

## Talking Points & Resources

Hello Pathways Connect Group Participants,

### **Preliminary note: There is no wrong way**

To run your Pathways Connect Gathering, the steps below are to help guide you. However, we encourage you to embrace the flow of your gathering and allow for your meeting to take on its own momentum in whatever direction it might go.

### **Step 1: Select topics**

Prior to your group gathering, find and select one or more of the magazine articles that you found interesting and want to share. Pick topics that make you passionate, as these are the easiest to talk about and spark discussion.

### **Step 2: The Gathering**

Welcome everyone present in the group and ask each person to introduce themselves and share a little about themselves. Be sure to share about yourself as well.

### **Step 3: Introduce the topic**

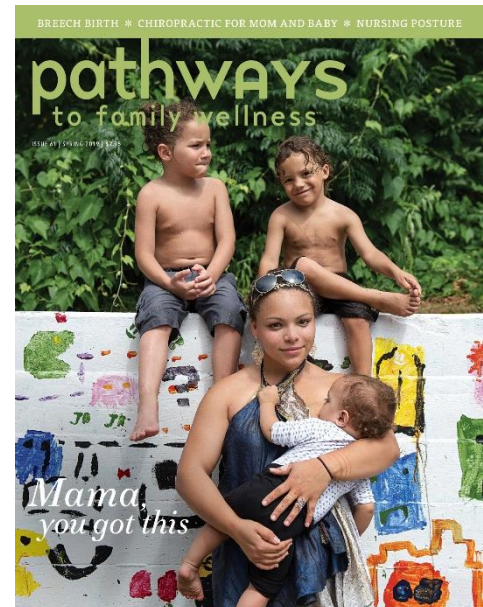
Share with the group your topic and why you chose it, why it interests you, and the importance you see in it. Summarize the article (some article summaries are provided below). You can read the entire article or article summary out loud to your group and share your thoughts at this time.

### **Step 4: Encourage conversation**

We provide questions after each summary section that will help people to engage. Make use of these questions or devise your own.

### **Step 5: Make the chiropractic connection**

At the end of each article summary are notes about how this topic relates to chiropractic. If you utilize these meetings to educate parents on the importance of chiropractic care you will be benefitting your office growth and the health of your community.



## **PW #61 Introduction**

### **TAKING THE STEP • STAYING THE COURSE • LIVING THE JOURNEY**

Welcome Mama: You've got this! Join and journey with us through this new issue of Pathways to learn more about the community of practitioners, parents, and friends who are out there supporting your ability to step into greater levels of health and who honor the wisdom of motherhood.

Our first section, *Taking the Step*, has nine new articles for you to delve into to gain integral perspectives about the birth process, bonding with your new infant, how to support early family development, and the value of chiropractic care to overcome challenges all along the way. Our feature article on page 8 is about our current cultural story of separation, and the gifts we each have that can lift us into a new and different story of generosity, a story that mothers of all generations have been keen to appreciate and nurture.

The next section, *Staying the Course*, has 3 key articles that will provide huge benefits in both preparing for birth, and assuring that your birth remains within your own domain of influence and choices. Particularly insightful is Gloria Lemay's Secret Sensation Time on page 46, and the summary on page 6 of this document.

*Living the Journey*, the final of the three sections, has 7 articles that can help relieve the living conditions that can throttle early parenting and family bonding. Here we learn to take on a new model that's not about conquering ourselves or our environment, but delicately balancing ourselves moment-to-moment, day-to-day, and allowing the community to spawn from which new freedoms are permitted and a new way of life unfolds.

While nobody can make another person take the step in life, stay the course, or live to their highest potential, this magazine is simply dedicated to the fact that such a journey exists, and we hope to offer some resources and the community that helps to light the way.

Once again, make sure to look at our double-page spreads and infographics found on the following pages to clarify the importance of chiropractic care for pregnancy, childhood, and greater community well-being: pg. 12, 16, 38, and 54. These are specifically designed to easily share the chiropractic philosophy and purpose to friends, co-workers, and others who may be interested in similar life-goals and aspirations.

## **PW #61 Talking Points, Group Questions, and the Chiropractic Connection**

### **TAKING THE STEP**

***Nursing Posture and its Role in Sympathetic Dominance*** by Drs. Jordan and Joseph Adams

A characteristic posture found in new moms while nursing is one where the upper spine is rounded forward, the shoulders are rolled in, and the head is in a downward position gazing toward the baby (or a phone in hand). There's more to this posture than we might at first expect. In fact, what this posture can often do is activate your body's sympathetic nervous system, the underlying mechanism behind feelings of tension, dis-ease, and anxiety where no perceived, external threat is present.

In a real-life encounter with danger, the sympathetic nervous system activates a host of physiological changes in the body, and one of these changes is the change in musculature including posture. In order to begin fighting or fleeing the external threat, the body must physically prepare by rounding the shoulders, moving the head forward, and tensing the backs of the legs in a fight-or-flight response.

The chiropractic insight provided here is that this response to external threats can be imitated in a reverse sequence whenever our body assumes this forward bending posture during the day. In other words, just as the sympathetic nervous system response can change our posture for the purpose of our survival, our posture can change our sympathetic nervous system activity, namely by activating it, even though no real danger is present.

Our posture is something we engage in all day long. It's ramifications on our health are well understood as detrimental in the long run. Here it is shown, that not only is this true, but posture can intricately affect short-term changes affecting our optimal well-being in the here and now.

"Day after day, I'm running around trying to take care of everyone else, leaving myself last on the list," says one mom who recently visited a chiropractor's office looking for solutions to her difficulties. She senses that a chiropractor could help her, but what she may not have considered until her first visit was the compounding affect her nursing posture may have had on her feeling rushed, on the run, stressed, and self-neglected all the time. The posture is a key factor in ramping up, or slowing down, the sympathetic stress response which can manifest as a host of issues in the body and mind. The effects of nursing posture go deeper than neck and back pain—it reaches into the function of the nervous system itself.

Some things to consider while breastfeeding:

- 1) Sit or stand tall, with your chest open and shoulders down and back. There should be a sensation of the body lengthening upward and expanding outward, with the torso resting on a balanced pelvis and secure lower back.
- 2) Use a footstool if your feet don't reach the floor to make sure your feet are connected to a surface.
- 3) Stretch your muscles and ligaments, including your chest and hamstrings whenever you have the space and time to do so. This is particularly helpful!
- 4) Invest in an ergonomic breastfeeding pillow for support (however, I advise the first three options be taken into consideration as more powerful and empowering solutions, to be added to—not replaced—with ergonomic devices)
- 5) Schedule at least 10 minutes of quiet alone time every day to help reboot your nervous system to autonomic balance.

Tip: When stretching the muscles and ligaments, focus on taking full breaths *into the area that you're stretching*. By focusing on our breathing, we improve our likelihood of really getting the most out of our stretches to such an extent that we wouldn't be wrong to label our stretching routines as "breathing routines."

*(See below for chiropractic considerations)*

#### **Questions for discussion:**

- Reading this article often prompts people to sit up straight, how does it make you feel to re-arrange your posture?
- What are some reasons why we might get fatigued performing optimal postures for longer than a few minutes?
- The breathing cycle is inhibited by poor posture, resulting in poor oxygenation of the body. What are some other negative consequences you can imagine are connected to bad habits of posture?
- Why is exercise such a cherished activity for so many people, while stretching is often avoided or disliked?
- How does it feel to breathe into the area your stretching, focusing more on the breath instead of the tension/pull of the muscles?
- How might a mother spend 10 minutes of quiet alone time every day to reboot?

#### **Chiropractic Connection**

There are various reasons why we lock ourselves into poor posture. Tight muscles may be one of the most significant. However, there is also the consideration of nervous system interference which itself breeds the sympathetic response in the body. When the nervous system suffers structural impediments to flow, the body sends proprioceptive signals back to the brain that convey signals of the presence of stress. This can lead to unconscious changes in posture that further exacerbate our position.

While changing our posture using our conscious intention can be tiring, finding the underlying causes of our increased stress response from blockages in the nervous system can be a huge boost in our ability to improve our postural habits.

**STAYING THE COURSE***Secret Sensation Time* by Gloria Lemay**Article Summary**

Many births begin in the night. Typically, what occurs is the mom will wake up to go pee, feel her membranes release, and then an hour later will begin having sensations 15 minutes apart. The error we make at this time is to turn nighttime into daytime—turning on the lights, waking up our husband, organizing supplies and spending our energy in excitement and anticipation, instead of making this a time of quiet transition, allowing our bodies to absorb the benefit of the pure, quiet hours of the night.

That first night can make all the difference, but so many couples hype up the situation and don't realize they are sabotaging their births right at the beginning. Many couples don't call their midwives until they have sensations coming five minutes apart at 7 a.m., but they've been up since midnight timing every one of the early sensations. If they had called their midwife at midnight, she would have said, "Turn off the light and let your husband sleep as much as possible through the night. You, stay dark and quiet. Take a bath with a candle if it helps, and call me back when you think I should come over."

Many couples distract themselves in that early, critical time when the pituitary gland is beginning to put out oxytocin to dilate the cervix. The lights cause inhibition of the oxytocin release. When you begin to have sensations, it's perfectly acceptable to ignore it as long as you possibly can. Don't tell anyone. Instead, have a "secret sensation time" with your unborn baby and get in as dark a space as you can. This will allow your hormone activity to be as biologically primed as possible for an empowered birth.

Many births take days and days of prodromal (under 3 centimeters dilation) sensations before things start to progress. If only we can allow the beginning to be quiet and peaceful, then the rest can go smoothly as well, and this is preferable to an exciting birth story to tell everyone, beginning with the first sensations.

**Questions for Consideration:**

- If you are excited and want to spread the news about your water breaking and sensations beginning, what can you do to harness that excitement and channel it into a quiet sensation time instead?
- Has anyone experienced a particularly long labor? Did it begin at night? How were those first hours for you?

- What are some additional benefits of a “secret sensation time” that you can imagine?
- Do you have a preferred time for when you’d like to begin labor?
- What are your thoughts on the baby’s role in initiating labor? Do you think he or she has a say in that process?
- If labor begins during the day, how can you still harness the “dark” and “quiet” feelings of secret sensation time?

**Chiropractic Connection:**

Aligning the pelvis for an ideal birth is just one of the many preliminary benefits that chiropractic can have on birth. An optimally functioning nervous system is a vital benefit provided allowing the body to better communicate hormone production and enhance physiological function. Chiropractic is one of the least invasive forms of care available, and being a hands-on, delicate approach, it is intrinsically respectful of the body’s normal capacities and innate functions. Many births may experience a delay in progression. This doesn’t need to be a problem, but if it’s prolonged it can lead to an increased chance for complications. Chiropractic can help move things along in labor, as well. Considering the emphasis on ideal hormone production for an optimal labor we can see how the principles of chiropractic care are integrally aligned with the principles of an optimal birth experience.

**TAKING THE STEP**

*Six Things Every New Mother Needs* by Allison Mecham Evans, M.A.

**Article Summary:**

There's a great deal of contrast between bridal showers and baby showers. Bridal showers tend to assume a much larger level of support and consideration from friends and even family members. Why should this be?

It's strange to think about, especially considering that birth represents one of the biggest transitions a woman can experience. Provided that women in the western world have suffered during this transition more as time goes on, it's a sad reality that the norm remains that the transition into motherhood is met with less support than is their weddings.

There are some commonalities in cultures that have great success in nurturing the bonding stage of new motherhood, and one key factor is the recognition of postpartum as a unique time, deserving our special attention and abundant practical and emotional assistance to the new mother. These cultures' success prove that it is culture, not biology, that makes postpartum so hard for new mothers. So here are some key insights and practical tips we can apply to help the new mothers in our life achieve a greater level of recognition and support during this most pivotal time, and to help build ourselves up together as a community.

- 1) Drop the idea that the woman is "having" a baby. Embrace the idea, instead, that she is becoming a mother; that a fundamental change is burgeoning within her and by seeing her from that perspective we align to the truth of her life at that time.
- 2) Drop the Imperative to "Bounce Back." Many mothers who understand the above principles face opposition in many forms from their friends and family on this issue of "getting back out there." The fact is, a strong mother-child bond will remain for the rest of your life. This time is more precious than we can ever know or quantify. So let's respect the decision to honor it to the fullest possible capacity.
- 3) Feed her. Since the mother will be spending most of her waking hours feeding the baby, it makes natural sense to support the mother by cooking and providing for her. There's few things in life more heartwarming that participating in the flow of vital current that's alive in the mother-child dynamic, and by helping prepare nourishing food, we do precisely that.
- 4) Run her house. Tidying, laundry, and help with older children are crucially valuable to help someone transition into motherhood. Household stresses can make a new mother feel like she "can't keep up." But she never was meant to, in a community setting (our biological norm) we are meant to have support. Let's reincorporate that ideal as much as possible. And this gift we give will elevate the relationship—it will never be forgotten—and it will truly set the stage for more community support in your families' futures.



- 5) Run her errands. “Running” around is not something a new mother is meant to be doing. And infants can make “running errands” practically impossible, and there may be a biological reason for this....as a baby calls out for stillness, your support will be what allows it.
- 6) Sit with her. “What’s happened to me?” can be a question forming in the mind of a new mother if she’s lost contact and normal, face-to-face conversations. If she’s feeling isolated, disoriented, unsure of herself, or displaced, you can have a direct, positive impact by simply being with her in person, to reassure her that everything is still normal and okay.

**Questions for Consideration:**

- What was the most difficult thing about the transition into motherhood, in the context of needing support?
- What was something that someone did or said to you that you felt was particularly important or helpful?
- Of the above six concepts, which one do you feel is most essential?
- Why do you think weddings receive more support than the life-giving transition of motherhood?
- What can you do to counteract the drive to be everything and “do it all” as a new mother?

**Chiropractic Connection**

Chiropractic provides a benefit for the transition into motherhood that goes well beyond the objective of having a healthy birth and a healthy baby. The chiropractic adjustment is designed to help free up your nervous system to adapt to future stresses and to help build resilience in the body as it grows, changes, and develops. The functions that are inhibited by stresses to the nervous system can result in any manner of problems relating to the mental, emotional or physical levels of the body. Sometimes these stresses are abated when others support us in our everyday lives. Chiropractic is fundamentally of this sort; it’s a support that we can apply which is aimed to help the body feel, think, and function better, while at the same time, nourishing us through the realization that there’s a community of people and practitioners who are on our side, ready to help when we are in need. With the common aim of achieving improved health through chiropractic care, there’s a powerful spark for real community support, and this spark is all the more vibrant when it is mothers who are coming together.

## TAKING THE STEP

***On Their Own: How to Stop Interfering with Your Child's Development*** by Lindsay Mumma D.C.

### Article Summary:

One of the most important things to remember when watching and helping your child develop into childhood and beyond is that your child will learn on his/her own. This applies especially to the early stages when your child is still learning to move, crawl, and walk. If your child isn't allowed to learn on his/her own, then he/she won't learn how to do it properly.

Children need to get a sense of how their bodies function in a gravity environment, so they can learn to coordinate and activate muscles in the proper sequence to initiate complex movements. Helping children achieve these positions will actually stunt their learning, and will take away from their sense of accomplishment once they do learn.

Many devices sold on the market are designed to prematurely situate a child in a position that is not biologically appropriate at their current age. These include Bumby seats (or any seat that sits your child upright before she has sat up on her own), ExerSaucers, Door jumpers, Baby walkers, and Baby swings.

While it may appear like unfriendly advice, there's substantial arguments to be made to limit or exclude these devices.

You may be thinking, "But my baby wants to walk—he just can't do it yet." This is a sentiment that comes often, after seeing an infant lift one leg when someone stands them up, upright. While it may look like the child is trying to walk, and it may be adorable, it's only a reflex that occurs spontaneously whenever a child who's not ready to stand upright is put in that position. In other words, it's not a conscious act of the desire to walk. If they're not doing it on their own, then they're not ready to do it. Instead of focusing on what your baby can't do yet, sit back and enjoy what your baby *can* do. This change in perspective can go a long way.

"But my baby gets frustrated when I lay her on the ground." This may be a result of being conditioned to being held upright, which will require gradual transition to lying comfortably on the floor. Often parents put their children in devices that sit them up to keep them safe, but it's more effective for the child's development if they are free to move about in a safe space instead.

"But he has so much fun jumping in his door jumper!" The patella (kneecap) doesn't ossify until 3 to 5 years of age, making repetitive bouncing on a knee potentially detrimental. While it's not the intention of the author to limit fun activities, it's worth considering the primary point

iterated above that if your child isn't ready, or is incapable of doing something on her own, then she shouldn't be doing it.

"But she'll only sleep in the swing." We all need sleep. So definitely do what you need so that everyone can rest. But if your child requires a significant amount of time in a reclined/semi-supine position, make sure to make up for that with lots of free movement.

Lastly, think about the last time you completed a great feat all on your own. Would you have felt as proud if someone else did half of the work for you? Give your baby the chance to feel some satisfaction at his/her own accomplishments, and let that be your guide to avoiding interference with your child's development.

If you're worried that your child has spent too much time in assistive devices, it's a great idea to have them checked by someone who understand biomechanics in babies.

#### **Questions for Consideration:**

- What are some devices that you feel dependent on that you might think are distractions or limiting your child's development?
- Can you think of any reasons, other than our own enjoyment, to bring a baby to take steps prior to them reaching their developmental stage on their own?
- What are some alternatives to a bumbo-seat that you can think of to accomplish the same practical end that a bumbo-seat provides without having to sacrifice their natural development as discussed above?
- Is your chiropractor aware of the detrimental aspect of the above mentioned devices, and have you asked about what they suggest to optimize optimal development?
- Can you think of any aspects of your child's development that required little to no consideration or conscious input on your part as a parent? In other words, think of all the things you don't need to "train" in your child that they have come to learn themselves.

#### **Chiropractic Connection**

Ideal development in infants and children comes autonomously, without the need for external supervision. It's coordinated by the body's intelligent nervous system which controls the body's functions, adaptations, growth and learning. In infancy or even before, blockages may occur to the intelligent nervous system from accidents, birth trauma, or stresses coming from the outer environment that overload the nervous system. Chiropractic can be a key element in assuring that the body is clear of these obstructions, allowing innate function and optimal development

to proceed without the need or desire for any external support measures. Just as chiropractic aims to support biologically normal, physiologically empowered birth, it also serves the infant to achieve biologically normal, physiologically empowered development.