



Happy Mama

A Spiritual Survival Guide
to the Early Years
of Motherhood

Amy Taylor-Kabbaz

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“

Spiritual growth is like childbirth. You dilate, then you contract. You dilate, then you contract again. As painful as it feels, it's the necessary rhythm for reaching the ultimate goal of total openness.

”

Marianne Williamson



Chapter One - Introduction

Here we go!

I know.

You've already got so many commitments in your life right now, making another one to this book and to turning this life-changing time into one of massive self-discovery and fantastic-ness is probably the last thing you feel like doing. You are just too freaking tired. After all – isn't that why you're feeling disconnected and lost in the first place?

This will be different. I promise.

This is not about adding to your stress or worries about doing things 'right' or following a certain method of raising your children. This is not about making you feel guilty or telling you how you should be feeling.

This book – and the time you give to reading it – is all about space. Giving yourself the time and space to reflect on who you are now you are an Amazing Mama. Because the truth is, most women just need permission to take the gentle option. To be kind to themselves. They need someone to tell them – it's OK. Take your time. Go Slowly. Nurture yourself.

I am here to give you that permission.

Motherhood is often something we long for, but when it arrives it is very, very different to what we thought it would be. In fact, motherhood can be the biggest contradiction of them all – the happiest time of your life, and the hardest time of your life. The best, and the worst. No-one can prepare you for what it's really like, and even when you've done it once – it can be totally different the second time round! And the third (or so I'm about to find out!)

There's also a lot more pressure on us as Mums these days to do everything. Be a Mum AS WELL as be superwoman at work, supermodel at the gym, and superlover in bed. Hardly a week goes by without another freaking study released on work-life balance, the pressure Mums feel to

lose the baby weight, or how our busy lives are messing up our kids. I should know – I've been covering these stories as a journalist for more than a decade.

So with all this external pressure to be everything to everyone, and the added bonus of sharing every minute of our lives on social media for all to scrutinise, is it any wonder that we have become totally disconnected to the power and wonder of **just being a Mum**? Is it a surprise that the majority of us are feeling overwhelmed, tired and disconnected from the joy we first felt at the birth of our baby, and now just focus on getting through one day at a time?

I was the same. After the birth of my first daughter, Scarlett, nearly six years ago, I stood at the window of the maternity ward believing that I was the most powerful woman on earth. Despite it being a far-from-perfect birth, at the time, all I could think about was how amazing I was that I'd created and birthed a new life. In fact, it wasn't until weeks later when I found myself re-telling the birth story over and over again did I start to feel less empowered by the inclusion of epidural, vomit, stitches. Interestingly, it was once I started putting my power back into the hands of others – by watching their opinion of my birth – that I started to lose my own power again.

And, Scarlett wouldn't feed. She was born with Congenital Torticollis (a condition where her neck muscles and one side of her jaw didn't develop properly because she was too squished inside me) and therefore turning her head to one side was excruciatingly painful. Severe Breast Rejection is what the nurses named it. Nice. You can imagine what that did to my new Mama glow.

So, over the coming months, I bounced from one 'expert' to the next, putting all my faith into everyone else's expertise. I never stopped to listen to my own instincts, because I didn't think I had any. I was scared, confused and thought I was doing it all wrong.

With daily physio therapy, Scarlett could eventually turn her head and began to feed, and my life started to settle down. But deep within me, something had stirred. As a supremely capable woman who had believed that she could do anything that was thrown at her, this new baby thing had shaken me. Shaken my confidence in me. And so began my journey

of writing, reading, and discovering how the adventure of motherhood can be the greatest catalyst to uncovering who you really are and what you are really capable of in life.

And this is what I have discovered:

Motherhood is the greatest gift to a busy, career-driven, materialistic modern woman. It gives us permission to step away from all that we have valued up till now, and tune into the wonders of life. It strips back everything we have ever known, and everything we ever believed about ourselves, and leaves us raw and vulnerable. A wonderful thing! Because it is only when we go back to basics like this that we finally begin to figure out how amazing we really are.

It's not an easy journey at times – I don't have to tell you that. Many, many, many women around the world love being a mother, but find themselves totally disconnected with their own self. They put themselves last – in everything they do. We are not martyrs though – this isn't some 1950s belief that we must put our children and husbands needs' before our own. No, this is just the reality of raising a family. And while I hope that one day (hopefully in my daughters' lifetime) this may be different, we are the only ones that can change things. **It's up to us.** And we do this by putting ourselves first.

First? I hear you gasp! I know. It was hard for me too. Still is. It feels wrong and selfish to say that you should be your first priority. I tried negotiating with myself at first that maybe I could put myself equal-first with my children. Some of the time. But this is the lesson I've learnt, and seen so many others learn: unless we put our own spiritual and emotional needs first, we are no good to anyone else. If we look in the mirror and don't recognise ourselves, how can we be authentic? How can we teach our children to be authentic?

There's another reason to do all this too.

When I think about the lessons I want to teach my children, valuing themselves, believing in themselves, and taking care of their heart, mind, body and soul is the number one legacy I want to hand down.

If I can help them even in the smallest way to avoid the destructive behaviour of my teens and twenties by teaching them early to love themselves and take care of their own needs, then my job here is done.

So how do we start? We start by being kind to ourselves. We start by just taking a big, deep, right-into-your-bones breath and letting it all out – the stress, the fear, the confusion, the worry, the guilt. Gone. **Let it go.**

And then do it again.

From now on, this is all about self-care. This is about mothering the mother. You are doing an amazing job, and everything you have done till now has been perfect because you have done the very best you could. There is no right way to do this mothering thing – there is only your way. And your way has been amazing.

Now, it's time to nurture YOU. To give you the love, support and chutzpah you need and deserve to go on and be the most amazing version of yourself you've ever imagined. This is the time to become the real you – the woman you were meant to be. And to show your family – and the world – the Amazing Mama you are.

The skills and tools in this book will help you reconnect with your true self while still being a busy Mum. You won't need to pack up your life and spend four months missing-in-action overseas – you'll simply need this book, a journal, and a little bit of time each day (not much, I promise!). This is not a book to make you feel guilty, or add to your stress and workload. This will not dictate what you should and shouldn't do. And it will not focus on the tough bits of motherhood – there's too many blogs and books out there already on that!

I have spent the past five years interviewing some of the most inspiring women I know about how they make sure they look after themselves while being busy, successful, fantastic mums. I've spoken with doctors, yoga teachers, actors, supermodels (well, only one), authors, nutritionists, and just some pretty amazing Mummies I've met along the way. And each and every one of them have agreed with each other on some pretty key parts of this journey. Those key parts are what have made up this book.

This is YOUR TIME!

I want to add one more thing before we really embark on this journey together – and that is, don't be too hard on yourself if you make a commitment to yourself to write in your journal or get to yoga and it doesn't happen. You assume the baby will sleep for two hours and then you can walk down the road with the pram before feed time. You've gotten really excited about finally taking that first step to making yourself truly happy! And then the baby only sleeps for 40 minutes, and wakes up foul. Crying, grumpy, maybe teething? Maybe ear-ache? Or maybe it's your toddler. Or the rain. I know, I've been there – a thousand times.

Please, from the bottom of my heart, **don't give up**. Don't decide in a fit of self-pity that this won't work for you because "I can't even get to the shops so how am I ever going to do all the things in the book!" I know – again, I've been there too. I've beaten myself up after promising to do things so many times, and I've come to realise that commitments when you are a parent have to be a little more fluid than for other people. It's all very well for those amazing 20 and 30 something girls on the web to commit to a week of juicing, or an hour of meditation everyday – we would freaking love to do that! I have spent a ridiculous amount of time longingly reading their blogs and signing up for their newsletters to only feel totally disheartened and just a wee bit depressed that I simply can't do those things at this time of my life.

What I have learnt through my journey to this book is that self-development, spiritual realisation and true happiness is not a race. You can't do it in 21 days, and you can't put a deadline on it.

So, if you don't get past this point in the book today – it's OK. Tomorrow is another chance to start. Just be kind to yourself, and then congratulate

yourself for making the commitment in your mind to do this, knowing that whether it takes you a day or a week to get there, you will get there. You are committed to being happier, healthier and more authentic.

As Louise Hay says –

‘Everything happens in perfect divine timing.’

And your timing is now.

