deserving Queen she was.. and still is.

He was born at 4:58 a.m. and by 7 a.m., I had delivered the placenta, took a shower, ate a fanciful feast, and was settled in for a

nap on my dreamy couch with angel babe in hand and a post-birth glow that'll never diminish or shrivel under the weight of "I just can't do this" fears or doubt. That glow wasn't about the birth being easy, it was about the moment I realized I couldn't be broken.

But before we go further, I want you to understand something about his birth, about this initiation, about what actually happened in that apartment in the early morning hours of May 17, 2008.

It wasn't that first mutual stare here on planet earth where his dreamy blue eyes whispered "Hi, mama" to my already beaming soul. Or the raw beauty of leaning against my bed, just me and a body that had been entrusted with this knowledge long before I was born. It wasn't even the moment my mom announced his actual weight and the room tilted sideways while I tried to process whether I'd just birthed a baby or a small woodland creature.

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...after he was born, I squatted over a metal mixing bowl from the kitchen, pushed out the child-sized placenta, grabbed an overripe banana, then took a shower.
”

It was everything that came next - the awareness, the awakening, the

quiet recognition of who I was, and realizing that I had just met myself for the first time.

I remember sitting on the edge of the bed, still high and speechless in post-birth ecstasy, trying to gather the pieces of my exploding brain box, half laughing in that punch-drunk, love-soaked way that only a fully present and involved birth can produce, thinking, "Wait... what did I just do?"

But that number - 13.2 pounds - was not the miracle.

The miracle was that I didn't malfunction or disintegrate under the brilliance of this seemingly impossible gift. My breath didn't disappear. My body didn't turn against me or shutdown. I didn't unravel or start rewriting the story to make it more palatable for those who would doubt it later. I simply sat there, stunned, yet unshaken, inside a body built for this, inside a body that had just done something supernatural and extraordinary.

The transformation had already happened long before the first contraction ever squeezed through me.

During those quiet, unglamorous months beforehand, I found myself fighting against my own body more than I was trusting it, and I had to learn how to stop stiffening at every "what if" and start listening to something quieter underneath all that worry and doubt. As it

turned out, my nervous system, and my heart, needed more preparation than my body did.

By the time labor began, it wasn't about being brave or performing feats of extraordinary strength. It was about staying grounded, living inside the knowing I'd been practicing - in my breath, in how I held my body, in choosing not to spiral every time fear knocked on the door. My body already knew what to do; my only job was to stay out of its way and lean into its own version of primal trust.

This guide exists because I see so many women preparing everything except that part. We research dilation, interventions, and backup plans. Debate locations, providers, and percentages. Pack bags, buy gadgets, and fill our Amazon carts with aesthetic shiny objects that fit our color palettes. *I mean, sure, you can have the \$200 organic linen birth gown, but if your nervous system is in a tailspin, the gown won't save the experience.* We keep scrolling late into the night looking for reassurance. But almost no one explains that the body responds differently when it feels safe, and that safety is not just about where you birth, it's about how your nervous system interprets what is happening.

Regulating your nervous system doesn't mean becoming some blissed-out spiritual guru or floating around like an enlightened goddess who never feels fear. It means noticing when your chest tightens and breath catches after reading a horror-show birth story

and choosing to close the tab and breathe instead of spiraling down the rabbit hole. It means learning the difference between intuition (quiet, steady) and adrenaline (loud, urgent). It means teaching your body what calm feels like in ordinary moments, so when the intensity of labor hits, your system doesn't confuse powerful with dangerous.

It's not mystical, nor is it complicated. It's the simple practice of softening and remembering that the strong, rising sensations are normal and necessary. When your nervous system feels safe, your

body opens more easily, your thoughts slow down, and your heart and mind work together instead of arguing about who knows best. When it feels threatened, even by imagined scenarios, everything tightens and fear gets loud, demanding, relentless.

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The miracle wasn't his weight. It was that I didn't disintegrate under the brilliance of this seemingly impossible gift.
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Preparing your nervous system doesn't eliminate risk, but it does teach you how to stay collected when the waves slam into your cabana chair nestled in the white sands instead of frantically building walls to keep them out.

I'm not a doctor, midwife, doula or other formally trained medical professional, and I'm not here to argue with your provider or tell you

where you should give birth. I'm simply a woman who walked into one of the most immense experiences of her life grounded and aligned, who witnessed firsthand what becomes possible when your internal poise has been practiced long enough to hold the impossible.

I'm also not here to convince you to birth like I did; that's not my mission. These words are about showing you how to a tune into a new inner frequency, and to hear your heart and your body more clearly, so that you can make choices from a place of *your calm* trust instead of *their* frantic fear.

If you are already questioning your questions, if you feel that quiet whisper that says, "there has to be more," then this is for you. Not to hand you answers, but to help you answer your own.



White Coats & Bifocals

// BLESS THEIR HEART.

Have you ever noticed that fear doesn't actually walk in screaming? It doesn't kick the door down and throw plates against the wall. No. It strolls in with a clipboard, crosses its legs, and sounds educated and responsible. It sounds like the adult in the room. "Let's just be realistic," it says. "Let's not be naive." And because it doesn't look like a villain, because it looks like wisdom dressed in sensible, cute shoes, you give it a seat at the table and pour a cup of its favorite tea. Pinkies up.

At first, the voice doesn't even belong to you. It belongs to your doctor's raised eyebrow, your friend who swore her story wasn't meant to scare you - and then scared you, or your mother's soft worry disguised as love. It belongs to that late night article that

began with “I don’t want to alarm anyone, but...” and then proceeded to brush over every happy tree that Bob taught you how to paint. The voice echoes for a while and then, slowly, without asking permission, it changes pronouns. It stops saying “they say” and starts saying “I think.” And that’s when things get messy, because now you’re sitting in the corner wearing a dunce-shaped hat

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Fear doesn't look like a villain. It looks like wisdom dressed in sensible, cute shoes, so you give it a seat at the table and pour a cup of its favorite tea. Pinkies up.

”

arguing with yourself and the invisible energies of he-said, she-said chaos.

Early in my pregnancy, I would shove myself into the deep corners of my cushy couch, hiding from a world I no longer wanted to be a part of. It was the only thing that loved me more than I loved it. That couch was my refuge and my prison. Soft, forgiving, asking nothing of me

while I sank deeper into its cushions and deeper into the void. It's where I spent most of my days, the ones where breathing felt like too much effort and living felt like such a cruel joke.

Unexpectedly pregnant and still wrestling with suicidal thoughts and depression, I sat there despondent and broken, thinking that if I just gathered enough information and found the right people, I could

outsmart uncertainty and stop feeling so stranded and alone. Or if I read enough of *their* birth stories, watched enough of *their* videos, listened to enough of *their* opinions, I could eliminate the element of surprise and maintain some order of control in my desperately unstable life.

Secretly telling myself that this was wisdom and common sense while being hush-hush and mumbling under my breath, "Chill alright, I'm just looking" was key. I mean, I was just being thorough and intentional, right? Preparation was her name, and while she suffocated me with her anxious arms, I liked her and wanted to keep her. Her answers locked my feet in concrete and kept my brain spiraling in new tingly, curious loops, but I felt safe, so it was okay. I didn't stop being depressed overnight, but I decided that my birth was going to be a territory the darkness wasn't allowed to possess.

I started confusing tight shoulders and shallow breaths with responsibility. I began to believe that if my body was braced and holding on, constantly scanning for danger, I must be doing something right. Meanwhile my body was over there like, "Ma'am, we aren't being chased by a bear, why are we acting like we're in the Hunger Games?"

The mind is dramatic, bless its overachieving little heart. It's built to scan for threat. It hears one scary story and thinks, "Noted, next." It hears twenty and builds a bunker, complete with three escape

routes, two panic rooms, and enough rations to survive the apocalypse. It doesn't care if the story was yours or your neighbor's cousin's coworker's. It doesn't pause to fact-check your intuition. It only knows it's been fed a steady diet of what-ifs, and so it prepares, tightens, and rehearses disaster like it's auditioning for a role in *Worst Case Scenario: The Musical*.

Somewhere underneath all that noise, there was a moment. Small, quiet, almost shy in its appearance. A moment when something inside you felt steady. It wasn't loud or rebellious, just... sure. A soft internal nudge that said, "Maybe my body isn't broken. Maybe I'm not incompetent. Maybe I don't need a permission slip to trust myself." And almost immediately, like clockwork, something louder interrupted it: a news segment, an hour long Reddit scroll, or a gentle but firm, "You just never know."

“
*Intuition doesn't twist
and tighten you into a
salty pretzel, slather you
in cheese, and whistle
for the bear to come
hither.*
”

So you overrode the whisper. Of course you did. The whisper didn't come with a degree on the wall, or sit on a spinning stool in a chilly, white-walled room, or carry the weight of institutional authority. It didn't make your nervous system buzz with urgency, screaming "I'm Alive," like Johnny 5. It just stood there, barefoot and calm, gazing

~5 minutes fresh



at you with heart-shaped eyes of admiration, while the louder voice stomped around with charts, big words, and dramatic flair. And we were trained, so very thoroughly, to believe that the stomping, loud one must be right.

Most of us were taught that authority lives outside of us. In offices and systems. In someone who studied longer, trained harder, memorized more Latin than we ever will. We were trained to be good girls, to comply, to double-check, to defer and assume that if something feels different, it must be dangerous. So when your own instinct rises up, it can feel almost naughty, flat out irresponsible to your people-pleasing core. Like you're about to get called into the principal's office of life for coloring outside the lines or taking too long to eat your rectangle-shaped cafeteria pizza. We think if we know everything, we can't be hurt. But birth isn't an exam you can study for, it's an experience you have to inhabit.

But here's a blow to the gut that will make all of your cells throw punches to the air of how-dare-you-say-that: sometimes we silence ourselves before anyone else gets the chance.

We research until our original clarity dissolves into static. We scroll until our nervous system hums like a faulty Maytag. We invite so many outside opinions into the room that our own voice starts echoing from the dimly-lit space at the other end of the hallway, then we call it wisdom and due diligence or, like me, named it Preparation

and sweetly kissed it good night like I owed it my highest devotion. But if we're willing to be honest with ourselves, we'll notice that it's just borrowed fear wearing a white coat with a sewn-in name and grandma's bifocals.

Fear isn't evil. It has a job. But not all fear belongs to you. Some of it

“
*You don't have to
keep carrying fear
like it's a sacred
heirloom passed down
through generations
of anxious women.*
”

was inherited and settled into you before you even knew to question it. Some of it was repeated so many times that it started to feel like your own heartbeat. Borrowed fear can feel saintly, almost like love. You're carrying what the women before you carried - their caution, their warnings, their hard-earned wisdom. Releasing those fears would feel like betrayal. To

let go would mean you think you're somehow wiser, somehow exempt from what they survived.

But intuition doesn't twist and tighten you into a salty pretzel, slather you in cheese, and whistle for the bear to come hither. Intuition doesn't make your teeth clench and your breath disappear. Intuition feels like swinging on the front porch in the plump shade of the morning air, tucked inside your white picket fence, stress-free and at ease, because you know the universe isn't trying to destroy you.

So here's the question that might make you squirm just a little - the good kind of squirm though, the kind that wakes you up: Is the fear that I'm feeling really mine?

Not, is it possible. Not, will someone else approve. Not, does this make me look responsible. But is it mine? Because if it isn't, you don't have to keep carrying it like it's a sacred heirloom passed down through generations of anxious women.

Your body has been listening to all of it - every borrowed fear, every well-meaning warning. It's been boarding up windows and tightening down the hatches for years, preparing for hurricane-level impact that never arrives. No wonder you feel disconnected from it. No wonder trust feels mystical and complex and almost out of reach.

The voices that aren't yours have been loud for a very long time, and they've been convincing and persuasive. But once you recognize their annoying chatter as an external signal of agitation and not an internal wave of mindful observation, something almost magical happens - they shrink and lose their authority.

The throne room no longer honors them. And underneath all that static and echoes from down the hall, your own voice starts to clear its throat. Not with screams or hearty stomps like they do, just a quiet knowing mixed with a little holy and a little wild. So the next

time the 'white coat' voice in your head starts to lecture you, I want you to ask it for its ID. Is this voice mine, or am I just hosting a stranger's panic?



CHAPTER 3

Let's Be A *Good Girl,* Now

//WHATEVER YOU SAY. *(insert eye roll)*

Somewhere between childhood and womanhood, without a ceremony or a memo or a flashing neon sign, most of us learned that being "good" meant being agreeable. It meant not making people uncomfortable with our certainty. We learned how to read a room before we learned how to read our own nervous system. We learned to soften our tone, to not make a fuss, to be still and sweet when Uncle Eddie's hands wandered or his breath got too close. We learned that our discomfort mattered less than keeping the peace. And we became wildly skilled at it - so skilled that we can override our own intuition with a kind smile and a "g'day to you too, sir" and not even notice we've done it. In the boardroom or at a dinner party, being an expert at reading others makes you charismatic. In the birth room, it makes you a bystander in your own body.

I had been trained, politely so, to be a good girl who gathered opinions and double-checked her instincts. I needed everyone else to feel comfortable before I could feel certain. I could sense what I wanted, but I'd immediately run it through an invisible committee of fictional judges, each one holding a clipboard and a disappointed sigh waiting to grade my reasoning with the dreadful red pen of C-exams and "see me after class" vibes.

Pregnancy didn't create that pattern. It just exposed it.

There's something about bringing forth new life that magnifies every unresolved dynamic you have with authority. Suddenly the stakes feel higher, the pressure to perform responsibility *correctly* becomes suffocating, and you don't just want to make a decision - you want to make the *right* decision in a way that earns approval from people who may not even be in the room. Because approval makes us feel good and feeling good is always the end goal.

So you sit in front of someone with credentials or confidence or just a louder voice, and you comply. You nod. You smile. You say "that makes sense" even when your insides are doing somersaults and screaming "wait!" You tell yourself you're being open-minded, that wisdom lives in deference to another, or to the louder. And if there's even a flicker of resistance in your gut, you hush it quickly because you don't want to be confrontational. You don't want to be *that*

woman. You don't want to look ignorant, reckless, or - God forbid - selfish.

So you ask: "Is this okay?" "Does that make sense?" "What would you recommend?"

We don't even know how to let our voices speak without immediately asking someone else if it's allowed to be heard. It's almost like we need a hall pass just to have an opinion about our own bodies.

It sounds harmless. Respectful, even. But sometimes we're not seeking information, we're seeking permission. We're looking for someone else to take accountability for the choice already rising in our spirit. We're hoping someone will offer their silent blessing of agreement so we don't have to stand alone in our own knowing. We think if we have enough data, they can't call us bad. But you cannot cite your way into sovereignty. At some point, the only evidence you have is the steady beat of your own heart..

“

*Good girls don't argue,
they say "yes ma'am"
and "whatever you
think is best" and
swallow their perfect
knowing like a bitter
pill wrapped in a
Little Debbie cake.*

”



We're wired for belonging and don't want to be cast out of the tribe. Today's modern version has systems and protocols and expectations, and if you step even slightly outside of their sanctimonious circle, you can feel the temperature change. A subtle shift in tone. A pause before someone responds. A well-meaning, "I just worry about you." And suddenly you're explaining yourself when no one technically asked you to.

You build a case like you're defending a dissertation. You cite your research, drop a perfectly-spaced Powerpoint, maybe throw in a study or two you found in some obscure medical journal, and clarify that you're not anti-this or anti-that. You reassure everyone that you're sane, that you've thought this through, that you're being *responsible*. You become your own defense attorney in a courtroom you created, defending yourself against charges nobody filed.

And the wildest part? Half the time, no one is even attacking you. You're just preemptively shrinking so no one else has to. If this sounds exhausting, and almost threatening, that's because it is.

Good girls don't argue with the system. Good girls comply. Good girls say "yes ma'am" and "whatever you think is best" and swallow their perfect knowing like a bitter pill wrapped in a Little Debbie cake.

But compliance leaves a residue. Every time you override your own sensations to avoid discomfort - yours or someone else's - something inside you contracts and tightens. You subconsciously tuck into the fetal position while your inner voice gets harder to recognize. The more you practice that tightening, that tucking inward, the more natural it feels. Now you're balled up so tight that everything feels like an emergency, and you can't tell the difference between real danger and rented panic. Eventually, you won't remember what your own voice sounds like without the louder echoes drowning it out.

“

And there it is - that phrase... I just feel... as if embodied knowing needs footnotes and scripture references to sound convincing.

”

This isn't about rebellion for rebellion's sake. It's not about rushing around declaring independence from everything and everyone. It's quieter than that, more sacred and intimate. It's the moment you realize how often you've asked permission to trust your own gut, to feel safe in a decision that doesn't fit neatly into someone else's pocket.

And when you stop asking - even just internally - it feels terrifying. The responsibility is yours. There's no one left to blame if it doesn't go the way you hoped, no external authority to hide behind. Just

you, your nervous system, and the steady inner knowing that left the light on for you.

The first time you choose instinct over instruction it feels like walking the plank with no Popeye rushing in to save you. You rehearse explanations: "I've thought this through." "I'm not being reckless." "I just *feel*..." And there it is - that phrase, *I just feel*, as if embodied knowing needs footnotes and scripture references to sound convincing.

When my internal voice began whispering, "You can do this, you can trust yourself," I didn't celebrate. I panicked like I was about to shoplift from Target or skip church on Sunday. Trusting myself felt dangerous, irresponsible. I kept thinking, "*Surely a responsible woman wouldn't feel this calm about having a baby at home by herself. Maybe someone with more letters after her name should be involved in these private conversations I keep having.*"

But here's what I had to remember: Our bodies have been calibrating since our first taste of air, responding to danger and safety like the unsung hero it is. It knows contraction and expansion. It knows when something feels aligned and when something feels off, even if we can't articulate why.

Degrees only prove that they studied the standard method, the basic foundations of what they're allowed to teach. Your intuition, however,

proves that you've studied the source - you, and the ancient notes of wisdom that still make your heart beat. So who is the real expert on your baby, them or you?

The noise will say that you're arrogant for trusting yourself. It will say humility means stepping aside and safety means surrendering your autonomy to someone more qualified and battle-tested, someone with framed diplomas decorating the wall and an exclusive parking spot to prove it.

And sometimes, yes - support and collaboration are wise and necessary. But surrendering your internal compass because you're afraid to stand in it? That's not humility; that's fear dressed up in good girl clothing, where anxiety is mistaken for virtue and overthinking is praised as being thorough.

You're not a child waiting for a gold star or a pat on the head to trust what you already know. Nor are you a liability in need of supervision and ankle monitoring. You're a woman with a divinely mature nervous system that's been auto-tuning itself since its first neurons twitched with life. So the question isn't whether you're *capable* of self-trust, it's whether you're *willing* to be bold enough to stand in opposition to the crowd.

That kind of discomfort can be brutal. Because it means that you can't keep outsourcing your power to the white-coat "experts."

~30 minutes after birth, before delivering placenta



You'll have to sit (maybe even alone) with decisions that might disappoint those who look down at you through tilted glasses and eyes of obvious displeasure. You won't always look as good as you were taught to be.

Most of us don't silence our intuition because it's weak. We know she's talking, answering our questions, and showing us where to go. We silence her conviction because it threatens the systems we've relied on for validation. She asks us to grow up and go deeper, to stop listening to the boring lab rats of society, cut the chains, and become the kind of woman who can proudly say, "I've thought about it and I'm still doing this," then turn on one heel and trot on with a casual sashay without looking back.

The room might go quiet and someone might gasp. *Oh the horror!* The "I would never" whispers and glares of disgrace might start and then somehow you're the star of next week's Bible study led by Sister Judy and her smug raspberry-filled jelly roll. But you stand anyway. You bloody stand.

That kind of almost unruly sovereignty doesn't come with applause. It comes with a steady exhale deep in your spirit and the reassuring notice that you're no longer giving your power away. The external voices don't disappear, but they stop feeling like rulers. They become what they always should have been: information, not identity. So when a doctor tilts their glasses and sighs, remember this: they aren't grading your motherhood, they're just following a

script, and you don't have to stay after class for a lecture you didn't sign up for.

Now, that throne inside of you? It's yours. When you take your proper place - even with your trembling hands trying to secure the crown upon your head and your feet dangling like a 5-year-old at the big kids table at Thanksgiving - the noise begins to lose its influence. It no longer has leverage because it no longer owns your worth. You do.

Nana, the helper



Snuggling an hour after birth



Dr. Google Will See You

// PSST. HE DOESN'T EVEN LIKE YOU.

I used to think more information would make me powerful. That if I just read enough, listened enough, studied enough, scrolled enough, highlighted enough, bookmarked enough... I would finally reach that magical place called Prepared, where my homegirl Preparation lives in stylish affluence. The land where nothing could surprise me because I had already imagined every possible disaster and built a mental evacuation plan for each one. I would be untouchable, bulletproof, the most informed woman in the room.

Instead, I became the most anxious. *Rah-rah-rah, go me!*

It starts innocently. You read one story, then another. Then you find a forum, then a study, then a counter-study. Then someone's blog post

about how the study was flawed. Then a podcast, then a comment section. And before you know it, you are knee-deep in other people's experiences at 2:32 a.m., your eyes groggy and your nervous system jittery, like you just sucked down five shots of espresso and signed a blood pact with the devils of WebMD.

You tell yourself this is reasonable, this is wisdom, and that knowledge is power. You even feel a little virtuous about it and tip your hat to the imaginary tribe of fellow over-thinkers that have become your BFFs. But there is a threshold, a quiet line that hides beneath the surface of our everyday casual conversations. It's the moment where research stops supporting your intuition and starts drowning it instead.

“
*It doesn't care whether
the story happened to
you, a stranger, or if it
even happened in reality
- maybe it was just
gossip spread by
a piece of string and
rusty tin cans.*
”

The more I read, the quieter my own knowing became. The safety I once felt slipped into mud and my mind flooded with every possible version of how things could go wrong. Every complication, every emergency, every what-if. My body seemed calm but mentally, I was staging auditions and rehearsals for the next predictable disaster.

Late at night, with the friendship of a glowing screen and Preparation swaddled in the rounded curve of my arm, I would repeat to myself, "I know what I'm doing... I know what I'm doing," as if I was trying to convince myself of a truth that really wasn't true. Because, if I was being honest, there was a sharp edge just beneath the surface of that lie that I didn't want to acknowledge: I wasn't reading to feel informed, I was reading to feel safe, and I believed safety could be stockpiled like canned goods before the storm and I could access it anytime I wanted.

The problem is that the internet doesn't know when to stop. Dr. Google doesn't just see you; he tracks you. He notices when your thumb lingers on a tragedy, and he makes sure to bring you three more just like it by breakfast. You aren't finding truth; you're being fed a custom-tailored nightmare.

There's always another story, another complication, another rare scenario that sounds just plausible enough to wedge itself into your imagination. I wasn't even collecting balanced perspectives; I was collecting fringe cases, the most dramatic outcomes, and holding them up like cautionary talismans, as if memorizing them would prevent them from ever happening to me. It was almost impressive in hindsight, how efficiently my mind could transform information into imagined catastrophe.

Your nervous system doesn't care whether the story you just buried yourself in happened to you, a stranger on the internet, or if it even happened in reality - maybe it was just gossip spread by a piece of string and rusty tin cans. It doesn't politely sit back and say, "Oh, that's hers, or theirs, not ours." It responds as if it's a possibility knocking down your door to bow at your feet in allegiance. Sometimes it even bursts through with a ten-page manual on impending doom, and now you're researching from a state of scrambled tension.

You start looking for the thing you missed. The hidden risk. The rare but terrifying anomaly. You tell yourself you're still being thorough,



but what you're actually doing is trying to eliminate uncertainty entirely. But uncertainty doesn't negotiate, it doesn't vanish because you read one more article.

You're a hunter in disguise, hunting for control and reassurance - a guarantee no one on this planet can give you. The more you feed it, the hungrier it gets. It's almost comical, if you think about it, and if it wasn't so exhausting, we could actually sit here and laugh about it.

You read one birth story where something went wrong and suddenly your mind whispers, "That could be you." You read another where someone trusted themselves and it went beautifully and the mind says, "Yes, but what if you're not like her?" It doesn't matter what direction the story goes, your brain can spin it into a warning. That's the danger of the riptide, of the spiral out to the red ocean of information. You think you're swimming towards clarity, towards insight, but you're drifting further from shore where the sharks are drooling and primed for fresh meat. Closing the laptop isn't giving up on being informed, it's a tactical retreat to save your nervous system from a shark attack.

Your intuition isn't going to scream at you, or to you. She's a lady, gentle in her approach and soft in her composure. She doesn't compete for airtime or argue with the thousand browser tabs open in your overstimulated brain, each waiting to be recognized and picked to join your team. She waits. She waits for quiet, for space, for

acceptance. And if she doesn't feel welcomed, *when you're inhaling other people's fears like oxygen*, she takes a step back. She didn't leave the building or disappear or stop loving you, she just scooted her beautiful little self back into the hidden corners of your spirit because you chose to bathe in *their* frantic noise instead of *her* calm clarity. When you decide to stop screaming at the screen, she'll raise her hand and ask if its her turn.

The hustle and bustle seems productive, and that's how it fooled me. Negotiating with my own sense of peace and presence became a full-time job. I was just being proactive, I thought, literally, physically, doing something and taking steps towards progress. But on the inside, my beautiful heart-of-hearts kept begging, "Can we puhhhlease stop rehearsing doom and gloom for a whole five minutes?"

Research is not the enemy. Knowledge is a beautiful thing in and of itself. But wisdom, which is what we're seeking, is knowledge married to awareness, and that requires finding new measures of quietness within you. It requires that you swim away from the riptide long enough to feel the stability and warmth of your own pulse again.

~10 hours after birth



Hey, That's Not Yours

// RETURN TO SENDER PLS.

Fear rarely begins with us. It travels and moves through stories told across kitchen tables and hospital rooms and group texts late at night. It hides inside phrases like, "Just be careful," and "I almost died." It's passed down not because anyone wants to harm us, but because someone once hurt, and the hurt became a warning, and the warning became a rule.

Before I chose to have an unassisted pregnancy and homebirth after five months of checkups, ultrasounds, and surgery, I sat next to a young lady at the doctor's office who offered her birth story as sort of a red light warning in disguise. She casually angled her body towards me, careful not to disrupt the library-like silence of the waiting room. Her eyes were still swimming in the same fear she

drowned in that day; her body reflecting the same tormented memories.

Every sentence felt like a cliffhanger. Blood, panic, doctors rushing, machines beeping. Each detail landed heavier than the last, building to some terrible crescendo I didn't want to hear but couldn't turn away from. She ended it with a matter-of-fact statement of complete dependence, as if the doctors alone stood between her and tragedy, "If I hadn't been at the hospital, my baby and I would have died!" She said it with the conviction of someone reciting the gospel. It sounded less like gratitude and more like worship.

I know she meant well, she truly did, but as she spoke, I could feel my body shrinking as my still-questioning mind stitched her story onto my future like it was a patch of prophecy on my favorite pair of jeans. Nothing had happened to me, and yet I was already sheltering in place like her misfortune was mine, like my body had confused her story with my fate.

That's how borrowed fear works. It doesn't ask permission before it settles into your nervous system. It simply enters and begins rearranging furniture, putting toilet paper on the wrong way, and leaving dirty socks on the floor.

You hear your mother say, "Labor is the worst pain you'll ever feel," and your body stores that sentence. You watch a movie where a

woman is screaming on a hospital bed, spread eagle with feet in stirrups, while ten people shout instructions at her, and your body stores that image. You scroll past a headline that says "Tragedy Strikes During..." and your body stores that too. None of it may belong to your lived experience, but your nervous system does not

“
*It sounded less like
gratitude and more like
worship.*
”

separate fiction from possibility very well. It catalogs, and once something is cataloged, it can be activated.

This is the part no one talks about when they say, "I'm just sharing my story." Stories carry energy. They shape expectation. They plant images in the mind that the body begins rehearsing quietly in the background. You can know logically that every birth, every body, every circumstance is different, and still find yourself anticipating distress because you've absorbed enough of it through verbal osmosis. It's almost unfair.

You walk into your own experience carrying a suitcase full of other people's outcomes, heavy with stories that were never yours: the friend who hemorrhaged and spent days recovering in the ICU, the cousin whose emergency turned her birth into a trauma she's still processing years later, the aunt who convinced herself (and probably you) that being "too small" is a real limitation, the doctor who's built

an entire practice around worst-case scenarios and defensive medicine.

These may not apply to you. They may not reflect your body, your health, or your reality. But they sit there, heavy, whispering, "This could be you." And because we love the people who tell us these stories, because we respect them, because we don't want to dismiss their pain, we let their fear become our forecast. Doubt settles in our body because their body struggled.

It feels disloyal to question inherited fear. It feels almost disrespectful to say, "That was yours, not mine." We think honoring someone's

~10 hours after birth



experience means adopting it as our own possibility. But, please know this: you don't have to carry their fear or take ownership of it. You can be aware and care deeply about them and their story without building your home inside of it. Hold her hand while she tells you her story, hug her, be there for her, just don't let her story move into your guest room. Compassion is an open, empathetic heart; borrowed fear is an open door that steals your sacred energy.

“

*It came from control
disguised as care,
possession disguised
as love.*

”

It's easy to forget that physiology is not a copy-and-paste template, that context, health, history, support - they all matter, that we're not just numbered statistics wandering around waiting to fulfill a percentage or a doctor's need for a student-transcribed medical document.

I was sitting alone in the quiet one day, weighing and measuring all the thoughts of what could go wrong, what could go right, what may not go at all because I'll change my mind tomorrow, and these kind of questions started firing up: "How much of this fear is actually mine?" "How much have I absorbed and taken as my own without even noticing?" "So wait, has my body ever really given me a reason to distrust it?" The answer, for me, was quite surprising, and so unsettling that it broke my heart.

The fear I was clinging to didn't come from my own lived experiences, it came from *them* - *their* stories, *their* fears, *their* doubts. It came from those with agendas, with plans and prescriptions, with outlines and to-do lists. It came from control disguised as care, possession disguised as love.

That was a tough aha moment for me. I had been rehearsing and inflating *their* stories, expectations, and trauma inside my own nervous system, and my body had been faithfully responding as if they were real. I was the director, my body the producer. Through subconscious direction and constant rehearsal of external noise and scripts I didn't write, I told my body what kind of life and future I

~12 hours after



expected. And, to my dismay, it honored my requests, it did as I asked.

My body - the body that had survived its own premature birth at 31 weeks where I wasn't expected to live as fully and healthy as I do. The body that fell out of a moving car as a toddler and was saved by an angel who was already holding me before my mom got out of the car. The body that had carried two other children with ease (and this one to over 44 weeks). The body that had endured years of mental, emotional and verbal abuse from those it loved. The body that had been bruised and broken and healed itself naturally for over 30 years. The body that had survived even more years of depression, poverty, self-hate and self-apathy.

Pause right here for just a second. What has your body already been through? The broken bones that fused themselves back together, the fevers it battled while you slept, the heartbreak that didn't actually stop your pulse. Your body isn't a beginner at staying alive, it's a bonafide pro that knows exactly what its doing..

My body never wavered in how much it absolutely adored everything about me, how it supported me even when I made unhealthy, dangerous decisions, how it held me when no one else would, and yet here I was... treating it like it didn't know better, like it didn't know how to adapt and repair itself, like it didn't know how to

manage the remarkable act of creating and bringing forth another living, breathing soul in the way it was designed to.

The shame and sadness I felt due to this sense of betrayal and disgust that I projected upon my own body, my own intelligence, my own perfection was almost suffocating. *How could I, ya know? How could I have been so blind to not have seen it before? How did I miss the many blinking green lights that said, "Go this way."* It loved me without condition or question, it fought hard for me, every bloody day, and helped me get back up every time I fell, and I couldn't even look it in the eyes and say thank you.

“
The body that had survived its own premature birth at 31 weeks...the body that fell out of a car and was saved by an angel...the body that survived even more years of depression, poverty, and self-hate.
”

Borrowed fear can feel wise and loving. It can feel like you're being prepared and mature and realistic. But sometimes it's simply unexamined inheritance and pain passed down without translation. Or, perhaps, what's even more likely, is that our present society frantically shoves fear in our face while screaming that our bodies are fragile, faulty, unpredictable, and dangerous. And if we never pause to ask where it came from, we

safely assume it's our truth - so it becomes our story and now we're sticking with it.

This isn't the time to deny risk or pretend complications don't exist because both are very real and present, they are an unfortunate and necessary part of our lives here on earth. They can be good or they can be bad, depending on what pair of glasses you're wearing.

It is time, however, for you to learn what belongs to you and what doesn't, what's yours to carry and what's yours to give away. It's also the time for you to start paying attention to your boundaries and noticing when your foundation starts to shake. Is it because something external rattled it, a story or a Facebook post, or it is because your body itself is unstable or unreliable? The word said my pregnancy was expired at 42 weeks, that I couldn't, or wouldn't be allowed to go any further without its help. But my body and my baby politely declined and said, "Watch us, we're just getting started."

When you begin separating your lived experience from the collective fear around you, something resonates inside of you. You start to notice that your body has its own language, rhythm, history, and it's not obligated to 'go fetch' and then copy *their* book of rules or list of commandments. Your body is the most forgiving partner you'll ever have and once you acknowledge its infinite power, it'll welcome you back with arms stretched wider than that galaxies we haven't discovered yet.



CHAPTER 6

Do *You* Hear Her?

// SHHH. LISTEN, JUST LISTEN.

It didn't arrive with the sound of mighty trumpets circling the city, no lightning bolts or cinematic slow-motion periods of time where the clouds parted and angelic choirs sang above me. It was far more subtle than that. It was just a thought, a quiet one. One that showed up at the most inconvenient times - in the lavender-infused sanctuary of my bathroom, while driving the same roads of windy habit, or pretending to listen to someone's fifth explanation of the same thing. It would slip in gently and say, with modesty, "There has to be more than this." There has to be more than fear, more than compliance, more than rehearsing bad luck scenarios like they were divine texts written in stone.

It wasn't rebellion. It wasn't even confidence, at least not yet. It was curiosity. A tiny crack in the wall. A sense that maybe the story I had been handed about my body, my birth, my authority and my safety was incomplete. Not entirely wrong, just incomplete. It turns out, that

that crack is exactly where the rebirth begins. The questions start to speak a little louder and get more persistent with time. But more often than not, the louder they get, the harder you work to silence them.

I mean, you can try. You can drown them out with more investigation and smother them with more concern and restlessness. You can even ask three more gurus for reassurance. You can tell yourself you're being too emotional and it's time to stay in your own lane and not make noise. But they keep resurfacing, like buoys that refuse to sink. "There has to be more... there has to be more..."

When I sat down next to that whisper instead of swatting it away, it felt reckless, like I was entertaining something irresponsible and impulsive. I half-expected someone to step out from behind the curtain and say, "Careful now, those thoughts are going to get you in trouble."

But no one did. The pigs didn't fly, the sky didn't fall, and the world didn't end. It was just me and this gentle, persistent knowing that maybe I was stronger than the narrative I'd been living inside.

“

*Calm doesn't trend,
go viral, or make
headlines. It just
stands there, steady,
like a mountain that
has breathed ancient
rains and wears
lightning around
its neck.*

”

Fear in its sensible shoes had been convincing. The borrowed suitcase had been heavy. The research spirals felt productive. But underneath all of it, my body had never once signaled alarm on its own. Panic followed a story. Tension followed a warning. Doubt followed someone else's crooked eyebrow. When I stripped away the external commentary, what remained was not hysteria, it was calm, and the only thing that broke was the spell of compliance.

Calm doesn't trend, go viral, or make headlines. It just stands there, steady, like a mountain that has breathed ancient rains and wears lightning around its neck. When I finally gave it a little space, it didn't roar or perform a silly jig for TikTok, it simply said, "We know. We know how to breathe. We know how to soften and strengthen at the same time. We know how to do hard things."

The whisper never asked for permission, or for a debate, and it didn't beg for my approval. It was just there, like it had been waiting its whole life for me to catch up. And, in all reality, it had been.

It wasn't promising perfection, or guaranteeing ease, or saying nothing could go wrong. It was saying that maybe I didn't have to live in constant anticipation of defeat. Maybe I didn't have to approach my own body like it was an accident waiting to happen or ask the world for approval to trust what felt grounded and pure.

That was both exciting and terrifying, because if there was more, then I had to be willing to reach for it. If there was deeper trust available, I couldn't keep hiding behind the comfort of obedience. If my body wasn't the fragile thing I'd been taught to believe, then I had to relate to it differently, and that requires courage. The quiet kind that says, "I'd rather trust myself and ruffle some feathers than override my intuition to keep the peace." It feels like a tremor at first, but slowly becomes solid ground that your feet no longer have to search for.

The whisper doesn't force you, shame you, or rush you. It just keeps showing up, patient and loving. You know what it sounds like: the

First bath, ~17 hours after birth



feeling that you get in the middle of a conversation that doesn't sit right, how it settles in the pit of your stomach when someone dismisses your concern, or maybe it was in the quiet after you said yes to something that felt like a no.

It's not loud because it doesn't need to compete. It trusts that eventually you'll grow tired of the noise and notice how exhausting it is to live caged in heavy armor wrapped in barbed wire and start craving something more rooted and stable. We think the containers (the research, the opinions, the backup plans) will keep us safe. But all they do is make us too heavy to move when the waves come. Real power is being light and fluid enough to dance with the intensity.

When that moment comes, when you finally turn to face it, eye-to-eye, heart-to-heart, something shifts. Nothing big or obvious, just a moment that calms your nerves and expands your presence. It'll be a quiet declaration, an internal question of curiosity that says, "What if I could actually do this?"

Your intuition doesn't need a yoga retreat or a 10-day ayahuasca ceremony in Costa Rica to find you. She's been sitting in the passenger seat of your car and at the edge of your bathtub for months, just waiting for a red light or a quiet soak so she can finally get a word in. You don't have to screech and squawk and tell the world that the medical system is wrong in order to say that your intuition is right. All you have to do is internally acknowledge that

their charts are missing a critically important piece of data: you. And then move on.

Once you admit there might be more - more trust, more strength, more wisdom already inside you - you can't go back to pretending the old story is the only one available. You're the mountain, so stop asking the valley for permission to grow.

First bath, ~17 hours after birth



CHAPTER 7

Oh, There She Is

// SHE WAS ALWAYS THERE.

The shift came quietly, almost apologetically, like it didn't want to disturb me. Validation from others never materialized. No one finally agreed with me or handed me the perfect research study that answered every question and dissolved every doubt. Fearlessness never showed up either. *Like, seriously, how dare her!*

What showed up instead was exhaustion.

Not the physical kind - though carrying a nearly 14-pound human will do that to you - but soul tired. Bone-deep, heart-weary, completely-done tired. Rehearsing disasters that hadn't happened yet and

defending decisions that only existed in my head drained my once carefree spirit. I was stick-a-pitch-fork-in-me-and-call-me-burnt done.

So I had to stop - stop wheeling and dealing with the outside agents of endless questions and chaos. I didn't start living in a bubble or turn into a hoarding hermit to soothe my discomforts (though that was very, very tempting), nor did I delete the internet from my life and burn my books. Instead, I lit a candle, ceremoniously thanked them for their service, snuggled back into the cozy corners of my couch, and asked the silence to sit with me for a bit longer than usual.

At first it was just space, and it was nice. I was floating in a place where darkness felt safe and the radiant twinkles of the stars kept me company, giggling and bouncing to-and-fro from their energy under my feet. I'd hover by a star and embrace it with a hug like it was my best friend from middle school. The next one, I'd give it a rightful fist bump as a thanks for all the cheers and years of encouragement. The other one, I bashfully moseyed over to it, pulled its face closer to mine, and gave it a soft peck-of-love for loving me as pure and holy as it did. That was my best soul-friend right there. He now lives in a place beyond our humanity and I didn't want to leave. I wanted to float next to him for the rest of my ever. I had never been in an environment so undisturbed and weightless, yet so palpable, so alive.

After a few minutes, however, in that dreamlike state of deliberate

rest, something unkind and unfamiliar started to wiggle its way to the surface. This feel-good silence morphed into an awkward, almost mysterious place of intimidation and feral taunting. The stars ran for cover and the darkness itself became darker and unsettled. Every empty moment, every twist-and-turn felt like a trap. I could sense the black web-like symbiotic tentacles crawling up my spine, inching closer and closer to my throat. I lost my footing repeatedly and tumbled recklessly under its threat.

“

*I was floating
in a place where
darkness felt safe
and the radiant
twinkles of the stars
kept me company,
giggling and bouncing
to-and-fro from their
energy under my feet.*

”

As the webs became more dense and inched closer, I forced myself to physically jump through a small opening and as I did, I jolted awake, thrown back into current reality in a clouded state of confusion and incoherence.

Sweat puddled on my forehead and my body tingled with adrenaline and torment. I cautiously looked around with terror leaking from my eyes so I could remember who I was and where I was. I just knew that if I stayed still for too long, stayed there in that foul level of darkness, the one-eyed boogeyman would prowl out from under the

Nana and him after bath



couch, squeeze my neck until I was blue, and make all my fears come true.

I had been so busy filling every crack in my life with information and opinion that longer moments of silence felt like free-falling into the void where the healing space of darkness turned into the destructive fear of darkness. My instinct was to grab something, to search for one more article, one more word of reassurance, one more external voice to steady me. But I resisted, I had to. The heart shift that had taken place was too compelling and my time with the stars was too vivid and real to deny.

Hurriedly, I cornered the boogeyman, tied him up, glued his mouth shut, and, as an act of purposeful self-love, I closed my eyes, took a few deep breaths and asked myself, "Now, how do I really feel right now? What are my thoughts really trying to say?"

I was a bit shocked, yes. And a bit relieved, most definitely. A big part of me was still giggling and hanging out with my lover star, and that made me feel light and airy and free. The other part was sitting on the foggy fringe of darkened fear still feeling the tightened web around my throat. And that was not pleasant or comforting, at all. But I sat with it for a few minutes and allowed it to come and go, through and through. Not trying to pick it apart, or coddle it, not doubting or questioning, just sitting still with a quiet mind of

awareness and acknowledgement, saying, "I see you, I feel you, and it's going to be okay, you're safe."

My body began to soften, and my heart sighed in relief. The faint humming that had been churning beneath my skin quieted. My external circumstances hadn't changed and no new guarantees had appeared. The world hadn't suddenly become risk-free and my life definitely didn't get any easier. But internally, something neutralized. It was almost anticlimactic in its simplicity, and yet it was the most honest, intentional and delightful mood shift I had felt in months. I was in control. I was winning the battle.

“

Calm feels too simple, too passive. When your mind has been sprinting for weeks, for months, for years, stillness can feel like laziness.

”

And that was the return. I didn't suddenly become some fearless warrior who never doubted. I just returned to myself - to the quiet, steady knowing that had been drowned out by the noise and the second-guessing. Simple things made sense again. I could breathe without needing Google for backup. I could feel the force of his long legs stretched up inside my ribs, the pokes and tickles on my bladder, and his jump shots without needing a stethoscope to tell me he's still alive. I could relax, finally.

There's something inconvenient about all of that, though. Once you step into that part of the unknown, into the path of more potential resistance, the responsibility no longer floats around in the universal hands of someone else. That's the price of freedom. If they're responsible, they own the outcome. If you're responsible, you own the glory. You can't blame *them* anymore. You can't say, "Well, they told me to." You're left with your own intuition and sacred choices, and that can feel both empowering and uncomfortable at the same time.

Your body has to adjust to this new baseline, and the adjustment isn't always smooth. After spending months in a state of constant vigilance - scanning for threats, rehearsing disasters, bracing against imagined catastrophes - coming back to calm feels foreign, almost

~18 hours after birth and after bath



suspicious. You visit with the stars, then you feel the tightness of the webs. You visit with the stars, then you feel the tightness of the webs again. It's a vicious, relentless cycle until you notice it and take dominion over it.

Calm is unsettling when you've grown used to tension. It almost feels too simple, too passive. When your mind has been sprinting for weeks, for months, for years, stillness can feel like laziness.

But in the moments where I sat with purpose, where I was stripped of all outside chatter, my body felt capable and nearly invincible. My heart had been beating without my supervision, my lungs had been expanding without my micromanagement, and my body had been navigating stress and safety long before I learned to spin fanciful webs of self-sabotage. My body was not a fragile liability waiting for white-coat oversight at every turn. It was an intelligent system, constantly adapting, regulating, and working in my favor even when I doubted it and cursed at it during my weakest moments.

This kind of return is not exactly thrilling or exciting, boring is more like it. There's no one to kiss your forehead and squeeze your cute tush for a job well done, nor is there a warm Jamaican sunset eager to welcome you back to mocktails and palm trees.

But it is the moment you stop abandoning yourself at the first hint of frustration. It's the conscious, daily decision to stay faithful to your

desires instead of rushing to find the loudest wee-woo warnings on the street. Eliminating uncertainty isn't required for feeling purposeful and grounded. Presence with your own internal signals, really listening to them, is what matters.

“

Your body is not your enemy and your intuition is not a reckless child in need of discipline.

”

There will still be opinions and statistics and stories and raised eyebrows. The world does not suddenly go silent when you come back to yourself. It'll sound different, external, and no longer fused with your identity. That subtle distinction will change you. Once you've felt your own strength without interference, you recognize it when it returns. The tentacles weren't a sign of danger, they were the muscle memory of my old anxiety. My body was detoxing from its own 2 a.m. Google spirals, and detoxing always feels a little too much like dying.

Coming back is not about being fearless, either. It's about becoming centered. It's about recognizing the difference between the healing shade of darkness and the destructive shade of darkness. In labor, the lights will be low and the world will get quiet. If you haven't practiced sitting in your own darkness, you'll mistake the internal quiet for potential disaster.

Your body is not your enemy and your intuition is not a reckless child in need of discipline. Noticing that beneath all the inherited fear and endless research, there has always been a quieter current running through you. And when you choose to sit with it, even when doubt whispers back, it doesn't disappear.

~18 hours after birth and after bath



~18 hours after birth and after bath



CHAPTER 8

Oops, *She Did* *It Again*

// SEE, YOU'RE GETTING IT.

She did it again - and this time it wasn't your intuition or Britney. It was you. Somewhere between the last chapter and this one, you caught yourself breathing a little slower, your shoulders sitting a little less lower, your chest doing that thing where it opens and relaxes instead of bracing with tension or fear. You didn't force it. You didn't even notice it happening until I noticed it for you. That's exactly the point, and exactly how you know it's working.

For a long time, I thought trust would feel like a surge of confidence, or some kind of epic transformational moment where I stood tall and fearless, beating my chest with feminine power and declaring my

sovereignty to the world. I thought trust would be loud, certain, unshakeable - the kind of thing that erases doubt and leaves you glowing in some mystical field of sunshine, rainbows, and unicorns prancing around the majestic glow of your aura.

But it wasn't. It was quiet and considerate, and arrived without a DJ to usher it in or the kind of organ crescendo that makes you think God just entered the room.

Over time, my breath learned how to settle into the back of my body, like something inside me stopped hovering near the ceiling. My heartbeat no longer raced ahead trying to predict every element of misfortune - it just kept time, calm and unhurried. My thoughts slowed down on their own. No more racing to outrun my expected downfall. No more scrambling to beat fear to the finish line. There was space between them. My heart and mind stopped arguing and started holding hands like starry-eyed lovers.

When I operated from fear, my mind ran ahead of my body, constructing scenarios, rehearsing dialogue, and building contingency plans. My body would then respond as if those imagined futures were already happening. I'd interpret those physical sensations as confirmation that something was wrong. It was a tight, convincing loop that left me on unread, completely missing the actual texts my body was sending while I doom-scrolled through my mind's darkest predictions.

When I operated from trust, however, my body led. My mind still asked questions, but they felt curious instead of catastrophic - like wondering and curiosity, not cross-examination. My heart didn't pound like it was trying to escape my chest, it just kept its rhythm while my breath stayed deep. Even thinking about possible challenges didn't trigger panic - just awareness and consideration, but no internal meltdown.

“

*My heart and mind
stopped arguing and
started holding hands
like starry-eyed lovers.*

”

The physical difference became undeniable once I started paying attention.

Fear: Tightened my jaw, compressed my chest, shallowed my breath, hardened my face, and scattered my thoughts like startled birds.

Trust: It softened my face and expanded my chest until my breath finally found the basement of my lungs. My spine lengthened, and my thoughts slowed into something coherent and tender, like a dove that had finally found land after a thousand miles of sea. My feet grew heavy and grounded, like they were rooted into the floorboards. My jaw let go, feeling like it could unhinge and breathe

on its own, while my belly became a soft, expanding balloon - weightless, yet completely held.

I started testing it deliberately. I'd sit with a valid thought or a decision and imagine moving forward from fear - immediate contraction and nervous anxiety in my gut. Then I'd imagine moving forward from trust - a quiet, grounded expansion of relief, a subtle internal "yes," or a relaxed sigh. This became my new compass.

Fear says, "What if I can't?"

Trust says, "I've got this."

~18 hours after birth



The body doesn't lie, but it's easy to press mute and ignore the alerts when everyone else is talking louder. When the noise is loud enough, it becomes nearly impossible to distinguish between genuine intuitive warning and a stress response triggered by someone else's story. Your nervous system responds to both; your heart races either way. That's why returning to your body isn't just helpful, it's essential. It's how you find the right signal in all that static.

“
Fear says, “What if I can’t?” Trust says, “I’ve got this”.
”

This isn't poetic language, it's physiological reality. When your nervous system is regulated, your prefrontal cortex (the part responsible for reasoning and discernment) functions clearly. When you're in fight-or-flight, comprehension narrows and everything looks like a threat. And when you're in the middle of labor, wherever you are, you don't want a debate, you want a duet. If your mind and heart are holding hands, your body can actually do the work it was designed for without having to stop and explain itself to your panic..

Fear didn't disappear when I started trusting myself. That's not how it works. What changed was my relationship to it. Fear still knocked on the door but I stopped treating every fearful thought as an emergency requiring immediate action.

When a fearful thought appeared, I stopped assuming it was the final answer, the voice of authority I had to obey. I acknowledged it. I felt my body's response. And if my chest remained open, if my breath stayed deep and unhurried, I knew the thought was just that: a thought passing through. Not a prophecy, premonition or fate whispering secrets. Just noise.

And somewhere in those moments of intentionality, I discovered what trust actually feels like: being home inside your own skin. Not in some ethereal, goddess-energy way, but in the deeply ordinary sense of not being at war with yourself anymore. The internal arguments finally went quiet. Your body stopped feeling like something that needed constant supervision, and started feeling like the most reliable and intelligent thing you've ever known.

“
*Trust feels like being
home inside your
own skin, a deeply
ordinary sense of not
being at war with
yourself anymore.*

”

Once you've felt that, you begin to recognize it when it returns. You crave it like oxygen. You choose from it, not because you're suddenly fearless, but because your body has finally become an ally instead of

an adversary your body has finally become an ally instead of an adversary.

Your intuition is a solid floor and your fear is a flickering screen. One of them you can stand on, the other is just a projection. If the thought makes you feel like you're falling, or failing, it's not a warning, it's just a riptide. Let it pass through so you can move on to better thoughts.

Remember when self-trust felt like a crime? Look at you now. You're not shoplifting; you're finally taking home what already belonged to you.

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~18 hours after birth



~18 hours after birth



Nobody Promised *You* That

// THE HOSPITAL DIDN'T EITHER.

There is no such thing as a guaranteed birth. That sentence alone is enough to make most women turn the other cheek in defiance. We are conditioned to look for the safest plan, the lowest risk percentage, the pathway with the most backup options and the least possibility of surprise. We are taught that safety comes from control, and control comes from oversight, and oversight comes from placing ourselves inside a system that promises readiness for every emergency. And yet, even inside the most monitored hospital room in the world, there is still no guarantee. There are policies, and policies protect institutions. But presence, your full embodied presence, protects you.

That's terrifying at first. Then, it's strangely liberating. When I chose to birth at home, unassisted, the question that screamed the loudest wasn't, "Can I do this?" I already knew I could. It was, "What if something bad happens?"

And then the follow-up questions flooded in: *Who even defines "bad" anyway? Variables always exist - like the knot in his umbilical cord I didn't know about, or his indulgently plump 13.2-pound rosy cheeks. And why didn't I trust that I'd know what to do when the moment came?*

But those questions have teeth. They sink deep into your gut and makes you question your sanity. You visualize scenarios in such graphic detail you can nearly taste the metallic tang of fear. And then there's you again, starring in the cautionary tale that gets whispered at every baby shower from here to eternity. The realness of this worry feels more like you're standing in front of a firing squad instead of on the edge of something sacred.

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The realness of this worry feels more like you're standing in front of a firing squad instead of on the edge of something sacred.
”

Birth doesn't offer guarantees. It offers physiology. It offers preparation, awareness, confidence, and support if needed. But it doesn't offer a contract that says nothing unexpected will ever

unfold. The system we live in often sells the illusion that if you place yourself under enough supervision, you can eliminate uncertainty entirely. But you can't. No one can.

Every birth carries uncertainty. It doesn't matter if you're in a hospital or your living room, surrounded by a medical team or flying solo - uncertainty is there. The question isn't whether it exists, it's which version you're willing to face with boldness and curiosity.

Choosing without a guarantee is not recklessness. It's sovereignty, it's adulthood. It's the quiet, uncomfortable acknowledgment that life itself doesn't offer watertight promises or risk-free pathways. Driving down the highway carries risk - thousands of people die in car accidents every year, and yet you still drive to work, to the store, to visit friends. Walking down a flight of stairs carries risk - people fall, break bones, worse - and yet you don't install elevators in every building or refuse to use stairs for the rest of your life. Even breathing carries risk in some philosophical, existential sense.

And yet we live anyway. We move through the world without second-guessing or watching for the reaper around every bush or corner. We make choices without guarantees, like trying a new shade of lipstick or limited-time flavor from Starbucks. We still love, deeply, deeply love people knowing they could leave or die, with one of those being an actual promise from life itself. We even go so far as creating things, building things, knowing fully well that they might fail or fall

apart. We just instinctively know that we can't demand absolute certainty before we participate in our own existence. Because that would be absurd.

Birth doesn't get to be the exception to this rule just because the stakes feel higher.

The illusion of guarantee can become a trap. It can make you believe that if you just gather enough approvals, enough data, enough backup plans, you can eliminate vulnerability. But birth is vulnerable by design. It's raw and exposed and powerful. It requires surrender, embodied surrender.



The night I went into labor, there was no applause. There was no team standing around reassuring me that I had made the statistically safest choice. There was just the steady rhythm of contractions that had no interest in my mental debates. At one point, the thought flashed through my mind again: "What if something happens?" And in that moment, I realized something almost awkwardly simple.

Something is happening. Birth was happening. My body was not frozen in a hypothetical future. It was moving through a present reality. And in that reality, I was breathing and responding. I wasn't in a moment of crisis; I was in a moment of process, of becoming, of my own rebirth.

What I needed was to trust in my ability to respond in real time. Not like some superhero who never doubts. Just me, being responsively present, aware, capable. I had to stop trying to pre-live every possible outcome in my head. Uncertainty doesn't equal danger, and fear would never stop demanding guarantees I couldn't give, so I chose to trust myself instead of waiting for fear to give me permission. There's a beautiful peace that comes when you stop bargaining for promised outcomes and start anchoring in self-belief and conviction.

I couldn't guarantee that birth would be easy or that there would be no complications. But I could trust that my body already knew what it

was doing. I could trust that if something shifted outside the range of normal, I would act. That's not arrogance, that's awareness.

That ownership can feel heavy at first. The responsibility settles on your shoulders and you feel the full weight of choosing for yourself. But it's also remarkably clean. There's no pretending anymore or performing for an invisible audience. No contorting yourself to fit someone else's expectations. Just you, standing in your own body, saying with quiet confidence, "I know there are no guarantees, and I accept that responsibility - I'm doing this anyway."

Placenta with knot in the cord



~1 day old, the morning after



You Want Confidence? Great.

//THIS IS HOW YOU GET IT.

Trust is not a belief you adopt overnight. It's not something you can think your way into or manifest with positive affirmations scribbled in a journal. It's a practice - messy, imperfect, and maddeningly slow at times. It doesn't grow through thinking alone, no matter how much you analyze or rationalize or try to convince yourself you're capable.

It grows through sensation. The real work is noticing what's happening in your body instead of just your head. Change happens in small, repeated moments - the ones where you choose to respond differently than you're used to. Fear knocks and you don't immediately answer the door looking for reassurance. You take a second to pause, breathe and ask yourself what's actually happening right now, in this moment, versus what your mind is making up about the future.

It won't look impressive or make your spine tingle or your heart pitter-patter in delight. It's just daily, consistent practice (yes, the boring kind) that changes you from the inside out.

So how do you actually practice trust, and grow in confidence, when everything in you wants to run to the dark side of fear and keep clinging to your mindless suspense of the unknown?

I'm glad you asked. Here are the five base practices that worked for me. I built my new life through them and on them, and they slowly, quietly rewired my nervous system from constant questioning to grounded confidence and awareness.

They're not complicated, nor do they require special equipment or hours of your day. They do, however, expect patience and commitment, and, more importantly, that you actually to show up for yourself even when (especially when) it feels pointless.

They're not going to make you fearless, and your life may still be grumpy and overzealous in its effort to deter you, but they will make you capable of feeling fear without letting it run the show. This is where we talk less about my actual birth story and more about how

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*Change happens
in small, repeated
moments, where you
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you're used to.*
”

you can create new habits. You need this new foundation in order to step into the next best version of you, the one that sits back and watches in awe as your dream birth plays out like a movie right in front of you.

Practice One: Locate The Fear.

This one is simple, which is why most of us tend to skip it and make excuses so we don't have to do it. We've been conditioned to think real work has to be complicated, but real work - the true internal work that matters most, isn't. The hard part is doing it when we don't feel like it.

When fear rises, don't immediately chase the thought okay. Don't open your phone, text your sister or best friend or your mom for their opinion, or start building an escape plan in your head. Just pause... pause and locate where the fear is in your body.

Where do you feel it?

Is it in your throat, tight and dry?

Is it in your chest, heavy or constricted?

Is it in your stomach, twisting or fluttering?

Fear always lands somewhere physical before it becomes a full narrative. If you can catch it at the sensation level, you interrupt the

spiral before it builds momentum. Place your hand where you feel it. Yes, physically. Slow your breath deliberately. Inhale through your nose. Exhale longer than you inhale. Do it again. Then again. Five to seven times in a row. Let your body register that you're not under immediate attack, that the bear isn't in the room. I know, it sounds too simple to matter. Do it anyway.

If you can control your exhale, you can control your chemistry. Over time, your nervous system will know how to tell the difference between imagined danger and present reality.

Practice Two: The Body Check

When you're facing a decision about your birth - where to birth, who to invite into the space, which interventions you're open to, what your boundaries are - sit quietly and imagine each option fully. Visualize the whole experience, the exact scenario, not just the surface details. Don't weigh the pros and cons and mark off every to-do on your mental checklist. Go deep with it, feel it from inside your body. *Your feelings aren't the enemy here.*

Then notice what happens. I mean really notice, without rushing to interpret or fix anything. Allow the intelligence of your cells to speak truth through its movement.

Does your chest expand slightly when you imagine one option? Does your breath naturally deepen and get slower and softer? Do your shoulders drop away from your ears, back to your body where they belong? Does something in you relax, even just a fraction?

Or do you feel a subtle contraction, like your body is pulling inward, bracing? Does your jaw tighten and teeth start pressing down? Does your breath get shallow and choppy? Do you immediately feel the need to justify the choice, to build a case for why it makes sense even though something feels off?

“

You need this new foundation in order to step into the next best version of you, the one that sits back and watches in awe as her dream birth plays out like a movie right in front of her.

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Don't judge the response. Don't talk yourself out of it or explain it away. Don't dismiss it as silly or irrational. Just notice it and acknowledge its presence. It's information, that's all it is.

Your jaw and your pelvis are a mirror. If your teeth are clenched, your birth canal is locked. Your body often signals alignment before your mind can articulate why. It knows things your conscious brain hasn't processed yet. This doesn't mean you throw logic out the window or

make decisions based purely on feeling. It means you allow logic and sensation to work together - to collaborate instead of compete, to inform instead of override.

When your body says "yes" and your mind says "this makes sense," that's alignment. When your body says "no" but your mind is trying to convince you otherwise, that's worth paying attention to. This practice isn't just for your mind, it's the physical key to your opening.

Practice Three: Curate Your Input

This one may be the most uncomfortable because it requires you to reduce outside input intentionally - to quiet the voices, ignore the static, and potentially disappoint people who think they're helping by sharing their experiences with you.

There is a season in pregnancy where information becomes too loud, where every story and every warning starts to blur together into one giant wave of "what if." If you're constantly consuming *their* stories, particularly the traumatic ones, your nervous system absorbs that energy. Then it begins rehearsing it as if it's your own future and your body starts expecting their disaster.

Give yourself permission to curate what you allow in. That's not being naive or sticking your head in the sand or pretending

complications don't exist. That's discernment and self-preservation. That's protecting your peace so you can actually hear your own voice underneath all the outer chaos.

The birth stories and medical journals can wait. Your peace doesn't need defending or approval.

Step away from the pregnancy forums where fear spreads like wildfire. Stop reading comment sections where strangers project their trauma onto your choices. You can even politely decline and excuse yourself, or simply say something like, "I'm currently on a 'fear fast,' so let's hit the

pause button on that story for right now. Let's talk about *literally anything* else instead."

Your body deserves a calm internal environment - not just during pregnancy and birth, but always. And sometimes creating that calm means saying no to information that isn't serving you, even when it's offered with good intentions and slathered in love.

This isn't about ignorance or ego. It's about choosing signal over noise, choosing *you* over *them*.

“

Picture yourself in that scenario. Feel it. Allow the intelligence of your cells to speak truth through its movement.

”

Practice Four: Daily Ritual

This is something you do daily - not only when anxiety hits, not only when you're spiraling, but as a regular, non-negotiable part of your routine. Like brushing your teeth or drinking water. It becomes something your body expects, something it can lean into.

It doesn't have to be elaborate or time-consuming. It might be ten minutes of slow, intentional breathing - in through your nose, out longer than you inhaled. It might be sitting quietly with your hand on your belly, feeling your baby move without turning it into a story or a worry. Just noticing, being present with the sensation. It might be a slow walk around your neighborhood where you consciously relax your shoulders and let your body remember what it feels like to breathe deeply in the fresh air and move without tension.

The goal here is not to "manifest" a perfect birth or program your subconscious with affirmations. The goal is much simpler and more practical: teach your nervous system what calm feels like on purpose, what it feels like to sit with confidence and self-trust. You want it to be your baseline, your default setting.

When labor begins, your body will fall into the natural pattern it has been practicing the most. Not the pattern you hoped for in theory or what sounds best on paper. It'll be what you actually practiced, day after day, in ordinary moments.

If you've been tensing up with the feeling that you need to escape or disappear every time something feels uncertain, your body will tense up when contractions start. You'll want to call someone to rescue you or look outside of your higher self for validation. If you've practiced shallow breathing and sitting with the discomfort when you're stressed and overwhelmed, that's what will show up in labor. If you've practiced tensing your body and closing off your listening heart, that tension will amplify intensity into pain.

But if you've practiced slow breathing? Your body will remember how. If you've practiced softening and releasing tension? That muscle memory will be there when you need it. If you've practiced staying present

in your body instead of fleeing into your head? You'll know how to come back and it won't be a struggle to find your way. Don't wait for the Super Bowl of labor to learn how to huddle. Practice the calm while you're stuck in traffic or while your toddler is screaming. If you can stay in control in the grocery store, you can stay in control while in the birth tub.

This daily practice isn't extra or a have-to, it's a "I get to do this

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The birth stories and medical journals can wait. Your peace doesn't need defending or approval. Your body deserves a calm internal environment.

”

because I want what I want and I need to prepare for success." It's the foundation and makes everything else possible.

Practice Five: Shift The Question

And finally, perhaps the most powerful practice: stop asking, "What if something 'goes wrong' and I tense up and get scared?" and start asking, "If something shifts, internally or externally, how do I need to respond in order to protect our safety and my peace?"

That's a radically different internal posture. The first question feeds helplessness and imagined fear. The second feeds capability and sound judgement based on your intuitive urges. A queen doesn't panic when the

weather changes, she just adjusts her sails. Shifting the question makes you the captain of the ship, not the cargo.

You aren't pretending complications don't exist. You're reminding yourself that you're not powerless inside the unknown or unexpected. You can prepare for support. You can know your signs. You can understand when to transfer. You can be informed without being consumed.

“
*Birth doesn't require
perfection. It requires
presence.*
”

Birth doesn't require perfection. It requires presence.

These practices are not hard. They will not make you fearless overnight, but they will slowly rewire the relationship between your mind and your body, moving you from constant anticipation of disaster into grounded awareness.

No one can do this for you. Not your partner, midwife, doctor, not even this book, my other books, or a course. It's always going to be you versus you, so self-support and intentional trust are key.

If I, as a single, suicidal mom on welfare can do it; trust me, you can do it too. You are not under-qualified for this. You are pregnant with the very capacity you are searching for.

But, *What* *If I Get* Scared?

//YOU WILL. LET'S FIX THAT.

The spiral never announces itself politely. It doesn't ask if now is a good time to unravel and fall apart. It sneaks in through comments or searches or an overwhelmed mind. Or it could start with something as simple as a small sensation in your body - a twinge, a tightness, a flutter - that your mind immediately interprets as proof that something is wrong. Before you know it, you're back in the riptide, pulled out to sea by the current of fear, and the shore feels impossibly far away.

This isn't failure or proof that you haven't done the work or that you're not cut out for this or that all your practice was pointless. This is just a pattern, a well-worn neural pathway that your brain defaults to when it feels insecure and threatened. And patterns, no matter how deep they've been carved, can be interrupted.

You don't have to be perfect at this. You just have to notice when it's happening and have tools ready to pull yourself back. Here are a handful of anchors you can use to help draw yourself back in, to reset and recover your composure. They are guidelines, feel free to make them your own so that they feel consistent with who you are and what you want.

Anchor One: Stand & Breathe

The first anchor is so simple your mind will try to dismiss it as useless. Too basic. Too small to matter when you're in the middle of a full-blown panic spiral. Your brain will tell you that you need something bigger, more complex, more *real* to fix what's happening.

Ignore that voice.

When you feel the spiral beginning - when your thoughts start racing, or you feel a tightness in your chest and your breathing pattern gets more choppy and rapid, or you're reaching for your phone to Google one more symptoms - stand up. Not metaphorically, not "rise above it" in some inspirational poster way. Literally stand up.

Right now. Wherever you are.

Plant your feet flat on the floor. Feel the ground beneath you - the carpet, the hardwood, the tile, the dirt, the rocks, whatever's there. Press your toes down gently, like you're trying to hug the earth. Lengthen your spine without forcing it rigid. Think of a string pulling you up from the crown of your head, creating space between each vertebra. Roll your shoulders back and down, away from your ears where they've probably been camping out.

Then take one slow, deliberate breath. Inhale through your nose for a count of four. Hold it gently for a moment. Then exhale, longer than you inhaled, for a count of six or seven. Let it be slow and audible if it needs to be.

Here's why this works: your body physically can't stay in full fight-or-flight when your exhale is extended. That's not philosophy or positive thinking or wishful manifestation. That's physiology.

When you lengthen your exhale, you activate your parasympathetic nervous system - the one responsible for "rest and digest," for calming down, for telling your body it's safe. In a fight between a thought (*oh no, there's a predator!*) and a breath (*peace flows through me like oxygen flows through my blood*), the breath wins every single time if you let it be long enough.

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We're not in immediate danger. There's no bear chasing us. We don't need to run or fight. We can slow down.

”

Your breath is a bridge between your body and your mind. It regulates your internal rhythm moment to moment and determines your state of mind. So when you stand upright and breathe deliberately like this, you're sending a clear message to your nervous system: "We're not in immediate danger. There's no bear chasing us. We don't need to run or fight. We can slow down."

Your mind might still be spinning stories about everything that could go wrong, but your body? Your body is receiving different information. And sometimes, a lot of times, your body will help lead your mind back to calm.

Do this as many times as you need to feel re-centered and supported. Stand. Breathe. Repeat.

Anchor Two: Speak Out Loud (My Favorite)

The spiral thrives in silence - the kind of silence where the room is quiet but your head is screaming. Where no one else can hear what's happening inside you, but you're drowning in it. So break the silence. Use your actual voice. Speak out loud.

It may feel ridiculous at first, especially if you're alone. You might feel self-conscious or silly talking to yourself like you're narrating your own life. But here's the thing: your body responds differently to

spoken words than to silent rumination. When you speak something out loud, it becomes external, something your ears can hear, something that exists outside the spiral in your head.

Say it clearly, like you mean it, get emotional with it if you need to, and continue to do it even if you don't fully believe it yet. Low, slow, and loud. Don't chirp it like a nervous bird; growl it like a woman who owns the mountain. Your cells are listening to the vibration of your throat - make it a vibration of command, not a plea for help.

"Right now, I'm safe."

"My body knows what it's doing."

"This is just a thought, not my future."

"I'm not in danger. My mind is just being really loud right now."

You can say these exact phrases, or you can use your own words. What matters is that you hear yourself say them, out loud, with your voice, in the physical world.

Here's why this works: hearing your own voice interrupts the mental echo chamber. When fear is looping in your head, bouncing off the walls of your mind in an endless cycle, it gains momentum. It gets louder and more convincing with each repetition. But when you speak out loud, you break that loop. Your brain processes external sound - actual sound waves hitting your eardrums - differently than it

processes internal chatter. External sound pulls you out of imagination and plants you back in present reality.

It's grounding in the most literal sense. You hear your voice. You remember you're a person, in a body, in a room, right now, not in the terrifying future your mind was constructing.

If you're in public and can't speak fully out loud, whisper. Or mouth the words. Or step into a bathroom, a car, anywhere you can get thirty seconds of privacy. The point is to externalize the truth instead of letting fear run unchallenged inside your head.

Say it. Hear it. Let it be real.

Anchor Three: Touch & Ground

Place one hand on your chest and one hand on your belly. Not lightly - press gently so you can really feel the contact, the warmth of your palm against your skin or your shirt. Feel the rise and fall of your breath under your hands. Notice how your chest expands when you inhale, how your belly softens when you exhale.

If your baby moves while you're doing this - a kick, a roll, a gentle flutter - notice it. Feel it, but don't turn it into a story. Don't start analyzing whether it's enough movement or the right kind of

movement or what it might mean. Don't spiral into "is that normal?" or "should I be worried?" Just feel the sensation and be present with the fact that there's life moving inside you, right now, in this moment.

If your baby is still and quiet, that's okay too. Notice your breath instead. Feel the warmth of your own body under your hands - the heat you're generating, the life you're sustaining, the simple fact that you're here, alive, breathing.

Feel the steady rhythm of your heartbeat under your palm. You don't have to count it or check if it's fast or slow. Just feel it beating, steady and reliable, doing its job without you having to think about it.

Touch anchors you in physical reality. Spirals pull you into imagined futures - disasters that haven't happened, scenarios you've constructed in your mind, outcomes you're rehearsing as if they're inevitable. Touch pulls you back into now. Into your actual body. Into what's real and present and happening in this moment, not what your fear is predicting might happen later.

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Feel the steady rhythm of your heartbeat under your palm. You don't have to count it or check if it's fast or slow. Just feel it beating. Steady and reliable. Doing its job without you having to think about it.

”

You can do this anywhere - sitting on the couch, lying in bed, standing in line at the grocery store. Anytime you feel your mind starting to race ahead of you, bring your hands to your body. Ground yourself in sensation. Let your body remind you where you are: here, now, safe.

Anchor Four: Name What You See

Wherever you are right now, look around the room and name five ordinary things you can see. Not special things or meaningful things. Just ordinary, mundane objects that are simply there, taking up space in your beautiful life.

The corner where the ceiling meets the wall. The texture of the paint - is it smooth or slightly bumpy? The edge of the table in front of you. The way light falls on the floor - where it's bright, where it's shadowed. The shape of your own hands resting in your lap.

Say them out loud if you can, or whisper them, or just name them silently in your mind. But really look at them and notice the details. The lamp has a brass base. The couch cushion has a seam running down the middle. There's a water ring on the coffee table. Your fingernails need trimming.

These details matter because ordinary details ground the nervous system. They remind your brain what reality actually looks like, which

is nothing like the scenarios of defeat it's used to work overtime to construct.

Catastrophe is dramatic. It's vivid and urgent and all-consuming. It floods your senses and demands your complete attention. Reality, on the other hand, is mundane. It's the corner of the ceiling and the texture of the wall, boring and ordinary and utterly non-threatening. When you return your attention to what's actually in front of you - what you can see with your own eyes, right now, in this moment - your brain recalibrates. It stops treating everything like an emergency. It realizes, "Oh, we're just sitting in a room. There's no actual threat here. We can calm down now."

This works because your brain can't simultaneously exaggerate imagined futures and notice the mundane present. You can't spiral about all the things that might go wrong while actively observing that the wall is beige and the light switch is slightly crooked. The two states don't coexist.

So when fear gets loud, look around and name what you see. Let the ordinary world remind you where you actually are.

Anchor Five: Remember Your Strength

Recall a moment in your life when you handled something hard. Not birth-related necessarily, just anything that tested you, challenged you, required you to dig deeper than you thought you could.

I have been to the bottom of the pit. I know the “metallic tang of fear” isn’t just a metaphor; it’s a physical taste that lives in the back of your throat when you’re a single mom on welfare, staring at a shut-off notice and wondering if the suicidal thoughts in your head are going to win today. I know what it’s like to feel like the world is a series of slamming doors and you’re the only one without a key.

But I also know the exact moment I decided to stop being the victim of my circumstances and start being the architect of my survival.

“
*You've already proven
you can handle hard
things. You've already
survived what you
thought might break
you.*

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Maybe your pit looks different. Maybe it was a loss - your favorite person, a secure job, a long-term relationship, or a version of yourself you had to let go of. Maybe it was a move to a new city where you knew no one. Maybe it was recovery from an illness or a trauma that felt like it broke your very foundation.

Whatever it was, go back there for a moment. Not to relive the pain, but to remember the strength you found in the wreckage. Remember the sensation of waking up one day and realizing you'd survived. Remember the part of you that adapted when you had to, that responded when circumstances demanded it, that kept breathing even when it felt impossible.

That strength didn't evaporate just because you're pregnant. It didn't vanish because the stakes feel higher or because the doctor gave you a raised eyebrow. You aren't a level 1 character just because this is a new experience. You are a seasoned traveler who has already crossed deserts and climbed peaks - you just happen to be standing at the edge of a new, wild forest.

If you can survive the pit, you can survive the peak.

You've already proven you can handle hard things. You've already met uncertainty and come out the other side. Birth might be new, but your capacity to rise? That's ancient. That's your history. And your history is your power. So when your fear tries to tell you that "you can't do this," you can remind yourself: "I've done hard things before, I know how to do this."

None of these practices eliminate uncertainty. They won't guarantee a perfect birth or erase every moment of doubt or fear. They are not magic tricks or manifestation rituals that promise to control

outcomes. But they will strengthen the pathway between your body and your awareness, creating new neural pathways while teaching you how to notice what's happening inside of you so you can respond intentionally instead of reactively.

The more often you practice these anchors in ordinary moments - not just when you're in crisis, not just when you're already spiraling - the more accessible they become when labor actually begins. They become second nature, muscle memory, something your body knows how to do without you having to think about it.

Labor will bring intensity, there's no way around it. Contractions are intense, opening is intense. The sheer magnitude of what your body and mind are doing is intense. But intensity doesn't equal risk or threat, it equals sensation and power, it equals your body doing exactly what it was designed to do.

If your nervous system has practiced returning to steadiness during pregnancy and you've spent months teaching it the difference between real threat and imagined catastrophe, between bracing and breathing, between panic and presence, that muscle memory will serve you when contractions rise and your mind tries to interpret them as danger. When the waves get bigger and your brain starts whispering "something's wrong," your body will know how to respond: Stand, breathe, ground. You've been here before, in smaller ways. You know what to do.

You don't need to become fearless. Fear might still show up, and that's okay. What you need is to become practiced. Practiced in breathing when everything in you wants to hold your breath. Practiced in grounding when your mind tries to flee into worst-case scenarios. Practiced in hearing your own voice - the steady, calm one - over all the external noise and internal panic.

The spiral may still knock on your door. Fear may still show up uninvited. Doubt may still whisper. But when you have real, practiced, embodied anchors, you don't get swept out to sea so easily. You feel the pull, yes. The current is strong. But you also feel something else: the rope in your hands, the ground beneath your feet, the breath in your lungs, the knowing in your bones.

And that rope, that ground, that breath, that knowing?

That's your body, and it's been here all along, waiting for you to trust it.

Well, *Hello There*

//SHE'S BEEN WAITING FOR YOU.

There comes a moment in every meaningful transformation that doesn't announce itself with fanfare, but quietly rearranges everything. It happens somewhere between exhaustion and clarity, when you finally grow tired of asking everyone else what you should do. Tired of second-guessing every instinct. Tired of treating your own body like it needs a permission slip signed by three experts before it's allowed to function.

Something in you finally straightens, and you realize: the only person who needs to believe in this is me.

The decision settles in gradually, like dust finding its place after a long storm. You wake up one morning and notice the constant mental debate has gone quiet. The frantic need to convince others

has faded. There's a knowing that doesn't shout or perform, it just exists, steady and unshakeable. You think to yourself, almost surprised by how simple it sounds: "This is what I want, and I'm done apologizing for it." And instead of immediately dismantling that clarity with doubt, you let it be.

That's realignment grounded in devotion.

Devotion to your body, which has been trying to communicate with you this whole time through sensation, through instinct, through that quiet knowing you kept overriding with research and outside opinions. Devotion to your baby, growing inside your actual nervous system, not some medical textbook's version of what should be happening. Devotion to the woman you're becoming, the one who's learning in real time that her own voice deserves to be the loudest one in the room.

When I reached that place, I didn't suddenly become fearless, I became *committed*, and there is a difference. Commitment carries weight, you feel it in your bones. It's an organic weight, not the heavy, suffocating burden of trying to control every variable or predict every outcome. Just the solid, grounded feeling of knowing you've made your choice and you're standing in it fully, confidently, proudly.

I understood there were things I couldn't predict. Risks existed, they always do - in every birth, in every life decision that matters. Pathways don't come with guarantees. Once I stopped waiting for someone to promise me certainty, I could finally choose what felt aligned and true for me.

Surrender transformed from something that sounded like giving up into something that felt like coming home. It wasn't even about relinquishing control, it was about releasing the exhausting fantasy that I could ever control everything in the first place. Instead, I focused on building my capacity to meet whatever came, to respond with presence instead of panic, to trust that I'd know what to do when the moment arrived.

“
*Your voice deserves to be
the loudest in the room.*
”

That kind of surrender isn't passive or weak. You're actively choosing to participate in reality as it unfolds, rather than cling to some script you wrote in your head at three in the morning.

Birth is more than just having a baby. It's the perfect opportunity for you to stand in your own authority, forget who you used to be, and create someone you barely recognize, but someone you've always

wanted to be. You knew she was there, you just didn't know how to find her. Now you do.

The way you practice showing up for yourself in pregnancy becomes the template for how you show up in labor, and eventually, how you show up as a mother and in your everyday life.

When you draw that line internally, when you decide how you're going to meet this experience, your entire nervous system recalibrates. You stop scanning every sensation for signs of disaster and start preparing for presence, for strength, for the possibility that your body might actually know what it's doing.

Curiosity begins to replace difficulty, and that creates more space and freedom in your life than you'd ever think was possible.

Your decision doesn't need witnesses either. It doesn't require validation from people who will never understand why you chose what you chose. This is a quiet, private commitment that rearranges your internal landscape so completely that the external world starts to look different too.

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*Surrender transformed
from something that
sounded like giving
up into something
that felt like coming
home.*

”

Once you've made it, the endless circling stops. You're no longer wandering in the dark, looking for someone to tell you it's okay to trust yourself. You've already decided. Now you're just walking forward, one foot in front of the other, accepting that uncertainty comes with being human and choosing anyway.

By the time labor actually began, I wasn't some enlightened ball of energy floating above my circumstances. I was just a woman whose water had broken, whose body had started doing something she couldn't stop even if she wanted to. The normal response would've been to freak out, to call someone, to rush to the hospital.

Instead, I felt this unexpected calm settle over me. So I took a nap - yes, a nap, more than one actually, and waddled around with a towel between my legs. I didn't call the doctor because I didn't need one. My waters were clear. I wasn't in distress, my baby wasn't in distress. Every thought and feeling in my mind, heart and body reflected harmony and the need for solitude.

Nine hours later, the first real wave came hard, unmistakable, and for a split second, my mind went completely blank except for one almost disorienting, frantic thought: "Omg omg, it's time...", followed by, "uhhhh, helppppp, what do I do now?" But my body had already started to relax and return to center, without me having to think or talk my way through it. I had been practicing for months,

each time choosing to come back to my body instead of getting lost in my head. It didn't feel like preparation when it was happening, it just felt like surviving another day of being pregnant and terrified and determined all at once.

Near the end of that first surge - the kind that steals your breath and makes you understand how easy it is to lose composure - a thought ran through me that almost made me laugh: "You chose this on purpose, you absolute lunatic."

Everything kind of changed in that moment. I relaxed even more, because I did choose this, and I did it on purpose. This was birth by my design. The intensity of labor landing on top of a choice you make feels different than the intensity of labor landing on top of a choice someone else makes for you.

When another wave built and crashed through me, I didn't interpret it as my body betraying me or breaking down. I recognized it as process, as my body doing exactly what it was designed to do, with a power and intelligence that didn't need my anxious oversight to function.

My nervous system had spent months learning to distinguish between the feeling of resistance and the feeling of surrender, between fighting what was happening and moving with it. Even

when things got primal and overwhelming and so intense I couldn't think, breathe or talk in complete sentences, the foundation held.

Birth is messy and unglamorous and nothing like the sanitized version you see in movies. It doesn't follow a script or care about your timeline. There were sounds that came out of me I didn't know I was capable of making - guttural, animal sounds that would've embarrassed me under any other circumstances. My naked body moved into positions I hadn't planned or practiced or even knew I could still slip into. My mind didn't have the directions, but my DNA did. It followed some ancient blueprint I didn't consciously know even existed. There were a few moments between the waves where I giggled at the blissful absurdity of it all, wanting to scream to the universe - and my mom in the next room, "Look ma, I'm doing it, I'm doing it!"

The whole experience was happening *through* me, not *to* me. I was an active participant, not a passive victim of biology and happenstance. And that distinction matters in ways I'm still discovering years later.

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Near the end of that first surge, a thought ran through me that made me laugh: 'You chose this on purpose, you absolute lunatic.'

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When my mom finally weighed him - after his cute little chunky body slipped out, after we snuggled chest-to-chest, after I delivered the massive placenta, after the cord had been cut and I was still trying to process what had just happened - she looked at me with this expression I'll never forget. Part shock, part awe, part "you've got to be kidding me." And that's when she said it: "Thirteen pounds, two ounces."

Of course, I didn't believe her. You wouldn't either. So we weighed him again and there it was... again... thirteen point two pounds. So now what?

What's a woman supposed to do, or think, when her studly little angel boy turns out to be more like a giant squishy miracle with rosy cheeks, legs that stretched down to my knees, and hands that could hold a football and lift weights at the same time. He outgrew the newborn stage before he was even born.

That number hung in the air like smoke, and I sat on the edge of the bed, in an almost helpless daze, as both of us tried to reconcile what just happened with everything we thought we knew about bodies and birth and what's supposed to be possible. All we could do was smile at each other. Words were no longer needed. He really was that big, and I really did what I just did. The vigorous and deafening hush of an inborn, extraordinary greatness settled our doubts and confirmed the truth we've so often considered, but never fully

understood. That is: if one can dream it, one can make it possible, and the universe will help.

What I felt rising in my chest had nothing to do with pride or accomplishment, it was recognition. Not "look what I did" but "look what my body did when I finally stopped fighting it and started trusting it instead."

I'm not built much differently than you; I'm 5'11 and was comfortably over 200 pounds before he was born. I had two previous births (both boys who were 8.13 pounds at birth) that weren't in any way empowering or exciting - my heart still hurts

when I talk about them. I don't have some special pain tolerance or magic pelvis or access to things you don't. The only thing I had was choice, which is what you also have. The choice to stop negotiating with your own knowing, to stop asking your body to prove what it could do before you'll actually believe it.

Fear showed up - of course it did, repeatedly, loudly, convincingly. But I'd spent months building a different relationship with fear, one where it could exist without running, and ruining, my whole life. I

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*Birth was happening
through me, not to me.*

*I was an active
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happenstance.*

”

practiced returning to myself over and over until it became the default instead of the exception. I chose alignment when approval and following the crowd would've been easier. I drew my line and stood in it, even when my knees were weak with anxiety and hesitation.

Your story won't look like mine, it shouldn't. Your baby will be a different weight, your labor will unfold differently, your circumstances and support and challenges will all be uniquely yours. You might birth in a hospital or at home or in a car on the way to either. You might have interventions or complications or a perfectly straightforward experience. None of that matters as much as you think it does right now.

The foundation that you're building in these quiet months before labor begins is what matters. It's what will carry you through whatever comes next.

The practice of returning to your body when everyone else's voices get too loud. The anchors you've learned that keep you grounded when fear shows up uninvited. The poise of a woman who knows, a woman who has learned to stand in uncertainty without crumbling apart.

This has never been about achieving some perfect, social-worthy birth story. Instagram and TikTok weren't even born when this story

took place, and Facebook was barely suited for public use. It's about showing up for your birth - whatever it looks like, however it unfolds - as a woman who chose what felt true over what felt safe or socially acceptable.

The work you've been doing matters more than you know. Sitting with uncomfortable questions instead of distracting yourself. Practicing the anchors even when they felt pointless.

Learning to distinguish between the sensation of fear and the sensation of trust in your body, not just as a concept in your head. That's not theoretical preparation, that's muscle memory and nervous system

training. That's the backbone you'll be standing on when everything gets real and intense and there's no more time to prepare.

When the time comes, you'll face a choice that no one else can make for you. You can try to fight against what's happening, or you can confidently ground yourself in it. You can abandon yourself to every fear you've ever borrowed from someone else's story, or you can stay with your own knowing, even when it feels terrifying to fall into the arms of trust.

“

*If one can dream it, one
can make it possible,
and the universe will
help.*

”

The noise isn't going to disappear. People are still going to have opinions about your choice and what you should've done differently. Statistics and "what-ifs" will exist in the background for all of ever. But underneath all of the external chaos and the grannies looking through you with tilted glasses and smug jelly rolls, there will be you - determined and worthy.

That's what all of this has been preparing you for. You won't be able to eliminate fear or control all the outcomes or have all the answers neatly arranged before you begin. But you can meet yourself in the most demanding moment of

your life so far and realize that you're not as defective that they say you are. You can hold discomfort without breaking. You can stand in moments of indecision and ambivalence without needing someone else to tell you what to do. Surrender

isn't weakness or giving up, it's aligning yourself with something bigger and wiser than your anxiety brain could ever comprehend.

When I look back now, the number on the scale isn't what changed me in my core. It was everything that happened internally before labor even started. The slow, boring work of learning to trust myself again. The decision to stop treating borrowed fear like sacred truth.

“

*The baby you're
growing isn't the only
new life being created
right now.*

”

The willingness to surrender not to chaos or recklessness, but to the process itself - to trust that my body and my baby would figure this out together, even if I couldn't see the whole path from where I stood. The moment I drew that line and said quietly to myself, "This is who I want to be, who I want to become, and *their* thoughts and opinions no longer matter."

That's what this whole journey has been about. Not proving anything to anyone or performing some kind of fearless bravery for an audience. And definitely not trying to outsmart biology, because that's just stupid. It's learning how to meet yourself in a space that demands full presence and discovering that you're so much stronger than you've been taught to believe.

The baby you're growing isn't the only new life being created right now. There's something forming in you too - a new steadiness, a new spine, a new way of listening to yourself that doesn't require external validation. A fresh understanding that intensity and danger aren't the same thing, that your body has been on your side this entire time.

This is your initiation. Not into some specific birth philosophy or ideology but into the kind of embodied self-trust and confidence that will serve you long after labor is over and your baby is snuggling in your arms.

Nobody gave you this confidence. You built it, one surrendered fear at a time.

When your moment comes - however it looks, wherever it happens - you won't be walking in unprepared or empty-handed. You'll walk in with months of practice behind you and anchors that actually work when you need them. You've chosen your path and you meant it.

You'll meet a new version of yourself there in that raw, demanding space. And here's what I know for certain: you'll recognize her.

She's the one who's been waiting patiently underneath all the noise and fear and borrowed doubt. The one who already knows what to do, who's been trying to tell you for months that you're capable of this. The one who's been here all along, just waiting for you to remember.

She's still you, she's always been you, and she's ready.



1 week old with his big brothers



2 days old, first doctor visit
to document birth for birth certificate

Now, It's *Your* Turn

//YOU GOT THIS, I BELIEVE IN YOU.

If you've made it this far, thank you. Thank you for allowing me to speak into your heart and for staying with my words long enough to hopefully have stirred your spirit into a fresh new level of curiosity and expectation.

At this point, you've probably already done more preparation than most women do for birth. You've questioned everything, researched endlessly, practiced returning to your body when fear knocked. You've put in the work, and I'm so proud of you, my internet friend.

But now comes the hardest part: trusting that the work was enough.

Your body knows how to do this. Your baby knows when to come. They work together in ways you'll never see or fully know. The capacity you're searching for in books and articles and other people's stories? It's already in you. It's been there all along, just waiting for the noise to quiet down enough for you to hear it.

This guide isn't magic. It's not going to make your labor painless or script your perfect birth plan into existence. It simply shows you how to come back to yourself, to your inner guide, your own power and magnificence, when the noise gets loud and life gets exhausting.

Your body doesn't need you to believe in it to do its job. Your baby's heart has been beating and the placenta has been breathing for nine months without your management or approval. It knows what to do. The question is whether you'll let it, or whether you'll override every sensation with second-guessing and unnecessary fear.

It's now time for you to close this guide, step away from the internet, go be in your body, feel your baby move, notice your breath, and remember that this isn't happening to you, it's happening through you, and you've been building the strength to meet it all along.

The woman you've been becoming through all this practice? She doesn't need another guide. She needs to show up.

So go. Trust yourself. And when you meet your baby, remember: you knew how to do this the whole time.

And now for the boring but necessary magic spell that keeps the goblins away:

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