

Fourth Trimester Podcast

Episode 134: The Top 5 Questions Parents Ask in New Parent Groups with Mikka Bonel, Postpartum Ayurvedic Doula

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>

Sarah Trott: [00:00:00] Hi, I'm Sarah Trott and welcome back to the Fourth trimester Podcast. I'm here with my co-host Esther Gallagher and with a special guest, Mikka Bonel today, and we have a really great episode for you. We're talking about the top five questions that come up in new parent circles or new parent groups, and this is a really cool topic. Mikka leads these circles at a wonderful place called Natural Resources, and we'll talk more about that online option as well, because they have online courses as well as in person.

Sarah Trott: [00:00:28] I want to tell you more about Mikka. So Mikka is a certified Ayurvedic postpartum doula. She's a movement educator. She's a passionate advocate for holistic postpartum care, and she has over 1500 hours of training in yoga, birth education, and bodywork. And she brings an absolute wealth of wisdom to supporting new parents in their journey.

And of course, we know that early parenthood comes with all kinds of emotions. There's joy and overwhelm, exhaustion, frustration, everything, and often all at the same time. Right? Anger. All of these feelings can coexist. And so if you've ever wondered, like, am I doing this right? Or why is this so hard? You are not alone. Yeah, it's a hard time to be a parent, but it's always a tough time to be a parent. As we were just chatting about before we hit record here. So we're going to break down those top five questions and see where our conversation leads us today. So let's get started. Welcome Mikka and Esther.

Mikka Bonel: [00:01:25] Thank you. Thank you so much. Yes I'm excited.

Esther Gallagher: [00:01:28] Hello again. Yeah.

Sarah Trott: [00:01:31] Mikka, do you want to give yourself a quick introduction in your own words?

Mikka Bonel: [00:01:34] Yeah, sure. I mean, gosh, you did such a beautiful job. Yeah. I'm a postpartum ayurvedic doula, and I'm also a yoga teacher. I teach some of the core classes at Natural Resources, which has a home in the Mission District in San

Francisco. Nonprofit organization. and then primarily, I spend my time driving from house to house and helping humans in whatever form that they need, especially during the postpartum phase of their life, but also physical and emotional aches and pains prenatally as well. So I do a lot of one-on-one work as well as communal work.

Sarah Trott: [00:02:12] Wonderful and Esther you really need no introduction, but since it's been a few episodes since you've been on the show, do you want to say hi and talk a little bit about yourself?

Esther Gallagher: [00:02:21] I've been in postpartum and sometimes birth doula here in San Francisco since 1992. I have a background in home birth. My children and grandchild were born at home. I've taught childbirth prep and postpartum prep and parenting circles and all of the things. Like Mikka. I would say the big difference between me and Mikka is I haven't gotten all those thousands of years, thousands of hours of certification credits in bodywork per se. Although I've had a very long yoga yogic practice and bring yoga with me when I'm working with families. And then the other main difference is I bicycle to my clients. I don't own a car.

Mikka Bonel: [00:03:03] I used to do that until I had to bring around a massage table, so I resonate with that deeply.

Esther Gallagher: [00:03:10] Yeah.

Mikka Bonel: [00:03:11] So sorry. I was just going to say the other thing that I also am a mom as well. I have an eight year old daughter. Her artwork is behind me and is probably the most inspiration for me personally and to why I do this work. So I forgot to make that very important point.

Sarah Trott: [00:03:29] Speaking of babies, Mikka, we always like to welcome our guests to share a little bit about their own fourth trimester experience, because everyone's experience is unique and there may be some words of wisdom or a relatable story that you'd want to share to our listeners.

Mikka Bonel: [00:03:46] Yeah, absolutely. So I'll tell a little bit about my labor experience, which quite often will inform your postpartum experience too, but I had a sort of planned, or the intention was to have a home birth, and I ended up 72 hours later having a caesarean birth at UCSF. And you know, through that experience, I feel like I was really boot camped into the world of the unknown. and how to expect the unexpected, which is basically what the fourth trimester brings, is really learning to manage and navigate your own fears and anxieties around controlling that which we do not have control over. And then what it is that we can actually control. So, you know, I was sort of thrown into this postpartum phase of there's already deep, deep, deep exhaustion and physical recovery that's necessary during that time.

Mikka Bonel: [00:04:40] And I think because I had labored for three days and had a pretty intense sort of medical intervention as well, which was needed. And I'm so grateful for it because more than likely, neither myself nor my daughter would have survived. Survived the experience. Deeply, deeply grateful for that help. And I noted that sort of a more holistic approach to the recovery was also super, super important because I wasn't really given a lot of tools or really many tools at all in terms of recovering, particularly from a cesarean birth. So I learned the hard, hard way or sort of the way by trial and error, realizing like, oh, I can't really move to do x, y, and Z. And so I really need to build a larger community of support, which is very difficult to do on the fly.

Mikka Bonel: [00:05:30] And it also completely informed my choices down the line to work as particularly as a postpartum doula, which I think a lot of people are. I feel like I hear most postpartum doula stories are like, yeah, my postpartum period was too rough and it seems like it could be easier. So we're going to help to create that continuum of care and Sarah like you were talking earlier, You know, it brought so many different feelings. I remember feeling deep, deep gratitude and excitement and fulfillment at the exact same time as feeling at a complete loss, like I had no one. I was completely alone and overwhelmed and super confident and with no confidence. You know, it really is this time where you feel polar opposites at the exact same time.

Mikka Bonel: [00:06:14] And I found that the people who I was with, people who would come to visit me, would oftentimes bolster the happy feelings and would kind of dilute or

in a way, they were I felt like they were trying to shield me or protect me from the harder feelings. But unfortunately, what it really did was kind of put a damper on them and invalidate those feelings. And if I was having those feelings, it also made me feel oftentimes like I was a failure or there wasn't something. There was something that I was missing that I wasn't doing right. You know, for example, feeling super exhausted and having a beautiful, wonderful friend come over and saying, wow, I see your postpartum glow and you just seem so grounded and chill and you know, it immediately made me.

Mikka Bonel: [00:06:56] Rather than feeling validated, I actually felt like, oh, I better not share all the like, shit. Like I better not share the fact that I actually wouldn't call what I have a glow. I would call it a haze. I would say that I'm in avoidance right now, and that I'm so overwhelmed that all I can do is stare at you, you know? And so but I remember also being like, I do also feel like we kind of have this amnesia that gets kind of pumped into our system. So that comes six months, months postpartum. We're already then the next sort of generation or group of parents who are then feeding that same kind of stuff back into parents who are now newly giving birth, even with a six month old, how much changes during that time? And then we sort of feed back into that loop of, oh, wow, you're doing such a great job.

Mikka Bonel: [00:07:48] And you know it's going. Everything's going to be fine. You're doing great. And while that's important to be told, you're doing great. What I made sure to remind myself during those hard times was to really, really remember what felt hard because I wanted to make sure that I could tell other parents that it was also hard for me, and that whatever it is that they're going through is exactly what it should be. Exactly, exactly what it needs to be. Because our own experience is exactly that. It's our own experience. So I suppose I'll stop there, because I think that's like the background piece of my postpartum time.

Esther Gallagher: [00:08:19] I'm going to just tag on to the end there. That was beautifully, beautifully described and, and addressed and, and what I want to also say into the world, as I have many times because Sarah has given me that opportunity, is that I had super healthy pregnancies and very straightforward home births. And my

experience of postpartum was that it was grueling and sometimes identity crushing. And, you know, I'm certainly nowadays I might have been given a diagnosis of postpartum depression, but my experiences of postpartum doula for all these years, which is about 47, is that you don't have to qualify for that definition and have something be wrong with you. Right. Therefore, to be in this experience that you're describing, right?

Esther Gallagher: [00:09:19] This paradox of while the world thinks I'm just swimming along here and I'm not sure I can even take a breath. So thank you for that great description. And as I'm sure you'll talk about in terms of running groups, even people who think pregnancy and birth was a breeze might have a really different experience in the first three months, especially Of healing, recovering. Getting to know the world, etc.. And then the other thing is, you know, you were very generous in terms of the feedback. The world was giving you and your description there.

Esther Gallagher: [00:09:56] And I imagine it's not just me who experienced people saying to me, if I ever let on that I was tired, let alone exhausted, or what? Or if the baby was crying and I somehow couldn't get them to stop, you know that. I mean, I remember hearing it in a very loud voice, come my way. What's wrong with you? Mhm. Right. So even if the message is soft from the world. Oh, you're doing great. You know, there's also this other message which is verbalized not just in our heads. Yeah. Right. It gets verbalized that there's something wrong with a woman or a birth giver who can't control their baby.

Mikka Bonel: [00:10:42] Absolutely.

Esther Gallagher: [00:10:43] Or, you know, is broken if everything isn't perfectly perfect with their kid. So I know I'm always the one who puts the harsh spin on things on this show. But I want people to hear this because if they're experiencing it, it's not them who's broken. Right. It's the culture that we're being held by, in my opinion. Okay. There you go.

Sarah Trott: [00:11:08] Well, and to that end, like I think the you're both talking about is this idea that, you know, people want to bolster us, but not necessarily acknowledge or address the other side of the feeling spectrum. And that can be really hard to experience and damaging. We're saying yes to the encouragement and the positive. Hard yes, we want that. But then it's also okay to have these other feelings and acknowledge them and talk about them, because you can't really experience the high highs unless you also experience your lows, which are very real and, and normal and okay.

Sarah Trott: [00:11:41] And that was actually one of our themes and our questions that we talked about. So we can just go in and dive into that one first. Right. So beautiful, the theme is that all feelings are okay. Because you were telling me, Mikka, that you're in your new parent circles. There's a lot of questions around, you know, like new parents saying, like they're experiencing these range of emotions, including anger and sadness, resentment, all of these things alongside of the joy. And so how can we normalize these feelings while ensuring they don't negatively impact our relationships?

Mikka Bonel: [00:12:13] Yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean, I feel like this comes to mind a lot of times. but I talk about In the Circle is checking in with those pieces and really allowing those pieces to have voice and to have space, and then recognizing that it also might not be a part of you like I said, sort of call it your deepest and most grounded self, right? That we kind of have like this big and I'm pointing down here just because when I think of like the center of myself, I do think of that part of my body that that is like in the center, physically in the center of my body, which then allows me to sort of nervous system wise, spiritually, however, you kind of connect with that concept of centeredness.

Sarah Trott: [00:12:53] Mikka's pointing to her middle chest, by the way, for audio listeners. Yes. In the center of her chest.

Mikka Bonel: [00:12:58] Yes. I'm pointing to the middle of my solar plexus.

Mikka Bonel: [00:13:02] Which can be a great place to check in with yourself. And so yeah, especially when these sort of outbursts of multiple emotions happening at the exact same time is to really allow yourself to take pause and breathe. Because I think what can happen is that sort of anxiety of all these feelings can take over, and it feels like there's like this problem that needs to be solved, when really it's just more of needing a voice or a cushion to be held in. And so being able to take pause and let those feelings be there and part of it is normalizing it within the culture. But I think the best way in some ways to do that is normalizing it within yourself. And the more that you practice that normalization right, then the more other people see you also taking pause.

Mikka Bonel: [00:13:46] Sometimes I remember, even for myself, who I was diagnosed with postpartum anxiety, like down the line. But something that I started practicing with myself is just not caring as much around what the surroundings were, and physically placing my hand on my heart or on my center. Sometimes it was like closing my eyes and forcefully slowing down the next words that would come out of my mouth, so that I really had an opportunity to slow it all down, let the feelings be there, and then really articulate what my actual need was. And it was really scary to do because I, I came from a culture of like taskmaster and like getting things done and problem solving and like, which is all beautiful and fabulous and necessary.

Mikka Bonel: [00:14:29] But when out of balance can feel like the only way to sort of quote unquote, solve our problems. But what I actually found by doing this practice, especially in the city, especially with other birthing humans and their and their supportive community too, is that people watched and went, oh, wait a second. And they started slowing down their breath, and then they were able to hear what I was saying. And then when I said, no, I'm having a really hard time right now and that's okay. Then they wanted to share what was hard for them rather than like, dampening.

Mikka Bonel: [00:15:00] And there was so interesting how just like efficiency can be contagious, so can slowing down and having, you know, mindful practices can also be contagious. So yeah, I guess that was that was a piece that I just wanted to share in terms of like my own experience, but then also with teaching within the circle as well of really letting those all those pieces that have multiple feelings be there, and to also trust

that those feelings are temporary. And so when you slow down and breathe, then the stuff that really what you really want to or need to focus on, which emotion to focus on, to breathe into will actually sort of come forth when you can slow down.

Sarah Trott: [00:15:36] Wonderful. Thank you. Yeah. Some of the some of the things we talked about when we were prepping around, this was just the idea of it's okay to be vulnerable, and it's also okay to have all of these feelings, like it's okay to be angry and resentful. It's actually kind of common, right? It'd be odd if you have ups and downs, right? That would make us a little robotic. yes. And then also, the point you were making earlier, too, is like, it's really you don't you don't necessarily need to, like, try to keep a tight grip on the feelings. It's more like the behavior coming out of those feelings that are really important to control. What's the point that you made really beautifully before too?

Mikka Bonel: [00:16:10] Yeah, you're reminding me, actually, of some of a few, many different people actually in the circle who've you know, started talking. It's always interesting to like when, especially when I have new people coming in and it almost always will start with, yeah, everything's great, everything's fine. And it's like the pitch is higher too, which is interesting. And then there's that one beautiful human being who cannot hold it in any longer and just starts to burst into tears. And it's like, okay, you know, now we're in the juice. Like, now we can really hold space for each other and that those tears might be coming from a place of exhaustion. They might be coming from a place of, you know, in fact, they are almost always coming from a place of exhaustion and usually coming from a place of, like fear of their own baby, that they're not getting their needs met in some way.

Mikka Bonel: [00:16:52] And this massive amount of pressure that we need to be, you know, checking off all of these specific boxes to make sure that we're raising our child in the perfect way when the beauty is like looking at this quote unquote perfect way. Thank you very much. Because there is no such thing. There's truly no such thing if you're giving your baby love, if they're getting fed and they're sleeping somewhat regularly, like they're going to you're going to be okay, babe.

Mikka Bonel: [00:17:15] Will be physically. But these fears come up and and a lot of times those tears can also come from a place of like, I was feeling really angry and pissed off at my tiny human, this tiny, you know, 8 pound, maybe 10 pound human being and maybe, maybe much less than that to feeling really angry with them and then feeling extreme guilt around feeling angry or feeling really angry at your partner, or angry at your your mom or dad or whoever your support circle is. That on one spectrum might even be giving everything, quote unquote, that's needed, or they might not be at all to you. Your needs might not be getting met.

Mikka Bonel: [00:17:53] But I do find that a commonality, regardless of how much your needs are getting met or not, is just the deep guilt around feeling angry or upset with them. And that the truth is, there actually is absolutely no wrong way to feel in life in general, but especially during this time, there's absolutely no wrong feeling. And again, when we're able to give space to those feelings, then you can actually navigate, okay, what the need is. And then behavior can go accordingly. But the actual feeling is never, never, never the issue.

Sarah Trott: [00:18:28] Thank you. You mentioned our second question, so I'm going to steer us into that direction. Yeah. Which is the pressure right. So our second theme was around balance and confidence and the pressure that new parents feel to get it right all the time. And so how can we let go of the idea of perfection and build confidence in our own instincts? And I want to hear from you Esther on this one.

Esther Gallagher: [00:18:52] Well, I was just having the thought about how often in interviews and in life and in all kinds of places in the prenatal space when I might broach the subject of postpartum at all. or it comes up how often I hear and have heard usually male bodied humans / Non-pregnant / Not going to be postpartum bodies Say, well, we got this right. I mean, and that's just it, right? Like that's all they've got. But that's that's the idea that's kind of hitting hit in the floor. Like, you know, why wouldn't we have this. You know, we had little brothers and sisters or you know, we did this or that or it's instinctive isn't it?

Esther Gallagher: [00:19:46] But when poked and prodded a little deeper, they have to admit that, in fact, they have very little experience. They've never been postpartum or even in a postpartum space since they themselves were infants. Because this is our culture. We barely have female bodied people in a postpartum space prior to giving birth themselves, and we definitely don't have male bodied people in that space, right? So the level of involvement is superficial at best. And then as Mikka, no doubt experienced as well, I know you did Sarah I did when people come to visit, even if they themselves have given birth.

Esther Gallagher: [00:20:29] Even within the last six months. The amnesia effect is potent, and if they themselves got no real abiding support during that period for themselves, they've learned nothing about how to give postpartum support. They're not to be blamed for that. But the fact is, they've got nothing right. So on either side of this, really, in my opinion, the most intense period of the whole perinatal period, people are just floundering. They've got nothing.

Esther Gallagher: [00:20:59] And so it really does take ongoing, you know, stirring the pot culturally to get any sort of recognition that, hey, this is the biggest thing that you're ever going to do, actually. And it might be good to give yourself some, you know, the gift of some humility and ask out into your community, hey, you know, what do you think we're going to need to get through this period intact and and feeling supported. Ask yourself, do you even think that the feeling of being supported is something you let yourself have now, let alone when you have a third person for whom you will be feeling quite responsible and accountable? So that's my take.

Mikka Bonel: [00:21:47] Yeah. May I just sort of dovetail off of that or continuum? Because I think it is really interesting how there's, there's this sort of generational support or, or a space of like when I think of like my mom or other grandparents who kind of come into the picture and there's this sense of, you know, well, I just had to make to make it happen. We just had to just sort of figure it out because we didn't have the type of like, we didn't have a lot of support. We didn't have a lot of information out there. You know, my mom often talks to me about she's like the information that you're able to read on the internet is, like, just astounds, astounds her.

Mikka Bonel: [00:22:21] And that I can get, you know, I have all this education at my fingertips. On the other side of that, there is this sort of infiltration of information where I am overwhelmingly having people say over and over and over again, well, I read this thing, this one thing here, or I read this other thing there, I read this right and it's like, well, I should be doing this type of sleep coaching at three weeks, right? Or I should be feeding my baby this specific way or I should, should should should should. And I noticed that that's like the most common word that I see over and over again is I should be doing this.

Mikka Bonel: [00:22:59] I should be doing that. And as with anything there's like beauty to this ability to be able to gather information, right. As like human beings. That's part of our nature is to be able to gather, gather, gather. And then there's that other piece that hasn't been honed yet that hasn't been trained yet, which is the hunter, which is the person who is then able to clarify and get really focused and honed in on what information is actually helpful for the self. So while we've been told, hey, there's all this information, how you can be the quote unquote perfect parent.

Mikka Bonel: [00:23:31] Unfortunately, what that actually tends to do is just put a huge amount of undue pressure onto this sort of mythical creature of this perfect parent. Instead of teaching this extra component, which is how do we choose the tools from our toolbox? And then how do we build our own toolbox that we get to use? Yes, has maybe some data driven content, but is also bolstered or sort of navigated most deeply with your own instinct and that practice of self trust. So one of my favorite phrases is stop shitting on yourself. Like stop shitting on yourself over and over again to tell yourself what you should and shouldn't be doing, and instead ask, what is it that I would like to see different? What is it that I need? And oftentimes that need is I need more sleep, right? Or I need more rest.

Mikka Bonel: [00:24:24] And then. So what we do is we then go online and you know, obviously this is for every single human. But I do notice this pattern is that we then go online to fix the quote unquote problem, thinking that the problem is our baby thinking that the problem is that our baby isn't sleeping enough. And if I could fix (again, using

that word, fix) my baby's sleep, then I could get more rest. Then I could get more sleep. That puts a lot of pressure on baby.

Mikka Bonel: [00:24:48] And then unfortunately, if it's not happening, if your baby isn't sleeping the way that you would like your baby to sleep, then you feel like a failure, right? Because that one blog told you that if you do XYZ, then your baby will sleep this amount of hours. And we're just not that simple. Human beings are just simply not that simple. Where our own dynamic creatures, each one is individual and each nucleus meaning your nuclear family has different needs too. So because of sort of for marketing purposes.

Mikka Bonel: [00:25:21] The information that's out there online is sort of reduced to this ten step program or like three things that you can do when it's just it doesn't quite work that way, and it's not really taking into account what your needs are. So the good news is that there's ways to navigate this data so that you can use it to your advantage. But it's really about honing in and, and um, teaching yourself and or practicing these skills amongst community amongst others, where we again are able to sit with feelings first and then actually point to what your real need is, and maybe not necessarily relying on your baby to solve that issue with for you, but relying on community.

Mikka Bonel: [00:26:01] And that's really where building your community, like Esther you were talking about, like making sure you're resourced and having people to support you so that when you are really feeling strained or feeling exhausted and needing that extra support and help, that you have it so that you can navigate however your precious one sleeps, while also making sure that you are also getting rest that you need. And the reason why you're getting rest is because you're being supported by other adults, and that you're not having to rely on just your babe to be able to give you what you need.

Esther Gallagher: [00:26:32] Again, we've iterated it a zillion times on this show that what everyone needs is eating, sleeping, and bathroom time.

Mikka Bonel: [00:26:42] Got to have the basics.

Esther Gallagher: [00:26:44] And that's all you need physiologically to then be able to do anything else, right? So if you're if you're not sleeping and you think you know what's wrong, I don't you know, I can't sleep. Well, maybe you haven't had enough to eat. Your body's going to know, right? You were using hunter gatherer language earlier?

Mikka Bonel: [00:27:05] Yeah.

Esther Gallagher: [00:27:06] The hunter will get activated if it's hungry. Not the sleeper. The hunter. So if you can't sleep, it's probably you're not getting enough calories postpartum. And that. I just can't tell you how often that's the case for new postpartum bodies. And then the second thing is your sleep is being disrupted by adults, not your baby. And then the third thing is your screens. And that's actually very high on the list these days of what's what people are doing instead of sleeping. And that's not a should. That's just a reality check, right? You can't. Your brain lights on fire. If you're looking at a screen, try not to. Try looking at your baby. Just try. You know you don't have to. It's not a should, but you could try it.

Esther Gallagher: [00:27:52] There's something very soporific about a sleeping baby I find. Makes me want to go right to sleep if I've got a sleeping baby, you know, nearby. So I think, yeah, we've, we've sort of gotten, we've all pointed ourselves towards tech. In the last generations of humans, it's become ubiquitous. People have their whole school and their whole career. Our day to day to data tech, tech, tech. And to your point, Mikka, the emotions. There's been no practice around managing ourselves emotionally. And now we have a new baby. And they're not, they don't have a SIM card.

Mikka Bonel: [00:28:28] Yeah, they don't have a SIM card. We can't download onto them I know.

Sarah Trott: [00:28:33] Well, yeah. And there's no perfect set of steps or rules that you can follow to get a certain kind of outcome. And like this, like, stop making yourself feel terrible because you're not getting some specific, perfect cookie cutter thing. I mean, Esther, what do we always say? It's not a birth plan, it's birth intentions.

Mikka Bonel: [00:28:51] Oh, nice.

Sarah Trott: [00:28:52] Like, but it's like intentions. We can intend on something. But yeah, you got to be flexible too. It might not go a certain way.

Mikka Bonel: [00:28:58] Yeah. A favorite word I have too is considerations. Yeah. Like when you say intentions considerations. What are the considerations.

Esther Gallagher: [00:29:05] Yeah that's dynamic. That changes. Yeah. That changes moment to moment sometimes. Yeah yeah.

Mikka Bonel: [00:29:14] And I also think that sometimes it can be looked at as it can be. I also would understand hearing that like on a podcast, for example. And being like that sounds wishy washy. Like that sounds like you either consider all of these factors and then make your own choice. I do hear from people sometimes of like, I just want you to tell me what to do. I just want you to tell me what steps to do. And so for those amazing, brilliant humans, I will say that's that's the data sort of addiction that we have a little bit of like. And I get the frustration because you know what? Sometimes I wish it many times. I wish it was that simple too.

Mikka Bonel: [00:29:51] And then I like to remind over and over again that parenting is really, really freaking hard. It wasn't made to be easy. It wasn't made to be simple. Life is really complex and life is really hard. But hard does also not equate to bad. And that there's also deep, deep joy, fulfillment, enrichment, layers of love that you never knew existed. Get exposed during this time can also be a profound sense of empowerment for yourself too. Once you're through those gates and you've kind of start to really get that sense of self, of who you are as a parent, as a birthing human, as your new identity, etc.

Mikka Bonel: [00:30:33] But at first it's very difficult. And while you're navigating what's going on with your babe and all of their changes, you're also navigating all these deep, deep changes that are happening for yourself. And so that sort of efficient brain that wants to come in because it's what it was used to doing pre pregnancy is not

necessarily the most helpful right now. And so asking that beautiful part of yourself that efficient like I need to get this solved and figured out is to remind yourself that you know, everything is temporary, especially during this time.

Mikka Bonel: [00:31:05] The first three months in particular are so fleeting. But within those three months to write, Your babe is changing day to day even. And so that quote unquote perfect fix, even if it does fix it for one night or two weeks, you get thrown into yet another set of shifts and turns. Like you say, because it's dynamic. And so teaching that part of the brain that wants to have an easy solution that that actually right now is, is a time for continuous reflection and sort of taking things day by day and making sure, like you were saying, Esther getting those basics of sleep, food and connection, bathrooms, going to the bathroom. Really important.

Esther Gallagher: [00:31:44] Maybe somebody can make you a sitz bath. Yes. Instead of telling you how to raise your kid.

Mikka Bonel: [00:31:49] Exactly. Oh. That's beautiful. Yeah.

Esther Gallagher: [00:31:53] Yeah.

Mikka Bonel: [00:31:54] And it's almost like a postpartum doula.

Esther Gallagher: [00:31:56] Yeah. Imagine. Yeah, but anyone could do it. Anyone who has the strength to walk to a stove with a pot of water could actually show up and do this for you. Rio. If we had a culture that said, this is a really worthy, simple, short term engagement that we all know how to do, any, any eight year old could do it right. Like cooking dinner. Eight year olds can cook dinner. We just don't let them. And we don't tell them they can and we don't. So yeah, I'm crossing my fingers for massive culture change on this one.

Mikka Bonel: [00:32:34] Well, that's what I've been noticing, which is why there has been a shift. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Esther Gallagher: [00:32:38] Well, I've been doing this a long time.

Sarah Trott: [00:32:41] Yeah, well, we are quickly already covering our next question, which the theme here was about navigating those first few days to six weeks postpartum. So those are the really early days that can be pretty overwhelming. And so, Mikka, you talked about how a lot of the questions that come up in your new parent circles are about, you know, like, just tell me what to do in your words. But what are some of the most important things that parents can focus on when it comes to their physical and emotional well-being. We've already talked about some of them.

Mikka Bonel: [00:33:11] Yeah, absolutely. Well, I think we can talk about some of the physical stuff. I feel like we've talked a lot about the emotional stuff. Yeah. Which is my favorite topic, and I can talk more about it. But yeah, a little bit about the physical. So I think really the most important piece of the physical is knowing the investment that you're putting into your body and you're putting into which will then also be your emotional body to the investment that you put on in, put in in the first six weeks will then you'll really see the benefits for years to come after that.

Mikka Bonel: [00:33:42] And alternatively, the opposite is also true if you try and hit the ground running and we'll talk, I can talk a little bit more, even more detail about what that means. Then most unfortunately, very quickly, those are the humans who I actually tend to help the most with one on one programs because injury is very, very common. Things like incontinence, things like prolapse, organ prolapse. Things like diastasis recti. Extreme exhaustion, postpartum depression, anxiety, things like that are all. A lot of times that has to do with the fact that one, the education isn't given there for prenatal humans on how to navigate those first six weeks to three months. Really, I like to say up to a year is really like your most intense postpartum phase, depending on each individual. The reason why I really like to have a range is because we can get really fixed on numbers.

Mikka Bonel: [00:34:32] I oftentimes people will say to me like, oh well, great. So in six weeks I'm going to be good to go, and I'll feel totally like my normal self and I'll be able to go on my, you know, six mile runs and XYZ fill in the blank. Right. Like these are the

things that I'm going to be able to do. I'll go back to who I was before, physically and again, physical and emotional can never be truly separate. So physical is also emotional. Emotional is also physical when the truth is there's two sort of unfortunate or fortunate fallacies to that statement.

One is that we can't go back just in general. We just don't go back. It's like any other big transition in life. Like we're never going to say to someone, I'm, you know, once I go through menopause, then I can go back to how I felt prior to menopause. No. Or once I go through puberty, then I get to go back to what it was like before I went through puberty. No, these are life transitions. We don't go back, but we do go forward. And we do feel stronger.

We can still feel super strong and powerful. It's just that we tend to identify the before with the better to sometimes, especially when it comes to this postpartum phase. So I just like to encourage that. Actually, even though this isn't going to be a time for going back, it is definitely an opportunity for you to know yourself on an even deeper layer than you ever knew before, and to feel stronger than you ever felt before.

Mikka Bonel: [00:35:56] However, just like with anything, first there needs to be the time of rest. So just like you're recovering from anything that you do that's physically exerting. There's got to be that time of rest where we really, really let the tissues, the organs reset, where we allow a detox process to happen. And that includes eating and drinking foods that are deeply nourishing for your tissues, making sure that you're getting tons and tons and tons of fluids to. Because not only are you detoxing your own body, but you're also. For many of us, we're also producing milk.

Mikka Bonel: [00:36:29] And so if you're producing milk, regardless of how much your body is producing, by the way, and also even if you're having difficulty lactating, your body still needs a really, really deep amount of fluids, warming fluids that are going to, again, nourish the tissues, detox the blood, and then also, like Esther said, around that sort of fight or flight place that your body can go in when it's not being fed. It also can then rest.

Mikka Bonel: [00:36:58] So we sort of have like this and it's kind of well known amongst. I feel comfortable saying like well known amongst most, if not all midwives, as well as many postpartum doulas, but certainly anyone in any Ayurvedic setting or Chinese medicine as well. Lots of places around the world where we really think of this first six weeks, six week period is that we have this sort of like five, five, five rule where you're really staying in your bed in the for, for at least for the first two weeks or around your bed.

Mikka Bonel: [00:37:26] So I like to say inside of your bed for five days on top of your bed for five days, and then around your bed for five days. does it need to be that strict? No. For example, you got to go to the bathroom. Like that needs to happen. And for some people, they might feel like the idea of sitting, being in my own room for that amount of time, it just makes me want to go stir crazy. That's something to listen to. So please don't ignore that voice just because someone who has some kind of professional experience and certification is saying like that. This could be a good practice sometimes, you know, fresh air is really, really important and you might be in the depths of like your city, and it's really difficult for you to breathe in fresh air, for example, or you have to go to your doctor's appointments and you have to go up and down flights of stairs. Right?

Mikka Bonel: [00:38:14] We all have our own way that we need to navigate our worlds. But with that being said, I do also like to use that extreme sentence because it gives you a sense as to how much support you really do need from your community to do the things that are around the house that are not done that you may not be doing, and then hopefully crossing all fingers and toes that you aren't doing, at least for those first, you know, for as long as you can in that first 2 to 3 week period, and then eventually your body's going to start saying to you, actually, I feel like I'm ready to do some movement.

Mikka Bonel: [00:38:47] And again, it's really important, you know, not to go straight from being around the house to going and doing like a two mile hike. you know, you might look at what it feels like to do one block or one quarter of the block, right? And then come back. See how that feels in your body. And thank you, Esther, for shaking and nodding, because what I meant to say was one street length and then coming back

to see what that feels like, right? Because the beauty is that you can always do more, but once you're out there and you've done the walk and you might feel like, gosh, now I have to get back. And the getting back can be the most difficult piece. Whereas if you take it step by step, then it can feel a lot easier to take those next steps physically. I just thought I would stop there and see if to just sort of check in with what I'd share so far.

Esther Gallagher: [00:39:33] Yes. I think the one little thing I would add in.

Mikka Bonel: [00:39:37] Yeah.

Esther Gallagher: [00:39:38] Mikka, even though I really do respect that you were trying to shift from we've talked a lot about emotional to now we're talking about more of the physical. you know, for instance, you were using the example of somebody who's feeling stir crazy. Notice the word crazy, right? Like before you decide you have to go to the beach, you know, and walk around, give yourself 15 minutes to do a little deeper dive into why you feel. What I'm going to name is anxiety about getting outdoors, right? No, it just feels really nourishing to get some sunshine and fresh air. Or is it? I feel like I'm jumping out of my skin. I can't really I don't feel as though I can just tolerate being in my bed. And those are very, you know.

Mikka Bonel: [00:40:26] Very different things.

Esther Gallagher: [00:40:27] Very different. If you're feeling intolerant, which is real. Right. What is it that's intolerable? Is it? This environment feels a little toxic to me because I have people, you know, around me who don't support me. And so I just have to get out, you know, I have to get out of here versus. Oh, I, you know, I feel nicely rested. You know, I'd love to wrap this baby on my body and walk out the front or the back door and get some fresh air and sunshine and stroll around whatever strolling space I have, but still be close to my bed when it's time for that again, right?

Esther Gallagher: [00:41:07] And so what my experience has been with people is they get all excited about going outdoors and they way overdo it, and then they crash and burn. And the next three days are painful, more emotional. You know, they feel like

they're on a roller coaster. What's wrong with me? I was starting to feel so good, you know. And so I really worked my postpartum practice in the first two weeks to help people mediate that roller coaster of reactivity and ask good questions if possible. Sometimes it's their partners who are the ones who are intolerant and just think what a great idea it would be to get our baby and this mom out into the world for everyone to see. And for me to brag about and to. You know, it's a lovely sentiment and it really doesn't work for the Postpartum healing and recovery body, and there's plenty of time for it later.

Mikka Bonel: [00:41:57] I think that's the key. That sentence right there. There is plenty of time for it. Yeah. And also around like I have to take my baby out so that they can see the world because I'm not doing enough for the baby. And that's always that's always an interesting sentence to when, you know, you can remind yourself, well, your baby only sees a certain distance and they don't. They're not really interested in the outside world. In fact, they don't really have any awareness of the outside world. Brain is telling them that they're still a part of the person who gave birth to them.

Mikka Bonel: [00:42:27] And if their parents are made up of humans who didn't give birth to them, then their world is learning this new bond. And so really, the most important thing for an infant is to have as much time with the human beings who are raising them physically, being with them, touching them skin to skin. And this is why it can be so tricky when navigating things like wanting to do sleep training before three months and so forth. Is that really what they want is or even before six weeks?

Sarah Trott: [00:43:00] I want to come out and make that clear for anyone who's listening. That sleep training prior to 3 months old is not something that you recommend.

Mikka Bonel: [00:43:04] Thank you. It's not something that I recommend at all. Yeah, yeah. That and one of the big reasons why, one of the many reasons why is because really actually what's needed for the baby is to, again, continue to establish that bond and that safety through skin to skin interaction.

Sarah Trott: [00:43:22] Yeah, yeah. And in fact, we've had some great guests who are early childhood educators talk about that need for connection and how important that is for brain development. So you're actually doing right by your baby to keep them close and to stay connected. And that's what they want. And oftentimes that's often what our instincts are telling us to.

Mikka Bonel: [00:43:42] May I add one more thing to that too? Yeah. So yeah, not just the physiological brain development piece too, but also. And this again, physical and emotional are the same thing because they're all within our body, but also an amazing nervous system regulator to it, which makes.

Esther Gallagher: [00:43:57] And the top of that is the brain.

Mikka Bonel: [00:44:00] Which is in the brain. Yeah. Which is why I was like, yeah, yeah, exactly. And actually, really and this is probably something I'm sure I've covered in previous podcasts too, is like that. The, the piece of the brain development too, that's happening is their sense of feeling secure and independent, because there's oftentimes this sense of like, oh, well, if I don't have my baby sleep trained, then that means that I'm not going to feel then they're not going to have independence and they're not going to be able to, you know, feel confident in the world. And it's such the opposite is so true, especially during this. This phase is really, really giving them that opportunity to stay connected to their center, which is your center actually and physically being on top of your center is one way of doing that.

Sarah Trott: [00:44:46] Yeah. And you talked about partners partner dynamics. Our next theme. Is it okay for someone to be tired, even if they're not the one who gave birth?

Mikka Bonel: [00:44:57] Yeah. This is a really, really big one that comes up. Especially because the parent circle that I host is called New Parent Circle. It's not a new mother or new birthing human or, you know, new primary care taker circle. It is a new parent circle because for so many, it is not just about the person who gave birth or the person who is the primary or caregiver that we are also now an expanding culture and shifting

and changing to start including things like paternity care to paternity leave. That birth partner is becoming a bigger and bigger piece of the care of the care team for a lot of families.

Mikka Bonel: [00:45:38] And what can happen is there's not enough support as well for first of all, we're, you know, we're still due for a lot more support for the people who've given birth. So I just want to be very clear about that. But then also, the person who's carrying can sometimes do the opposite and try to take over all of the responsibilities, too, and not take time for themselves to feel nurtured or will not be able to communicate that to the other, to the other partner, especially if the other partner is breast is actually breastfeeding, so that the baby is truly dependent on that person who's given birth. And so there might not be good communication around needs, communication around feelings.

Mikka Bonel: [00:46:23] And so things like resentment, things like feeling like there's an imbalance. And also deep feelings of guilt can also come up. Right. That can take shape of the person who's giving birth, feeling anything from feeling guilty that they're not doing quote unquote enough. So important to remember that you created life. And even if you didn't create that life that's in your hands, that you are nurturing and caring for that life and that is your sole job and should be or should.

Mikka Bonel: [00:46:52] Maybe that's one should that I'll put out there should be. Your sole job is to care for that little one. And so there can be a feeling of guilt, though, that you're not doing enough, or it can feel like resentment, like, you know, my partner gets to go out and do x, y, z without checking in with me because. But I can't either, because culturally I've been told myself like, I'm not allowed to also have downtime or self time, or because physically you are needing to feed your babe, you know, more often. And so it can actually just practically be more difficult to get your own space in your own time.

Mikka Bonel: [00:47:23] And so I just kind of want to pull a little bit, too, from the conversation that we were talking earlier about really taking a moment, slowing time down for yourself, which really means just listening to your own breath, giving yourself that time to have your feelings, and then really allowing that to boil down to what is it

that I need? How do I feel and what is it that I need? I think that having a game plan, not necessarily just around the way your parenting style is, although these are important questions and important things to look at.

Mikka Bonel: [00:47:55] But really, in some ways, maybe the most important, because there's an imbalance at times, is to really give you and your partner space and time, even prenatally, to look and talk to each other and connect around what your love language is. What is the way that you communicate? How is it that you feel whole from the other person, making sure that you really have a practice around appreciations for each other as well, so that you can let each other know what it is that you actually do really appreciate about that person, what you've seen from them.

Mikka Bonel: [00:48:25] And then it goes both ways. That's something that's really, really vital and important too. It's not just one person, but really a shared practice amongst both people. And then from there is to name something that isn't working, name something that isn't working and what your need is around that, that it's really, truly okay. Again, it's okay to be vulnerable. It's okay to share.

Mikka Bonel: [00:48:46] I also really want to take a moment here because not all partners do we feel safe or comfortable talking to, or we also might not have a partner, period. Or we might be a solo mothers solo birthing humans by choice single. Like, there's so many different ways to structure. And so I want to be really clear that if your partner isn't the, you know, in your heart of hearts, that's not someone who I can turn to to talk to that you find working out who that community can be for you, that you can speak to.

Mikka Bonel: [00:49:15] And sometimes that's going through resources within your own. I was about to say village, but I kind of like that term. So I'm going to stick with it. Village or city or town or, you know, wherever you live, but that it's also a practice that you practice starting with just yourself, your own nucleus, your own self, because that is the one person who you do know can always be there for you. And that's a deep, deep practice of really slowing down, checking in with your own feelings. What's coming up for you, checking in around what the issue is and what your needs are, what your needs

are around it. And then again, that deep piece of medicine, which is the strongest tool, which is feeling comfortable with vulnerability, that can be scary.

Sarah Trott: [00:49:50] Yeah. Thank you. And asking for what you're what you need is the phrase I'm going to highlight from the answer there, in part because we talked about it earlier, but also because I think you made a really good point around the right time to ask for what you need.

Mikka Bonel: [00:50:04] Yes. So one thing I like to say, and almost always generates a laugh, and the laugh I think is one of like, oh yeah, I do that too. or like discomfort of like, oh, maybe I could make a different choice. Which is the best time to talk to your partner is not at 2 a.m. when you've tried, quote unquote, all the things with your infant. Your infant is screaming at you and you've decided that's the time where you're going to do sleep training or like, that's the time when you're going to talk about the list of things that aren't correct in x, y, z.

Mikka Bonel: [00:50:38] And by the way, when I say that you, I don't necessarily mean you as the birthing human or as the primary caregiver. I just mean like whoever that parent is who's speaking. So really making sure that that is not the time to problem solve, that is not the time to do your online research. That is not the time to, you know, make plans for the future. That's really the time to do whatever it is that you need to do in order to get your rest.

Mikka Bonel: [00:51:03] And then the next day, when you're feeling a little bit more fortified or you're able to reach out to your community, talk to whoever that person is that you need to that you can start to slow down. And again, one thing I highly recommend is to really start with slowing down, to put into practice whatever practices you've been doing pre pre-baby, whether that's an appreciation practice that you have with your person, whether that's a breath practice, whether that's a honestly watching cat funny cat videos on YouTube, I don't know whatever it is that allows you to kind of like just reset that and allow yourself some softening so that you are able to receive and so that you are able to give the actual feelings and sort of the harder, more difficult stuff to navigate, which can sometimes be the needs or the feelings too. For sure. Yeah.

Mikka Bonel: [00:51:55] So finding a place that feels safe, a time that feels a little bit more spacious, where you're a little more fortified, and then really starting with the appreciation. And if you're not feeling appreciation, then simply starting with some deep breaths before continuing.

Esther Gallagher: [00:52:11] Along the lines of the appreciation. What I want to veer towards is that if we're talking about the birthing person's body or the primary caregiver for an infant, but particularly the body of the person who actually gave birth and is now probably feeding this child to start there. Appreciate that you built this thing, and you're keeping it alive by feeding it and letting it sleep if it wants to. And so, like, start with yourself with that appreciation.

Mikka Bonel: [00:52:43] Beautiful.

Esther Gallagher: [00:52:44] And then see if you can dredge up any appreciation for anybody else. And if you can't, you're not wrong. you know, and that's then on the other people who may be feeling underappreciated, like, well, can you take a break and appreciate yourself for what's going on and how you're actually being a supportive entity in this space and around what's going on? Because it might not be that, in fact, other people around you can't appreciate you.

Esther Gallagher: [00:53:15] It might be that they're so deeply involved in the moment to moment ness of what's going on, that it's not their job to appreciate you, but you can you can appreciate how you're contributing and how you're holding yourself together if you are and how you know all those things. So I don't want to invalidate anything you suggested, Mikka.

But I also want to add in the place of what I experienced in the first two weeks with postpartum bodies is, and that includes whoever is in that postpartum space is so often, especially in my opinion, after experiencing the hospital stay and then having to transition on ground zero day back home, and then get that all sorted out and then keep

going is a deep experience of of disorganization emotionally, physically, spiritually, environmentally. Right.

Esther Gallagher: [00:54:11] So whatever anybody can do in that space to take that deep breath, center themselves back into their body, do a body check for like, what's up in here? And thank you, body, for hanging in with all this because it's a lot. And what do I need right now? It's probably food and drink right? Almost always. And it's the last thing on people's list, sadly. So ask for that or go get it. Whatever's going to work. Then you might be able to say, yeah, well, then you might be able to sort out like other needs.

Mikka Bonel: [00:54:46] Yeah. Basics first. Always basics first. Yeah.

Sarah Trott: [00:54:50] And I was going to say, if you're short of ideas on how to feed a person, we have ideas from Esther on how to build a snack tray for someone. And it's not a small snack, it's a big snack. It's like a meal size snack. So we'll link to that in our notes.

Sarah Trott: [00:55:05] I want to bring us to our last big theme or topic or question that comes up in our parent circles, Mikka and Esther. So we talked a lot about the body and feelings. And there can be sometimes a disconnection for those two. So sometimes it feels like a bit of a roller coaster. So the question here is how do we calibrate expectations and care for our body in a way that feels supportive rather than critical. So loving your body as it recovers and some practical things around that too.

Mikka Bonel: [00:55:36] What a beautiful segue from what Esther was saying, which, you know, by the way, I felt very validated by what you were saying, not invalidated around appreciation, because it's so true that it really does come from yourself, I think. I mean, we you know, we talked a little bit about that, making sure that there's that you're understanding that it's a range of recovery that the recovery is going to be really baby steps. They're going to be small steps.

Mikka Bonel: [00:55:59] It's not going to be knowing and understanding that it's more than likely not going to be one day. I feel like crap. And then the next day I feel great.

And then that means that I can go full speed ahead, that it's really going to be a step by step process, and it's really going to be the most important pieces of recovery are around food, drink and rest, and that anything after that is like brownie bonus. or Potentially, we're pushing ourselves too hard, so it might not even be brownie bonus. It's actually maybe distraction from getting back to that root, that core help, which is which are helping you with those basics.

Mikka Bonel: [00:56:38] And then I think also like really having the practice around appreciation for your body. I highly recommend starting that when you're pregnant, even if you're having sick throughout your whole pregnancy, you have sciatica. There's discomfort. You feel disconnected from your baby, from yourself, all of those things without invalidating that experience.

Mikka Bonel: [00:56:59] If those are or part of that is your experience is to also take time to have appreciation, even simply for breath, even simply for you being able to inhale and exhale through your lungs, that knowing that when you do that, you're also feeding and nurturing and nourishing your blood, which then pumps through your body. So we really go to like these very basic sort of primitive things that are happening in our body and having appreciation for them so that we have this foundation around the why.

Why are we needing to take all of this time for recovery? It's because you literally grew a human being inside of you, and then birthed that human being, and then are caring for it in some way postpartum. Then also that having the appreciation, appreciation for your body to reshuffle so that you can now be a body that doesn't have a baby inside of it anymore. Right?

Mikka Bonel: [00:57:53] So like the uterus contracting the organs reshifting down into your body and figuring out where they can now be, now that there's more space in the body postpartum, that your body really needs you to rest, so that those giant internal shifts that are happening can be given space to to do that. So it's reminding yourself that even if I think that I'm not doing anything, that I think that I'm just lying down, that actually you're doing massive amounts of work.

Mikka Bonel: [00:58:23] And so to just take that time to appreciate that or even just be aware if you don't appreciate it, is to also just be aware of it and know that it's there. Yeah. And that also making sure that you know that your new roles as you shift and change also have spaciousness around them as well, and care that it takes time to figure out what those new roles are, how you're going to shift in your house dynamic.

Mikka Bonel: [00:58:46] And I think, honestly, the biggest word that comes up for me is compassion is really, truly practicing compassion for yourself because it's hard and it takes a long time to recover. And it especially feels like it's taking a long time to recover when you're in the midst of it. But again, taking those little steps, making sure that no matter what, that you're not putting aside the basic needs of food, drink and rest, and that once those things are able to be met, that you can then add in baby steps of movement, which. So when I'm usually working physically with postpartum recovery, we tend to focus first on things that are in a supine position which are lying down. So that might look like you simply lying on your back and drawing your knees in and doing some simple leg circles.

Mikka Bonel: [00:59:30] It might look like doing a traditional - And you can look this up - Shavasana pose, where you have your legs a little bit wider than your shoulders. You have your palms generally face up, but it might feel good even to have your hands on your heart, or on your belly, or one hand on each and listening to your favorite, be it meditation or song, whatever it is that allows you to start to have a mind, mind body connection. Because before we can move our body in ways that feel strong, we need to be able to understand what is even going in our body.

Mikka Bonel: [01:00:00] So just practicing how to listen to your body. Another great pose that you can look up is called constructive Rest, which is a wonderful way to start to connect to your pelvis. Also allowing the outer hips in particular to soften and release. This tends to be the biggest areas of discomfort that I hear about are in the upper back, the front of the chest, and then our sort of hip area.

And the reason for this is because these are our greatest sources for mobility and where we can move around. But what that also means is that then there's less stability.

So these tend to be the areas because our body can move really well with our hips. And we've also gone through giving birth, which even if you had a cesarean birth, your body doesn't know that that's what it's preparing for.

Mikka Bonel: [01:00:44] And so of course, we're still going to have hormones that are going through your body to soften your joints. So in the areas where you already have mobility like your hips and your shoulders, then the hormone will then also make loosey goosey joints. Then postpartum, your body is being asked to do a lot of different things, right? For example, feeding your baby or holding carrying your baby. And so a making sure that you're setting yourself up ergonomically, where your heart can stay open, where your shoulders can be back and over your hips even when you're feeding your baby. And if you're hearing this going, I don't have the time. I can't do that. I finally got my baby to eat. There's no way I'm going to move my body.

Mikka Bonel: [01:01:26] First of all, I want to say I hear you. I understand this is your baby step practice, right? So it's like, first of all, amazing. You were able to feed your baby. And yes, I totally get that. That means lack of body awareness sometimes and taking the information and know that doing an hour stretch or, you know, a yoga practice or going for a bike ride or whatever isn't necessarily is really not going to solve the long term issue that it really is.

Mikka Bonel: [01:01:52] First, about recognizing your own body in space and adjusting your body to. So if that means that you know, before you latch your baby on, or before you bring a bottle to their mouth, or before you are cradling that you are setting yourself up in a way where your shoulders are back and down, where your heart is open a little bit. This is going to make a huge difference. And then also making sure that that you're supported underneath your pelvis so that you can have a gentle curve of the low back.

Mikka Bonel: [01:02:19] There was like two things I would say to focus on. It would be shoulders rolling back and down, and it would be having some kind of lumbar support and giving yourself that extra 30s, because it really isn't a long time to set yourself up for that. It's just a practice. And then you can also look up things where you are supine again, lying down, and you've got some sort of a heart opener too.

So that could be like a towel underneath your spine that allows you just to feel a little bit more open. And you can have things like cactus arms, or even just having your arms by your side with your palms up, and then you move from there. But that's kind of the beginning of a physical practice, is what you might call non-movement. But breath is also movement.

Sarah Trott: [01:02:59] Yeah, yeah. And as you said, it's one of those things that you practice over time. It's a practice. And by the way, it just feels good to have great posture even if you're not feeding a baby. Right. It just feels wonderful. Yes. Thank you. It's a good reminder. While we were chatting to sit up and then loving your body and appreciating it for the miracle and however you want to frame that for what it just did. It's a very big physical effort and it's incredible. Yeah. No, that's so nice.

Sarah Trott: [01:03:27] So we've covered a lot of ground. I wanted to mention a couple of things. We've talked about natural resources a couple of times. It's where you teach Mikka. They are wonderful as a resource. If you're in the Bay area, you can go to their shops in person, or you can find them online, and they have a lot of online classes and courses that you can take. So if you want to try some remote learning, check that out.

You can also order online. They have, like I said, classes and clothing and nursery gear and sleep gear and gifts and things that are really wonderful and recommended. So everything you need for you and your baby and we have a code you can use if you want to shop there, it's fourth trimester and I'll put the code in our show notes. It's 4THTRIMESTER. So if you use that, you get \$15 off your order. So there you go. Really nice. We love that shop.

Mikka Bonel: [01:04:19] I was just wanting to just mention about Natural Resources. It's really a space of generational community. It's been there for decades. It was founded decades and decades ago, 1988, I think. you know, and I know that I brought my babe there. I took classes there, too, when I was pregnant. And then when my babe was Sarah you too?

Sarah Trott: [01:04:40] Yep. Oh, yeah.

Mikka Bonel: [01:04:42] It's a place that draws you in. And I really, truly feel like it's a nest. It holds you. You can go there for a cup of tea. Like you can go there just to cry and know that you'll be held. We really, really pride ourselves on having a foundational heart. A place that comes from non-judgment comes from building community, and really, for a lot of people, is a launch pad for them to build their own community. And this can absolutely be done in person, physically going there.

There's also a little mini play space that's super cute where you can go with your kiddos. They have a weigh station. We're constantly thinking about ways that we can evolve and change and provide even more support. Yeah, there's a physical store and an online store too that you can check out as well. But if you also just have questions and curiosities is to just give them a call too. We have a really wide reaching network of care providers, from doulas to lactation consultants to counselors. And so it's a hub, a true hub for creating and evolving your own community.

Esther Gallagher: [01:05:44] I want to say that in thinking about how often it's the case that families are relocating during pregnancy or even sometimes early postpartum, that there may or may not be like a community hub for the perinatal space in your community. But there might be social welfare institutions that offer connections in the community or know something about where to find support. So yeah. And sometimes it's just the local church, right. Or something like that. And even if you're a non-denominational person or not, a somebody who embraces church per se, it might be a way to just meet somebody that's also having children. You know, you could start to form community support with, but do be creative about finding it wherever you go.

Sarah Trott: [01:06:38] And another resource we'll mention since we talked about technology earlier, if you are searching the internet, you can find a whole lot of great information and also a whole lot of not so great information. There's a real mix, so be careful where you search and where you're getting your information. I've launched a wonderful new service called HelloGaia Parenting Copilot, which I will mention because instead of searching the whole internet, it's really focused in on information from

experienced and also credentialed Individuals who are perinatal professionals as well as accredited sources that we know, like major societies like the CDC and AAP and ACOG, the Nurse Midwives Association, places that, you know, are you're getting reliable information. So definitely check that out if you're interested. If you want to get fast answers and know that they are from reliable sources. So it's HelloGaia. And we'll link to that in the show notes as well. And Mikka, tell us where we can go to find out more about you.

Mikka Bonel: [01:07:40] Yeah. Yes. So I do serve primarily within San Francisco, but also surrounding areas depending on the depending on your situation as a postpartum doula, as a bodyworker, primarily focusing on massage therapy and yoga recovery too. And yeah, you can check out my website at Birthing Yoga (<https://birthingyoga.com/>). And you're also welcome to go. You can find that information too through natural resources, but you can also just look it up separately as well.

Sarah Trott: [01:08:40] Okay. Wonderful. Thank you so much, Mikka and Esther, do either of you have any final words that you want to share?

Mikka Bonel: [01:08:45] Yeah, I think I just want to reiterate the tenderness of this time, the tenderness, the deep, deep need for self-compassion as you continue and to just know that everything is temporary and stop shitting on yourself.

Sarah Trott: You can subscribe to this podcast in order to hear more from us. [Click here for iTunes](#) and [click here for Spotify](#). 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.