

# Fourth Trimester Podcast

## Episode 17: Heng Ou And Amely Greeven On Food, Postpartum Preparation And The Importance Of Restoring Mama's Health After Birth

**Sarah Trott:** [00:00:05] My name is Sarah Trott. I'm a new mama to a baby girl and this podcast is all about postpartum care for the few months following birth, the time period also known as the Fourth Trimester. My postpartum doula, Esther Gallagher, is my co-host. She's a mother, grandmother, perinatal educator, birth and postpartum care provider. I've benefited hugely from her support. All parents can benefit from the wisdom and support that a postpartum Doula provides. Fourth trimester care is about the practical, emotional and social support parents and baby require, and importantly, helps set the tone for the lifelong journey of parenting.

When I first became pregnant, I had never heard of postpartum Doulas, let alone knew what they did. So much of the training and preparation that expecting parents do is focused on the birth and newborn care. Once a baby is born, often the first interaction parents have with medical or child professionals, other than the first pediatrician visits, is the six-week checkup with the OB/GYN. *What about caring for mama and family between the birth and the six week doctor visit? What are the strategies for taking care of the partner and the rest of the family while looking after your newborn?*

Our podcasts contain expert interviews with specialists from many fields to cover topics including postpartum doula practices, prenatal care, prenatal and postnatal yoga, parenting, breastfeeding, physical recovery from birth, nutrition, newborn care, midwifery, negotiating family visitation, and many more.

First-hand experience is shared through lots of stories from both new and seasoned parents. Hear what other parents are asking and what they have done in their own lives.

We reference other podcasts, internet resources and real-life experts who can help you on your own parenting journey. Visit us at <http://fourthtrimesterpodcast.com>

Today is a wonderful day where we get the honor of talking to the authors of a fabulous book that came out recently called *The First 40 Days: The Essential Art Of Nourishing The New Mother*. And we found this book being circulated on the Web. And I reached out to the writers of which there are three and they agreed to share with us their experiences and talk about the book with us. So here today we have two out of the three. So we have Amely Greeven and Heng Ou and the third author who is going to be represented by her other two counterparts is Marisa Belger. We're so honored to have you here. Welcome and congratulations on your book.

**Heng Ou:** [00:01:33] Thank you. Thanks for having us.

**Sarah Trott:** [00:01:36] Esther and I have been so excited to read through your book. It's part personal experience, part spiritual and emotional guide, part cookbook. And we just love everything about it. So thank you for your contribution with the book. What inspired you to write the first 40 days and what is it all about?

**Heng Ou:** [00:01:58] Ok so I know I have my three children who are now 13, 11 and 8 and I gave birth way back then. And my during my first birth my aunt came down from Oakland down to Los Angeles and said, "you know what I'm going to come in with my bags of food come and make all this before you're going to. All you have to do is stay in bed". And that was my first birth and I thought you know, Fantastic. Why not? You know I understand that this is a cultural practice in our Chinese communities. And I know that in Taiwan and China this is practiced throughout all the families and no matter how poor or how rich they are there's some practice there. So I thought you know what let's do it because my aunt basically forced herself into my home and said let's do this. So you have no other choice in a very nice you know Chinese demeanor kind of way. And she just started cooking and with all the smells that came from the kitchen. She did. It just nourished me immediately and I said you know what I'm going to just lay here with my little newborn. And just do my best to breastfeed because that was its own entity and from that one little moment I thought wow this is pretty darn special. And how many

other American women actually experience this? And it's really kind of just went on in my head like this-- I really want to spread the word in this way. So it kind of just blossomed from that one little seed.

**Sarah Trott:** [00:03:35] It sounds like you are aware of the differences between your experience and the experience of others around you.

**Heng Ou:** [00:03:40] Absolutely. You know in my two other births after that I didn't quite have that experience so I actually did experience on my own. The other two-- my aunt didn't show up in that same way. And also I know that with my other friends around me that had babies you know they just kind of disappeared. You know for the first few months you don't ---sort of tiptoe around them not knowing what to do because you don't know what to do. It's like it's uncomfortable to step into someone's home. I mean I'm comfortable with that and I'm ok about just leaving my door open or people coming in and out. But after birth it's different, it's a different language that we're trying to establish.

**Amely Greeven:** [00:04:29] Yeah and we actually wrote the book for the mother-to-be to pick up during her third trimester pregnancy to help her anticipate and start thinking about postpartum. We also very much wrote it for the people who might be around her and might love her and might want to help. So they had a little field guide: what would she possibly be experiencing. What would be supportive? What wouldn't be supportive and how if I would really want to show up for them, how could I do that best. Because we talked a lot as we wrote about it about how challenging it is to negotiate all those conversations of who I want in my home, what kind of support I want. It's so hard to do that after the baby is here. So we wanted women to gently start the conversation while they still had some time, space, and energy to do it in a way that supported them so the book is to pass on and we even said at one point if you feel uncomfortable asking for help the right way, just show them this book and hopefully they'll absorb it and see you know what it is that would help you. Not what THEY want.

**Sarah Trott:** [00:05:37] So I'm holding a copy of the book in my hands and I've got a bunch of my little tabs where I marked up all of my favorite places. It's just so well-worn

now at this point. And I think that one section in particular that I really loved, which might speak to what you're describing as being a guide, is this list of the seven factors that influence the postpartum period. So it's like questions to ask yourself before the baby arrives.

**Amely Greeven:** [00:06:01] Exactly. Yeah we were very much into helping not just set the space that you're going to be in, your home and set your pantry with all the ingredients but also set your mind to what's going to come because I think probably for a lot of women going through their pregnancy care in a more conventional fashion where appointments are quick and your doctor probably doesn't give you much time these conversations may well not come up. And so we wanted to offer a space to contemplate for a moment what it's going to be like. What might it feel like when all this change starts to occur and if you want we could just briefly talk about the seven sort of questions if that's helpful.

**Heng Ou:** [00:06:44] Yeah. And you know in my take on that was it's really about having an inner voice with the mother first. You know you have your voice to yourself first and you ask yourself what is it that I really want for myself. And then you know it's a continual question that you ask yourself throughout your likelihood of being a mother. But I really wanted to stir something up inside the core and then you start to reach out to the people that are close to you that you trust and you start reaching out and asking them to advise or to help or to support you. So the key is you know as we're going through this step by step is that you know what truly do you really feel inside. And how do we really support you on that?

**Amely Greeven:** [00:07:33] It's interesting Heng because sometimes what comes up might go against the grain. I know when I had my daughter and I was older by conventional standards-- I was actually 40 when I had my daughter and I just knew I didn't want my in-laws to be there. And my own mother couldn't travel. I didn't want the hustle the energy-- they're wonderfully helpful but I just knew that it would be this sort of hustle and I wanted to sink into this experience of bonding with my baby. And I said you know I think it's OK to say you know come visit when she's three months old from the other side of the country-- they have to travel. And I know that's harder for younger

mothers especially if they are like oh how could I say I don't want them there on the first day or the second day and seven people in my house. So it's such a powerful thing to maybe have some other women tell you through the book it's OK to have those thoughts. Now let's help you articulate them.

**Heng Ou:** [00:08:26] Absolutely. And you know what that's so great about your practice too Amely-- knowing that you're able to create a space for yourself no matter where you are in your life no matter where you are in the world. So that's why it's important to take the time to say well I really have this opportunity now after birth to you know it could be 20 days it could be 10 days could be you know, two days. You know, it doesn't matter how many days you can actually accomplish this time. But it's really about carving that time out for yourself.

**Esther Gallagher:** [00:09:02] I want to put in a plug for postpartum care right here because often family members are, of course you know they're driven sometimes a little mad by the desire to see the new baby and get their hands on that new baby and say hi to you. But underneath that desire to say hi to you is often a real concern for their own child. Right. You're their baby and now you're going through a really enigmatic process. Pregnancy birth and postpartum. It's enigmatic because they don't even want to try to remember theirs. It was probably very fraught in some way or many ways but they're really concerned that you are well cared for even if they don't know how. And so what I find often is the case when I'm interviewing potential clients is that you know the parents-to-be are kind of not even considering that there is a process to be you know that they're going to be going through because they're so immersed in the pregnancy and focused on the birth. Which is why it's brilliant that your book invites them to think of the end of pregnancy as a time to be considering the fourth trimester. But I have found often in my 37 years of practice that often that sort of the strain that comes up between grandparent and new parent or parent and child as it were is "I'm worried for you. And you're telling me you don't want me to be there and I'm not going to stop worrying about you so I'm going to push this and you're going to feel pushed and it's uncomfortable." And then when they can say to their parents well we've enlisted this person or these people to support us in just these particular ways that we believe are going to be particularly nourishing and supportive, they can calm way down you know and they'll be

happy to Skype to see the baby and then come out and visit in three months. So that little intervention can be taken down from a really fraught emotional place between parent and child who's becoming a parent if you've had this process. If you've been able to say then having undertaken to read your book or interview with a few postpartum doulas about what will you do, how will you help me and then relay to the grandparents-to-be you know we have people who are going to take really good care of us. Often these days when people are giving birth at 40 their parents aren't able bodied enough to take care of them. That doesn't mean they're not anxious about it. Ask them to give you a nice gift of a postpartum Doula. You know. There are things that they can do to feel like they're really participating in your care. So that you can take good care of their grandchild.

**Heng Ou:** [00:12:38] I love that. I mean we're an action-base society so we want to you know step forward and put ourselves you know we want to do something. And I love-- there's so many different ideas which we're now expanding to which is fantastic and my whole goal is to really take postpartum as a real serious time in our lives-- as serious as birth, as serious as pregnancy. You know that's that's our goal here. I think that's everybody's goal here on this conversation.

**Esther Gallagher:** [00:13:09] Yeah we recently interviewed women Lisa Chin who also experienced the 40 days. And she put together a whole online summit to address postpartum care with all kinds of people that are involved in this phase. So your book is the perfect sort of capper to what I hope is a real movement.

**Heng Ou:** [00:13:41] I'm actually on that summit.

**Sarah Trott:** [00:13:46] And it sounds like you've also built your career around taking real action. So for example I understand that you have a business called Mother Bees which is about delivering food.

**Heng Ou:** [00:13:55] Yes that's how I started. You know after my third baby's birth. I really again wanted to be in my action mode and as great as you know any postpartum or birth you know we know that birth awakens a woman's body in some amazing way

and it's like you take that moment to take a little bit of rest and then you say wow these little percolating ideas are going to sort of come out somehow. And if you honor that and really cherish that something grand can really come and fortunately it came in my life after my birth. The third one, I thought you know what. Like what my answer to me-- My first birth was fantastic. But like how do we now incorporate that into our community. So after my birth I started making food for my friends. And you know some people here and there and that has blossomed to a small local delivery to new mothers. And then I do that for a good five years. And I did everything. It was a lot of work. You know and I put a lot of thought a lot of love into it. And what's so wonderful is that my clients felt that and I never ever met them. You know so the transition of you know what you put your attention on what you put into your food or anything in the book was also something I really wanted mothers all around the world to feel what we put in, in the words and how we cultivate it is something that when they open it, I want them to feel what we feel and their health and their love and their scene throughout the day and through the night. So Mother Bees started in 2010. The food deliveries went on for five years and then after five years this wonderful book came along and then I started to ease down on the service. And now I am on the way of making other products, food products from Mother Bees and that's going to be coming out in spring of 2017.

**Esther Gallagher:** [00:16:07] And what's the what's the range for this business. Is it Oakland?

**Heng Ou:** [00:16:15] Well at the moment it won't be fresh food delivery because it's just not something that I'm investing my time and energy into. But with the products-- they will it's you know their retail food products so they could have, because my whole goal was to have a wider reach, and then that we can anybody can buy it and enjoy it and really take the benefits. And it's all about, you know how do we nourish the mother, not just the new mother but the mother now, because we all have to think as a whole like we all are here to do this together. And it's a fantastic community that we're part of.

**Amely Greeven:** [00:16:56] Yeah I would throw in and I think this comes across in the book but Heng is kind of a kitchen alchemist. like if you go over to her kitchen it's really cool. There's always a pot of something on the stove and she makes it so effortless.

She just chops up the cubes of squash and she throws it in the broth and a handful of this and a pinch of that, really simple, really healthy, great ingredients, served with this love. And I can tell you that when she first came over to my house and said hey, Amely I want to do a book. And I was, I just had my daughter and I was like Oh yeah yeah yeah you know what. No one buys books written, unless you're celebrity these days. It's hard because I write books-- so hard. OK I just humored her, I said you can come if you want. And she came up with this basket with her cheese and some cashew milk. And so one of the amazing smoothies from the book it has maca, spirulina and I just my heart just started to rise up from this fatigued place. Oh my gosh you feel so cared for. And then she while I nursed my baby she got to work and just cleaned my kitchen without saying anything. And so there's something about this kitchen presence that is just sweet and kind and gentle and giving. And she taught taught me a lot about how giving food--one person to another-- is just a small gesture but that transfers so much energy across. And I hope whoever reads the book whether it's a mom or someone who loves her really starts to play with-- that maybe after you have your kid you find that your neighbor's pregnant and you make a chicken soup for them and you take it over. It's just such a wonderful thing to see their eyes light up in their heart swell and they say, "Oh thank you." And that's that's what went into the cooking. So none of this is Gourmet, complicated, difficult. Oh I need to learn things. It's like you can do this. We've done this for millennia. Let's just give you a few easy ways to do it in your kitchen. That's part of what it's about. And I know the products that she's developing are going to be really cool. I know what they are -- it's still a bit secret. So it really is about can we put oxytocin in a bottle and give it to you.

**Esther Gallagher:** [00:19:06] Yes we can.

**Heng Ou:** [00:19:06] And you know it's interesting for me to actually know that I don't know and you know maybe Esther you might have a better idea on this is like you know a lot of mothers and women might even say no but first when you make an offering. I'm very curious about that.

**Esther Gallagher:** [00:19:29] Well you know in the first week after having given birth you may remember-- as your uterus is involuting and your guts that used to be up in



your diaphragm are kind of settling back and all of your endorphins and oxytocin and hormones from laboring and birth are so focused on newborn and getting to and from the bathroom, the appetite hasn't engaged yet often right. Like often women will say well I'm just not hungry. And of course in a hospital setting if that's where they've given birth they have not necessarily been nourished. They've been taken care of clinically right and their sleep has been disrupted if they were going to get any. So they come home on day three, the milk is coming in, the brain isn't hooked up to the stomach yet. And so when I describe the postpartum care that I give and I'm going to be very specific to me because one of my frustrations with postpartum care is that so many doulas I know involve themselves not at all with the kitchen. Because what I love about hearing your story is the smells. And I think you know the smells activate the appetite right? They do. And so if people are just dropping off groceries or a lasagna--if I ever see another lasagna I'm not going to... it's not that I don't love a lasagna every 6 years. You don't need five pounds of lasagna. You know they're just it's just a different thing to have a soup or a stew or a you know whatever. Cookies baking right and wafting through the house. And you know and Ben would bake bread. I mean if that doesn't get your digestive juices flowing... so. And then what I do with clients, as Sarah can remember is, I'll say you know I'll tell partners for instance, like don't ask her if she's hungry or what she wants. If she has to think about it she'll say she's not hungry. And that's what happens. So what your job is when I'm not here for the 21 hours before you see me again is just put this beside her where she can reach it and it disappears. Sarah remembers like whoomph! Where is more? So I do think that Nourishment is key to recovery no matter why you're recovering from and birth is something that we do recover from. Maybe we just had a stitch in our vagina. You know maybe our nipples are torn up from breastfeeding a baby-- who knows what we're recovering from. We're always recovering from something and you just look at it in terms of the uterus and its recovery you know getting the right amount of protein and minerals and all those things to help the body do the job that takes two weeks to do to get that uterus back to where it's supposed to be so we don't bleed out, so bad things don't happen. It's why in Asian countries we developed this very strict protocol. I say we-- the protocol of keeping moms in bed, keeping them warm, keeping their babies at their sides breast feeding and feeding them appropriately day and night. So I'm just passionate about this. Like this is my whole gig. For many years and now I'm just sitting here thinking. I'm super

inspired to become a postpartum trainer. It's not that the postpartum trainings that are out there aren't lovely but I think you and I are going to use your book as a text and teach Doulas to cook because yes I can't tell you how often I meet a new doula and I ask her so what do you make your clients? Make? food. Do you prepare food for your clients?

**Heng Ou:** [00:24:25] It could be three ingredients and small things. Nothing too crazy. You know it could be just some sort of as you said. And as we are all animals you will get eaten if left by your bed. It's the animal instinct you will eat it, drink it somehow.

**Esther Gallagher:** [00:24:46] And nobody eats their placenta anymore unless it's in pill form.

**Amely Greeven:** [00:24:50] I did.

**Esther Gallagher:** [00:24:51] Unfortunately you don't have that immediate big nourishing karma-free meat, that gets you started, hormone rich gets you started. So unlike other great apes you don't have that.

**Amely Greeven:** [00:25:13] You'll notice in the book we took the controversial route including placenta smoothies which I'm sure a lot of people are going to go, "Oh my God." That came out in my experience and my-- it was so funny because my husband who, he just loves all things herbal and medicinal and sort of experiments like crazy and he said you're going to do placenta encapsulation why wouldn't you just have it raw, wouldn't it be more powerful. I bet Heng did that! And so the challenge he like laid the gauntlet was like Oh she can do it I guess I'll do it.

**Heng Ou:** [00:25:53] I didn't do that.

**Esther Gallagher:** [00:26:02] Neither did I and I really wanted to. This created a deficit.

**Heng Ou:** [00:26:07] I want to have another child just to do it.

**Amely Greeven:** [00:26:09] And I do feel it contributed.

**Esther Gallagher:** [00:26:14] On our Facebook page Sarah has been posting from a page that we've linked to called American Afterbirth and what's hilarious about it and your story, Amely, is that it's a dad who is making the movie about placentophagy-- it's a guy-- just hilarious and I love it. I mean I love that it's a dad. Of course it's going to be marginalized as out of his brains but he's right. The funniest thing is he's bragging about his eating his wife's placenta which I was like-- that's for HER! What do you mean you're eating her placenta?!?.

**Heng Ou:** [00:26:51] Yeah there's only so much that goes around then that's it.

**Sarah Trott:** [00:26:56] Yeah I think he's taking the Stein approach-- he's a food food writer isn't he? And so he sort of sees it as extreme eating. But that's so neat to spread awareness and we had actually an entire episode listeners if you're interested we have an entire episode you can look in our back catalog on our feed. We have like the history around that and how you know we talk about how Kim Kardashian ate her own placenta. But like to be less scary, what is the top one or two recipes in the book that you like and just tell us a bit about those.

**Amely Greeven:** [00:27:37] Well Heng I bet you would say that the Chicken Date Ginger Soup.

**Heng Ou:** [00:27:42] Yeah. And you know I must say I mean on a personal front. I love pig trotters and so I'm getting a lot of nods in the room too. And you know and again I would actually give birth again for the pig trotters.

**Esther Gallagher:** [00:27:58] We're gonna call this the "Gourmet" issue. I raised pigs as a girl and I love every bit of a pig.

**Heng Ou:** [00:28:16] I grew up with my two aunts and my uncle who were acupuncturists here in Oakland and I would walk into their offices whenever I would come to visit them. And you know the office still looks the same after 30 years. But I

would hear all the stories and see all these photos of all these mothers and babies that they've helped bring into this world because of fertility or infertility issues. And I always listened to their stories of how do we serve the spleen, how do we help the kidneys. Oh kidneys-- OK if you want to help the kidneys you give them pork kidneys. And it's just like a one from one-- one organ you serve by giving them organ meat. It was part of our conversation. It was never like oh that's kind of gross. It's like well, whatever we eat, there's always a purpose of why we eat it. So everything that was on the table was kind of medicinally made for us. So if you see it that way you know they've always said pig trotters will help with lactation and if it's pickled it has the ginger and has the brown rock sugar in it and the vinegar that helps you to just lactate. And you know there's the fish soup too that helps with the papaya that helps and seaweed soup and it's all about like as in theory. There's a reason. Right. And my whole take when I made the recipes was that we have that side and I know that it's not for everyone. But then how do you really think about what you're ingesting for one. And then other part is what's comforting for you. So you know I love making just a simple kabocha red lentil with coconut soup because that serves my heart. And that serves like that just makes me feel really good.

**Esther Gallagher:** [00:30:14] All that Vitamin A, it's so good for you.

**Heng Ou:** [00:30:17] It's all very good. It is. And it's kind of like well what's going to make me feel good? I want that. Yes sometimes the chips and that would make me feel good and I might take that. But that's a small percentage of my diet and that's fine because again it makes me happy. And you know our whole goal with here is how do we make-- how do we strive to just pull this out and and hopefully shine light on this beautiful woman who's just gone through this process and say you know you are here. You're going through this experience. And how do we just make you the most beautiful seen person and not worry about your body weight, not worry about anything else besides, How do we serve your heart. Right now; let's kind of do it for your belly first because that's easy and it's fun.

**Esther Gallagher:** [00:31:06] That is the way to the heart, not just in men.

**Amely Greeven:** [00:31:11] I was going to say Heng that's just why we included some delicious treats in there too we really thought about it because we were all quite healthy and yada yada but we're like we have to have these delicious sumptuous sensory treats to you know every tradition particularly in Ayurveda, there's like a bit of sweet will kind of balance you out not just raise your spirits but calm the vatta or the excess wind, so we also put delicious like a little spiced egg custard, soft, unctuous, creamy, sensory things that remind you there's delight when you're just exhausted. And my favorite I think my favorite recipe came from a wonderful midwife in Phoenix called Shell Lutrell who is so cool and she told me, the minute just like Esther just said, when the baby is born, I go into the pantry. I whip out these bit of cornmeal, a bit of cacao, maple syrup some cinnamon and chili powder and she makes this really rich warm hot chocolate that's inspired by a Hopi Indian tradition of putting a corn meal in. And she just presents this beautiful delectable rich warm warm drink. And I said what a loving gesture. So that's my favorite recipe.

**Heng Ou:** [00:32:24] So that's good. So nourishing and you know what. In terms of cooking something, my aunt loves to come in and just put a pot of black vinegar on the stove for one she feels like it, her theory is that it kills the germs in the room. But the smell there's something again, gets saliva going to get you going right. It just percolates and the senses again, and that's what we're saying as simple as something that's just-- not like you're drinking it but there's something that's kind of prickly in the air.

**Esther Gallagher:** [00:32:57] Your nose picks it up, it goes to the back of your brain and lights up your animal.

**Heng Ou:** [00:33:02] That gets going and then you create some wonderful soup on the side.

**Esther Gallagher:** [00:33:05] Tell us about black vinegar vinegar.

**Heng Ou:** [00:33:11] Well that's just it's like in the Chinese kitchen you know we have very simple ingredients: black vinegars definitely one of them. Sugar, oil, salt. Very simple. The umami flavors. and they rely on the ingredients because all the ingredients

are fresh. They go to the store daily and they rely on the flavors and the power of the you know the freshness. So the vinegar is always some kind of there's always a base to it you know because of the five flavors. You know it's either you know the percentage of more of this or more of that. But you go to my aunt's kitchen. It's kind of just those five flavors. It's really an empty kitchen. What she pulls out from that is incredible. And she's one of my favorite cooks. So she'd always say it's always black vinegar and it's wine as well because that helps you know pull out the vinegar or just it just it helps with like the alchemy of the food. And how that will kind of protect you and it's all about preserving the body. How do we preserve the body. So maybe it's about being vain but you know like it's like we want to look young, we want to feel young as long as we can and we want to be healthy as long as we can. And that's why we want to just take that moment to just preserve it. If it's black vinegar then it's black vinegar. That's what they do because Aunty says that.

**Sarah Trott:** [00:34:54] So let's say we have some new parents they're preparing to have a baby. What what you have and I want to reference this preparation list that you have here. Like what are the essential questions that they need to be asking themselves or thinking about?

**Amely Greeven:** [00:35:13] I think probably one of them is going to be "How is your space set up for you? For Mom." We talk about there's a lot of attention on the nursery being beautiful looking just like a Pinterest board and accessorized but actually the baby is not going to hang out in the nursery and not for the first few days. It's going to be on your body so is your bed comfortable? Is there a cozy chair you could sink into? You're not going to want to move around. Do you have just the furnishings set up so you can be in your cocoon? So we talk a lot about setting up your little cocoon and then a second big question: How am I going to eat? Who's going to feed me? We help the reader gather supplies during the third trimester which we call The Gathering and stalk her pantry and put some basics in the freezer. Some of our recipes for broth and so forth. How am I going to be fed? Which we've already talked about. We talk about again that question of who do I want around me. Who will be supportive? We talk about assembling your helping hands and really thinking about that. And then a really key one is what's the effect going to be on my relationship with my partner? Just trying to think it

through. You know how do we do when we're under stress and we are sleep deprived and we're hungry? What are our patterns? How could we talk about it in advance. I might get a bit snappy and I don't want you to take it personally and we help the woman see there are just little things you can do to acknowledge your partner. Because remember, as tired as you're going to be, they're not going to get the oxytocin rush in the middle of the night from nursing that helps them fall back to sleep-- they might even be more tired than you. They might be wondering what's my role here? You know so really talking through some expectations in your relationship beforehand, we call it Fortifying Your Relationship. And lastly we talked about what can you set up to honor yourself for this rite of passage you're going through and you might want to think about if there's something lovely and group oriented like a blessingway which we talk about in the book-- a gathering to honor your transition to motherhood. Or it might be little simple things like having a friend come and just hug you and give me a foot massage. But we lay out a sort of five general areas to think about during your third trimester.

**Sarah Trott:** [00:37:39] It seems like a practical and helpful exercise for a new parent to go through. Like a woman who's in her third trimester or a couple who is about to adopt a baby just to look through this list and maybe journal what all of that looks like for themselves or the people they're caring for. To a degree but really just for the person who's about to become a parent. Like really think through those things and be aware. I get the feeling that had I not been asked some of these questions by Esther when she was helping prepare me I probably would have just defaulted. Now like there would have been things that I was aware of but I wasn't necessarily just sitting down and truly thinking about the answers to.

**Heng Ou:** [00:38:18] What would be your default because you're a career driven woman and mother, new mother. You know what were those options or thoughts that came through.

**Sarah Trott:** [00:38:31] I think the default for me would just be to look back to my own experiences whatever I can remember about my mom telling me about the way she raised me or my brothers and just kind of looking back to my own experience and accepting whatever that was as the way--which I think is true for both practical things

and emotional things, like to look back and say, "OK well my mom didn't have necessarily a lot of care--" like I'm aware that my dad's mom was there helping her out a little bit but I got the impression that she did kind of a lot of things on her own and didn't necessarily prioritize her own care.

**Esther Gallagher:** [00:39:09] And the phrase that goes along with most Western women's postpartum experience is, "you just get through it."

**Sarah Trott:** [00:39:18] I think I just had these assumptions that I wasn't thinking about anything negatively, it was just like ok well yeah I know it's going to be hard. Like I'm aware there's going to be a challenge. And let's just do it and what's awesome about what I've learned from Esther and the two of you and many many other women now that I've had the opportunity to speak with is that there's a way to create your postpartum experience. There is a way to think about it and change it and make it exactly what you want.

**Heng Ou:** [00:39:49] Love it.

**Esther Gallagher:** [00:39:52] And that's given that as I said before, it is enigmatic much like pregnancy. Much like birth. You can't plan it. You don't know what you're going to be experiencing one hour to the next in terms of what your baby's needs might feel like, what your needs and emotional state might be like. But you can know some things about it that are true for all of us, which is that you will be healing, you will be recovering, you will one way or the other be establishing a relationship around feeding your baby, You'll need to sleep, You'll need to eat, You'll need to use the bathroom.

**Heng Ou:** [00:40:47] Natural instincts, right.

**Sarah Trott:** [00:40:50] And I love the notion of using or taking the opportunity to train other people and how to take care of the parents. So I would love to just talk about that. What are the top recommendations you have for people who are about to take care of someone else?



**Heng Ou:** [00:41:08] For the other party?

**Sarah Trott:** [00:41:10] Right. For grandparent or friend or whoever.

**Heng Ou:** [00:41:14] That's wonderful and that's why the conversation needs to start earlier and not during birth not during labor. Not when you don't know what's going to happen. Right. And so that's the key for us is to have it during the second and the third trimester you know just when the nesting and the physical nest is just-- wanting to build that home that bedroom is happening. So you know pick one or two really important maybe female friends and your partner. And look first you know with your partner first because you have to always work with your core first, yourself. So it's you know first you know I think it's important to have that one conversation or several conversations with yourself first. What are your needs, like how do you want to fulfill them? And then you reach out to your partner in having that conversation and kind of talk about the practical needs, emotional needs, the spiritual needs. And then you reach out to your family or your friends if they're not around and then you sort of ask them-- what your needs are. Because if you have the help at home maybe you don't need the cleaning, maybe you don't need the person to help you cook. Maybe you just need a friend to come by to say hello. But you know there is a time limit too, saying you know what I kind of love to have company. But I think I can only take 20 minutes and maybe 30 minutes stretch time. But you know what, maybe I'm in bed. Maybe you're holding my baby and maybe I'm just brushing my teeth because I haven't done that in three days. So let's talk practical because like you're not in your best state. You're not looking pretty. Maybe your boobs are leaking and everything is just kind of messy and ugly. And that's all very OK and that's what we're saying it's all OK. So that's why we are choosing people who are coming into our little circle and saying you know I'm very vulnerable here and I want to feel that I'm being loved and supported and these are my needs and I hope that you can meet them.

**Esther Gallagher:** [00:43:27] Yeah. I would add to that--I reinforced this constantly. Sarah's probably gotten bored with me now. If sleep is a critical part of recovery the way food is that-- And I think often during pregnancy even though that the last month of pregnancy often women are starting to contend with like I just have to take naps. You

know I can't get through a 24 hour period on what I get at night because I'm not getting it at night anymore. That recognizing that the first six to 12 weeks of postpartum recovery also are going to be like that-- you're up at night breastfeeding. So you're not sleeping eight to 12 hours at night. So sleeping when your baby sleeps is critical and sufficient but if you don't sleep when your baby sleeps you're not going to get enough sleep. So I think preparing friends and family and other care providers so that I will be sleeping when my baby sleeps. So if you're going to prepare me a sitz bath that you know, don't just make it and then tell me to get in it. Check in with me so that we know that the baby is breastfeeding now and maybe I'll be breastfeeding in the tub to have my sitz bath because once I get out I'm going to jump in bed with the baby and sleep. That's a more technical example in a way. But feed your new mom while she's feeding her baby. If that means spooning the food into her while you chat and she breastfeeds great because then she's nourished, the baby's nourished and they can sleep together and have a full sleep because she's not going to wake up hungry. So I think you know these are like strictly very practical tips but it's not how we think, right. We think well as soon as the baby is asleep I can do what I have to do.

**Heng Ou:** [00:45:52] And I remember when I did not do that you know the breast infections came and then I was dehydrated because I didn't want to drink a glass of water and go to the bathroom 60 times a day you know. But if I didn't do that it really showed up in my breasts and my breast milk and infections came on immediately. So when I started to nap when the baby napped everything flowed a lot better and my mind settled. It's a cycle isn't it. If you don't catch it early it's just going to catch you some time.

**Esther Gallagher:** [00:46:28] Right. And you said your mind settled which touches on a critical health issue in America which is that we're now seeing that 20 percent minimum of women experience mood disorder during during the postpartum period. Well why do we think that is? We have a we have a structure that traumatizes them during birth, then takes care of them in the clinical sense for two days but doesn't allow them to sleep, then sends them home on day three when their milk is coming in with no support, and doesn't nourish them. So we can, as far as I'm concerned we could bring that number

way down if we were preparing women and their families to sleep when the baby sleeps and eat when the baby eats.

**Heng Ou:** [00:47:34] Makes a lot of sense and very very simple. Right. That's what we're saying first, because we're here to mother the mother. If we think of that as a concept. It's just she's-- she's not a baby. We know that. But you know we all have those basic needs and we all have those very simple needs.

**Esther Gallagher:** [00:47:54] Well when people have to be hospitalized because they are in an accident somebody feeds them and bathes them and does everything for them because they're in recovery. And this is where we fail to acknowledge it for women-- so often in life for women. We are never in recovery. We're always taking care of everybody else. But there is a way to be both recovering and caring for your baby at the same time. It's not an either/or proposition. And your book is just so lovely in acknowledging it.

**Heng Ou:** [00:48:38] Thank you. And my belief is like you know when we do that and you know and I know a lot of people say Well six weeks is so long and 40 days. Well I don't think I can stay in. And I need to go and show up to do my stuff. I know that when I'm with a woman-- when we have our little power juices going. Like we could then come out of that recovery period, because we're not sick, that's for one, we're not. Our bodies are just internally going back into place the organs are. But if we do that we come out and we can like feed thousands of people or we can do so much. We're making milk. I mean that's pretty incredible already. But we can come out like work and do this and do that. The like we're pretty-- it's pretty powerful you know. Yeah. You're making milk I mean it's outstanding. I mean so again that we know it's there and we want to tap into it and say well it's in all of us. We all know this. Basically I believe that every woman out there knows like the basic instinct of what we talked about in The First 40 days and we're just here to really say it's in you. Let's really pull it out and be the best of who you actually are. And let's take this moment because you just gave birth to this life that you just made. I mean that's incredible. I mean look, think, then celebrate. Outstanding.

**Esther Gallagher:** [00:50:16] Well and I think the part that I always try to bring forward for families, that's sort of secreted in your title The First 40 days is something that my gay Chinese tai chi teacher says. We talk about my work. And he says, oh you know everybody knows that this expression in Asia which is 40 days for 40 years-- that the way that mother is supported in her first 40 days is going to show up 40 years later in her health and wellbeing. And you know look, women have to then be grandparents. All right. We have to sustain the family for many many many years to come. It's not just squirt a baby out and get on with life. And we don't acknowledge that in the West. And I think it's why we see so much breakdown in physical and emotional health and relationships.

**Amely Greeven:** [00:51:38] Now you know that was one of the things from the book that really stood out to me was that in [an Asian postpartum practice] but in that practice traditionally, they talk about it's not just a time of recovery but of actually establishing yourself as more beautiful, more radiant, more enlivened than ever before. Traditionally they saw postpartum as one of three major junctures in a woman's life. So puberty, postpartum and menopause, where a huge shift was occurring that when done wisely with proper care is super empowering. And we heard that a lot that you know what you do now during these 40 days will show up for the four decades or so to come. So a good first 40 days really well taken care of, keeping warm, keeping excess wind and chill out of the body, will reflect in healthier reproductive state and a better menopause and conversely the opposite. So exactly, I found that in all my research and in Ayurveda they would say 42 days for the next 42 years- it's pretty consistent worldwide. So interesting.

**Heng Ou:** [00:52:52] Yeah it's great. I mean you know and I remember you know with my midwife she's Sikh and she does you know she's a home birth midwife. But you know they say you know what, give yourself, your body two years if you're thinking about the second child. And you know even with the Chinese culture we're the same. You know my aunt would often say you know how do you fill the baby room? Because it's the baby room left and there is an empty space there. So visualize that it's like a well. If you really visualize it was taken up by the baby and you know since another baby just left there's a baby room there that's empty. How do we-- now you get the

power, the choice to say this is what I want to fill it back with. Now you might see it differently. And if you're thinking about the second or third child, how do you want to replenish your body. Even better than before.

**Esther Gallagher:** [00:53:50] I love that image. Yeah. Do you want to throw another baby into an empty room?

**Sarah Trott:** [00:53:59] Well we're going to wrap up on that visualization in that final thought so thank you so much again for being on our program. Thank you so much to our sponsors. We now have a Patreon page. Anyone who's interested in sponsoring us please do. And listeners, Esther and I have been doing this for the better part of a year. We don't actually know who you are so we set up a newsletter sign up that's on our website. So if you go to the fourth trimester podcast dot com and sign up for a newsletter. We will have a way to share our new content with you and our thoughts with you. And we would really value that and we think you would like it too. So please go ahead and do that. So thank you so much again ladies. We really enjoyed this and we learned a lot from you.

**Heng Ou:** [00:54:37] Thank you.

**Amely Greeven:** [00:54:38] Thank you for having us.

**Sarah Trott:** You can find out more about Esther Gallagher on <http://www.esthergallagher.com/>. You can also subscribe to this podcast in order to hear more from us. [Click here for iTunes](#) and [click here for Google Play](#). Thank you for listening everyone and I hope you'll join us next time on the Fourth Trimester. The theme music on this podcast was created by Sean Trott. Hear more at <https://soundcloud.com/seantrott>. Special thanks to my true loves: my husband Ben, daughter Penelope, and baby girl Evelyn. Don't forget to share the Fourth Trimester Podcast with any new and expecting parents. I'm Sarah Trott. Goodbye for now.