



Reclaiming & Trusting Mama and Papa Bear Wisdom

Teresa Robertson, RN, Certified Nurse Midwife, MS

Childbearing in its entirety, from the mysterious and miraculous ability to conceive and to give birth, on through the nourishing acts of childrearing; have suddenly become explosive minefields of fear, insecurity, and guilt. Somehow as a collective culture, we have lost or abandoned any thread of belief in a woman's ability and power to naturally conceive and give birth. These once tight threads of belief have been constantly and consistently shredded away, leaving in its wake a gaping lack of trust and unrelenting fear.

The more we "know" externally, the less we are trusting internally and as a result, we have lost our connection and trust of our inner navigation source- our Mama and Papa Bear Wisdom. This is the part of us who knows to the marrow of our bones, and lunges without any doubting – to owning a decision and any subsequent action. Some may also name this part as our intuitive knowing.

In her book *Mother Daughter Wisdom*, author Christiane Northrup MD coins the phrase "mama bear wisdom" to powerfully describe this instinctual intuitive inner wisdom hard wired in all women when they become mothers.

My addition of Papa Bear is to acknowledge the concurrent hardwiring present and available for dads.

This article aims to discuss where and how we lose our "in"sight and trust in our Mama and Papa bear wisdom during the pregnancy and birth process; and to share some simple, fun, concrete, relaxing and empowering tools and techniques in order to reclaim and to reintegrate him and her back into our lives.

In my work with women and families, I have come to strongly believe that the antidote for all the free floating fear and anxiety in our culture is to learn how to cultivate feelings of safety and trust. The simple yet powerful and amazingly adaptable tool I teach that does this is called grounding.

I encourage you to try this technique now

GROUNDING -THE ALL PURPOSE FEAR ANTIDOTE TOOL

The first step in the process of connecting with your intuition (your inner knowing) is to ground.

Grounding is a tool that places us in present time—the now, this moment; and thereby aids us in creating a safe container.

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I like to think of grounding as the ultimate laundry chute, allowing me to easily and safely release any thoughts or feeling that no longer are needed.

Grounding enables us to create a pause in the fear-need to control cycle, and thereby helps us to cultivate a deep knowing and feeling of how to authentically create safety and trust.

Grounding only takes a moment. Once you understand the how to, and feel the power of this tool, you will start integrating this tool into every facet of your life.

I ground my car while driving, my date book in anticipation of a busy day, and the phone before I pick it up.

Grounding is a powerful tool to use in labor.

To ground, imagine your feet connecting to the stream of life force from the earth. You can imagine connecting to the stream of life, nourishment and clarity from anywhere in the planet. Given you have two feet, you can draw the energy up from 2 different areas.

As you inhale imagine breathing this current up both your feet and legs allowing it to settle at the base of your spine (your perineum).

You can also imagine drawing from the earth colors, symbols or concepts (such as clarity, peace, joy, nourishment).

From this space feel and imagine the energy swirling around in the center or core of your perineum.

From the center of this energy imagine creating a grounding structure, (tree roots, a waterfall, a tube, an anchor, a slide) to grow out from the center until it has grown to 2-4 feet wide. As you exhale be aware of this structure connecting back to the earth.

As you breathe in, be aware of receiving, and as you exhale again, be aware of releasing anything that is safe and comfortable for your system to release, such as any stress, fear or worry.

As you ground you might find yourself feeling lighter and/or stronger and more rooted.

We naturally ground when we: sit on the earth; sit on or hold a rock; listen to running water; or sit on a toilet.

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Many people notice after awhile, that with the simple act of consciously taking a deep breath that they have automatically created grounding for themselves.

Now that we have grounded let's move on.

As you continue reading, check in periodically to your grounding cord, and pay attention to how and what you are feeling.

MAMA BEAR WISDOM DURING PREGNANCY – THE ROLLER COASTER OF FEAR, TESTING AND NOT TRUSTING

While standing in line at the market a few months ago, I was sadly amused to read the headline captions listed on 2 mainstream pregnancy magazines. In each of them, there it was, in bolded captions FEAR. “What you secretly fear: “Your top ten fears”

This growing trend of fear starts affecting a women from the from the moment a women conceives- she can't relax any more- what if something is wrong or goes wrong. She is concurrently bombarded with messages that elicit worry and with that the need for her to remain in control.

Every Ob visit is now focused on what tests to consider for this visit and the next, instead of affirming the miracle of the growing baby. In the place of exploring a mom and dad's hopes and fears and validating their strengths, visits now focus on discussing what could possibility be or go wrong. In many OB practices the pregnant mom's belly is no longer even touched! Any assessment of her pregnancy growth is done by ultrasound! Very few parents really understand that the measurements obtained from ultrasound become less and less accurate as a pregnancy grows. A term ultrasound can be off anywhere from 1-2 pounds in estimating a baby's weight.

Sadly, the art and skill of touching a moms belly to determine a baby's position and size is becoming a lost art and practice.

When we touch a mom's belly we are doing more than measuring and assessing her baby. We are transmitting to her that— isn't it amazing what your body is doing! Aren't you beautiful! Affirming to her—you are doing a great job of nourishing and growing your baby!

This tactile interaction also enables the health care provider to learn so much about what this mom knows and feels about herself, her family and her baby.

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SO WHAT'S A PARENT TO DO?

There is no test, series of tests, procedure or crystal ball that can assure you that your baby will be normal and healthy and continue to be normal and healthy. That is the truth. To believe otherwise pulls us away from the inner resources of inner mama and papa onto the merry go round of another and another test- creating more fear in its wake. Creating again and again what Barbara Katzman Roth terms in her book, *The Tentative Pregnancy*. With this roller coaster of testing, pregnant women have lost the time and permission to just relax and revel in the miracle and wonder of being pregnant.

The current work of cell biologist Bruce Lipton PhD, has validated the old wives tales about what ever a pregnant woman is feeling and exposed to emotionally and physically during her pregnancy gets transmitted to her baby. What Bruce has discovered that a woman's overall long term pregnancy experiences and emotions gets translated to her baby via her hormones through the placenta to the baby's womb environment. From these hormonal messages, the baby goes on to determine its DNA expression. He/she will choose DNA which will determine its body, genetic expression, and his/her future hormonal wiring in order to prepare for a world his/her mother is showing via her feelings and hormones.

Now, to alleviate any immediate feelings of guilt, I wish to state that pregnancy is a time normally filled with emotional ups and down. What is important to remember, is that these determinations results from a consistent and persistent hormonal environment experienced over a period of time during the pregnancy.

So if a woman is holding a consistent low level of terror and fear during her pregnancy that will get transmitted to her baby. And her baby will prepare for a world that is tentative, uncertain and unsafe.

Conversely, if a mother is supported, validated with trust and confidence about her pregnancy that will also be transmitted to her baby.

One of my favorite tenets of midwifery care is that we as midwives nurture the mother so she is supported, and she in turn has resources nourish and to mother her unborn child.

Time again to breath, ground, and be aware of your feelings

Many practitioners present screening tests steeped within a fear based motivation. So instead of giving you an informed unbiased choice, you are being sold from a place of fear, yet another test.

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Behind the scene influencing how strongly a practitioner may recommend certain testing is the malpractice fear. This bias is most especially true in the realm of offering genetic screening testing. You the client may be strongly encouraged to partake in testing in order to protect your health care provider from any future law suits.

I feel strongly that when I am discussing any lab test or diagnostic procedure with a client I apply what I learned during Certified Nurse Midwifery training; and in turn, I urge my clients to start looking at any offered tests with the same questions.

What will I do with this information?

Are the results of this test going to change what decision we are already making?

If not, what are you going to do with this information?

Will taking this test increase my overall fear, or diminish it?

Are there any other ways I can get the similar information with less intervention and or risk?

Bottom line how does engaging in this test feel?

With the resulting answers, then decide if it worth your time, blood, money and worry, to engage in this particular test(ing).

Once you decide to engage in a test, ask yourself how can I best connect with my body and baby to create a feeling of trust and participation in this test process?

SO HOW HAVE WE COME HERE TO THIS PLACE?

Women have been convinced and thereby no longer trust that they can give birth without drugs, intervention and in 32% of the time surgery.

We have been strongly influenced by the experts, those who have to profit from this fear and belief, and in whom we have been raised to trust without question. Very few consumers realize that an OB/GYN is a trained surgeon. Fewer still have thought about that in relation to how they are trained to view birth, many MD's are trained to view birth as "an emergency waiting to happen."

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Given the current economic structure of maternity health care in our country; many health care providers, such as Certified Nurse Midwives and Family Practice MDs, who trust and hold the birth process as normal, have been forced out of offering OB services. Reasons for this include, chronic low reimbursement rates and rising malpractice rates .The bottom line is that normal pregnancy and birth are not money makers. (Hodges/Goer; www.TheBusinessofBeingBorn.com)

When one has only 10 minutes for an appointment, ordering an ultrasound may assuage fear in the short term. However, a 20-30 minute conversations might have done the same, but there is no time and the cycle continues. And the mother (parents) gets the message that it is really not important what she know or feels about her baby but what data the machines outside of her body has determine to be of importance.

Another subtle yet powerful feedback system is in place. When a woman is diagnosed as “high risk,” her provider is now able to bill for and receive increased reimbursement for the resulting increase in surveillance and tests this high risk condition requires. So testing and interventions like ultrasounds, inductions, C sections, instrument deliveries, and newborn NICU, stays generate more revenue for both MD’s and Hospitals.

THE PHYSIOLOGICAL IMPACT OF FEAR.

Most of us have heard about the fight or flight response our body engages in when it feels threatened. Our body’s response to fear or feeling threatened elicits the release of cortisol—a stress hormone released from our kidneys. Cortisol in turn triggers our pancreas to release sugar to fuel this emergency our body is perceiving. This sugar fuels the flow of energy to the survival organs; our brain, lungs, and our arms and feet- so we can react and move away from the threat. Non essential muscles and organs which include the kidneys and uterus receive less in blood flow.

Our body decides that reproduction and urinating are not important functions when our body’s perceive a dangerous situation.

As a result our blood pressure rises, blood flow to the uterus decreases and blood sugar levels which initial rose then plunge.

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Long term stress results in: decrease in conception; increase in; smaller babies, pre term birth, high blood pressure, gestational diabetes, IUGR, meconium staining and fetal death. (Peterson/Mehl-Madrona)

Unconsciously, this intertwined hot potato of fear interfaces between providers and pregnant women and their families. Fear breeds more fear, testing ensues, more fear which creates outcomes to justify the fear in the first place. So here we are in the place of collective culture believing that conceiving, pregnancy and birth are fraught with struggle, risk and are potential emergent situations requiring the highest level of medical training and vigilance to keep us safe.

Time again to breath, ground and be aware of your feelings

FINDING AND TRUSTING IN YOUR RESOURCES

Once you have connected with your inner wisdom and with what it needs for your pregnancy and birth; be completely sure that the care provider you have chosen is in alignment with your needs.

I strongly believe that the purpose of prenatal care is not the physical testing and surveillance of the pregnancy, but rather, the development of an interactive trusting relationship with the provider who will be attending your birth. The tests and discussions about your care provide the vehicle in which you develop and cultivate a trusting relationship. For labor to unfold as naturally as possible the laboring woman needs to feel safe and trusting. Believing or thinking you will be able to convince your care provider about your needs in labor will not work. For labor to proceed your need to be feeling, not thinking and negotiating.

Before you commit to an OB care provider, take some time do a meet and greet appointment with them. If a practice doesn't offer such a service, inquire why not?

It is never too late in your pregnancy to transfer your care to a different and more aligned provider and birth site.

Having a baby is something we do only a few times in our lifetimes. You are the consumer here. Spend the time to find the fit that feels right.

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Questions to Ask When You are Pregnant from the Coalition to Improve Maternity Services – this guide is a great resource <http://www.motherfriendly.org/resources/10Q/>.

1. You need to know what your practitioner (Doctor, Certified Nurse Midwife, Midwife, FP MD) has for a rate for these interventions; C-section, induction, epidural, forceps. vacuum assisted delivery, episiotomy.
2. How many people does your provider share call with?
3. What are the rates for the other practitioners who take call and could be at your birth?
4. What are the above intervention rates for the location of your birth (Hospital, Birth Center, Home)

If your provider or birth site has high rates of intervention, do not believe you are going to be the one to change and convince them to create a different approach.

Take the time to find a provider and birth place, even if it means traveling to the next town that shares and supports your birth philosophy.

Do not expect that your doula or your birth partner will be able to advocate for your desires. If your provider is coming from a different philosophy and belief system you are setting yourself up for feeling disappointed and or betrayed.

Take the time and the effort to find the people who trust birth and will support you and your family in your journey

Your family deserves to be treated with respect love safety and trust during this time.

There are more resources to find these practitioners at the end of the article.

Are you still grounding? Be aware of your grounding and release any fear, anger or tension this last section might have elicited.



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CULTURAL MYTH - KNOWLEDGE IS POWER AND IT WILL KEEP ME SAFE AND IN CONTROL

Many childbearing women adhere to this myth. The birthing practices of the 50's and 60's, when women were completely anesthetized ; interrupted and fractured the transmission of our oral knowledge, wisdom about pregnancy and birth in our culture. As a result, in the 60's and 70's, written information about natural childbearing arose out of the desire for families to regain this knowledge base. The challenge inherent with written knowledge, is it often does not incorporate the aspect of integrating inner wisdom. Absolute right ways and wrong ways to approach something emerge as truth. So, the practice of looking outside of ourselves first for the answer and accepting an external expert's written statements as our truth may impart knowledge, but it may exist without the wisdom needed authentically integration. To navigate the ever changing and complex world we live in, we need to learn to integrate and temper both our knowledge base with our inner wisdom.

I experience this often with clients who utilize the internet to allay their fear. Yes, they may get their questions answered, however, in the process of finding their answer they are exposed to frightening options they were never aware of. Now there are new potential scenarios to be afraid of.

Conversely I have worked with clients who have interfaced the knowledge of the internet while being aware of and connected to their inner wisdom and intuition. These clients find their answers, know when to stop researching and find the experience to be empowering.

The difference is when you go shopping for knowledge or information to be sure to bring your wisdom radar and check in with her/him as you research.

I have witnessed time and time again in my work when a mom and dad really connect with their inner knowing- their decision works- they feel freedom and peace. The decision itself is neither right or wrong good or bad- what is essential and important is the integration of the wisdom, the knowing feeling component in how any action is carried forth. That is true empowerment- being in power.

Throughout this article we have discussed and periodically revisited the first step in accessing Mama and Papa Bear wisdom by grounding.

The next step involves dialoging, connecting and interacting with our inner source of intuition and wisdom. As you develop this relationship- you will then learn to feel comfortable and trust its

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messages in everyday life so when the big decisions come along, you can then access your wisdom source with established trust.

This next exercise will give you the next steps for cultivating this dialog and relationship with your inner wisdom.

EXERCISE CULTIVATING DIALOG AND RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR MAMA AND PAPA BEAR WISDOM

The key to remember as you read and look at all of the tests and procedures is to balance the time you spent researching and learning with time spent reflecting on how all of this makes you feel.

There is not a specific right, wrong or perfect path to follow. Let me repeat that the action you pursue is not as important as how does this decision feel to my(our) core(s)?

Your body has all the knowledge and resources to create and nourish a healthy baby. Our bodies are wired to do this.

SO we need to trust this. We also need to listen to our bodies when something does move out of the realm of normal and our bodies are and babies are asking for some extra care. This information speaks to not from a place of fear, but from a knowing that something is not right—not fearing something is wrong.

There is a place for intuition in the world of OB care. I have observed countless times, if a woman says she is feeling something is not right with her baby—she is urged to come in to get it checked out.

So let's go deeper now and connect with our Mama and Papa Bear Wisdom.

EXERCISE

Now let's go inside to connect with mama and papa bear wisdom- the inner part of you who knows how to optimally navigate your personal path.

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KEY if the answers to these questions come from your head—that is most likely NOT your mama and papa bear wisdom speaking with you.

The language of intuitive knowing is not logical.

The more you approach this with amusement, and have fun with it like a game, the easier the answers will flow.

A fear message from your brain is not the authentic answer.

Our intuitive knowing often comes as a: strong and persistent knowing; feeling something in your body such as in your gut or your womb space; or a whisper or a strong sense; feelings of warmth or cold.

Take your time with these questions. You might want to ask one at a time or go through the entire list. You might want to take time in between questions to draw your understanding of your messages.

Start by grounding.

Be aware of your body and how it feels. Be aware of your breath.

You may want to create soft eyes—your eyes slightly unfocused or you may wish to close your eyes.

Let's invite your mama/papa bear wisdom to join in conversation

Say hello to he/him, thank her/him for coming forward.

Ask her/him what do you need?

What do you know or want to share with me?

Where do you reside?

What signal do you like to use to get my attention?

How can I quickly connect with you?

Do you have a name?

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What conditions makes it easier for him/her to connect with you?

What conditions help you to trust and hear him/her?

What gets in the way of the communication?

What can help to reestablish the connection?

How can you validate he/him?

Be patient with yourself. Some of the answers may come to you later, as your day unwinds or in your dreams.

Complete this conversation as you would any other. Agree to another time when you will reconnect.

Open your eyes and be aware of your surroundings.

Stretch and breath.

In closing, remember that the secret key to all of this is to go deep inside of yourself, with all of your questioning and embrace that part of you who loves yourself and your child so very deeply. From this place your answer has the opportunity to clearly unfold.

Remember that your child(ren)is will always be your most powerful teacher, full of compassion, love and amusement.

Your child does not expect for you to be perfect. What he/she does need is for your choices to be coming from a place of connection to your inner knowing and their heart space.

There is no place for fear based decisions. In any situation, there is always a choice to use one moment to reset yourself into a place of trust, safety, and from that clarity.

All the time you need is the time it takes take a deep breath.

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Know that you are his/her mother and father and from your wisdom you will create correct actions, as you act from your intuitive knowing and loving heart.

TO SIGN UP FOR A FREE TELECCLASS ON CULTIVATING YOUR MAMA AND PAPA BEAR WISDOM VISIT www.LivingIntuitive.com.

Teresa Robertson RN, Certified Nurse Midwife, MS, Birth Intuitive

Teresa provides information, support and tools to assist her clients to connect with their unborn children. Her work aids clients: to promote fertility; to heal and to resolve pregnancy losses such as miscarriage and abortion; to heal and/or minimize pregnancy complications; and to assist adoptive parents in connecting with their unborn children.

Her strong and varied clinical background and education allow her to serve as a translator between the worlds of intuition and western allopathic medical approaches. She offers suggestions about communication between mothers and their unborn children.

Information about her services can be found on her website at www.LivingIntuitive.com.

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REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

American Association of Childbearing Centers – www.birthcenters.org

Association for Pre and Perinatal Psychology and Health – www.birthpsychology.com

American College of Nurse Midwives – www.acnm.org

Midwives Association of North America – www.mana.org

BOOKS/MAGAZINES

Mothering Magazine – www.mothering.com

Effects of Hospital Economics on Maternity Care by Susan Hodges with Henci Goer, Reprinted from Citizens for Midwifery News, Spring/Summer 2004.

Mother Daughter Wisdom by Dr. Christiane Northrup, MD

Pregnancy as Healing Vol 1 and 2 by Gayle Peterson MS.,MSW and Lewis Mehl MD. PhD

The Biology of Belief by Bruce Lipton PhD

The Tentative Pregnancy by Barbara Katzman Roth

DVD'S

The Business of Being Born – www.thebusinessofbeingborn.com/literature.htm

Birth into Being – www.Birthintobeing.com

Orgasmic birth – www.orgasmicbirth.com

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