

# BRAND NEW MOM

Deconstructing the 'first trimester' of motherhood.

**M**otherhood is bliss. Motherhood is shit. It's shitty bliss. Blissly shit.

You probably know that, if you're reading this magazine, but nowhere else does it help more than in the business/joyride that is parenting - reiteration. And if you're a brand new mum (sounds shinier than it is, I know), that's the truth and nothing but the gospel truth. Although gazillions of women go through it worldwide and your *intellect* understands that, you're convinced you're on a solitary journey with your baby, nevertheless. And that's because it's true. Any number of well meaning people don't help, because nobody else really gets it. Also, true. Breathe in this fact of life - if you thought the nine months of pregnancy, the labour pains, the birth, and the 'rooming in' at the hospital signalled the end of something tumultuous, then you were only partially right. What's humongously more vital and pressing is that you've just begun something that demands a word more tumultuous than tumultuous. Now that the baby bump has become a baby. And those wide eyed flutters of expectations have turned into something less pretty - paranoia and depression - your new bedfellows, except you're rarely *in* bed, or to qualify, you're rarely ever in bed, *sleeping*. If the past nine months have been about planning and dreaming and focussed ideas and maternity bibles and discipline and exercise and nutrition, the next (at least) three will see you like never before, you'll feel tried and tested and *stretched*, in every way

possible. You'll be in your worst headless-chicken mode, as you attempt to cope with demands that you could never ever pre-empt (only read about). There's a new somebody in the picture - not a person, not yet - and your supposed 'natural' connection isn't exactly throbbing with delight. The hallowed, much-celebrated 'instinct' is tough to pin down, amidst the whirlwind of emotions that you find yourself struggling with. There's guilt, cuts-to-the-bone guilt you'll be plummeting the depths of, Sisyphus situations (nursing isn't the very portrait of a benign Madonna painting), nightmares even when you're awake, serious doubt and intense questioning. And those are the good days. On the bad ones, you'll worry about your own sanity, resent everyone, desperately search for a sense of humour (dead baby jokes, brand new mum?

**There's a new somebody in the picture - not a person, not yet - and your supposed 'natural' connection isn't exactly throbbing with delight. The hallowed, much-celebrated 'instinct' is tough to pin down, amidst the whirlwind of emotions that you find yourself struggling with.**

No?), and wonder out loud, at times, 'Is it possible to die of exhaustion?' My pet, 'printable' peeve had to do with how everyone likes to say the following - 'Oh, trust the baby to wake up/cry/complain/poop be generally needy when the mother sits down for her lunch/dinner...'  
*Everyone* says this in a generally affable tone, smiling, laughing, or with a chuckle, even. Possibly ladling their own plates with generous helpings. And what went through my head each time someone said it - 'What's so damn funny about that?!' You'll find yourself fantasising about spa treatments (even if you never took them), European summers, Neemrana weekends. And the less glamorous, more pitiable things - going back to work, sleeping for eight hours at a go, sleeping for four hours at a go, reading a book through, reading a chapter through, getting a pedicure, a head massage, going for a walk, alone. The semblance of your life as you used to live it.

Yup, all true. Should we get to the good bits, now? Remember that first movement you felt when the baby moved, inside you? Some feel that distinct, well-documented, kick, while some talk about butterflies; someone I know said it felt 'like she was scratching me', and in my case, it was... a squirm. (I think she shrugged or something). Close your eyes and remember... Well, what you felt then doesn't even come close to the moment when your baby finally *looks at you*, when the elusive gummy something-like-a-smile appears, unannounced, one fine day, spreading across that teeny, tiny mouth. Everything you understood about the

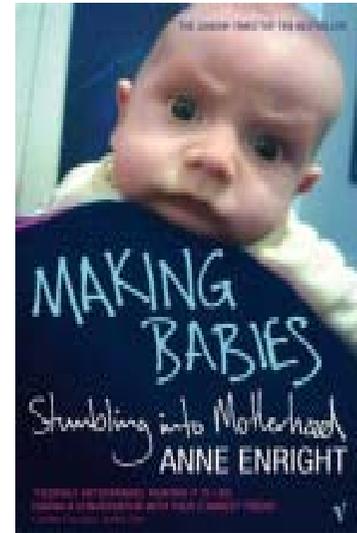
## RECOMMENDED BOOK FOR THE NEW MOTHER'S 'FIRST TRIMESTER'

Making Babies: Stumbling Into Motherhood  
Anne Enright

*I thought childbirth was a sort of journey that you could send dispatches home from, but of course it is not – it is home. Everywhere else now, is 'abroad'.*

Words never seemed as inadequate, useless even, as they do if you attempt to translate this, the experience of 'making babies', into them. It's only when you 'stumble' into motherhood (and nobody sashays elegantly into this state, I believe) that you grasp the truth of this. And if words mean magic to you, if they've always been your saviour (or worse, your bread and butter), then god speed to any memoir you're planning. Because there is the desperate need to express this something-everything-nothing you're feeling, almost constantly, now that the baby bump has become a baby, and the damn words refuse to take any shape more definite than a thought bubble... Which is why what Anne Enright has managed to capture here, is a feat beyond imagining, a super-achievement. If they gave out Bookers for non fiction, then she would've bagged it for *Making Babies* long before *The Gathering*.

If you've crossed over to the other side, the one where you're learning that your identity, your truth as a parent, especially a mother, is easily going to define you as a person more than any other relationship, anything else, then this is compulsory reading; pleasurable and therapeutic. If you're not on this side of 'The Glass Wall' though (and leading a life that's not *much more difficult, much better*), then it makes for fascinating what-if reading. (Having a uterus is mandatory though).



world, yourself, your relationships, will shape-shift, gradually, and find new grooves, new definitions, starting now... Responsibility, love, even freedom, tremendous joy, they'll be your new friends; they'll work towards creating a newer, enhanced, more improved, stronger, you. Version

Motherhood. 0. Also, true.

It's the best of times, it's the worst of times. Hang in there.

*Pooja Pande.  
She works as a writer and editor in New Delhi.  
Her daughter, Ahaana, is just about 10 months  
now, which is why she can look back at her*

*time as a 'brand new mum', with what comes  
only with the passing of sufficient time -  
precious hindsight.*