

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

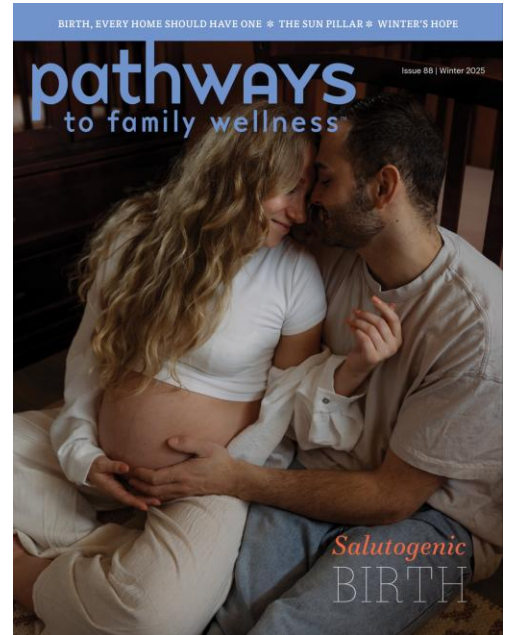
Share with the group your topic and why you chose it, why it interests you, and the importance you see in it. Summarize the article (some article summaries are provided below). You can read the entire article or article summary out loud to your group and share your thoughts at this time.

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 benefiting your office growth and the health of your community!



The Birth of Health: Reclaiming the Sacred Dance

When families discover their innate power, birth becomes the genesis of lifelong health.

This issue of Pathways—Salutogenic Birth—invites us into a profound remembering. At a time when the world is rediscovering what it means to trust the intelligence of the body, we turn our attention to the most primal of human experiences: birth. Here, in this sacred threshold, families have the opportunity not only to bring new life into the world, but to generate health itself—salutogenesis—from within.

The salutogenic birth paradigm shifts our focus from outcome to process, from fear to coherence, from external authority to internal resourcefulness. As Dr. Michele Odent reminds us, women living in a modern world must take increasing responsibility for the skills they bring into birth. This is not about rejecting medical support or choosing one birth setting over another—it is about recognizing that birth happens first and foremost within the family's sense of coherence, which can be internally generated regardless of setting or circumstance.

Since 1987, when Dr. Larry Webster developed the Webster Technique, families have increasingly sought out chiropractic care during pregnancy to prepare the body and mind for the activity of birth. Today, this collaboration has deepened. Webster-certified chiropractors are being invited into the birth itself, offering adjustments before and during labor, and providing newborns with their first gentle assessments in the precious hours after birth. This integration of chiropractic care into the birth journey represents a return to the original blueprint—trust in the woman's body, trust in the process, and skillful support that empowers rather than directs.

Across these pages, you will encounter voices calling families home to the wisdom of their bodies, to the power of informed choice, and home to the sacred dance between mother, baby, and partner. You will read of integrative pediatricians guiding prenatal health practices, birth advocates championing the safety and empowerment of home birth, and practitioners illuminating how light, movement, and fascial alignment support recovery and resilience.

The stories shared here affirm a single, resonant truth: when we honor birth as a conscious, coherent experience—when we approach it with skills, resources, and self-trust rather than fear and dependence—we do more than bring a child into the world. We establish the foundation for family wellbeing that will serve generations to come. The birth process becomes the physical, emotional, and spiritual nucleus of the new family, a place where salutogenesis—the birth of health—takes root.

Welcome to Issue 88. A celebration of salutogenic birth—the intelligence of life honored, the body's wisdom trusted, and the promise of coherent family beginnings made visible through the sacred work of practitioners and families alike.

Living the Journey

Before the First Breath: An Integrative Pediatrician's Prenatal Blueprint for Lifelong Health

By Brittany Blockman, MD

Dr. Brittany Blockman shares a deeply personal journey that many expecting parents will recognize: the experience of feeling lost during pregnancy, even with a medical background. Despite her expertise as an Integrative Pediatrician, she found herself searching for guidance on how to truly optimize her baby's health—not just keep the pregnancy safe, but actively support lifelong wellness beginning in the womb.

The gap Dr. Blockman identifies is significant: while OBs provide essential monitoring of pregnancy, they typically don't see patients until the end of the first trimester—after many critical developmental milestones have already occurred. Moreover, prenatal pediatrics isn't even recognized as a formal specialty. This leaves families navigating one of life's most important periods without access to the growing body of research on how early life exposures influence neurodevelopmental outcomes.

Dr. Blockman's article offers a practical framework built around what she calls the essential pillars of prenatal optimization. Sunlight exposure ensures adequate vitamin D levels—ideally between 40–60 ng/mL—which supports bone development, immune function, brain development, and reduces risks of preterm labor. Iron is critically important, with ferritin levels above 30 ng/mL helping prevent anemia and supporting fetal brain structure. Omega-3 fatty acids, particularly DHA, are essential for brain and eye development, while magnesium supports hundreds of enzymatic processes, promotes better sleep, and may help reduce preterm labor risk.

The gut microbiome also plays a key role during pregnancy. Probiotic-rich foods and supplements, especially those containing *Lactobacillus rhamnosus*, can help reduce eczema risk in infants and influence the microbial environment the baby encounters during birth. Finally, eating organic whenever possible—particularly with awareness of the Environmental Working Group's "Dirty Dozen" list—can dramatically reduce pesticide exposure, which has been linked to hormone disruption and delayed cognitive development.

Dr. Blockman's vision is of a world where every family feels empowered with this knowledge early in their journey—where fewer parents feel overwhelmed or alone, and where every child has the best possible foundation for lifelong wellness, beginning even before they are born.

Questions for Consideration

- What prenatal guidance did you receive during your pregnancy, and were there areas where you wished for more support?
 - How does the concept of “health optimization” differ from “disease management” in your understanding of prenatal care?
 - What role do you believe nutrition and lifestyle play in shaping a baby’s lifelong health trajectory?
 - How might accessing integrative prenatal care earlier—even before conception—change outcomes for families?
 - What barriers exist in our current healthcare system that prevent families from receiving proactive, holistic prenatal support?
 - How can parents balance the recommendations of conventional medicine with integrative approaches during pregnancy?
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The Chiropractic Connection

Chiropractic care during pregnancy aligns beautifully with the integrative approach Dr. Blockman advocates. While she focuses on nutritional and environmental optimization, chiropractors address the neuro-biomechanical aspects of prenatal health—ensuring optimal support for both mother and developing baby.

The nervous system is the master coordinator of all body functions, including the hormonal cascades that govern fetal development. When subluxations create interference in this communication, the body’s ability to adapt and optimize become limited. By maintaining spinal alignment and nervous system integrity throughout pregnancy, chiropractic care creates the deeper conditions for the mother’s innate intelligence to guide the baby’s growth.

Together, integrative prenatal nutrition and chiropractic care form a complementary foundation—one nourishing the body from within through optimal nutrients, the other ensuring the body’s communication pathways are clear and responsive. This collaborative approach embodies the salutogenic principle: generating health through a workable knowledge of the body’s inherent wisdom.

Feature

Birth, Every Home Should Have One

By Jennifer Margulis and Suzanne Arms

Jennifer Margulis and Suzanne Arms open with a striking observation: babies are conceived out of lovemaking, an intimate act that happens in homes, hotels, and private corners of the world—never in hospitals. Yet over 98 percent of American women give birth to the fruit of that love in highly sanitized, windowless hospital rooms surrounded by strangers. The authors boldly disagree with the prevailing narrative that hospitals are the safest place to give birth.

They argue that hospitals are places for sick people, full of germs and hospital-acquired infections that affect 1 in every 31 hospitalized patients. Instead of protecting birth as a normal, natural, healthy, loving activity, obstetrician-led birth has become characterized by machines, bright lights, unnecessary interventions, and all things plastic and metal. According to the World Health Organization, the United States has one of the highest maternal mortality rates of any industrialized country, despite spending more on birth than any other nation.

The authors detail the cascade of routine practices that studies have shown to be both unnecessary and potentially harmful: limiting freedom of movement, restricting food and drink during labor, continuous fetal monitoring (which increases cesarean rates without improving outcomes), and requiring women to labor on their backs—a position that lengthens contractions, increases pain, and works against gravity. Perhaps worst of all is the routine separation of mothers and babies in the first critical hours after birth, which hinders both breastfeeding and bonding.

As medical historian Alice Dreger has noted, the most scientific birth is the least technological. In countries with the best birth outcomes—Japan, Iceland, Sweden, Holland, Norway—midwives attend the majority of births, whether in hospitals, birth centers, or homes. Women in these countries are treated with respect, kindness, and patience; encouraged to move around during labor; given food and water when requested; and encouraged to have unmedicated vaginal births.

The authors cite research showing that planned home birth attended by skilled midwives produces outcomes better than hospital birth. A 2009 Canadian study found that babies born at home with midwives had the best outcomes when compared to hospital births attended by either midwives or physicians. Home birth is cost-effective, satisfying, and safe for women—and the baby born at home is welcomed with love, given immediate skin-to-skin contact, and primed by this early calm to find the world a loving, peaceful place.

Quoting Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*, they remind us that a house is not a home until it has been consecrated by a birth, a wedding, and a death. Home birth, they conclude, is not only a blessing for the home—it is a blessing for the birthing family and for all of humanity.

Questions for Consideration

- What cultural messages have shaped your beliefs about where birth should happen and who should attend?
 - How does the comparison between lovemaking and birth challenge conventional thinking about hospital birth?
 - What emotions arise when considering that countries with the best birth outcomes rely primarily on midwifery care?
 - How might the routine separation of mothers and babies after hospital birth impact long-term bonding and breastfeeding?
 - What would need to change in our healthcare system to support more families in choosing home birth?
 - How can we shift the narrative from viewing home birth transfers as “failures” to seeing them as a calling to elevate our sense of family coherence amid life’s infrequent and unexpected turns?
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The Chiropractic Connection

Chiropractic philosophy has long aligned with the perspective that birth is a normal physiological process, not a medical emergency waiting to happen. The principle that “Nature needs no help, just no interference” speaks directly to the authors’ argument that undisturbed birth, guided by the natural rhythm of mother and baby, rarely produces complications requiring intervention.

Webster-certified chiropractors play a crucial role in preparing families for the kind of physiological birth Margulis and Arms champion. By ensuring pelvic balance and optimal nervous system function throughout pregnancy, chiropractic care supports the body’s innate ability to navigate the birth process. When the Power, Passage, and Passenger relationships are aligned—when the mother’s body can move freely and respond to the baby’s descent—the natural momentum of birth is honored rather than disrupted.

Whether families choose home, birth center, or hospital, chiropractic care offers the same gift: preparation for birth as an active, empowered experience. By trusting the body’s inherent wisdom and removing interference, chiropractors join midwives and birth advocates in supporting the kind of loving, patient, mother-centered care that produces the best outcomes for women and babies alike.

Staying the Course

The Sun Pillar: Light as Medicine from Conception to Recovery

By Lindsey Mathews Cantu

Lindsey Mathews Cantu begins with a simple yet timeless truth: your body is designed to heal in the light. Not under fluorescent bulbs, not scrolling your phone at 2 a.m. while nursing—but outside, under the sun. This isn't wellness theater, she insists—it's biology. And it's one of the most powerful, yet most ignored, tools in postpartum recovery.

What most women don't realize is that this healing begins long before birth. During pregnancy, a mother's light environment directly shapes her baby's developmental timing, metabolism, and mitochondrial health. Amniotic fluid, research shows, selectively transmits red and near-infrared light—the exact wavelengths abundant in morning and evening sunlight and essential for mitochondrial energy production. Early and mid-pregnancy sun exposure matters most, as light transmission through amniotic fluid decreases later in gestation.

The circadian rhythm—the internal clock governing hormone production, cellular repair, inflammation response, and metabolic function—is controlled by the suprachiasmatic nucleus (SCN), which sits above the optic nerve and is set by light entering the eyes. When we disrupt that rhythm through staying inside all day or exposing ourselves to artificial light at night, we disrupt everything downstream: sleep quality, immune function, tissue repair, and hormonal timing.

Cantu explains that morning light within 30 minutes of waking signals the SCN to produce cortisol and suppress melatonin, setting the stage for proper melatonin production at night. Red and near-infrared wavelengths in morning and evening sunlight penetrate skin to reach fascia, muscles, and connective tissue, stimulating collagen and elastin production—exactly what the linea alba needs to regain tension after pregnancy. For newborns, whose circadian rhythm isn't fully mature until 3–4 months, the mother's light exposure and hormonal cues help establish their sleep-wake cycles.

Drawing from personal experience, Cantu shares how she sunbathed almost daily during pregnancy and prioritized morning light on her belly from day one postpartum. By 6–8 weeks, she had no signs of diastasis recti. While she acknowledges this wasn't only due to sunlight—she also practiced BIRTHFIT Basics and nourished her body intentionally—she considers light her secret weapon. Research supports her: light therapy combined with exercise is more effective for diastasis recovery than exercise alone, and postpartum mood disorders correlate with circadian disruption.

The article provides practical guidance for each phase: during pregnancy, get outside daily and let sunlight hit your belly; in early postpartum, get outside within 30 minutes of waking and avoid

bright artificial light after sunset; from weeks 4–8, pair light with gentle movement; and beyond, continue morning light exposure as a lifelong practice. The message is clear: your body is not a machine to be fixed but a biological system designed to heal when given the right conditions—and light is one of those conditions.

Questions for Consideration

- How much natural light do you or did you get during pregnancy and postpartum? What barriers prevented more outdoor time?
 - What role might artificial light at night—from phones, screens, or overhead lights during nursing—play in postpartum challenges?
 - How does the concept of “entraining for two” change your understanding of a mother’s light exposure during pregnancy?
 - What simple changes could you make to incorporate more morning light into your daily routine?
 - How might understanding circadian biology change the way we support new mothers in the postpartum period?
 - What does it mean to view the body as a biological system designed to heal rather than a machine to be fixed?
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The Chiropractic Connection

Chiropractic care and circadian health share a common foundation: both recognize that the body possesses an innate intelligence that coordinates all functions when given the right conditions. Just as light signals the SCN to orchestrate hormonal cascades throughout the body, the nervous system—free from subluxation—coordinates the communication that allows all systems to function in harmony. All life is based on light and frequency, or what chiropractors refer to as tone.

Cantu’s emphasis on the linea alba, fascia, and connective tissue repair speaks directly to the structural component of postpartum recovery that chiropractors address. The BIRTHFIT movement, which integrates chiropractic care with movement, nourishment, and mindset practices, exemplifies this holistic approach. When spinal alignment supports nervous system function, and natural light supports circadian rhythm, the body’s healing capacity is optimized on multiple levels.

For postpartum mothers, combining regular chiropractic adjustments with intentional light exposure creates a powerful foundation for recovery. The adjustment restores structural integrity and nervous system communication; the light restores hormonal timing and cellular repair signals. Together, they honor the body's original blueprint for healing—a blueprint that has served mothers for millennia.

Living the Journey

The First Adjustment

By Mackenzie McNamara, DC

Dr. Mackenzie McNamara opens with an intimate portrait of salutogenic birth in action. Amanda, a holistic mother of three expecting her fourth child, was more than 30 hours into labor when Dr. McNamara arrived at her home. This was Amanda's third planned home birth and her longest labor yet. Her midwife, who had attended her two previous births, wasn't sure why things weren't progressing at Amanda's normal pace.

Dr. McNamara assessed Amanda for subluxation and gently adjusted her pelvis and upper cervical spine. As night fell and Amanda's older children slept, her birth team—two midwives, a doula, a birth photographer, and Dr. McNamara—camped out on the floor around her bed, heads popping up as she moaned through difficult contractions. In this moment, Dr. McNamara was struck by the beauty of it: "This is the village and the love so many of us are missing."

Then came the insight. Observing Amanda's standing posture, Dr. McNamara recognized a biomechanical challenge: the baby's body was positioned forward over Amanda's pubic bone, preventing the baby's head from engaging directly over the cervix. She quietly shared her observation with the midwife and suggested supporting Amanda's belly with a woven wrap to help the baby engage.

With the wrap held gently taut, Amanda's next contraction brought the most primal sounds of the birth so far—the labor pattern shifted. Soon Luna made her entrance. Dr. McNamara watched with awe as the magic of those first moments unfolded—the love that built through the long days of labor, the support and presence of family, friends, and birth team.

Luna was less than an hour old when she received her first gentle chiropractic assessment. Initially uncomfortable and disinterested in breastfeeding, Luna spit up copious amounts of fluid right after her adjustment—as Dr. McNamara had predicted might happen. Her father noted how her face and body seemed much more relaxed. Luna then latched at the breast for the first time with ease and grace.

Dr. McNamara's story is framed by a powerful sidebar introducing the salutogenic birth paradigm: a model that honors the innate capacity of the mother, the process of birth itself, and the resources available to families to build the skills and confidence to bring life into the world. In this model, birth happens not in a location but within the family's sense of coherence. A homebirth isn't just about location—it's a return home to the power, wisdom, and sovereignty of the body.

Questions for Consideration

- What does it mean to you that birth can happen within a family's "sense of coherence" regardless of location?
 - How does the image of a birth team "camping out" around the laboring mother challenge conventional birth support models?
 - What role did observation and collaboration play in identifying the biomechanical challenge during Amanda's labor?
 - How does this story illustrate the complementary relationship between midwifery and chiropractic care in birth?
 - What emotions arise when considering that a newborn might benefit from gentle chiropractic assessment within the first hour of life?
 - How might the concept of "salutogenic birth" change the way we measure success in birth experiences?
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The Chiropractic Connection

Dr. McNamara's story embodies the vision of chiropractic at birth that began with Dr. Larry Webster in 1987. When chiropractors are present at birth, they offer what families are learning to generate for themselves: skillful awareness and conscious attunement for both mother and baby. The gentle adjustments during Amanda's labor supported her body's ability to progress, while Luna's first adjustment helped her integrate the birth experience and nurse comfortably.

As Jeanne Ohm wrote, birth in a technological age has often replaced natural processes with artificial procedures, weakening the body's ability to function and leading to cascades of intervention with lifelong consequences. Chiropractic care at birth represents the opposite approach—honoring the body's innate wisdom with skillful support regarding the activity of birth.

The first adjustment isn't just a physical intervention—it's a declaration of trust in the life force that animates each new being. It guards the sacred trust of life itself, reminding us that with skilled support, mothers and babies can do what they were beautifully designed to do: navigate the threshold of birth with love, trust, and freedom.

Staying the Course

The Boy Who Couldn't Settle: Understanding the Dural Fascial Kinetic Chain

By Satya Sardonicus, DC, CACCP

Dr. Satya Sardonicus tells the story of a seven-year-old boy whose mother listed challenge after challenge: head and neck discomfort during reading or coloring, a habit of trying to pop his own neck and fingers multiple times daily, toe-walking, nighttime bedwetting, frequent skin rashes, emotional outbursts, anxiety, sensory meltdowns, fussy eating, and difficulty sleeping. Despite 18 months of occupational therapy, progress had plateaued. His mother's summary was heartbreakingly familiar: "He's so sensitive. Emotionally, physically... everything."

Dr. Sardonicus's examination revealed a nervous system showing global signs of dysregulation: retained primitive reflexes, mixed sensory integration challenges, imbalances in proprioceptive and nociceptive signaling, mixed muscle tone, compromised postural reflexes, and hypermobility in some joints with rigidity in others. His peripheral visual field was markedly restricted—indicating a system stuck in heightened sympathetic tone even at rest.

What Dr. Sardonicus recognized was a consistent pattern of tension along what she calls the Dural Fascial Kinetic Chain (DFKC)—a mechanically and neurologically connected line of tissue linking the protective covering of the brain and spinal cord (the dura mater) with the tailbone, pelvis, legs, and feet. This includes the dural sleeves around spinal nerves, the sacrotuberous ligaments, the posterior and lateral fascial lines, and the plantar fascia.

Rather than more drills or retraining, Dr. Sardonicus started by helping the boy's system feel safe enough to soften—using gentle proprioceptive neurosomatic practices to signal safety. Once that foundation was in place, she began unwinding the deeper strain using fascia release practices that work in partnership with the body. Only then did she incorporate specific spinal adjustments to support structural integration.

Within weeks, the results were remarkable. The director of his OT clinic called asking what kind of brain-based therapy had been done—he had made more progress in a month than in the past 18 months. But it wasn't brain retraining; it was helping his system downshift out of chronic survival mode by creating safety, reducing fascial strain, and restoring his body's capacity to process input. The symptoms that once seemed like separate problems—posture, meltdowns, bedwetting, toe-walking, neck pain, anxiety—began resolving together.

Dr. Sardonicus explains that when a person is stuck in a chronic sympathetic state, nothing integrates well. The body enters protective overdrive, and healing, growth, development, learning, and even compassion take a backseat to survival. Signs include sensory sensitivities, emotional reactivity, digestive issues, sleep disruptions, allergies, and the sense that a child is smart and capable but still struggling to gain traction. The path forward begins with creating

somatic safety—not relaxation, but receptivity that allows the nervous system to process new input and reorganize toward greater fluidity.

Questions for Consideration

- How does understanding the “sympathetic alarm state” change your view of challenging childhood behaviors?
- What does it mean to see symptoms like toe-walking, bedwetting, and anxiety as connected patterns rather than separate problems?
- How might creating “somatic safety” differ from traditional therapeutic approaches focused on skill-building?
- What signs might indicate that a child’s nervous system is stuck in a protective state?
- How does fascia’s role as both structural and sensory tissue change your understanding of the body?
- What would it look like to approach healing by working with the body’s protective wisdom rather than against it?

The Chiropractic Connection

Dr. Sardonicus’s approach exemplifies the evolution of chiropractic understanding—recognizing that structural adjustment is most effective when the nervous system is prepared to receive it. The Dural Fascial Kinetic Chain concept extends traditional subluxation theory by mapping how tension patterns travel through the body’s connective tissue matrix, affecting everything from posture to sensory processing to emotional regulation.

Her method—Safety → Softening → Change → Re-safety → Integration—honors the chiropractic principle that the body knows how to heal when interference is removed. The difference is recognizing that fascia, like the spine, can hold patterns of protection that need gentle release before adjustment can fully integrate. This is why spinal adjustments came last in her sequence, building on the groundwork of nervous system calming and fascial release.

For pediatric chiropractors and families alike, this article offers a deeper understanding of why some children respond quickly to adjustment while others need more foundational work. The body isn’t stuck because it’s broken—it’s stuck because it’s protecting. When we honor that protection and create conditions for safety, the body’s innate intelligence can finally do what it was always designed to do: heal, grow, and thrive.