

## The Basic Needs of the New Mother

Becoming a mother is a rite of passage, one of the few we have left in our culture. Women enter pregnancy as the maiden and come out on the other side as mothers. In between these two places is called liminality, the liminal space where we are neither here nor there. The word limbo, which evolved out of the word liminality, can be a good descriptor of this time and space. This space in between can be confusing, disorienting, and unnerving. It also holds potential where an unexpected source of creative genius can arise. This process can lead you to question your usual modes of being, if they are relevant anymore, what needs to be shed, and musing about whom you will become. In addition to this, women's hormones are shifting. It is important to note that, for some women, this experience may not happen with their first child but with their second, third, etc. And for some women, this may not happen at all.

When rites of passage go unsupported, this transition period becomes particularly challenging. Symptoms such as post-partum anxiety and depression can be amplified. And if complications occurred during birth and a physical recovery period is necessary, feelings of overwhelm can be quickly experienced.

Until recently, the main emphasis behind the post-partum period was on the woman's physical healing. Thankfully, this mindset is shifting towards understanding that it is also a time of significant psychological shifting. With this shift, we have come to realize that there is a foundation that we can draw upon to help support this transition. Below is a basic list that mother's need that will support them through this period – until they find their footing.

### BASIC NEEDS OF THE NEW MOTHER

- Time to focus on the newborn and older children
- A good listener who can be confidential with the information
- To feel protected, honored, and nurtured
- Reassurance that they are doing a good job
- Noncritical support and advice
- Praise and encouragement
- To have complaints and concerns taken seriously by family and care providers
- Time out now and then for a bath, a shower, or a quiet moment
- Ample, healthy food
- Adequate rest
- Respect for their emotions

Questions you can ask yourself:

1. Do I believe I deserve this time for rest, healing, and bonding with my baby?
2. How comfortable am I with new and challenging situations?
3. Who will I call when I become frustrated, scared, or confused?
4. How will it feel when I am alone with a tiny baby?
5. How will it feel to step out of my life and do very little?

6. Who will be there on days when I feel blue?
7. How will I communicate with my partner when I have reached my limits?

My recommendation is to review this list with your partner and/or support systems. It is okay to ask for these basic needs to be covered. You deserve love and support. It is okay to ask for outside help be it a lactation consultant, therapist, doula, motherhood coach, sleep consultant, or whomever can support you and your family through this transition.