



DEAR NEW MAMA,

Welcome to the other side. I know it was hard to imagine anything after your birth, but you have stepped over the threshold now into a brand new world. I know it can feel like someone just put you on Mars and expected you to be able to survive. Sometimes it can feel like no one understands these new feelings. But mama, I do. Other moms do. You are not alone. And you will survive this, believe it or not. And you will eventually feel at home in this new identity. “Hard” is ok and it is all so worth it.

You will adjust, gradually, to this new existence. Sometimes you will feel overwhelmed - sometimes you might even feel like escaping because the weight of all this new responsibility might feel heavy at times, but trust me, your baby needs *you*. Exactly you. Even when you don't feel like you're enough. And you need your baby. You are basically still one being/body right now.

You are in the becoming now. This is the in-between, liminal space between two lives, two roles, two identities, two different versions of you, and it is ok to know absolutely nothing right now. Or you might feel like everything is clearer than ever before! It is also ok to not even know who you are right now. You are reforming and not yet finished. It might take a year or two (or more) to feel like this is the new normal, or to feel like this baby is really yours. So be patient with yourself, with your partner, and your baby. You are all in a new world and you are all learning.

Your partner will need some extra appreciation right now as he picks up the slack and finds his way. You might feel tempted to notice what is not going well, but he will flourish more with your gratitude and noticing the good.

The transition to motherhood is arguably the largest, most profound transition in a human life. I hope you can honor it as that. And guess what? Your brain just changed almost as much as it did in puberty! That “pregnancy brain” or “mom brain” is real! You have four times your former capacity for protection and bonding - the two things most necessary now to keep this little human alive and happy. So be proud of your new superpowers! Those lists and details of life (ie. executive functioning) just don't make the cut right now - so leave as much of that as you can to others. It's this heightened protective instinct that often contributes to more anxiety, and maybe some scary thoughts. You are just a fierce mama bear. It will get easier as your baby grows and gets stronger.

For now, your best tools for these worries are: naming them as fears, having compassion for what you're feeling, and then coming back to what is good and true in **THIS MOMENT**. Over and over again. Gratitude pushes out fear.

This is a time meant for rest and receiving (as hard as both of those things can feel - especially for moms you are used to having it all together and helping others). The beauty is that other's tend to love giving too, and when you let them, you are bringing them joy! If you let yourself really rest and sink fully into imbibing in this sacred and fleeting moment - as you get to know this little being, and yourself anew - your entire motherhood journey will benefit, as will the health of your family. Rest can actually be productive! Imagine that!

You have stepped into the line of mothers before you, reaching back through all generations. There may be pride and excitement or more complex feelings associated with the word and identity of “mother”. It is ok to feel it all, heal it as you can, and step into how you want to mother now. Look to the models in your life that you respect and cherish and let all the other voices float away. This is your journey now. You get to claim it and decide what is best for you and your family.

Remember, your most powerful practice is self-compassion. It will not make you lax or stop trying, as some fear it might - it does the opposite actually. It helps soothe your mama-soul and gives you the strength to keep going and trying. Self-compassion makes us feel safe enough to learn. Motherhood is a learning curve, and you will grow into it as your child grows.

Welcome to your position as the queen of your castle. Breathe slow, full, and often. Check in with your body and ask what you need everyday. You and your baby's needs are tied together and cannot be separated. Talk to your partner and other trusted people about how you're *really* doing. And check in with him too. He might feel a bit alone and out of sorts.

You are meant to need help right now. These days will feel long and blurry, but I promise the years will feel short. So keep coming back to the gratitude available in this moment. And this one. And this one. One day at a time.

Be gentle. Blessings dear mama. So begins the wildest, most humbling, most exquisite journey of your life.

Your advocate,
Amirah David, LPC, PMH-C

