

FROM SAFA TO MARWA:

AN ISLAMICALLY MOTIVATED
GUIDE TO POSTPARTUM CARE

BY SADIYAH BASHIR



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ (peace be upon you), this guide: From Safa to Marwa: An Islamically Motivated Guide to Postpartum Care takes inspiration from the story of Hajur (عليها السلام). Who was left alone in the desert with her baby. While many scholars debate the age of the baby, we do know that Ismail (عليه السلام) was quite young and still nursing. Therefore, this guide looks to honor her postpartum experience racing between the mountains of Safa and Marwa to find nourishment. This guide is not to be considered a religious text, but a reminder of the necessity to go back and read our religious texts to see how our sacred ancestors experienced the moments we are experiencing today with the best of faith, discernment, and sincerity.

The journey of pregnancy, delivery, and postpartum is life changing. And while we do so much to prepare for these moments, we tend to fall behind in the care of ourselves once the pregnancy is over. This guide is meant to be a comfort, a reminder, and companion to you with interactive tasks, evidence-based knowledge, and gentle reminders of just how much you need to care for yourself alongside the community you come from and the community you have brought into this world.

How to interact with this guide

With deep consideration for the reality that every postpartum journey is unique, this guide intentionally includes very little discussion of babies and minimal imagery related to them. Postpartum can look and feel profoundly different from one person to the next, and this space is not meant to prescribe what that experience should be. Instead, this guide is devoted to the person navigating postpartum, to your inner world, your healing, your questions, and your return to yourself. Above all, it is an invitation to reconnect with Allah ﷻ, at your own pace and in your own way.

This guide was created to be a companion in the quiet moments and the heavy ones alike. I pray it brings you peace of mind on the nights when sleep feels distant, comfort on the days when worry feels louder than faith, and gentle grounding during moments of boredom, loneliness, or emotional fog. This guide features subject matter and evidence-based knowledge that is synthesized to ensure the information is received without overwhelming the reader. Whether you open these pages seeking reassurance, distraction, reflection, or simply something to hold onto, may you find them meeting you where you are.

I pray that Allah continues to bless and protect you throughout this journey, with mercy, softness, and ease. May these pages offer small reminders, subtle, steady, and sincere, to turn back to Allah ﷻ each day, even when it feels difficult, even when it feels quiet, even when all you can offer is a whisper of intention.

الرَّحِيمِ

The Merciful

الرَّحْمَنُ

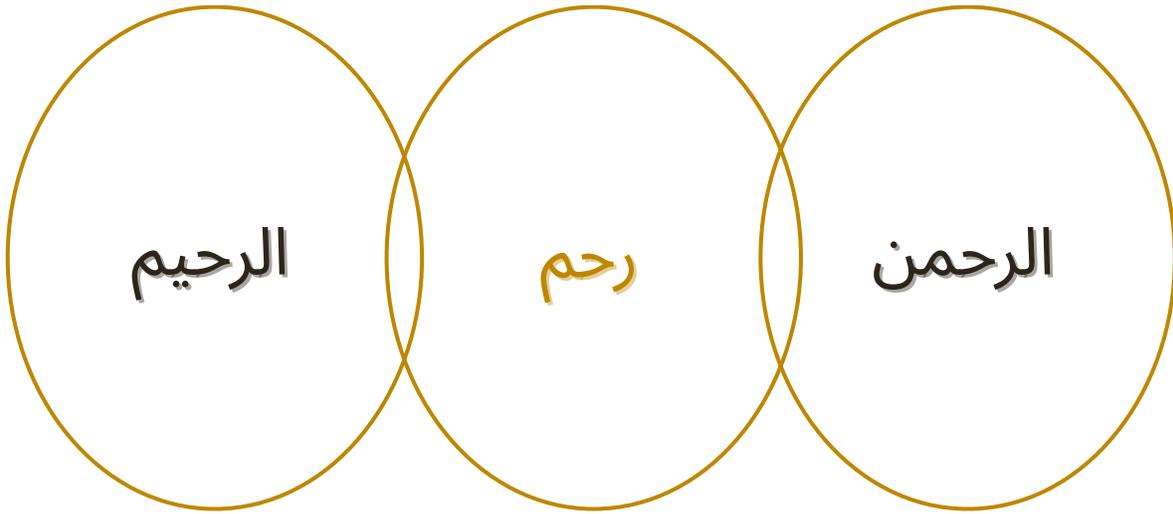
The Beneficent

Postpartum: A time of Mercy

“So eat and drink, and put your heart at ease. But if you see any of the people, say, ‘I have vowed silence to the Most Merciful, so I am not talking to anyone today.’” Surah Maryam 19:26

The word Rahm رَحِم (womb) shares the same root as Rahman الرحمن (Benificent) and Rahim الرحيم (Most Merciful). This guide is not meant to be about simply nurturing the womb but rather nurturing the whole person in postpartum.

The ayah above is the commandment Allah gives Maryam عليها السلام in her immediate postpartum.



What is postpartum?

And how to use this guide!

Postpartum starts immediately after delivery (no matter the type of delivery), and how long it lasts is up for debate. Some research suggests postpartum lasts for years and anyone impacted by the pregnancy or delivery can experience a form of postpartum including people who have adopted, parents of children born through surrogacy, and foster parents.

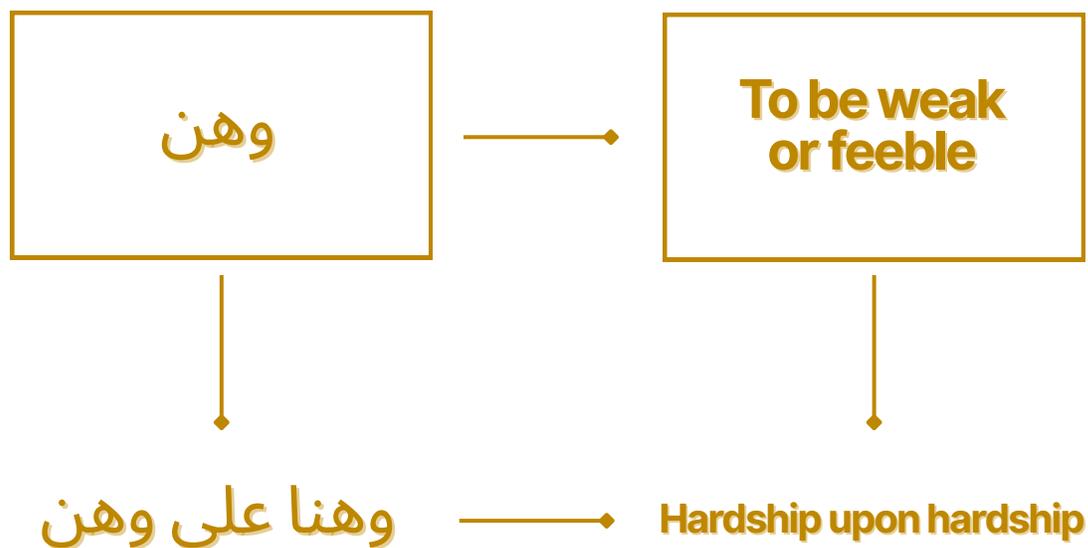
This guide is dedicated to all impacted by the postpartum experience and with this in mind, includes evidence-based education on the physiological changes related to those who are experiencing postpartum after physically delivering.

Postpartum: A time of care

What does Allah say about postpartum?

In the Quran, the postpartum experience is often translated as a “hardship upon hardship” **وهنا على وهن**; here’s the full verse:

“And We have commanded people to honor their parents. Their mothers bore them through hardship upon hardship, and their weaning takes two years. So be grateful to Me and your parents. To Me is the final return.” Surah Al-Luqman 31:14.



In fact, the hardship of delivery and postpartum is mentioned again in Surah Al-Ahqaf, verse 46:15.

When we look at the stories of those experiencing postpartum in the Quran we recognize and honor the amount of strife, adversity, and hardship is presented throughout this time.

Understanding Your Hormones

And how they impact you!

What is Oxytocin?

Oxytocin, known as the love hormone, supported you in pregnancy and labor. Pitocin a commonly used method of labor induction is synthetic oxytocin. It helps your body to contract. In postpartum it increases to support you. Oxytocin helps:

- Shrink your uterus
- Help milk production
- Increase happiness to help you bond with baby

What is Prolactin?

Prolactin, produces and promotes lactation (it's in the name!) This goes up in postpartum. Prolactin supports you by:

- Enlarging the breasts
- Produce and maintain production of milk

What is Estrogen?

Estrogen has carried you through sexual development of your body parts. It also has regulated your menstrual cycle. In pregnancy, it helps:

- The uterus grow
- Regulates baby's organs developing
- Maintains your uterine lining

While this hormone does also support milk flow in postpartum, it takes a dip once the placenta leaves the body.

What is Progesterone?

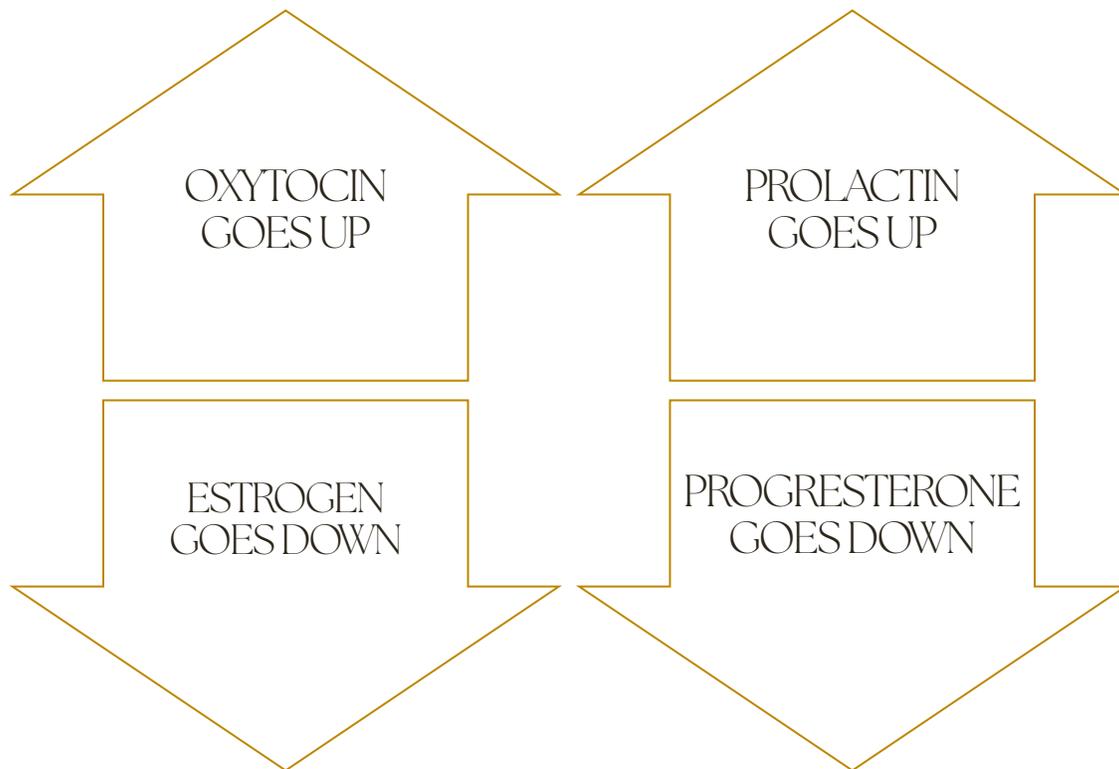
Progesterone works closely with estrogen during pregnancy. This hormone supported the environment for you to become pregnant. It supported you by:

- Preventing contractions
- Pauses ovulation
- Helps to ensure no more eggs are produced while pregnant

This hormone alongside estrogen, does take a dip once the uterus is out.

Postpartum: A time of Mercy

This is a time to accept the Mercy of Allah and to give mercy to yourself. Part of the reason why is because there is a massive dip in hormones the first few days:



These hormonal shifts can deeply impact your physical and mental health feeling like an emotional crash.

Time, care, and attention can be a mercy, just as you may have created a birth plan or nesting plan. Plan ahead for your postpartum period. Use the next pages to give back to yourself and let your community know how they can best support you!

My Postpartum Care Plan

What helps my body recover:

Comfort items I want ready (pads, belly wrap, cell phone, book, etc.):

My ideal rhythm for the first 1-2 weeks (Mostly in bed, short walks, limited responsibilities):

One boundary that protects my rest:

What helps me when I feel overwhelmed:

People I can reach out to:

Signs I need extra support:

Free space to process your delivery

“They planned, but Allah also planned. And Allah is the best of planners.” Surah Al-Anfal 8:30

Draw a picture or write about the experience...

Connecting with Allah

Stories of postpartum in the Quran; the story of Yūkābid (abbreviated!)

Allah commanded Yūkābid to place her baby in a chest and cast it into the river, promising that Musa would be returned to her. She placed Musa into the river and the river carried Musa gently to Pharaoh's palace. When Pharaoh's family found him, Allah placed love for the child in their hearts. The Pharaoh's wife Asiya, insisted they keep the baby.

When Musa refused to nurse from anyone, his sister suggested a someone who could care for him, his birth mother. Thus, Allah reunited mother and child. (Quran 20:38–40; 28:7–13).

What ways does fear or anxiety support you?

What ways does resolve support you?

المُقِيتُ

The Maintainer

الْمُجِبُّ

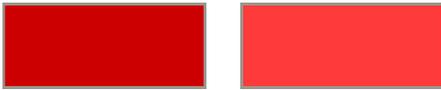
The Restorer

Nifas

POSTPARTUM BLEEDING

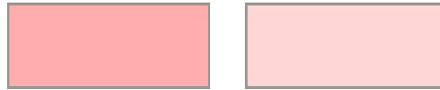
The period of nifas is typically up to 40 days though some scholars differ, in medical terms this is called lochia and typically lasts up to six weeks.

Lochia rubia



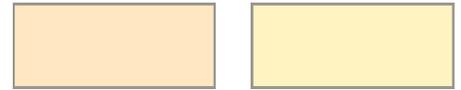
Typically lasts 5-7 days

Lochia serosa



Typically lasts 10 days

Lochia alba



Typically lasts 10-14 days

Bleeding & Physical Healing

- Wear comfortable, breathable clothing
- Change pads frequently and hydrate well
- Check for clots, if any clots are the size of a golf ball then call your provider
- Consider keeping a cart by your bed that holds the items you need (pads, pain medicine, socks, etc.)

Nourishment as Healing

- Warm, cooked foods; soups, stews, broths.
- Iron-rich meals
- Plenty of fluids (you have already lost a lot!)
- Continue to take your prenatal vitamins

Nifas

POSTPARTUM BLEEDING

Keeping Connection to Faith and Community

- Do dhikr on your or someone else's hand
- Have your partner read you Quran
- Create a list of meaningful dua to keep near your bed
- Listen to lectures on Hajur and Maryam; seek their wisdom during this time

Anxiety as a Useful Tool

- Turn any doubt you have into a dua (examples on the next page)
- Allow moments where you feel sad, anxious or guilty to remind you of Allah
- Remember anxiety is an emotion given to you by Allah; your emotions are valid not your enemy

Worship has not stopped because your body has changed. During nifas, you may not pray salah or fast but your rest is an idadah and your commitment is rewarded. It is important to acknowledge that going almost ten months performing salah daily to six weeks without salah may also cause a dip in iman. Be intentional about how you remain connected to Allah.

Dua Guide

Finish the prompt with your own words!

Ya Allah, release me of the guilt of...

Oh Restorer, please restore in me...

Ya Allah, please see me through...

Oh Most High, raise me in...

Ya Allah, I thank you for...

Oh Expander, expand my...

Oh Most Loving, I love...

Dua Guide

Finish the prompt with your own words!

Ya Allah, prepare me for...

Oh Constant Provider, please provide me with...

Ya Allah grant my community...

Oh Most Compassionate, increase my compassion for...

Ya Allah, I thank you for...

Oh Just, grant me justice by...

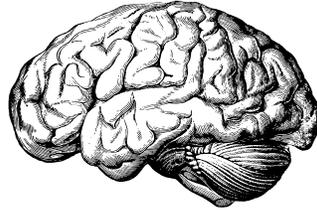
Oh Most Forgiving, forgive me for...

Postpartum Mood Shifts

Hormonal shifts and lack of rest can produce fear, crying bouts, and anxiety within the first few weeks. This is known as the “**baby blues**”.

Research shows up to 85% of people in postpartum experience postpartum blues. This is normal.

عقل

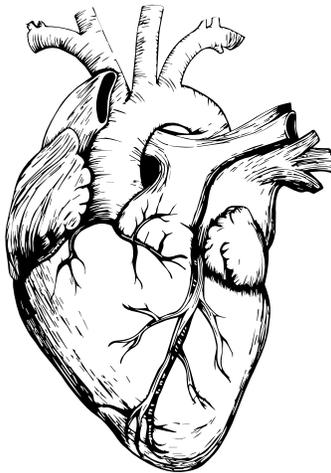


Factors such as family or personal history of mood disorders may increase the chance that your baby blues may develop into more severe mood disorders. If the worry, grief, and sadness last longer than two weeks, seek the help of a **mental health professional**.

“Indeed, We created humans in the best form.” Surah At-Tin 95:4

Take the time to listen to your heart, and grab some markers, crayons and draw how your heart feels (be bold, or subtle up to you!) or, write words to around your heart to state how you're feeling.

قلب



Free space to process your feelings currently

Draw a picture or write about the experience...

Connecting with Allah

Stories of postpartum in the Quran; the story of Hajur (abbreviated!)

By Allah's command, Prophet Ibrahim left Hajur and her infant son Ismail in the desert alone. When Ibrahim walked away, Hajur followed him and asked repeatedly why he was leaving them there. When he told her it was by Allah's command, she stopped and said with firm faith, "Then Allah will not abandon us."

Soon, the small supply of water ran out. Hajur placed him on the ground and ran to the nearby hill of Safa, searching desperately for anyone who might help. Seeing nothing, she ran to Marwa. She ran between the two hills seven times.

Allah sent the Angel Jibril to strike the ground near Ismail, and water gushed forth. Hajur rushed to contain it, saying "Zamzam," meaning "stop stop," and the blessed well became their source of life. Soon after, travelers noticed birds circling and realized water must be nearby. By Hajur's permission, a tribe settled there, and Makkah was born. (Qur'an 28:7-13)

How do resources support you?

What role does action to create change support you?

Intrusive thought exercise

Right now, I feel most weighed down by:

What's hardest today? Circle all options that apply:

Feeding myself

Feeling joy

Feeling connected

Getting out of bed

Feeling like myself

Trusting the future

Choose One "Gentle Enough" Action

- Drink some water
- Sit near a window
- Make dhikr
- Rest without guilt
- Listen to Quran
- Watch your favorite show/movie
- Text one safe person

Track progress (select all that apply)

- I did it
- I did part of it
- I tried
- I rested instead
- I gave up and did something else
- I forgot
- I asked someone to help me complete it

المصنِّع

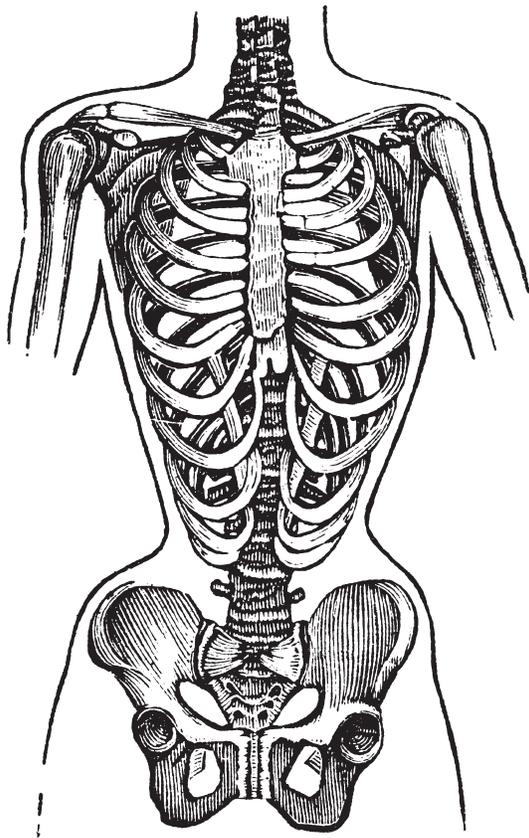
The Fashioner

الْقَدِيرُ

The Perfect

What's going on with your body?

From the top down; we've spoken about the brain, let's take it further.



THE BODY IN IMMEDIATE POSTPARTUM

Breast size increases

Uterus begins to shrink

Abdominal cramping due to uterus contractions

Pooping may be hard to do

BY 6-8 WEEKS



Cesarean incisions are generally healed. Some irritation is normal



Milk supply has fully come in switching from colostrum to milk



Uterus size goes back to pre-pregnancy size



Lochia decreases or completely goes away

AFTER 6-8 WEEKS



Hair shedding typically begins



Medical professionals will typically clear you to have sex



Period may start again



Medical professionals may clear you for exercise

OTHER COMMON POSTPARTUM EXPERIENCES

Swelling in the hands and feet

Some may develop hemorrhoids

Pelvic floor muscles may loosen leading to incontinence

Weight loss

Sweating may occur as your hormones change

Spontaneous back pain (may be due to labor or epidural)

Breast cancer can occur at any age

Breast engorgement

Brand Styling

Connecting with Your Body

Here's what you can do!

“My Lord! I am truly in desperate need of whatever provision You may have in store for me.” (Surah Al Qasas 28:24)

You are not alone in any of the emotions, pain, or joy you are feeling. All have been felt before. And yet at the same time, you're unique in how you are experiencing these feelings. You are an expert on your body and an amazing advocate for yourself when in doubt:

REMEMBER SHIFA

S

Support:

Who can I call on for support?

H

Hydration:

Have I hydrated and nourished my body?

I

Intention:

Have I acted from survival or through intention?

F

Feelings:

Am I letting myself feel my emotions completely?

A

Affirmation:

Have I recognized myself today?

Shifa (شفاء) in Arabic means healing or cure. Shifa is Allah's dispensation of your healing as Allah is Ash Shafi (الشافى) The Healer.

You may be wondering, “when will I feel like myself again?” or “when can I have my body back?” Again, you're not alone in these feelings but they are unique to you. Some days you may feel completely aligned mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. While other days you feel like an uphill battle to get to any sense of normalcy.

During this time, many in the postpartum may rush to doing activities that make them feel like a more integrated self. Remember, this is a process and healing is not linear. Additionally, rushing to reorientation may do more harm than good. Just as fasting, prayer, supplication, and ablution are all multi-step actions starting with intention so is healing your body.

Connecting with Your Body

Be sure to consult with your midwife or doctor if complications arise!

“Surely, with hardship comes ease. Verily, with hardship comes ease.” Surah Ash-Sharh 94:5-6

Perineal Pain

1. Ice Packs with Witch Hazel pads
2. Sit on a pillow
3. Consult doctor for pain medication

Incision Pain

1. Prescribed pain relief
2. Lidocaine patches
3. Warm/hot shower

Breast Engorgement

1. Try feeding
2. Pump or hand express
3. Take a warm shower

Nipple Pain

1. Consult a Lactation Specialist
2. Nipple butter on nipples
3. Massage breast milk onto nipples

Hand, Feet or Face Swelling

1. Put your feet up
2. Compression socks
3. Drink lots of water

Hemorrhoids

1. Eat high fiber foods
2. Soak in a warm bath
3. Ask your provider for medication

Constipation

1. Eat high fiber foods
2. Drink prune juice or senna tea
3. Drink lots of water

Obstetric Fistula

1. Prescribed antibiotics
2. Listen to your doctor closely
3. Consider a postpartum doula

Increasing Libido

1. Consider speaking to mental health professional
2. Ease back into intimacy slowly
3. Use lubricant for dryness

Connecting with Your Body

Connecting with providers made easy.

“He is the One Who created everything in the earth for you. Then He turned towards the heaven, forming it into seven heavens. And He has ‘perfect’ knowledge of all things.” Surah Al-Baqarah 2:29

DOULA/POSTPARTUM DOULA SUPPORT

[Ad’iyah Doula Directory](#)

[DONA International](#)

[Muslim Birth Worker Collective](#)

[National Black Doulas Association](#)

PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

[Postpartum Support International](#)

[Grow Therapy](#)

[Psychology Today](#)

[American Psychological Association](#)

LACTATION SUPPORT

[La Leche League International](#)

[The Lactation Network](#)

[Milky Moms](#)

National Breastfeeding Hotline (Look up number for your country)

MUTUAL AID FUNDS

[HEART](#)

[National Abortion Funds](#)

[The Bridge Project](#)

Decision making made easy!

Use your BRAIN! Coined by Dr. Sara Wickman

“Is there any reward for goodness except goodness?” Surah Ar-Rahman 55:60

Benefits

What good will come from this?

Does this support what I want?

How will this help me?

Risks

What are the risks?

How often do these risks typically come up?

What is the likelihood of this happening to me?

Alternatives

What are the alternatives to this?

How will this alternative impact me?

What are the other options?

Intuition

What does my intuition say about this?

Should I pray on this?

If I was not afraid, what would I decide?

Nothing

What if I do nothing right now?

How urgent is this?

Can I come back to this after I consult another provider?

Free space to process additional care

"They planned, but Allah also planned. And Allah is the best of planners." Surah Al-Anfal 8:30

Draw a picture or write about the experience...

الِهْدِي

The Guide

الْوَالِي

The Protecting Friend

Ways community can support you

Quiet Companionship

- Body doubling, (having another person around for you to feel at ease or complete a task)
- [Mealtrain.com](https://mealtrain.com) allows your community to sign up to bring you meals or give you money for food
- Care Teams for tasks; family and friends clean, watch children, or run errands while you rest.
- [instacart.com](https://www.instacart.com) you or a support person can order groceries and have it delivered to your door.

Companionship Out Loud

- Community dua chain
- Postpartum groups (Whatsapp or Facebook)
- Check-in text rotations
- Walking partners
- Going to the masjid
- Mental health counseling
- Feeding counseling

Who can help?

Be sure to communicate and schedule things far out. Many people who take parental leave come back to work around six weeks. During that time there may be a dip in communal care. Look into hiring a postpartum doula support for all of the above if needed.

Setting the proper boundaries

A boundary continues to support your actions, the boundary is in bold

If someone comes by unannounced, **I will ask them to come back another time.**

If I feel pressured to host, **I will excuse myself to rest.**

If advice is given without consent, **I will advise that advice is not needed.**

If comments feel minimizing, **I will pause the conversation and proceed how I see fit.**

If someone's presence increases my anxiety, **I will alert my support and see how we can best address their presence.**

If messages are overwhelming, **I will silence notifications.**

If photos are taken/posted without my consent, **I will ask for them to be deleted.**

If coordination feels stressful, **I will assign a point person.**

Free space to process for anything

"They planned, but Allah also planned. And Allah is the best of planners." Surah Al-Anfal 8:30

Draw a picture or write about the experience...

Your boundaries! Remember, boundaries are what YOU will do!

If someone...

When _____ says...

If interactions...

If patterns repeat...

If my decisions are challenged...

If questions feel invasive...

If too many people are present...

Your boundaries! Remember, boundaries are what YOU will do!

If someone arrives sick...

If someone says...

If obligations conflict...

If I need privacy...

If I'm tired...

When I need support...

If I feel unsafe...

Connecting with Allah

Stories of postpartum in the Quran; the story of Maryam (abbreviated!)

Maryam began labor alone and in pain. She secured her body beneath a palm tree. She cried out, wishing she had been forgotten. Allah sent a stream flowing beneath her and instructed her to shake the palm tree, causing fresh dates to fall, nourishment for her body.

Allah commanded her to remain silent when she returned to her people, leaving her defense to Him. When they accused her of immorality, she pointed to the infant. By Allah's miracle, baby Isa spoke from the cradle, declaring himself a servant and prophet of Allah, honoring his mother. (Qur'an 19:16–34).

How can vocalizing your needs support you?

How does silence support you?

Connecting with Allah

With dua from the quran

كَلَّا إِنَّ مَعِيَ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ

“Indeed, my Lord is with me. He will guide me.”

(Surah Ash-Shu'ara, 26:62).

Spoken by Hajur عليها السلام

رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ

Our Lord, do not let our hearts deviate after You have guided us and grant us“
”.from Yourself mercy. Indeed, You are the Bestower

(Surah Aal Imran, 3:8).

رَبِّ ابْنِ لِي عِنْدَكَ بَيْتًا فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَنَجِّنِي مِنْ فِرْعَوْنَ وَعَمَلِهِ وَنَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ

“My Lord, build for me near You a house in Paradise and save me from Pharaoh
and his deeds and save me from the wrongdoing people.”

(Surah At-Tahrim, 66:11).

Spoken by Asiya عليها السلام

Connecting with Allah

With dua from the quran

رَبِّ إِنِّي لِمَا أَنْزَلْتَ إِلَيَّ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَقِيرٌ السَّلَام

My Lord, indeed I am, for whatever good You would send down to me, in need.

(Surah Al-Qasas, 28:24)

رَبِّ هَبْ لِي حُكْمًا وَأَلْحِقْنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ

My Lord! Bestow wisdom on me, and join me with the righteous.

(Surah Ash-Shu'ara 26:83)

وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا

“Our Lord, let our spouses and children be a source of joy for us, and keep us in the forefront of the righteous.”

(Surah Al-Furqan 25:74)

Acknowledgements

Allah ﷻ

Firstly, I'd like to thank Allah ﷻ for guiding me through the paths that have inspired this guide and for giving me the sacred ancestors stories to reflect on. Ya Allah, I pray this work keeps me firm in your Deen.

Amirah Bashir

Thank you to my big sister, without whom this idea would not have existed. Thank you for being my sister in life and birthwork and for always being a grounded sounding board for my ideas. My Allah always keep our bonds strong. I love you!

Jazzmin Shakir & Aya Iwai-Folk

Thank you to my sisters in research and education for always believing in and listening to my dreams. I hope I made you all proud! May Allah expand our knowledge and care for our communities and one another.

HEART Team

I cannot thank you all enough for giving me the space to see this through at the speed of trust. Thank you for selecting me, believing in me, and always hyping me up. Special shoutouts to Kiran, Anahita, and Nadia! You all make me want to grow more to continue this sacred work. May Allah continue to bless this organization and the people within it.

Sister Nethal Abdul-Mu'min & Sister Sarah Manasrah

Thank you for answering the call of the interviews and continuing to do the work that is necessary for so many. May Allah continue to bless your work and your knowledge in all that you do!

Chaplain Lauren Schreiber

You're the GOAT! And such a resource to so many! Thank you for believing in my work and providing me avenues of knowledge. May Allah bless you for all that you have given to others with so much more abundance.

Shifa, Hajur & Aqsa

Thank you for always keeping me on my toes. It's never a dull day with you all. Thank you for all you have given me, I promise to spend a lifetime giving you just as much if not more! Mommy hopes to always make you proud and I pray that we always remain strong in our bond.

