

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

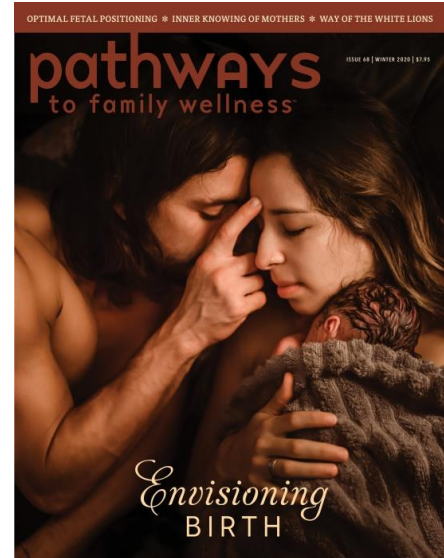
Share with the group your topic and why you chose it, why it interests you, and the importance you see in it. Summarize the article (some article summaries are provided below). You can read the entire article or article summary out loud to your group and share your thoughts at this time.

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 #68 Introduction

Welcome to the Winter 2020 issue!

A mother's inner knowing merges her with the mysterious and powerful in Nature. Nature awakens to our inner voice. This issue is a collection of the voices that have encouraged this awakening in humanity. This issue is called, "Envisioning Birth." To envision something is to awaken its potential in reality. All great movers and shakers have noted the same indwelling power to shape reality by way of the human imagination. When we envision birth we begin to get in touch with our exciting human potential.

The section *Taking the Step* represents practical considerations to step onto the individual and unique path ahead of you in birth and parenting. We learn about Mother Blessing ceremony ideas and practices that can sublime the early mother experience. We explore the topic of chiropractic for creating an internal oasis of safety and comfort. How to improve birth, and what optimal fetal positioning means.

Next, in *Staying the Course*, we read the story of one mother's inner knowing, and how it reveals a miraculous reality underlying normal, everyday life. Also, we touch on a topic that inspires many, the legend of the white lions of Timbavaati.

In *Living the Journey* we have several articles on the topic of birth—how birth experience shape our future and how to make the most of them, and how newborn chiropractic care can make life changing differences in our expression of health and well-being.

To summarize this issue in a single sentence, we say: Birth is full of wonder, the more we can tap into it's calling with love and admiration. This issue is our yearly Birth issue. Every birth is unique. And none can be predicted. Confidence comes when we align ourselves to our deeper knowing, trust, and ability. Chiropractic can help early families thrive. And the more we enjoy the process of learning the mystery and power surrounding birth, the more it will respond in kind.

PW #68 Talking Points, Group Questions, and the Chiropractic Connection**TAKING THE STEP***Blessing of the Mother*

By Oksana McGettigan, M.S.

Every culture on earth holds sacred ceremonies for the mother. However, it has become normal in our part of the world to permit and even encourage ridicule for the nurturing role of the mother. Some parts of our culture, particularly in parenting choices, people have pathologized motherly instincts, especially ones that reverse the tide. Rather than fight the bastard of cultural programs, we can step forward together, those of us who see a pathway to a better future.

“As a symbol of and vehicle for sustainable life,” writes McGettigan, “women and mothers have an important role to play in the revival and practicing of the wise traditions that sublime the world.” The power of creation that organizes and sustains the Universe is the same power that works through a human mother.

The wise traditions celebrating motherhood and all stages of a woman’s life promise clarity and empowerment for the culture as a whole. These celebratory rituals are traceable to the universal common roots of all peoples. The importance of such a celebration lies in the fact that they help us envision a future that works. For nothing can happen in the world, unless it be first envisioned.

“The Mother Blessing ceremony has many wonderful names—Blessingway, Birth Blessing, Mother Rising, A Mother’s Hands—with many new creative ideas to come, and many to rediscover.” This article discusses some of the beautiful practices that help connect us together in times of disconnection. And which offer ways to give voice to our inner wisdom, at a time when voices are being suppressed. It’s an article that is important for us in the Pathways community for its authenticity and raw truths.

“In a life of a woman,” writes Oksana, “there are three deeply lonely journeys requiring the utmost of human and feminine strength: being born, giving birth, and dying.

Pathways gatherings are here to encourage you— mothers, daughters, sisters, and friends— to seize the wonderful opportunity to connect and celebrate mothers and women around you. This is Oksana’s wish, and it is ours as well.

Questions for consideration:

- Have you ever been to a mother blessing ceremony?
- What is the simplest or easiest way you can think of to bless and honor a mother?
- What prevents mothers and women from engaging together on a ceremonial level more frequently?

Chiropractic Connection:

In her article, Oksana describes her own journey through pregnancy, where it so happened that she had to leave her midwife relationship only two weeks prior to her expected delivery. In her search for a new midwife she writes: “One midwife I found routinely offered to all her clients a Mother Blessing ceremony and that made my decision [to hire her] easy.” Her decision to go with this midwife was rooted in their common recognition of the importance of Mother Blessing ceremonies. This common recognition of core values provides trust and ease in the relationship. In chiropractic, we recognize how important shared values can be, and why a doctor-patient relationship that dismisses, or worse, betrays those values, cannot do justice to health in the fullest sense of the term. This shared connection between clients and providers which aligns them to *something greater* than the doctor or patient alone, is what makes the chiropractic community such a vibrant and robust avenue for healing.

TAKING THE STEP*Internal Oasis*

By Molly Stiens, D.C.

We asked the question, “What is it about chiropractic care that creates an internal environment that feels safe?” Chiropractor Molly Stiens provides an answer.

Just as you can imagine uprooting yourself from your current life stresses to go live in Hawaii to eat fruit readily from trees, sip local island coffee while listening to the birds, and leave the door unlocked, so too can you also imagine that our bodies desire the same exact thing!—inner peace, comfort, and safety. Especially is this so during pregnancy.

Molly writes, “Everyone talks about the importance of creating the perfect birth space, choosing the right provider, the right physical place, the “right” everything. But what if the inside is what created the truest sense of safety? What about creating a safe womb space?”

To a large extent, this is one of the best secrets of chiropractic care for pregnancy. Pregnancy and birth are both biomechanical and physiologically mediated events, and the neurological health of the mother drives the function of both. Hormonal release depends on an inner feeling of safety, connection, and social engagement recognized by the nervous system.

Chiropractic’s central focus on the well-being of the nervous system offers a multifaceted benefit to the mother carrying her child. One of the most fascinating, and recent, discoveries is the role of the vagus nerve in opening up the optimal functioning of our organism with respect to handling stress with greater ease.

“My prayer is that more of us can live from this place” writes Stiens, “especially in place of the ultimate uncertainty of the motherhood transition. We can make the internal place we inhabit safer for expression, for relaxation, and for play.”

With this, we will begin live in our body as our vessel, as the place of our own oasis, and to trust it as our friend.

Questions for consideration:

- What stressful situations have you been in lately?
- Do you think the balance and health of your nervous system had any effect on your ability to interpret and handle that stressful event?
- Does it make sense to optimize the body’s nerve-system function regardless of whether we have any physical ailments?
- Do you have any friends who were pregnant and started seeing a chiropractor? What was their experience?

Chiropractic Connection:

Chiropractic for pregnancy has so many benefits. Here's three:

- 1) Biomechanical balancing for increased mobility and an easier pregnancy and labor.
- 2) Greater nervous system function (less nervous system static) to promote ideal physiological activity and to harness deeper conscious and sub-conscious connections with your baby.
- 3) An opportunity to meet a community of parents and a network of care-providers who are happy to help you forge your own path in parenting.

TAKING THE STEP*9 Changes We Must Make to Increase Vaginal Birth Rates*

By Maria Silver Pyanov, C.P.D.

#2: Use More Doulas

Doulas radically reduce C-Section rates. They increase likelihood of spontaneous vaginal delivery and satisfaction with the birth experience (for both mom and dad). As Maria Silver Pyanov says, “The evidence speaks for itself.” And she calls for doula care to become the norm.

#3: Encourage Movement

“Barring medical necessity, staying in bed is not an evidence-based practice.” (For more on evidence based practices, visit Pathwaystofamilywellness.org) Maria reminds us that “coping with contractions using gravity and facilitating easier movement for baby can increase vaginal birth rates.”

#6: Encourage Natural Comfort Measures

Side effects of narcotic pain relief include: limiting movement, making it difficult for mom to feel internal cues to push, fetal distress, and more. “Labor is work, and women need coping techniques and comfort measures.” So it is important to explore options, and learn skills that work!

#8: Normalize VBAC

Many have been conditioned to fear uterine rupture after a C-section, “when the likelihood of this occurring is actually very low—and the chances of it being fatal is even lower.” But, strangely, women have not been conditioned to fear the possibility of uterine rupture after induction. To normalize VBAC we will help to drastically reduce climbing C-section rates.

#9: Build Confidence in Natural Birth

“If society begins to view birth as normal, we will see positive births in the media, building our confidence. We will also have friends and relatives encouraging and building us up, rather than creating fear.”

Questions for consideration:

- What makes birth scary for you?
- If we cannot know how our births will unfold, (every birth is unique) is it right to create a culture of fear around it?
- Of the 5 bullets listed above, which one do you resonate with most?
- Do you know any birth skills that can help you do the activity of giving birth? (such as breathing/relaxation techniques, muscle and tissue preparation skills, coping techniques for transition)?

Chiropractic connection:

The chiropractic philosophy which holds that there is an innate intelligent that expressed itself in the body, and that it can grow or diminish based on certain factors called subluxations, provides an avenue and context for preparing for birth that is unlike any other. Many pregnant moms have hired the help of chiropractic care to aid them in their birthing process. Others have utilized it to prepare the body for an easier birth. Chiropractic represents an enormous relief for many parents looking for ways to ease delivery and enhance normal physiological function for better births. In addition to chiropractic, there are also many ways to affect a positive outcome for yourselves. Altogether, self-learned skills and chiropractic care leads to greater autonomy in birth, no matter where or with whom, you decide to birth.

TAKING THE STEP*Optimal Fetal Positioning*

By Amy Michaelson

(Original artistic illustrations included)

Amy Michaelson's *Optimal Fetal Positioning* is an article designed to show expectant parents the intricate mechanics of birth. Every birth is unique, so "optimal" can be seen as nothing more than a guideline for understanding typical birth maneuvers the baby undergoes. What we learn is that the baby, in order to make its way through the pelvis, must perform certain maneuvers, and we can help the baby in various ways to do this.

Michaelson discusses several variables at play in birth: The pelvis, the fetal head, and the baby's head and body rotation. Assuming the baby is head down, the movements can vary depending on the alignment of the head to the front of the pelvis. The "optimal" position is where the back of the baby's head (occiput) is facing the mother's front facing pubic bone. This position is called (Occiput Anterior)

As the head crowns and begins to emerge, the shoulders still inside must rotate to follow suit. The shoulders slide into the pelvis by rotating so that one shoulder (usually the left) faces the mother's front, and the other shoulder faces her back. If you could see the entire baby in this position you would see his face looking toward the mother's backside and his chest facing the mother's left hip. And it would appear as though he were gazing overtop his right shoulder. As contractions increase, the baby is slowly moved further down and out the pelvic outlet while in this chin-over-shoulder position. Until a point comes when the emerged head can "restore" its position back to center.

(Go ahead and look far over your right shoulder, and then slowly restore back to center. This is what the baby does and feels at this stage of labor)

This is called "restitution" and it usually happens *during some of the final contractions of labor*. On the outside, the baby's face, which was facing the mother's backside for most of labor, is seen to slowly rotate, such that the nose brushes by the mother's left inner thigh. It's a unique and fascinating rotation for the father or birth assistant to witness. After this restitution, or sometimes during it, the shoulders will begin to emerge, beginning with the front facing shoulder. During this time, the baby's head and body continues to rotate, and some mothers who deliver their own children will see their baby turning to face them as the shoulders and rest of the body is born.

Questions for consideration:

- What aspect of the baby's maneuvers are you not clear on when visualizing it?
- Do you think visualizing a baby's normal, typical maneuvers can help you or the baby prepare for labor?

- Have you seen a chiropractor during pregnancy, and did this help you understand the bio-mechanics of the pelvis and baby in labor?

Chiropractic Connection:

It is often the case that mother's with a breech birth will seek out Webster Certified chiropractors to try and "flip" the baby. The chiropractor, however, is not trying to "flip" or "turn" a baby in utero. Here's one potent reason why this is:

Some babies who choose a breech presentation, do so for good biological reasons! Many breech births occur, many of which can and do occur naturally at home. Once born, the baby's umbilical cord is shown to be uniquely short. Or perhaps, the cord is shown to be positioned such that it became shortened. In such instances, it can be seen after the fact that the child's breech presentation was actually a life-saving position for that baby for birth. Had he or she assumed a head-down position, the cord attached to the placenta may have prevented a full descent through the pelvis.

If chiropractors "turned breech babies" they would be dis-honoring nature's innate wisdom. What chiropractors do is optimize normal physiological wisdom, by removing subluxations, interferences, and imbalances to the body's pelvic structure and nervous system. Often, these imbalances impinge uterine constraints, which negatively affect optimal positioning. In some rare cases, the optimal position may be breech.

This point summarizes why chiropractic is perhaps the safest form of healthcare ever invented. Because it follows Nature's innate blueprints for success, it doesn't desire to overcome or force nature to fit a prescribed outcome.

STAYING THE COURSE*Inner Knowing of Mothers*

By Ibu Robin Lim, C.P.M

Author Robin Lim discusses the intriguing question of a mother's intuition, and shares her own personal account of the mystery that child-bearing can bestow. As a young, late stage pregnant woman in college, Robin experienced an episode of breakdown; riding her bike to class, her bike got caught in a train track and she couldn't lift it out. (don't worry, no train was in sight.) Totally exhausted and defeated, she stepped back. Then she noticed an inner knowing, which she says felt as though her baby was talking to her, saying: "Don't worry mom, I got you covered."

Immediately thereafter, an elderly man with a scruffy beard and wearing tatters came to sweep her and her bike off the tracks. Robin writes: "The rain suddenly stopped. The clouds parted and the sun came out to shine on this ancient man's toothless smile. He quickly fixed my bike chain. 'Better be off to school, little mother,' he said."

How did he know she was a student? And where did he even come from? His answer demonstrated the mystery. With a wink, he said, "Your baby girl told me."

She never met the man again, but after that day she knew (without ultrasound) that the baby was to be a girl. And she knew that her baby would be a teacher to her.

"From that day forward, I began to truly trust in the kindness of all creation."

Robin ends her article with a letter to moms:

"Dear mom,

Natural childbirth is not a myth. Most women can do it, supported by loving, skilled birthkeepers such as midwives, doctors, doulas, nurses, and caring family. I am not saying there are easy answers or simple solutions. I am saying that as a mother-to-be, you can tune into your own inner knowing."

Questions for consideration:

- Do you have any personal experiences as a mother or parent that felt beyond normal, almost miraculous?

- Do you think Robin's story is an example of coincidence or spiritual synchronicity demonstrating the power which science cannot measure?
- Have you ever felt your pregnant child talking to you? What are some things your baby may have been telling you?
- What are some difficulties with listening to your inner knowing for guidance and answers?

Chiropractic connection:

For many families who love chiropractic care, there is also often a love for self-determinacy, informed choice, autonomy, inner knowing, and a rejection of the belief instilled by culture that humans are helpless creatures without x, y, or z. There's a vital community of people in the world who are now saying *yes* to the idea that they are, deep down, wise and intelligent beings that hold the answers, as long as we are clear enough to hear them and brave enough to honor them. Chiropractic was born at a time when society was transitioning from pre to postindustrial standards of living. So much potential for good at this time, quickly became dominated by a mechanistic paradigm of control. Chiropractic represented, and still does, a beacon of hope to balance out human perception at this most amazing point in human evolution. To reaffirm what we intrinsically know about health and well-being; that a holistic reality of inner intelligence and power exists in the heart of each living organism.

STAYING THE COURSE
Way of the White Lions
By Andreja Cepus

This is a fun article and full of mystery and wonder. In the heart of South Africa, in the land of Timbavaati, a rare genetic breed of lion exists, the White Lions whom native shamans and indigenous peoples regard to be spiritually important. These white lions represent far less than 1 percent of the total lion population in the world. And they are some of the most majestic and mysterious animals one can witness. Linda Tucker, foremost among the defenders of this brilliant animal sub-species says:

“The white lions have a particular mystique about them. All the legends describe them as star creatures...and legends say that they came down to Earth to help save humanity at a time of crisis.”

The author, Andreja Cepus, describes her experience travelling to meet the White Lions. Recalling the words of one animal communicator who accompanied Andreja on her travels:

“Communicating with animals teaches us unconditional love. There are no filters in this communication, as it can only flow directly from heart to heart. If there is fear, insincerity, or a hidden purpose that differs from the one we try to express, the animals sense it immediately. Therefore, no one can hide here.”

While feeling this energy, Andreja felt herself in a peculiar, enraptured state that made her hear one of the white lionesses voice speaking clearly. Nebu, the lioness, said: “Baby is coming.”

“It was her message to me.” Andreja says. “At first I thought I was just imagining it, of course, but the voice spoke again, and the message was the same. I accepted the fact that one cannot question nature, and that the invisible is as much a part of nature as are the trees, the grass, and the stones.”

This article is a captivating, short summary of the majestic power of the white lions, and it discerns a positive message for all mankind—to re-align with the spiritual source and purpose of our being here on Earth.

“Our task,” says Linda, “is to help restore the natural balance, which also means to restore the natural balance within us, human beings, within ourselves. Let’s just take a look at the lion as a symbol. It represents power, dignity, leadership, courage, and heart. When we, people, are our best, we are exactly like that: lion-hearted.”

“If the white lions disappear, the Earth will lose its balance completely, which is something that we, humans, cannot survive,” –Linda Tucker. Andreja’ adds, “The white lions are pure starlight,

pure sunlight that activates in us the *courage to stand up and follow our hearts.*” As Linda says, “Just watch what’s going to happen when we start living our purpose.”

The article ends with the following call to action: The white lions are ready to give unconditionally in the belief that we will stand up and activate our purpose and live a meaningful life. I believe that we are on the right path, and that we can do it.

Questions for consideration:

- What’s your first impression about this article and the white lions of Timbavaati?
- Where can you begin to demonstrate the lion-hearted qualities of power, dignity, leadership, courage, and heart, in your life?
- Do you resonate with the white lion’s message of growing courage and pride in ourselves?
- If the white lions are here to help us at a time of crises, according to African shamanic prophecies, what can we do today to make sure their spiritual efforts are not in vain?

Other Notable Articles (editor's picks)

LIVING THE JOURNEY

Is Your Birth Experience Still Affecting You?

By Jacob Devaney (pg 48)

LIVING THE JOURNEY

A Newborn Cranial Session; Mia Lands in Her Body

By Karen Melton (pg 52)

LIVING THE JOURNEY

Mysterious and Powerful Human Beings

By Richard Henry Whitehurst (pg 62)

“Your job as a parent is to protect your child’s connection to herself so she can always follow her inner guide.” — NAOMI ALDORT

“As we make the choices for our family’s well-being from this quiet place within, we reclaim motherhood. As we pronounce the respect and appreciation for the magnificence of life, we change the world.” —Jeanne Ohm

“To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment.” — RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Thank you for being here, and we love you.