# Your Babymoon – Sewing the seeds for joy

*Babymoon.* It’s such an inviting concept, conjuring up notions of a euphoric holiday, not unlike a honeymoon, where we exist in a perfect bubble with our newborn, who never cries. We, the proud parents never argue, nobody is ever in pain, and breastfeeding is as easy as falling off a log.

In reality, all too often those early weeks can fall far short of this impossible fantasy holiday. During our postnatal support work we hear (often much later) of the discomfort, exhaustion, worry and helplessness experienced in the early days. This isn’t helped by the fact that there may be a stream of people wanting to visit the baby at all times to suit them. Or perhaps we want to show everyone how utterly brilliant our babies are, so we can’t wait to get out the house and visit our pregnancy yoga class. Or by necessity we have to make a supermarket dash for nappies and food. In extremis, our Babymoon can begin to feel like this:

*I found myself, instead of floating on a love filled cloud nine, actually having the absolute worst, most stressful, painful, bloody, sleep deprived, tear soaked, nipple cracking, horrible time of my life.*[*http://www.likereallifeblog.com/2015/05/17/life-with-a-newborn-expectation-vs-reality/*](http://www.likereallifeblog.com/2015/05/17/life-with-a-newborn-expectation-vs-reality/)

Not a holiday any of us would want to go on. And whilst for most these memories fade as babies grow and nipples heal, wouldn’t it be wonderful to create the conditions where a very different reality could emerge?

For at least the first few weeks your baby is a bundle of needs, instincts, and reflexes. She has no concept of time, of day and night, of waiting. Right now she wants you with her constantly, preferably with your skin on her skin, and with your boob firmly planted in her mouth. When these conditions are met, she is likely to cry less and your milk supply will most likely be plentiful. This is a full on, all consuming love affair, which post-birth rituals in traditional cultures seem to naturally support.

Other cultures revere and nurture the new mother for the first few weeks after the birth – preparing rejuvenating foods for her, ensuring she rests, recuperates, and receives regular warm baths and massage. The details of the ‘confinement’ vary, but what unites these practices in Japan, North Africa, South America, the Caribbean, India, Thailand, Malaysia, and, until relatively recently, Europe, is that the mother is tended to by other women (Kitzinger, 2000).

*‘There is a strong focus on the physical elements of mothering … on prolonged skin contact between mother and baby, oiling and massage. … these are primarily tactile experiences… the mother and the women tending her are physically close. She is caressed, cradled, stroked. The mother has her baby close to her and holds, touches, strokes, massages and explores the baby* (p221).

That’s sounding a bit more like my kind of holiday, although I might quite like my baby’s Dad to be there too! So how could we make these rituals more appropriate for the 21st century modern world?

Each Babymoon can be as rich and as varied as the families that choose to mark this new chapter in their lives. But we urge you to carefully consider your support needs in those early days. Consider inviting one or two trusted people into your home who will give themselves over to you and your baby in those early weeks. People who are invested in you and your family. People who you can ask to do anything and everything. People who have parented themselves. People who you can trust to comfort your baby as you would if you just need some time out. People with whom you can laugh and cry. People with whom you feel totally relaxed, who make you feel positive and capable and people who will recognize if you need additional support. People who will help provide the oxytocin-fuelled environment you will need to meet your newborn’s need for food and physical contact.

What connects post-birth traditions in other cultures with the modern day rituals that we suggest is that they all support optimum hormonal balance, help to establish psychological connectedness between parents and baby, foster emotional wellbeing and physical health, help to get breastfeeding off to a good start and can reduce postpartum bleeding. They also feel darn good:

* Before the baby comes, buy in nutritious food and drink to keep you well nourished. Also, some lovely treats – this is a celebration after all.
* Book in a postpartum massage for the new mother.
* Support the mother to ‘nest’ with her baby for the first few days, skin to skin as much as possible.
* Consider having a few days where it’s just the new family without distractions (with a trusted friend/family member on standby). Turn up the heating, light some candles, massage one another, massage your baby, play music, and just ‘be’.
* If you go out carry your baby in a sling to keep that close connection.
* Ensure that the baby AND the parents are nurtured and cared for. (Partners need to attach with their babies too)
* Get lots of rest

If you’re a friend or a relative, eager to help, you can:

* Set up a food delivery rota amongst your friends and family
* Try not to turn up unannounced and don’t expect to be waited on when you do visit the new family
* Mother the mother (and co-parent): this might include, cooking up delicious, nutritious meals, offering up a birthday cake, keeping the house clean and tidy, the fridge full and the laundry basket empty, entertaining older children
* The evenings are exhausting, try to visit at other times, unless you are planning to take a meal with you, in which case drop it off at the door and come back and wash up the next day.
* Be sensitive about separating the parents and the baby unless specifically asked to tend to the baby.

‘*Just as we mark a new relationship by cementing it with a honeymoon, new parenthood demands we take some time out. Honeymoons are a private time, usually uninterrupted; time spent in bed, skin-to-skin contact, gazing at our lover, bathing in oxytocin. A babymoon is very similar’ (McMahon, 2015;71)*

Our wish is that you too are inspired to make some plans and so give yourselves every opportunity for a deeply joyful, blissful babymoon.

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[www.postnatalangel.co.uk](http://www.postnatalangel.co.uk) - providing caring, confident support to new families

Kitzinger S. (2000) Rediscovering Birth

McMahon M. (2015) Why Doulas Matter