



1

The BornClear Philosophy

The core goal of the BornClear program is to prepare you for childbirth on every level: emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and physical. These four key values are central to the BornClear philosophy, and they work together to help you deeply understand and trust yourself and your body. This sort of preparation can only occur when you feel completely educated and empowered to make the best choices for yourself about your baby's birth. The process begins when you recognize the deep physical and mental connection that exists within you. This is called the mind-body connection.

The Power of the Mind-Body Connection

The mind (your thoughts and feelings) and the body (your physical self) are completely connected and interdependent. Your emotions, thoughts, and beliefs affect the way your body feels on a daily basis, including the way it responds to pain. The converse is true as well: the health of your body, your respect for your body, and your ability to be comfortable with your body all affect your mood, thoughts, and beliefs. In this way, any one aspect of your mental or physical life can control or enhance another.

Dealing with stress is an excellent example of how the mind-body connection works. If you are in a demanding job or relationship, if you feel anxious and frazzled all the time, or if you always spur yourself on to accomplish more, even when you are tired, the resulting stress will eventually cause disease, or, as I like to think of it, “dis-ease,” in your body. It is well documented that stress can lead to a host of physical ailments, including heart attack, high blood pressure, weight gain, and obesity. On the other hand, living with chronic or persistent pain or dwelling on and being stressed about your weight can cause clinical depression.

There is no question in my mind about the scientific and practical evidence surrounding the mind-body connection. Candace Pert, PhD, the author of *Molecules of Emotion: The Science behind Mind-Body Medicine* and many other books, believes as I do that physiology and psychology are inseparable. I deeply respect Dr. Pert’s groundbreaking work, which laid the foundation for the discovery of endorphins, the hormones released by the brain (in the hypothalamus) and the body (through the pituitary glands) that act as a natural opiate or pain killer and produce a sense of well-being. From these discoveries, Dr. Pert was able to show that emotions, in the form of biochemicals such as endorphins, act as internal messengers, carrying information to link all major systems of the body into one unit.

This network of communication means that your thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and even fears about birth will affect how you experience childbirth. When you are deeply relaxed, you increase your production of endorphins, allowing for other chemicals to be released that directly influence how quickly labor comes and how comfortable you are during labor.

If you are stressed, however, or you feel fear or become upset, you increase your production of another set of hormones, called catecholamines, which will cancel out and diminish your production of endorphins. Later, I will teach you exercises that increase your endorphins during delivery, and if you do get stressed, how to counteract the catecholamines and produce even more endorphins. You will be able to use these exercises throughout your pregnancy and even afterward, for the rest of your life. If you are not pregnant yet, they can also help create the mental and physical space that will be most conducive to conception. These exercises will strengthen the internal conversation between your mind and your body so that they can work together as a unified team, just as nature designed.

The Emotions of Your Past

The renowned theorist and author Dr. Joe Dispenza, who was featured in the movie *What the Bleep Do We Know?*, believes that feelings and emotions are the product of sensory experiences. His research shows that when you are having an experience, whether you are enjoying a sunset, having a great dinner, or watching your child hit a home run, all of your five senses send a rush of information back to the brain through the five different sensory pathways. That sensory information causes neurons to string into place, which may release chemicals in your body, and those chemicals are directly related to your emotions and feelings.

Dr. Dispenza believes that if you live with the same feelings every single day, it means you are thinking in the past. Because of this, you're not having any new experiences and you're using those old feelings to determine who you think you are today. The redundancy of those same feelings and thoughts activates certain pains, which then allow specific diseases to manifest and break the body down. Eckhart Tolle, the best-selling author of *A New Earth*, refers to these "pains" as "painbodies."

By taking advantage of the knowledge and the lessons in this book, you will use your mind in a whole new way that is consistent with what you are creating: a new experience. These new thought patterns will replace your "painbodies," the "old" ways of thinking that may have left you feeling like a victim of your fears, thoughts, and

confusion. You will be able to rid yourself of the cultural conversations of fear that surround you, and give yourself an opportunity to heal.

What Defines Your Reality?

In her book *Molecules of Emotion*, Dr. Pert also looks at the concept of objective reality and concludes that everyone has the ability to shape his or her own reality. With the constant barrage of stimuli from the outside world, your brain would be overloaded if you analyzed everything that you saw, heard, felt, tasted, or sensed. Instead, you instinctually pick and choose from the entire range of visual, auditory, and sensory stimuli, using a filtering system that complements your perspective on life. According to Dr. Pert, your filtering system for incoming stimuli is highly colored by your emotions at a biochemical level. Your emotions screen your experience of reality. In other words, you see what you choose to see and physically experience what you choose to experience. I like to refer to this perspective as your “context.”

Your emotions also help you decide what is worth paying attention to. Because your emotional biochemicals filter so much of what you perceive, feelings and thoughts can have a profound impact on your experience of “reality.” This concept is integral in understanding exactly how the mind-body connection works during pregnancy and labor. If you choose to focus on the expected pain of delivery, you will create a reality that meets your expectation of pain and consequently feel pain. If, however, you concentrate on experiencing the joy and beauty of the birth, then those emotions will create a different reality, even if the physical circumstances are exactly the same.

It’s important to remember that good health and a successful, comfortable childbirth do not result merely from thinking happy thoughts. What you are trying to achieve is the optimal balance, which is based on an honest assessment of your current mental state. All of your emotions affect your body, whether you are angry, sad, or frightened. It is how you choose to deal with your emotions that will affect your physical state during pregnancy and beyond.

Through the exercises in this book you will learn to recognize what is going on inside your mind and how your thoughts, feelings,

and beliefs affect not only your context, but how your body feels and how it behaves. Outwardly, you will see how you present yourself to others; inwardly, you will be able to control aches and pains or other symptoms that are currently unpleasant. Best of all, the mind-body connection might bring about positive and lasting changes. Many of my clients who have experienced BornClear childbirth feel powerful, almost invincible, for weeks afterward.

Experiencing the Mind-Body Connection

The following is one of my favorite visualizations, inspired by the book *Psychic Development* by Jean Porter. Its goal is to elicit a mind-body response. If possible, have someone read this to you so that you can be completely surprised when you experience it. Or, read through the following exercise aloud, recording your voice so that you can play it back. Before you begin, sit or lie down in a comfortable position and take five deep breaths. Let everything go, including all of your thoughts, sensations, and stresses of the day. Allow your breath to drift down through your chest, into your stomach, and down through your body into your toes. Releasing and relaxing, feel your shoulders, your chest, and your elbows become limp and relaxed.

When you are ready, close your eyes and listen to the following:

In your mind's eye, take yourself to a kitchen. This is a kitchen that you are very fond of—a place that holds good feelings for you. Look around the room. See all the familiar things in this kitchen. Feel the warmth of the room. Breathe in the wonderful aroma of your favorite food as it cooks. Hear the bubbling sound of food cooking on the top of the stove. Feel the warmth coming from the oven and the smells of baking, healthy meals.

Imagine now that you are standing at the counter in this wonderful kitchen. In front of you are a knife, a cutting board, and a large bowl full of fruit. Go over to the bowl and select one perfect, beautiful, bright, and yellow lemon. Pick it up and hold it in your hands. Feel the weight of it. Experience the texture and smell of the

rind. Now, with your thumb, break into the skin and begin to peel the lemon. Be aware of the citrus fragrance. When the skin is entirely removed, feel the difference in the texture from the outside to the inside. When you are ready, pick up a small knife and cut the lemon on the cutting board. See yourself cutting the lemon in half. Watch as the juice runs down and begins to make small puddles on the board.

Now, take one half of the lemon and bring it to your nose. Smell the lemon. Bring it to your mouth and sink your teeth into the pulp. Be aware of the juices as you suck the lemon, and feel them run through your mouth. Slowly move your tongue around the inside of your mouth. Feel what is happening to your jaws, lips, and tongue.

Slowly come back to the room, opening your eyes. Take four deep breaths and think about what just happened. Did you notice the puckering of your lips and mouth; the sour taste of the lemon; the jolt of the sourness? Any or all of these sensations point out that the thought and the visual are connected by a bodily response as if you were eating a real lemon.

The goal of this exercise is to demonstrate that when you let your mind become attached to the concept of the lemon, you can cause a physical reaction. The mind actually elicits a bodily reaction. You can feel and taste the lemon. Just thinking about it, seeing the lemon in your mind, or remembering lemons you've had in the past can actually cause a real physical response in the moment, even though you are not actually eating a lemon at all. In this exercise, you can also determine which of your senses works best for you. Was it hearing the words? Or seeing the images in your mind? Going forward, you will be able to use what works best for you as you select specific exercises that enhance your understanding of the mind-body connection.

Giving Birth Consciously

One of the most important lessons in learning to control the mind-body connection is being able to create an emotionally safe space wherever you are, but particularly when you are giving birth. To me,

feeling safe means the ability to relax completely, trust yourself and your personal choices, and be nurtured by this environment so that you can be fully uninhibited.

This feeling of safety is part of a universal context that every woman needs when she conceives or gives birth. Women need to feel uninhibited so that they can follow their instincts. Just as it is impossible to have passionate, meaningful sex when you feel insecure, it will be impossible for you to completely open up and release to the process of childbirth if you don't feel safe.

For many women, this feeling of safety occurs when they believe that they are in control of a situation, instead of having a situation forced on them. In the context of childbirth, safety can be achieved by choosing where you will give birth and who will attend the birth. It is well-known that animals in the wild give birth only when they feel completely safe. They have an internal system for protecting themselves that is no different from ours. Usually, animals will find a dark place that is quiet and peaceful. They don't seem to be feeling pain. But if they sense the slightest danger—such as another animal approaching—they stop the birthing process, their adrenaline kicks in, and they operate in survival mode. They then run and find a safer place, lie down, and start birthing all over again.

You will begin to feel safe and secure when you have knowledge about the birthing process and have mastered the mind-body connection. You will also need to fully understand your current fears and beliefs about childbirth so that you can begin to control both your mind and your body.

The Power of Reflection

Reflection is the second facet of the BornClear philosophy. Because the physical aspects of pregnancy and childbirth are intimately connected to your mental state, you will benefit from examining yourself thoroughly and performing an introspective study of your true needs and wants. You will be able to uncover what is working and not working about your life, and discover what issues may need to be healed.

I call this careful examination the power of reflection. By examining yourself this way, you can lay to rest specific fears or concerns that may be holding you back emotionally or affecting you physically. You will begin to understand what limits you have set for yourself, either consciously or unconsciously, and you can work on correcting negative thoughts that are standing in your way.

The process of reflection begins with identifying your current perspective, or context. Each person already exists within a particular context. Just as the mood you feel in the morning is carried through the rest of the day, your general attitude is already colored by the thoughts and beliefs you have now and have had in the past.

As Dr. Dispenza said, your thoughts and feelings have imprinted the way you approach life. In fact, each of us has already created his or her own context. If you met two men using sledgehammers on a pile of rocks, and you asked each one what he was doing, you might get two entirely different answers. The first man might say that he is breaking rocks, and the second may offer that he is building a cathedral. Even though the men are doing the same exact thing, each sees his job differently based on his life's context. They each have a completely different relationship to their work.

Everything you do at every point throughout your day exists inside your context. Every action you take or decision you make sets the tone or the perspective for all subsequent actions and expectations. These actions and expectations are fueled by your thoughts and beliefs, which create a cycle that swirls around you and which define who you are. Over time, if you focus on problems in a negative way, it results in a specific kind of personal context—a belief that everything about your life is negative. The ability to create what you want for this birth and in every aspect of your life comes from consciously designing a life to match the context you choose.

You can start by analyzing what you have already created. This type of reflection provides clarity, illuminating your current context when you look deep enough within. You think about the pieces that make up the person you are, and you reflect this person back out. Reflection allows you to observe yourself, your behaviors, habits, and

thoughts without judgment. In this way you can see for the first time that your life isn't "happening" to you: you are causing your own circumstances.

Where Are You Now?

The first step in uncovering your current context is to address the negative thoughts that you've accumulated. In this way, you can arrive at a new space and start to design your entire pregnancy and childbirth experience. For example, many women approach childbirth with fear. Dr. Christiane Northrup, an expert in women's health, said that women can pick up fear the way a sponge absorbs water. There is so much fear around us, and we may absorb it in many ways—through our own thoughts and from what we read, what we see, and what we hear. We may not even realize how much fear we've absorbed. If we are not clear about the direction we want to take, it's easy to imagine how the fear around us can be overwhelming, even upsetting. But just as you can squeeze water out of a sponge, you can release your fears. Once you actually start to dismantle them, everything gets lighter, and you return to your true self.

You may have specific fears about childbirth. You might be concerned about pain, your past experiences with childbirths, images from television or the Internet, cultural expectations, thoughts about your body, the health of the baby, a change in your lifestyle once the baby arrives, or something more personal to you.

It's completely normal to be fearful about childbirth. In fact, the fear of childbirth is almost universal in our culture. Although women inherently know that our bodies are designed to give birth, at the same time it's almost impossible to envision how it happens. This is especially true since birthing has become medicalized and has been taken out of the world of "women's wisdom." Many of the doctors I interviewed for this book have never witnessed a birth where there was no medical intervention. This is partially because a birth without complications was never presented as part of their medical education. It is also due to the fact that for many doctors, the fear of a childbirth

without intervention has become the norm. Without the knowledge of how unassisted childbirth is supposed to occur, the predominant emotion that is left for most people is fear.

Yet outside of the Western world, there are hundreds of cultures where women continue to birth their children naturally, supported only by other women in their communities. Some of these communities have reclaimed childbirth practices that were being lost in the haste to adopt Western practices. In Bali and the tsunami-ravaged Aceh region of Sumatra, Indonesia, Robin Lim, a renowned midwife, has created the Yayasan Bumi Sehat (Healthy Mother Earth) Foundation. The project trains local midwives to serve their clients by reinforcing the ancient wisdom of childbirth with the safe, culturally sensitive, gentle, appropriate application of modern techniques. If we can re-create a knowledgeable community of women, as Robin Lim has, we will be able to release the collective fears and anxieties that surround birth. It will be a new era of childbirth where the parents are enlightened, and our current cultural paradigm will shift.

I find that fear is often the result of confronting the unknown. Your fears may stem from the fact that you don't have a frame of reference for this experience. For women of childbearing age, it's quite common that their mothers gave birth at a time when women were put to sleep to deliver their babies. Even your grandmother's experience may have been similar. So you are left with fear because there is no one to share her experiences with you. Even your friends might not be comfortable enough to talk frankly about their childbirths. Or, if you have delivered before, it might not have gone the way you wanted. Without examples or information, you continue to fill your sponge with fear.

Many fears about childbirth are foisted on us from the outside. "Advice" that we receive from people, even if it is given in good faith and with only the most loving intentions, can subconsciously create new fears. For example, we've all been told that labor will be a painful experience. The fear of pain is embedded in the minds of men and women, including members of the medical community. The universal conversation about childbirth goes something like this: "Hey, good luck. You know that it's going to hurt, so I hope you make it,

and don't forget to order the epidural ASAP." You don't normally hear that birthing will be a beautiful, safe, fulfilling, and even exciting experience, all of which it can be!

I always tell my clients that during pregnancy, the best thing to do is to turn off the "Birth Channel" and stop having conversations with people about their childbirth experiences, unless these are positive and uplifting. I find that it's best to create distance from others who try to impose their negative thoughts and images on us. This negativity could potentially create fear and, worse, cut off the possibility that childbirth will be a rewarding experience. You don't want to build your objective reality around someone else's story. You are then giving up the right to create your own baby's birth and instead are mirroring what the other person experienced or embellished.

No matter what your specific fear or concern is, recognize that any negative thoughts and beliefs will limit you in your childbirth and in your life. By addressing these fears and negative thoughts, you will be able to remove this attitude of fear from your current context. Just as you can absorb fear, you can also wring it out.

The following questions are meant to raise some of your conscious and unconscious fears. Answer these questions as honestly as you can, expressing all of your thoughts and concerns until you can clearly state exactly what you are afraid of. Look for common themes among your answers. For example, if you have issues with trust in general, you need to look at how lack of trust manifests in your own life, as well as the particular issues of trust surrounding your pregnancy.

- What are your current ideas about pregnancy and childbirth?
- What do you choose to think about or dwell on?
- Are you worrying about the delivery or your life after your child arrives?
- How will your relationships change?
- How will your work life change?
- Do you worry that you will repeat the same bad parenting you received from your parents?

- Are you thinking about pain?
- Are you wondering how long the delivery will take?
- Are you wondering whether you will be strong enough to recover?
- Do you wonder whether you will require medication during the delivery?
- Are you afraid that you can't deliver vaginally and will end up having a C-section?
- Are you unclear about the physical changes that will happen to your body?
- Do you understand how childbirth actually progresses?
- Are you afraid that your husband/partner/friends won't be supportive?
- Are you afraid of what your life will look like afterward?
- Do you worry about taking care of yourself and your new family?
- Do you worry that you will never sleep again?

Visualizing Fears

Another way to uncover your fears, self-limiting behaviors, or unconscious beliefs is through visualization. Visualizations allow you to see in your mind's eye what your feelings look like. This type of exercise lets you focus deeply and allows you to get to the heart of the matter.

Read through the following exercise once so that you understand it completely. Then find a space in your home where you can relax uninterrupted. Have someone who is close to you slowly read through the exercise while you are lying down with your eyes closed. Or, you can record your own voice reading the exercise and then play it back. You can return to this exercise any time you feel a need to address your fears or whenever new anxieties arise. For instance, after you have read this entire book, you will be in a different mental place than you are right now. When you repeat this exercise again, notice if the same fears or concerns surface and whether new ones crop up.

Begin by closing your mouth and breathing in deeply through your nose and out deeply through your nose. As you continue this breathing, allow yourself to relax your entire body, releasing and relaxing your jaw, gently closing your eyes, relaxing your lips, your neck—the front and the back of your neck. Imagine the same deep soothing relaxation drifting down to your shoulders, having them drop, feeling your elbows and lower arms going limp, falling heavy, washed with relaxation, your upper chest, your upper back. Use your breath to release and relax fully, caressing your body into a deep state of comfort, relaxing your stomach, letting your hips go fully, your lower back, feeling more and more relaxed as you breathe and moving that deep relaxation down and through your body. Focus on your upper legs and thighs, your knees, your lower legs, your feet, your toes. At this point you should be fully relaxed; allow yourself to go even deeper. If you hear any noises around you, interruptions, street sounds, or sounds in your home, use them to go even deeper into relaxation, giving yourself the permission and the gift to relax fully, physically and emotionally, letting all thoughts, concerns, and aches drift away and bathing yourself in this very quiet time inward, nurturing yourself, mothering yourself, in the place of your own unique essence. You are very quiet, very calm. Take a few more deep breaths and with these fall into an even deeper relaxation, releasing, relaxing, soothing.

As you are breathing and feeling relaxed, take yourself to a beach, your favorite beach, or any beach that you have enjoyed or that you have imagined. Make your beach a very sacred, safe spot where you are alone but not lonely. What time of day is it? What is around you? Take in the air, the feeling around you. Look at what you are wearing—picture yourself feeling really cozy and comfortable—bring whatever you want to your beach that will help you feel totally at ease, deeply relaxed, safe, secure. You are sitting on this beach either in a chair or on a blanket or directly on the sand. You are fully and deeply relaxed and at peace. Once you are comfortable on your beach, look out at the beautiful ocean—notice the color of the water and the waves, coming in, going out,

all very soothing. In the distance on the waves you notice a clear glass bottle coming to the shore in front of you. You pick up the beautiful clear glass bottle and place it to your right on the sand.

Now look into your thoughts and see all of the images, fears, and concerns you may have about birthing your baby, becoming a parent, changing your lifestyle, stories that well-intentioned friends may have told you about their childbirths that still live in your mind. Some of your fears may be about these things, but look to see what else may be there—thoughts, beliefs, worries—and, one by one, place these images on the sand in front of you, from right to left. Lay them out. Look at them. If any other thoughts, memories, events, and feelings come up that you want to discard, face them and be free of them by placing them in an arc around your body, from right to left in the sand. Keep going through your thoughts. The mind, the subconscious, works very fast, so keep looking and placing on the sand all of the images that are not consistent with what you really want to create for your childbirth and your life after the baby's birth.

Now as you see all of these images, watch them melt into sand. Grab a handful of sand where the image was and begin to fill up your clear bottle. Watch the sand fill the bottle. Now go from image to image, morphing it into sand, grabbing it with your hand and letting it pour into the bottle. With each action, the morphing of the image into sand, your grabbing the sand and placing it into the bottle, you are dissolving that image, that fear, letting it go.

Once all of the images are in the bottle, choose a point on your ocean and toss the bottle with all of your strength. The waves are carrying away your concerns, fears, past events, and negative images. Watch as the bottle disappears and falls off the ocean's horizon, where it can no longer be seen.

Now on the sand, replace that same space with new images. See yourself now with your birthing partner. You look beautiful—you trusted yourself—you had the birth that you intended. See yourself now holding your baby, looking into your sweet baby's eyes. You did it, you created the birth you wanted, you knew you could.

Take a moment to look at this image: feel it, see it, sense it, be it. Enjoy this beautiful image fully. Add anything you want to this image to allow yourself to see and feel all that you are creating and preparing for. Breathe deeply and fully and let yourself see and feel all of this.

Count slowly from one to five, and bring yourself back to where you actually are. Take your time . . . one, you feel nourished and very relaxed . . . two, bring the feeling back into your hands and feet . . . three, begin to wiggle your fingers and toes . . . four, bring the energy fully back into your body . . . and five, bring yourself back to your room. When you are ready, and only when you are ready, open your eyes slowly and easily.

Replacing Fear with Curiosity

As Dr. Joe Dispenza said, there is a true biology to change. If you think the same thoughts and you behave the same way every single day, your brain is not changing. If you are living in fear, you will continue to live in fear. In order to create real change, you have to open up new neurological pathways by learning and experiencing new things. If you want to change your context from one that is full of fear to something else entirely, you have to combine thought and emotion: you must replace your fear with a passion for curiosity to find your new context.

A curious mind can regard these same fears or concerns in an entirely different context. You can dismantle the underlying fear by actually looking at each of your issues and replacing the fear with factual information that addresses your concerns, so that you reach a point where you are no longer afraid. Instead, you'll be educated and prepared.

You can dig underneath the fears that you bring to light during the visualization exercise by becoming curious about them. In this way, you will be able to determine whether the fears really represent your true thoughts. Ask yourself, "Do I really think that?" "Do I really fear that?" See whether you can identify where specific fears, thoughts, or beliefs came from.

Then look at each fear or concern and ask yourself how you really feel about it. Are the fears rational? I know that they may “feel” real, but by contemplating each one, you might be able to identify specific actions you can take to address them. You can answer some fears merely by reading this book and learning about the various aspects of childbirth. By replacing your fear with knowledge, you’ll find that you have much less to worry about.

If you reflect on your fears, you can address them individually. For example, if you are worried about connecting with your baby, chapter 5 will help you create a bond with him or her, starting right now. If you are afraid of having a painful childbirth, the exercises in this book, particularly in the BornClear toolbox in chapter 4, will teach you how to manage pain. If you are unsure about what happens to your body during birthing, chapter 7 outlines each stage of labor so that you will be fully educated. If you are worried about how your life will change, chapter 8 will instruct you on how you can have honest and thoughtful discussions with your partner, your boss, or other important people in your life so that you can begin reflecting on the life you want to create after the baby arrives.

Working with other fears may take more effort and may require having deep conversations with yourself and with others, or even seeking support or professional help. See whether you can uncover what is buried so that you understand yourself. If you’re afraid you won’t be able to handle childbirth, ask yourself whether you really want to be stuck thinking about what you can’t do. Once you decide that you want to be positive, you will summon the courage to take the necessary actions that will impact you positively. In this case, your first step is to get educated: reading this book and doing the exercises in it will help you deal with and eliminate the fear of childbirth. You will learn exactly how your body functions during childbirth, so that you understand what it looks like, what it will feel like, and what it will be like.

Creating Your New Context

Once you replace fear with curiosity, you can begin to create a new context. You can define what this journey *could* be like. Your reflection has given you the power to make new choices, the ones that are right for

you. They can involve your pregnancy, your delivery, how you handle yourself as a mother, your life partnership, your new family, and more.

Jill was one of my clients who was able to become empowered in this way. Her first childbirth was completely traumatic, both emotionally and physically. I met her when she was five months pregnant with her second child. She was terrified that she would repeat the same bad experience again.

By working with Jill, I was able to help her rethink every aspect of her life. I encouraged her to make the necessary changes to fulfill her dream of having an easy, calm, and peaceful birth. I had her look at her last birth experience using the fear visualization. What surfaced was that Jill's brother had died in a kayaking accident about a month before she gave birth, in an area of a river called, of all things, "the birth canal." Jill did not realize that at the time of her childbirth, she was still dealing profoundly with her grief over her brother's death. So, during her second pregnancy, I worked with Jill to process her grief. She also looked at her entire life and made some empowering choices: she realized that she needed to change her job and began to research new places for her and her family to live. All of these actions helped her feel more in touch with herself.

Four months later, when the contractions started, Jill was able to let go of tension and fear and replace it with deep trust. She had a great birth and could not have been happier. The results of her second birth reflected her deep inquiry into, and courage to address, her fears. Afterward, she was empowered and educated and trusted herself. She was proud of her courage and willingness to take the necessary actions to heal and to create what she really wanted to have happen.

Your curiosity and investigation will eventually lead you to create, design, or invent the birth experience that you deeply desire. In chapter 3, you will take the next step: channeling your curiosity. For now, realize that you have taken the first important step toward creating this new context merely by facing who you really are.

The Power of Trusting Yourself

The ability to trust yourself in any aspect of your life comes from being completely educated and prepared, from taking the time to understand

yourself—your gifts, your commitments, your fears, your behaviors. You must be comfortable with every aspect of the journey, which will involve careful planning, orchestrating important decisions, and sometimes having difficult conversations. Once you have had conversations with everyone who will be involved in the birth and know that your concerns have been addressed, then you will be completely prepared. I believe that this type of deep work leads to empowerment, which is the third goal for this book.

I will show you how to create distinct alignments with your partner and your entire birth team (your doctor, midwife, nurses, family members, friends, and so on) in advance. You need to not only create but to expertly write out your new context so that everyone involved knows what you want and can help you achieve it.

The first place of alignment begins at home. You alone, and you and your partner as a couple, need to create the context for the pregnancy, the birth, the new baby, and your life with the baby after he or she is born. As partners, you need to be completely aligned to get the birth you want. Everything needs to be prepared, discussed, and dealt with.

I know that it takes courage to begin this journey, to look deeply at your fears and face them. You will find that when you reflect on your fears and replace them with curiosity, when you understand the power your mind has over your body, and when you are fully educated and prepared in every aspect of your pregnancy and people around you are aware of your new context, then you will be completely satisfied with your decisions. You will have reached the fourth aspect of the program, a place where you trust your thoughts and also trust your body and then surrender. At this point, you will know that the decisions you make are the right ones for you.

For many people, this level of satisfaction is defined as happiness. All of the work you'll soon embark on is designed not only to create a beautiful birth, but to let you reach a deeper understanding of yourself. You will be better able to grasp who you are, figure out your relationships, discover what is important to you, and develop further as a human being. This journey allows you to trust yourself beyond the childbirth experience. It is an all-encompassing rite of passage because you are birthing yourself as a mother and in every aspect of your life.

Your birthing experience will be filled with many rich rewards, not the least of which is your new baby. You will also feel a deep sense of comfort once you are aligned with your partner more intensely. Most important, you will completely trust yourself, birthing yourself as a mother-father-family and more. As Erma Bombeck once said, “Instead of wishing away nine months of pregnancy, I’d have cherished every moment and realized that the wonderment growing inside me was the only chance in life to assist God in a miracle.”

Let’s Get Started

The BornClear program can begin as early as preconception, although whenever you begin is the right time for you. For women who have experienced difficulty in conceiving or who are merely thinking about becoming pregnant, continue the journey with chapter 2. If you are already pregnant, no matter how far along you are, you are ready to begin creating a new context with chapter 3.