

Childbirth Chatter



IN THIS ISSUE ...

Nurture Your Relationship To Nurture Baby • Gender Roles and Parenthood

www.ceadarwin.asn.au

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knowledge • confidence • choice

A Word From The CEA Committee

So... hello and welcome to the dry season.

As you will see this quarters newsletter has a focus on partnership/romantic relationships.

Most of us are aware of the mainstream messages about pregnancy and becoming parents. You will both become dugs, lose your figures and one of you will definitely lose your sex drive. Some of the most well read pregnancy books lean into this stereotype and headspace - Kaz Cook - Up The Duff for example. Yep, it's funny but it's not a very empowering book for 'soon to be' parents - it makes a joke out of what can be an amazing time - feeling our way gently into this new life stage. The pregnancy and early parenting experience can be fulfilling, exciting and bonding - it all depends how we approach it and prepare. We encourage you to choose to engage with information that gives useful insights into how to make life better for yourself when faced with normal concerns.

Here at CEA we like to help shift perspectives and see people move through these vulnerable times with knowledge and choice backing them up. Everything each human does is affected by how they process and respond to situations that arise. CEA aims to provide you with tools to navigate normal pregnancy and early parenting situations and uplift your mental/emotional state should you need it.

We acknowledge that everyone is on a different page while preparing for parenthood (and once they become a family). For some it's the culmination of a long and well planned out dream. For others it's a bit of a surprise and they may start facing some personal and relationship challenges early on.

Giving birth is a massive experience and feeling supported by your partner throughout will help get you off to a great start. To upskill your partner the Birth Preparation Course or Active Birth Workshop will provide you both with practical skills and a deeper understanding of the process of labour and birth.

CEA's pregnancy yoga classes are a great way to take some time out to connect with your body and learn to relax. Staying calm and not stressing changes everything in labour, when parenting and when relating to our partners.

For those of you already on your parenting journey (though of course we welcome pregnant people too) we are running our first 'relationship care' workshop - Nurturing Your Relationship to Nurture Baby. This workshop takes place on the 9th of June 9:30am to 11:30am and is led by Darwin based relationship coach Rachel Jakobi. Relationship care is an aspect of self care and certainly very important for your baby or child to have the best of both of you and a happy stable home environment.

With statistics showing just how tricky it is for people to maintain healthy, happy intimate relationships CEA has also added a relationships section to our library. We hope you will enjoy these books and find them useful and inspiring.

Best of luck for the journey ahead from all at CEA.



2021 Committee

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Thank you to
Michael Gunner and
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Thank you to
local mum
Natasha for the cover photo

Birth Preparation Courses

July

Tuesdays 6th, 13th, 20th, 27th
6pm to 8:30pm/9pm on 27th July

August

Tuesdays 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th
6:00pm to 8:30pm/9:00pm on 24th

Private courses are also available if these don't suit your schedule.

Nurture Your Relationship Workshop

June 9th 9:30am to 11:30am \$45.00pp

Birth Preparation Course Outline

Session One: Pregnancy & Creating Your 'Mindset' For Labour & Birth

- Welcome
- Pregnancy - nutrition, self care, building your support group for early parenting
- Birth Planning - a useful birth plan is not your ideal birth written down on paper
- Informed Choice
- Thinking about Pregnancy & Birth - not an illness or 'risk' but a normal healthy life event
- Cultural Ideas Around Pregnancy & Birth - how this influences us
- Fear Release Work
- HypnoBirthing Explained
- The Hormones of Labour
- Rebozo for Pregnancy
- Why Normal Birth is Important
- The Importance of Your Due Date
- Role of Your Birth Support Person
- Roles of Care Providers - OB's, Midwives, Doulas
- How/Why Does Labour Start? Physical/Emotional/Spiritual
- Question Time

Session Two: Labour

- Recap of Week One
- Relaxation Meditation Practice
- Induction - your choices around this, why, when, where, what to expect
- The Cascade of Intervention
- Hormones & Induction
- Why Your Birth Environment Is Important
- Creating Your Ideal Birth Environment
- How Contractions Work
- First Stage of Labour
- Using Natural Birth Tools To Manage Labour
- Active Birth Positions/Movement
- Medical Pain Relief Options
- Water
- TENS Machine
- 'Birth Media' - every birth is unique

Early Parenting

July

Tuesday 27th 6pm to 9pm

August

Tuesday 24th 6pm to 9pm

Active Birth Workshop

August

Saturday 7th 1:15pm to 4:15pm

All classes held at the Nightcliff Community Centre

Session Three:

- Second Stage of Labour (Birth)
- Directed Pushing vs Instinctive
- Avoiding Tears
- Post Partum Haemorrhage
- Third Stage (Birthing Your Placenta)
- The Importance of The First Hour After Birth

Session Four: Early Parenting (3 Hour Session)

- The Fourth Trimester For Baby, Mother & Family
- What Babies Need -
- Physical, Emotional & Developmental
- Your Baby's Experience Of The Fourth Trimester
- Baby-Wearing
- Breastfeeding
- Baby & Parent Sleep
- Developmental Milestones
- What New Mums Need
- Understanding Hormones
- Brain Changes
- Traditional Postpartum Practices
- Mum's Experience Of The Fourth Trimester
- Physical Recovery from Birth
- Partner's & Team Building
- Maintaining Your Relationship
- Question Time

Check our website for on-line booking forms... www.ceadarwin.asn.au or email the office ... info@ceadarwin.asn.au

Like our facebook page for dates of future events & courses along with regular posts about birth, parenting and community events.
fb: [childbirth education association darwin](https://www.facebook.com/childbirtheducationassociationdarwin)

Birth Education Classes

Birth Preparation Classes

Held over four weeks and encompass body, mind and spirit. Includes breastfeeding information.
Cost: \$220 for two participants

Active Birth

Teaching mothers and birth companions techniques for comfortable and satisfying birthing through positioning, movement, vocalisation and special breathing. Workshops are held quarterly in one three hour group session.
Cost: \$120 (Includes up to two support people)

Private Birth Classes

You may prefer a more personalised course. Incorporating specific elements of our other courses. One that fits with your and your birth partners schedules.
Cost: Dependent on time - approx. \$80/hour

Early Parenting Workshops:

Designed to give parents-to-be knowledge and skills to enhance those first precious hours and weeks with your newborn. Topics include: normal infant behaviour, sleep and settling, breastfeeding, the infant microbiome, self care, team building for new parents and much more.
Cost: \$120 (includes partner or support person)

Pregnancy Yoga Classes

Pregnancy Yoga: An antenatal yoga class with asanas appropriate for pregnancy. relaxation techniques, visualisation, pelvic floor exercises & strength work are included. The library will be open after the class.

Classes are held Saturdays 11.30am - 12:45pm & Thursday evenings 5:30pm to 6:45pm

Cost: For either Yoga class \$15 or buy a 5 class pass for \$60.00

Classes held at the Nightcliff Community Centre Boab Meeting Room

Nurturing Newborns Morning Teas

(Suitable for Babies from Newborn To Toddlers)

A chance to meet with other parents in a relaxed environment, have a cup of tea and share a delicious Petra's Raw Food Cake. Topics for each session are posted to facebook Please see the schedule later in this Newsletter.

Last Tuesday of every month 10am to noon
Nightcliff Community Centre
Cost: Free

CEA Library

Our library has an extensive collection of books, magazines, DVDs and CDs covering a wide range of subjects such as Pregnancy, Labour, Birth, Parenting, Vaccination, Exercise, Nutrition, VBAC, Waterbirth, Twins, Toddlers, Crying/Sleep, Special Needs Babies, Grief/Loss, Alternative Therapies, Fathers, Grandparents, Midwifery, Stories and more!

How Nurturing Your Relationship Nurtures Baby

It's no secret that having children can result in significant changes to the relationship you have with your spouse. There's the lack of time to connect, verbally and physically. There's the conflict of values that may come up as you go about parenting this new human. And then there's coming to terms with your new identity as 'mum' or 'dad' and whether this shifts the way you see each other or yourself. There are biological changes, changes in needs and of course the lack of sleep!

Understanding what our partner is going through and also communicating our feelings to our partner can be a challenge. Children who grow up feeling as though their parents are strongly and positively bonded to one another experience: a stronger attachment with both parents, a strong sense of self, high self-esteem and confidence, are more likely to make healthy relationship choices when they grow up, have an increased ability to manage stress effectively and much more.

So how can you nurture the precious bond between you and your partner as you move into this new phase of life?

Firstly, it's important to work together as a team. In the past you may have done this really well but throw a little human in the mix and the dynamics change. Working as a team means understanding the needs of your partner. Now that those needs have shifted, as have your own, working together doesn't look the same way it used to. When we're tired and overwhelmed we tend to focus more on ourselves (or on our baby) – it's a crucial survival technique. However, when this happens, we forget the needs of our partner and the bigger picture of what we're working towards. A great exercise to re-focus is to sit down with your partner and work out your shared values. Values are those emotional states you wish to experience on a more regular basis – things like joy, peace, connection, adventure, fun and so on. Now that you have a family, your values might have changed. Once you have your values you can design goals

around ways to experience these values. For example, in order to experience the values mentioned above, you may plan a weekend away in a remote cabin, with some outdoor activities. Another great way to work together as a team is to think of the relationship itself as an entity of its own, with its own personality and needs. After all, it's your relationship that provides the solid foundation upon which your lives are built. If you find yourselves in a quandary as to what to do in a certain situation, ask yourselves "what would our relationship do?" or "what does our relationship need in this moment?" or "what's best for our relationship now?"

As I mentioned briefly above, one of the best ways to ensure we work well as a team is to have a solid understanding of our partner. A big part of this is communication – finding the time and creating the safe space to share our vulnerabilities with one another. The other part is understanding what makes them tick, what needs they are driven by.

Although you know and love each other deeply, things are changing for you both and it can be hard to understand what's going on for you, and secondly, know how to communicate it. Part of creating a strong team bond is welcoming opportunities to share ourselves with one another, how we're feeling and what's changed. Motherhood comes with certain biological (including hormonal) and physical changes, which may lead to feelings of self-doubt, instability, guilt and shame. These feelings are associated with the term 'matrescence' – the transition into motherhood. And for both parents, they may find the transition into parenthood confusing and confronting. Who am I now? How does this affect my role as a husband/wife? By keeping a line of communication open between you, giving each other the benefit of the doubt, holding the space for one another and asking: "how can I help?" your bond will only deepen.

I know it's politically incorrect

to generalise about men and women, but it really does help to understand this masculine/feminine polarity and therefore get along. These generalisations aren't going to fit everyone and every couple. In fact, I myself don't fit the mould precisely. So please, as we move through these points 1. assess the information honestly and take onboard what's relevant and leave behind what's not. And 2. we're not actually talking about men and women per say, it's more about masculine and feminine energies. We all have both. Generally, women have more feminine energy, and men more masculine, but in some cases, it's the other way around. There are perfectly healthy relationships where the woman possesses more masculine energy and the man has more feminine, but because they're well balanced it works beautifully.

Characteristics of masculine energy are:

- One focus
- High confidence
- Task focussed
- Concentration
- Analytical, assertive, logical
- Impatient
- Wants to be needed
- Hunt, pursue and chase
- Thrives on appreciation

Characteristics of feminine energy are:

- Wants to be seen, safe and understood (won't let go of something emotionally until she feels understood)
- Feels and sees multiple things at once
- Deep need to share and connect
- Nurturing
- Desires to be sought after, pursued and honoured

It's important to note that under stress, people have a tendency to wear the opposite energy.

A male will wear the opposite mask if criticized or controlled. A woman will wear the opposite mask if she feels vulnerable or disconnected from her loved ones.

Now, when these attributes come together, general behaviours will present themselves. Starting with the masculine energies:

- They don't like being told what to do because they see themselves as the hero, the knight in shining armour who is able to solve all the problems. And when their feminine partner tells them how to do that, they feel as though they're not trusted. So, it's really important if you're the feminine partner, to give your masculine partner the benefit of the doubt.

- When men want help, they'll ask for it. If it is offered to them, they feel as though they are not trusted. Never offer a man help!

- When men have a challenge they often withdraw and take time alone in order to work the problem through in their heads. A woman is simply to accept him for this and give him the space he needs. Once the problem is solved, he'll come back and connect with her.

- A man is motivated when he feels he can help, so women must appreciate their men so that they are encouraged to continue to serve their woman.

In regards to the feminine energies:

- While men like to solve problems, they must realise that a woman doesn't always need a problem solved, and often just wants to vent and be heard and understood. So men, before you solve your woman's problems, listen to her, care for her and then offer a solution rather than forcing one upon her.

cont/...

- Women find an offer of assistance supportive. Therefore, men should offer to help, because it's a sign of love. Women won't ask for help because they want it to be offered.

- Because women often need to just vent and because men want so badly to be there for their women, they can often feel as though a woman is blaming him for her problems. As a man it's important to realise that she doesn't and all she needs from you is understanding. If you can do this, you're actually solving her one and only problem – and that's to understand and validate her.

- In this day and age, the stresses of modern living can leave a woman feeling undeserving and therefore they often fall into the trap of constantly doing things for others. However, in order to find a balance between your two energies, women must learn to receive more, because men feel best when they are serving their partner.

- When arguing with a man, a woman will withdraw out of mistrust, causing him to feel rejected.

So, to summarise, men need to be trusted and appreciated. Women need to be heard and understood. Please keep this in mind with your children as well, I have boys and a girl and applying this info to them is really effective in helping to meet everyone's needs.

Have you heard about the Six Core Needs? Tony Robbins came up with this concept and it's been so helpful to so many of my clients and also within my own relationship. When you satisfy two of the needs of another person you have a connection, if you satisfy 4 you have a strong attachment and if you satisfy all six you are permanently bonded. So, as you can imagine, by understanding your partner's needs and then finding ways to fulfill them, you will greatly deepen your understanding of one another.

There are 6 needs that every human has. The role of the unconscious is to satisfy these needs no matter what, even if we're not aware of how we're doing it.

They are:

1. Certainty (comfort, safety, stability, security,

protection)

2. Uncertainty (variety, adventure, fun, fear, change, entertainment, surprise, crisis, drama)

3. Significance (pride, importance, standards, achievement, performance, perfection, discipline, competition)

4. Love and connection (significance, passion, unity, warmth, tenderness, desire, togetherness)

5. Growth (learning and constant evolution as a human being)

6. Contribution (volunteering or education)

Everyone has all these needs but one (or two) will be more important than all the rest. Be sure to find out which one that is and give it to your partner in spades! Of course this is also very relevant to your children.

No doubt you've heard of Gary Chapman's 5 Love Languages? Understanding these for both your partner and your kids will be like superglue bonding your family together. Quite simply, the 5 Love Languages are:

- Words of affirmation
- Acts of service
- Receiving gifts
- Quality time
- Physical touch

Now before I go on, please remember, all of us respond to all of the love languages to some degree, so we must practise using them all, although one will be particularly sensitive for each person.

Words of affirmation not just saying 'I love you', although this of course is invaluable. It incorporates all the genuine and meaningful words you use to express your love for another and why you love them. For example, rather than saying "Thanks for helping", saying "Thank you so much for helping me carry the shopping in today, it saved me loads of time and energy. I really appreciate it." Your partner will really feel heard, understood, appreciated and loved.

Acts of service are all those little things you can

do to help like assisting your partner fill in a form, making an important phone call and so on. For a child it might be fixing their broken toy. As a parent, it is obviously important to encourage independence in your child. However, for children with a preference for acts of service, it's really important to do things for them often simply out of love and with pleasure.

Receiving gifts is pretty self explanatory and something most of us can understand very easily. With this love language though you have to be really careful that the gift doesn't get linked to positive behaviour or used as a reward. It must simply be a 'just because I love you' gift. If your loved ones responds positively to gifts, don't despair, it doesn't mean you have to spend a mountain of money on them. They love anything that just shows them you're thinking of them, especially when you are apart. It could be a postcard sent when you're away, a simple souvenir or something for which you can say "I saw this and thought of you".

Quality time can be one of the most challenging love languages to express, particularly for busy families. It requires you to set some time aside to spend with your spouse or child one on one focussing on something they enjoy doing. Quality time does not include helping each other with the washing up or the vacuuming, or running errands together. It's an activity you do together through which you can really connect and learn to understand each other even more. Partners should commit to scheduling regular date nights, which are organised by the partner whose love language isn't time. This is really important, because otherwise it's like a gift that they buy themselves with money you gave them. Mobiles must be switched off during this quality time between you and your treasure.



When we think of **Physical touch** as a love language, many think of that physical touch between adults. For adults whose love language is physical touch, this isn't even confined to that sort of touch. It's holding hands, massage, a simple stroke of the back as you pass them in the hallway. For a child it's all these things too, as well as lots of cuddles, tickles, high fives, knuckles. For a teenager who may seem to need less of this 'lovey dovey' sort of stuff, he may be better communicated to through playful wrestling or even contact sport.

One of the greatest threats to the bond between you is individual stress. When we feel stressed, we instinctively shut others out as a survival mechanism. This is why it's important to have some stress relief techniques up your sleeve so that you can calm yourself down in order to re-connect. As parents, a lack of sleep and self-doubt are probably the most triggering stresses. It's important to find your own ways of calming yourself and prioritising these when triggered. For you it might be taking a bath, listening to some music, reading a book, hitting a pillow, meditating, using EFT tapping, asking for a hug and receiving it, visualising a safe space, reassuring affirmations or something else. I know as a mother we struggle to put our own needs first, so maybe if we can look at it as putting the needs of the relationship first, we're more likely to follow through. And one of the greatest needs of any relationship is that the needs of the individuals are met.

Article by Rachel Jakobi
www.therelationshiplab.com.au

Rachel Jakobi is a Darwin based Relationship Coach. She works by identifying the stressors on any relationship, whether it be with your partner, your kids, your parents, friends, even colleagues and especially with yourself. She then devises strategies to eliminate, reduce or manage those stresses.

Rachel will be presenting the Nurture Your Relationship To Nurture Baby at CEA on June 9th 9:30am to 11:30am \$45 per person. Babes in arms welcome. Go to www.ceadarwin.asn.au and click on the workshops tab to navigate to the booking form.

Who Is Doing What On The Homefront

More progressive attitudes regarding gender roles aren't translating into reality in Australian households

In 2018 the analysis of the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey of over 17,000 people looked at how heterosexual couples have been dividing up their share of paid and unpaid work since 2002, and whether they think that division is fair.

It shows us that Australians are becoming less traditional in their attitudes towards parenting and work; more people are supporting maternal employment, greater father involvement in parenting, and the use of day care for young children.

But this progressive thinking isn't leading to the equal division of work between men and women at home. Women still do seven hours more housework per week than men and, based on current trends, it will take another 30 years before both genders do the same amount of housework.

While changes in attitudes are translating into some changes regarding who does what in the household, the shifts are small.

In 2002, men aged 15 to 64 spent 12.4 hours per week on housework, and this has risen to 13.3 hours in 2016. They also spend more time caring for children and for elderly or disabled family members at 5.4 hours in 2016, up from 4.8 hours in 2002. At the same time, women have reduced the time they spend on housework from 22.8 to 20.4 hours per week, but the amount of time they spend on care has increased from 9.7 hours per week to 11.3 hours per week.

And although young women are now more highly educated than men, and more women are employed, men still spend much more time on employment (35.9 hours per week) than women (24.9 hours per week).

THE FIRST CHILD FACTOR

So why are men still focusing on employment and women on housework and care?



Before the arrival of a child, couples share the work relatively equally. Men spend only slightly more time on employment than women (53 per cent of the total couple employment time), and women spend only slightly more time on housework (54 per cent of the total housework time).

But a first child establishes a more traditional arrangement.

Many women then focus on full-time caring while men maintain employment and help out when they're at home. In the year after the birth of a child, women's employment share drops to an average of 14 per cent of total couple employment time, but they do 72 per cent of care and 64 per cent of the housework.

NOT OPEN TO NEGOTIATION

These new, more traditional, roles are not renegotiated as children grow older. Ten years after the birth of the first child, women's share of the couple's employment time is only back to 30 per cent, while still doing 63 per cent of the housework and 66 per cent of care. Even ten years after the second birth, things have not nearly returned to where they were prior to the birth of the first child.

Women's satisfaction with the division of housework and child care drops markedly after the birth of the first child and continues to decline until the child is five years old. Not surprisingly, men are much more satisfied with this arrangement. This entrenchment of a traditional division of labour despite more progressive attitudes is partly due to economics.

The gender pay-gap, the cost of external child care, and family benefits for single earner families contribute to the female partner staying home or working part-time while the children are small.

Once these new roles are established, it may be difficult for those women who want to get back to work or increase their working hours to demand more engagement at home from their partners. Even if both parents work full-time, housework and care remain the domain of mothers, who then do 58 per cent of the housework and 59 per cent of the care

WHAT IS FAIR?

Getting the balance right at home is also difficult because men and women have different perceptions of a fair division of unpaid work. Only a quarter of couples agree that they are dividing the housework fairly, and the proportion of couples who think they share child care tasks fairly is even lower at 22 per cent.

Although most partnered men think they do their fair share in the home, most partnered women think they do more than their fair share.

Generally, couples consider an arrangement as fair where both partners spend about the same overall time on any type of work - employment, housework or care. How this total time is divided in terms of paid work or unpaid work seems to matter less.

But this has long-term economic implications. While women focus on work in the home, they receive no or lower earnings than men, they miss career opportunities and accumulate less superannuation.

TACKLING THE ECONOMIC RISKS

This may not matter too much for couples who share their income equally.

However, with one in three marriages predicted to end in divorce, there is an economic risk attached to a traditional division of labour, reflected in high poverty rates among single mothers and single elderly women.

From a policy perspective, there are good reasons to shift couples away from traditional gender divisions of paid and unpaid work.

This requires policies to improve mothers' employment participation and policies to increase men's contribution to unpaid work. These might include further reducing the cost of child care and increasing the availability and length of paid paternity leave.

Scandinavian countries provide examples of what these kinds of leave regulations may look like. Iceland, for example, reserves three months
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**Australian
Breastfeeding
Association**

PLANNING TO BREASTFEED?

Breastfeeding Education Classes

Come to a relaxed, information-packed Breastfeeding Education Class for expectant parents and support people. Classes are presented by trained volunteer Breastfeeding Counsellors and cover a range of topics including:

- How breastfeeding works
- Breastfeeding in the early days
- Parenting in the early days
- Information for fathers and support people
- Where to go if you need help

Although breastfeeding is natural, it is a learned skill that does not always come easily. Our classes aim to provide parents with the knowledge and confidence to successfully breastfeed.

Cost: **\$70 per couple** includes afternoon tea, 12-month membership to the Australian Breastfeeding Association and FREE book *Breastfeeding...naturally* valued at \$34.95.

All classes are held on Saturday from 1pm - 5pm

2021						
13 February	27 March	17 April	19 June	14 August	16 October	20 November

Book online with
eventbrite

www.eventbrite.com.au
and search 'ABA Darwin'



For more information please contact:

Mary 0452 485 310
aba.darwin@gmail.com

 Australian Breastfeeding Association
Darwin/Palmerston/Rural Group

for the mother, and a further three months the partners can divide up as they wish.

The benefit covers 80 per cent of earnings and, as a result, is attractive to many men who earn more than their partners.

Policies like these would support a more even division of labour for couples and help reduce the severe disadvantage faced by women following relationship breakdown.

But for the time being, the data suggests that couples may benefit from being upfront on who's doing what and why around the home and asking whether the current highly gendered division of roles can be renegotiated to better suit both.

*By Dr Inga Lass,
University of Melbourne*

Even when both parents work full-time, in most cases, housework and care still remain the domain of mothers.

With one in three marriages in Australia ending in divorce, openly discussing and negotiating fair household labour division of labour could make all the difference





The Darwin Homebirth Group is a collective of parents who share the philosophy that pregnancy, labor and birth are normal, natural family centered events.

Our members are passionate about women having real and informed choices in regards to where, with whom and how they birth. This way women can feel supported, safe, empowered and in control of their birth experience.

The fully funded Government Homebirth Service gives women the opportunity to have a known, qualified and experienced midwife care for them at home before and after the birth.

Darwin Homebirth Group is volunteer run and not-for-profit. We offer:

- Monthly morning or afternoon teas
- Access to our library with information on pregnancy, natural birth, water immersion, home birth, breast-feeding and gentle parenting
- Biannual newsletters rich with birth stories, birthing and parenting information
- Ongoing contact with homebirth midwives
- Access to birthing aides and equipment
- Meal provisions for new parents
- Advocating for improved birth choices and women centered care



Darwin Homebirth Group
dhginfo@gmail.com
 0438 888 755

www.darwinhomebirthgroup.wordpress.com



darwin
 homebirth
 group

birth choices matter

Find us on



Nurturing Newborns Monthly Morning Teas

Last Tuesday of Every Month 10.00am – Noon
Nightcliff Community Centre Meeting Room
Refreshments Provided From Petra's Raw Cakes
Free of Charge

CEA is facilitating a welcoming and relaxed monthly gathering for pregnant people & parents of babies from birth to eighteen months.

Older siblings welcome.

2020	Topic
Tuesday 26th January	Australia Day Public Holiday - no event
Tuesday 23rd February	Soothing, Settling and Sleep Through The First Year of Life
Tuesday 30th March	Baby-led Weaning
Tuesday 27th April	Travelling With Your Baby
Tuesday 25th May	Pumping & Storing Breastmilk Hosted by the ABA
Tuesday 29th June	Forming a Secure Attachment With Your Baby
Tuesday 27th July	Soothing, Settling and Sleep Through The First Year of Life
Tuesday 31st August	Top Ten Gentle/Attachment Parenting Tips for Toddlers
Tuesday 28th September	Baby-Led Weaning
Tuesday 26th October	Team Building for Baby
Tuesday 30th November	Travelling With Your Baby



Is There A ‘Good ‘ Age For Parents To Divorce

New research shows there is a “good” age for children’s parents to split, writes Neil Fizzell.

The phrase “staying together for the children” has always struck me as nonsense.

Ever since, as a nine-year-old standing by a blue sofa, I begged my parents to get divorced – knowing that I was yet again going to be ignored – I have seen the tissue of lies that sticks to those words. They are as stupid as the phrase “it’s what they would have wanted” at a funeral.

What often holds an ill-matched set of parents together isn’t familial duty but financial interdependence, fear of being alone, illness, religion, conditioning, complacency or cowardice. And the longer you, as a child, have to live in a house tarnished by disharmony, violence, discord or depression, the worse it will be for you; not just in that moment, but for your ongoing mental and relationship health.

So it came as no surprise to me to read new research, from University College London, which says that parental divorce is less harmful if it happens in early childhood.

According to the analysis of 6000 children born in the UK, those who were aged seven to 14 when their parents split are 16 per cent more likely to suffer emotional and behavioural problems than those whose parents stay together.

Big news, you might say. Children from discordant homes fare worse than those whose parents are in a loving relationship. But what is really interesting is that children who were between three and seven when their parents separated showed no differences to those whose parents were still together. In short, if you’re going to break up, better to do it sooner, rather than wait until your children are older and more likely to form harmful patterns of behaviour themselves. My parents – a couple so spectacularly ill-suited

that even their best man, in his wedding speech, made a joke about their throwing crockery at each other – spent my childhood on and off. They finally separated for good three weeks before my A-levels.

The timing was spectacularly bad and I told them that if they ever dared get back together, I would never speak to either of them again: a promise I was fully prepared to keep.

The effect of all this instability and absence and uncertainty was to give me a hardline and total disbelief in long-term lasting love for all of my teens and most of my 20s, until finally (with much help from partners and professionals) I started to see that emotional interdependence can actually be healthy, as well as dangerous. Of course, having your parents separate is painful, sad, destabilising, scary and a logistical nightmare.

Anyone in the “broken home” gang will recall the nasty, slinking presence of a parent as they go around the house taking items from shelves and out of cupboards before leaving the family home.

We will all remember the sobbing adults on the stairs; grim weekends of enforced “quality time” with an estranged parent; the terrible, silent dinners. But all that is, I would argue, far better than spending your formative years under house arrest with two people who loathe each other. Better to have a disorientating break while you’re young, than to suffer years in the company of two people enacting a poor charade of what an intimate partnership relationship could and should be.

The idea that you are somehow protecting your children by exposing them to the most poisonous elements of human behaviour is actually laughable.

It is also a heinous injustice for children to be made aware, either explicitly or unconsciously, that their parents are staying in a state of loveless misery “for their sake”. As though the burden of responsibility is yours; that if you weren’t around, these two people would have gone their merry ways years ago.

Luckily, my parents were so unmistakably incompatible that I never fell for this lie. I knew, for as long as I can remember, that they were caught in a web of fear, laziness and lust that had nothing to do with me. So when, during one of their separations, I was reassured by kindly adults - a teacher, a friend’s parent - that this wasn’t my fault, my answer was always: “I know. It’s theirs.”

The UCL study, published in the journal Social Science and Medicine, also reported that, on average, mothers experienced more mental health problems if they separated when children were older. This is, in part, because the financial impact of divorce is more severe for a woman the later it happens in a marriage - that is, once your income, investments and belongings are as intertwined as a hedge full of bindweed.

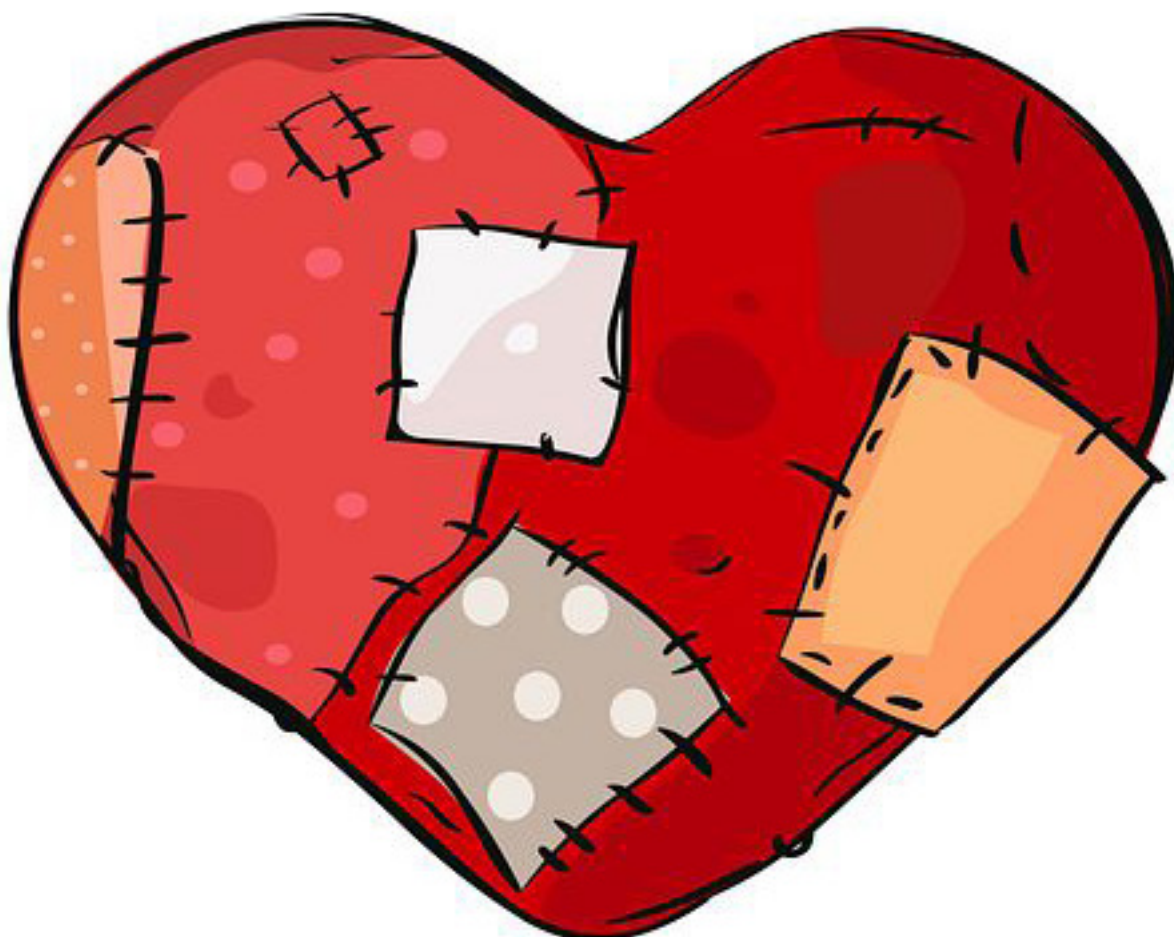
What this says to me is that if we really wanted what was best for our children then we would all, men and women, strive for an end to the gender pay gap, regulation of private landlords, free childcare – all the things that keep many couples stuck in loveless marriages and many children, like me, living in homes damaged by them.

But the reality is there is no good time for divorce. No, there is no “good time”. Jane Gordon says that, if she had her chance again, she’d have worked at it.

The seven adults, one child and a dog gathered around a table in a London pub last Sunday probably looked like the perfect multi-generational family.

We were celebrating the birthday of my youngest daughter with a brunch that was, for me, as bitter as it was sweet. Because, despite the illusion of unity we gave off to the people seated at neighbouring tables, we are in fact a broken family. Divided some 15 years ago by divorce.

cont/...





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The fact that we can all get together on special occasions and have fun is proof, I suppose, that we have achieved what some might call a “civilised” or “amicable” separation.

But the truth is that divorce is rarely civilised and almost never amicable.

The breaking-up of a family is always going to be painful and the idea that there is ever a “good” time to divorce is, I think, misleading.

It isn’t, of course, either possible or desirable to turn the clock back to change the events that caused my ex-husband and I to part.

But I do believe that if I had known then what I know now, I might have worked harder at holding our marriage together. Our breakdown was not a sudden thing but a slow moving apart.

In the last few years, I was more absorbed in my children – then aged 21, 19 and nine – and my career, than I was in my relationship with my husband. While he, feeling increasingly isolated, switched off.

At the time, our problems seemed insurmountable – a future apart seemed preferable to a future together

But had someone told me the truth about divorce – explained to me exactly how, in the years ahead, it would impact on our lives and the lives of our children – perhaps we might still be together.

Instead, we both bought into the idea that by divorcing we could achieve a “clean break” and a “fresh start”. Neither of which, in the event, worked out.

While we did move on to new relationships, they, too, broke down and today we are both single and, yes, sometimes lonely in a way that confirms my belief that divorce is never a good thing.

And it doesn’t mean you are going to be any happier than you would have been staying together.

I do worry that telling parents it’s better to

divorce when the children are under seven will discourage them from working through the humps of unhappiness that any marriage goes through.

Divorce, I now believe, can only ever be seen as a favourable option to marriage in the most desperate of circumstances.

No marriage is ever perfect, but most are probably good enough. But, at the time of my break-up, I didn’t understand this great truth.

It wasn’t until my parents died, a few years later, that I realised the true impact my divorce would have.

Their deaths – within six months of each other, after 60 years of strong, but far from perfect, marriage – made me realise what, in deciding to separate, I had denied my own three children.

They might not have lost their parents when we divorced, but they lost their family home and the continuity of life that makes the journey from child to adult so much more comforting and secure.

The fact that I have not given my own children the security and unity that I took for granted, will always be a source of shame and regret.

Article by Neil Fizzell and Jane Gordon
The Telegraph London
<https://www.afr.com/life-and-luxury/arts-and-culture/is-there-a-good-age-for-parents-to-divorce-heres-what-the-new-research-says-20190131-h1aof1>



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What I'd Tell My New Mum Self: Gender Roles are Powerful

A few days ago I stood in my kitchen gazing at a sink full of cocoa mugs and eggy plates. It's my husband's job to do the morning dishes before he goes off to work, and he'd run out of time and left them. I felt annoyed. There it was, the small-scale rage that so often prickles the skin of marriage. My writing would have to wait until after I did his chore for him. I sighed, turned on NPR, and loaded the dishwasher.

If I could turn back time, all Cher-like, and tell my new mum self just one thing, it would be this: Gender roles are more powerful than you can even imagine, as powerful as the tides. Fighting their pull requires vigilance, cunning, and sometimes a lot of negotiating. But you must fight them, I would say to that younger self. And I have no doubt that she — hazy-eyed, wild-haired, lightly doused in baby spit, exhausted by chores, exhausted by nursing, exhausted by being gendered — would stare back at me silently and ignore me altogether.

Gender roles grip us, tugging at our shirts when we try to escape. Women my age — which is middle — find ourselves amazed that all these years after the second wave of feminism crested, we remain sunk in biology, to use A.S. Byatt's unforgettable phrase from her novel *Still Life*. Part of the gendering of heterosexual parenthood is social, but there's also a difficult-to-transcend biological reality that can feel imprisoning. We daughters of second-wave feminism thought we'd be free. And yet here we find ourselves, doing the dishes, planning the meals, making the doctor's appointments, white-knuckling our way through another all-female PTA meeting.

And of course, it cuts both ways. I'm not the only one who feels trapped by gender; the burden of providing rests heavily upon my husband's shoulders. I'm continually chagrined that my marriage isn't an equal partnership when it comes to domestic chores and child care — but the fact is, you could as easily tell the gender story from another perspective: It would be the story of my husband, sitting with the bills, figuring out how

they will be paid, furious that he is alone with this sense of financial responsibility.

In truth, neither of us has been entirely alone in our given roles. After all, I also earned money. After all, he also did chores. But I think he didn't do enough, and he thinks I didn't earn enough.

It's not as if my husband and I were ignorant of a better way. We went into this marriage dreaming dreams of parity. We were both writers, colleagues at the alternative weekly where we worked, a team, a matched set. One of us happened to be female, one male. That difference was hot in bed and didn't seem especially germane anywhere else. And then we had a baby, and then another. At the time, the man had a writing contract and the woman did not — we didn't see that this was an expression of something greater than the two of us, of institutional or cultural sexism.

When a spot at Sasha's preschool became open, choices had to be made — that day, by four o'clock. In that moment, we chose to put our child in this sweet preschool program, which had shorter hours, but then that was part of its sweetness. We wanted to keep our 2-and-a-half-year-old daughter at home, take care of her ourselves. Which meant, as it turned out, that I would take care of her. After all, I was the one who was earning less. From that decision cascaded a thousand others, each one subtly reinforcing our roles. For reasons that we believed were purely economic and emotional, we made a series of choices that led ineluctably to my becoming the person who is in charge of the children and the house.

It was I who harbored the babysitter's phone number, I who remembered shoe sizes, I who kept track of allergies. Better to have all that information reside in one place, the place called mother. The more caregiver relationships I managed, the more details about drop-offs and pick-ups and appointments I kept filed in my head, the more I found myself to be the sole toiler



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in the field we've come to call emotional labor.

I recently learned the difference between a maze and a labyrinth. A maze involves choices of direction, while a labyrinth is what's called unicursal — a single path which can only be walked one way. My husband and I, it seems to me now, thought we were roaming free through marriage and parenthood. We thought we were carefully setting our own destiny as a couple. And yet our path turned out to be unicursal: We ended up here, in this embarrassingly preordained place. The woman jobs are my jobs; the man jobs are his. The woman self is who I get to be.

Doris Lessing wrote about this problem in *The Golden Notebook*, published in 1962. Even though the book's protagonist, Anna Wulf, isn't married, she is still a servant to the needs of her lover Michael and her daughter Janet. She wakes one morning, filled with anxiety over the needs of others: "It must be about six o'clock. My knees are tense ... 'the housewife's disease' has taken hold of me

... the current has been switched on: I must-dress-Janet-get-her-breakfast-send-her-off-to-school-get-Michael's-breakfast-don't-forget-I'm-out-of-tea-etc.-etc. With this useless but apparently unavoidable tension resentment is also switched on. Resentment against what? An unfairness. That I should have to spend so much of my time worrying over details.

It's not just the doing of the chores that eats at Anna Wulf, it's the aforementioned emotional labor. She is tense and angry over the fact that she is alone in being the woman self. "It is the disease of women in our time," she goes on. "The unlucky ones, who do not know it is impersonal, turn it against their men. The lucky ones like me — fight it."

This is what gets called luck in Lessing's world — the ability and will to fight the housewife's disease, to know it's an "impersonal poison." This poison is well known to any woman who's ever regarded the landscape between the making of dinner and the singing to sleep as a



vast wasteland. I don't know any mother who hasn't at least once felt that horror, though we meet the moment with varying levels of despair or sangfroid, depending on nature, depending on situation, depending on wealth and husband and poverty and career pressures.

I fear I have been one of Lessing's unlucky ones, taking it personally over and over, finding, in my husband's inability to overcome the training of millennia, evidence of his lack of love and respect for me. When I stood at the sink and looked at the dishes the other morning, I took it personally. I allowed myself to be made lonelier by what I saw. But the truth is, we both stepped onto the well-worn path and didn't fight hard enough to get off of it.

And we're not alone. I can't think of any couples where I see true parity. I know couples where the woman works and the man stays home with the children, but in those cases — admittedly a small sample — the woman still does a disproportionate amount of the housework. I have a kind of fantasy that it's different among younger couples, among millennials. I have no evidence that it is the case, but I hope it is.

The fact is, a woman's prison is not the same as a man's, it's worse — and Lessing saw that. It's not men but women who are, as Lessing says, diseased with rage at the injustice of it all. And it's women who do the housebound work of protesting traditional roles, and who toil at tasks that aren't considered as valuable as men's, don't have the same currency, literally. For me, the work has started now. The negotiating, the fighting, the pushing back. And simultaneously the effort to earn more. I'm fighting against the impersonal poison.

Obviously, I'm not entirely succeeding. Witness the scene at the top of this essay: There I was, am, and will be, doing the dishes again. But those days are fewer and farther between. Or sometimes I find the dishes in the sink, but I also find also a text in my phone from my husband, a text saying "Please don't do the dishes, I forgot, I'm sorry, I'll do them when I get home." That's not nothing.

I wish we'd known this all along, that this labor

must be shared if both partners are to live fully human lives, lives that include the labor of caring as well as the kind of labor that gets more public and financial recognition. It might have been easier to change if we weren't already so deep in the labyrinth. I fervently wish we hadn't ended up here, stuck in these old husband and wife roles. That's what I would tell my younger self: Begin fighting now. Begin being lucky.

*By Claire Dederer
Author of Love and Trouble:
A Midlife Reckoning*

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