



the
HEALTHY
MOTHERHOOD
JOURNAL

Practices, Prompts, and
Support for Women
in Baby's First Year



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EXCERPT

WELCOME TO YOUR JOURNAL

Nearly everything about your life will change when you become a mother for the first time: your marriage, your priorities, your friendships, your career, your life goals, and even your very own body. You are a MOM now! It's a radically rich and fertile time in your life—and it calls you toward introspection, practically begging you to attend to self-care and self-reflection. The pages ahead are for you, for your journey into motherhood.

We developed *The Healthy Motherhood Journal* to guide new moms through new motherhood—with all the complexities, joys, challenges, sacrifice, and fulfillment this stage of life brings. By journaling, you will work through the beautiful chaos of new motherhood, keep your health on track, and create a keepsake that you can return to in years to come. Throughout the journal, we call on our experience as health advocates, parenting advisors, and nutrition educators to help you and your baby thrive. And when you thrive, your baby thrives.

This journal is unique, starting with its three contributing authors. Martha Sears, mother of eight grown children, grandmother of many, and now great-grandmother, brings the wisdom and perspective of age. Hayden Sears Darnell, mother of three tweens/teens, offers practical tools and important insight from one who is still on this motherhood journey. Erin Sears Basile, brand new mother, contributes her real and raw experiences with her new baby. These three Sears women combine their voices and different life stages to offer depth and breadth to your journaling experience.

Our hope is that this journal will help you connect with yourself on a deeper level and keep what's important at the forefront of your mind. By guiding you toward further self-awareness and understanding of your new role, the time you spend with this journal will help you blossom as a mother and woman. In these pages we will celebrate the unforgettable highs, magical moments, and mom wins, while also embracing the parts of motherhood that aren't as shareable—the fears, the worries, and the meltdowns (yours and Baby's). We want to create a space for all your feelings and experiences, and alongside these, provide insightful and often intimate prompts to encourage you to examine the full range of who you are and who you are becoming.

We welcome you to the new world of motherhood, and we look forward to guiding you with our collective experiences, acting as two older sisters and one eager-to-help mom. May you hold onto grace, patience, and peace as you embrace each moment and appreciate what it adds to your life.

With love and blessings,
Martha, Hayden, and Erin

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BECOMING A MOTHER

Congratulations! You have accomplished the most amazing and momentous feat nine months in the making. You are forever changed physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. In light of all these changes, the contrasting nature of all you are feeling and experiencing may catch you off guard. You may be fluctuating between singing for joy and crawling into bed to cry; savoring each moment and wishing the day would end. You might feel like you are Superwoman one moment and Queen of Supertired the next. You may feel like you have finally found a piece of yourself and at the same time wonder if you have lost something central to who you are. You've likely never felt so fulfilled and empowered and so vulnerable at the same time.

Everything you are feeling is natural, honest, and real.

While the spotlight is on Baby, remember you have also given birth to yourself as a mother. Becoming a mother gives you an opportunity like no other to connect with yourself in a new and deeper way. Throughout this journal we will invite

you to be present, responsive, and attuned to yourself as a woman who has become a mother and who is discovering aspects of herself that she never knew existed. This process of attuning and attaching first of all to yourself will in turn allow your baby to attach to you in a beautifully healthy way. As this process unfolds, you'll come to a fuller realization of yourself as a mother.

This chapter will guide you through unpacking the first days and weeks of stepping into motherhood. Whether your baby was born days or months ago, take some time to immerse yourself in that time and space. Allow your mind and heart to drift back and remember your incredible experience, capturing both the essence and the finer points of your journey so far. This time in your life is relatively brief, but it contains precious, poignant, and life-changing moments that will likely have a lasting impression on you—the woman you are and the mother you are becoming. This is YOUR time.





TO PONDER

What feelings and emotions came up while writing my birth story?
What did I think my birth experience would be like?
What was it *actually* like? How do I reconcile the two?



A MOMENT FOR ME

Lens of Love Meditation

As you reflect on the events surrounding the miracle of birth, try to see yourself and the situation through the “lens of love”—a lens of grace and compassion. Birth is a remarkable experience full of expectations, unpredictable moments, and sometimes fear. As the hormonal roller coaster of this new season ebbs and flows, looking at everything that’s happening through your lens of love will help you move from disappointment to peace.

Take a few moments to center yourself and focus on a slow, steady inhale and exhale. Allow any and all thoughts to arise. Notice those thoughts; celebrate the most joyous moment that comes to mind. Does any guilt or grief come up? Do any confusing thoughts arise? Are you hit with regret or feelings of inadequacy? Compassionately exhale those feelings and inhale healing and love. Take some time to record what came out of this meditation for you.



REFLECTING ON LABOR AND DELIVERY

Journaling through some of the more intense or unexpected moments of your initiation into motherhood will allow you to grow, laugh, remember, and have further appreciation for yourself and others involved. If your labor unfolded in a disappointing way, or in a way that surprised you, it will take some time to come to terms with it all.

Working through all your feelings here can help. Let this become your mantra: "I truly made the best decisions I could at the time for my baby and my body. I honor my body for every contraction, challenge, and victory. Every moment brought me closer to you, my precious Baby. I am a champion bringer-forth of life!"



What words or phrases came out of my mouth during labor and delivery that were surprising or shocking?

Humorous moments (reactions, jokes, mishaps . . .) that I just HAVE to remember:

Were there special moments of support that I received (from my nurse, partner, doula, or other labor support person) that had a huge impact?

Was there a point in my labor when fear or panic set in?
Did unexpected challenges arise? How did I work through these?

Do I have feelings of negativity or guilt regarding parts of my labor that need attention?
How can I work through these feelings so resentment and blame do not set in? How
can I show myself grace and forgiveness for what did not go as planned?

What did I learn about myself as a woman? What did I learn about myself as a mom?

Looking back, what would I want to say to myself at the beginning of labor?



TO PONDER

How did I connect with myself in a new way during my labor?
What did I learn about my strengths and areas of needed growth?
What did I learn about myself on a spiritual level?



A MOMENT FOR ME

A Place for Peace

Have you found a place in your home where you feel the most peaceful? On the roller coaster of emotions new motherhood brings, it's important that you can connect regularly to a serene space where you comfort yourself as you tend to Baby. Many moms love to have a rocking chair in the corner of the room, next to a window, to feed and comfort Baby—and also to comfort themselves. Natural light can help keep your mood up during the day, and a strand of twinkle lights can be soothing at night. It doesn't have to be the “perfect nursery,” just a place to help foster feelings of peace. A place that sends an invitation to your

mind, body, and spirit that it is time to relax from head to toe and soak in the love as you hold, rock, soothe, and feed your little miracle. If a physical place like this does not exist in your home, then create one in your imagination.



Self-Care Check In

On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means “really struggling” and 10 means “no problem”:

What is my current stress level?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What is my current level of joy?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How am I doing on my self-talk/thought life?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Am I making nutrition and hydration a priority?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Am I managing my mental health?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Am I getting enough sleep and rest?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How am I doing at staying present?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Am I being supported in my mothering?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Am I making enough space for myself and my needs?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

NOURISHMENT TIP

Feeding Station

In the first couple months of motherhood, it might seem like your baby is constantly eating and sleeping. You might feel liberated by this—or trapped. Either way, being prepared for marathon feeding sessions is key for your self-care. Your little angel is literally sucking the fluids out of you, and Mama needs to be filled with nutritious foods and plenty of water to best care for herself and baby. Having nutritious snacks and water at arm’s reach where you typically feed Baby will help you to stay healthy. Here are tips for equipping your dual feeding station:

- A water bottle with a straw (aim for one day’s total water of at least half your weight in ounces)
- Hydrating fruits and vegetables like cucumbers, melon, and berries
- One-handed foods like nuts (walnuts are great because they’re high in omega-3 fatty acids, which are top fats for brain development)
- Foods that are high in B vitamins to help keep your energy up (Brazil nuts and sunflower seeds, for example)
- Dark chocolate–covered almonds (Mama needs some healthy treats too!)
- Phone charger
- Headphones
- Inspiring or funny podcasts
- Guided meditations
- Affirmation cards
- Lanolin nipple cream
- Burp cloth
- Nursing pillow
- Essential oil diffuser (many moms like peppermint, lavender, and citrus)

Lactation Cookies

- 3 cups organic old-fashioned rolled oats
- 1½ cups unbleached organic all-purpose flour or gluten-free flour
- 5 tablespoons brewer's yeast (a traditional aid for lactation)*
- 4 tablespoons hemp seeds
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¾ cups organic unsalted butter
- 4 tablespoons unrefined organic virgin coconut oil
- 1 cup organic coconut palm sugar
- 1 large egg + 1 large egg yolk
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 cup dark chocolate chips/chunks

Heat the oven to 350°F.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the oats, flour, yeast, hemp seeds, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, and salt.

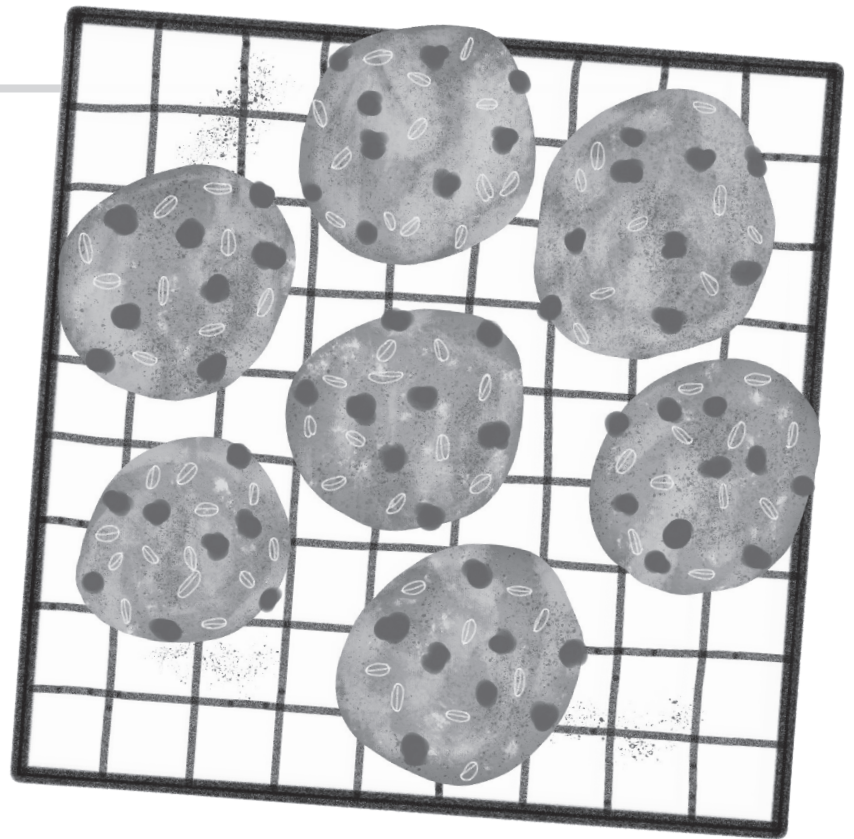
In a large bowl, beat the butter and coconut oil on medium speed until creamy. Add the sugar and beat on medium to high speed until fluffy. Add the egg and egg yolk and vanilla extract and beat until thoroughly combined.

Gradually add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients, beating on low speed until just combined and mixed. Stir in the chocolate chips.

Scoop the dough into 1-inch rounds and place on a baking sheet about 2 inches apart. Bake for 10 to 14 minutes or until the bottoms are a beautiful golden brown.

Yields about 20 cookies

*Consider adding brewer's yeast to other food items like oatmeal, yogurt, smoothies, and muffins.



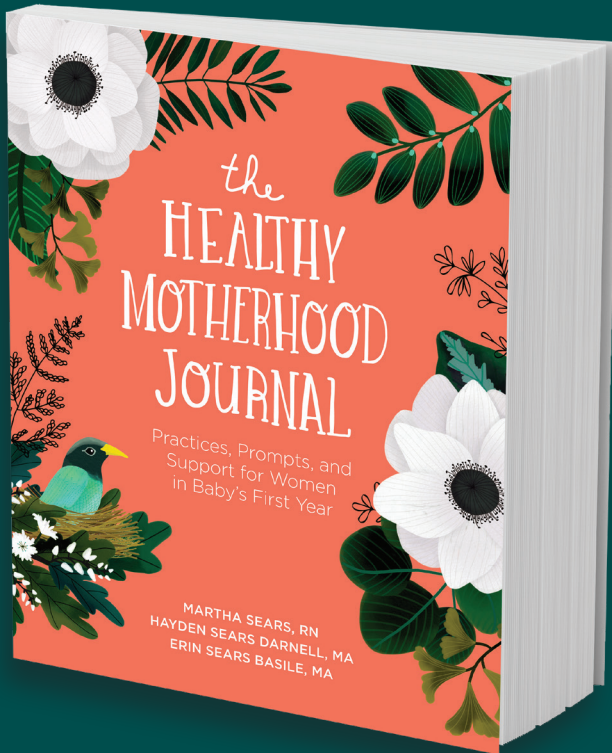


MARTHA SEARS, RN, mother of eight grown children, grandmother of many, and now great-grandmother, brings the wisdom and perspective of age. An RN, childbirth educator, popular lecturer and media guest, and La Leche League leader, Martha is also the coauthor of more than 25 parenting books, including *The Baby Book*.

HAYDEN SEARS DARNELL, MA, mother of three tweens and teens, offers practical tools and important insight from one who is still on this motherhood journey. A health and nutrition coach, Hayden has worked with the Sears Family Pediatrics medical practice for over 15 years.

ERIN SEARS BASILE, MA, brand-new mother, health coach, and coauthor of *The Dr. Sears T5 Wellness Plan*, contributes her real and raw experience with her new baby.

Together, the Sears women combine their voices and different life stages to offer depth and breadth to the new mother's journaling experience.



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