

The Postpartum Eco-Map

Build the support network you need to transition to parenthood as an entrepreneur with ease and grace.

The information in this workbook is not medical or psychological advice, it is for educational purposes only. The information should not be copied or distributed beyond individual use.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY



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Arianna speaks and writes about parental leave and respectful maternity care as an issue of social justice, human rights, and economic equity. Her work has been published in peer-reviewed journals such as the International Journal of Health Equity, Advances in Social Work, and Ethnicity & Health. She is a co-author of Degrees of Difference: Reflections of Women of Color on Graduate School, published by The University of Illinois Press in 2020, and The Expecting Entrepreneur® is her first solo-authored book.

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START WITH THESE INSTRUCTIONS

Eco-maps are visual tools that help us assess our connections with family, community and social networks, paying special attention to the quality of these relationships.

This eco-map workbook will help you think beyond the birth plan and map out what you need to transition to parenthood as an entrepreneur:

As you work through each section, you will

- Explore your current support network
- Identify what connections could play a helpful role in helping you transition to parenthood as an entrepreneur.
- Discover what additional support you may need to have the postpartum experience you desire.

By the end of the workbook, you will have clarity about

- How your ideal postpartum experience looks and feels
- Who you want around those first few days after birth (plus how to diplomatically communicate boundaries with well-intentioned family and friends)
- What local resources in your community can help with your postpartum transition (everything from emotional support to help with meals)
- What you (and your partner) need to honor your physical, psycho-emotional, social and spiritual health as you welcome your little one

Ecomap instructional notes

- If you plan on going through the workbook all in one sitting, give yourself at least 40 minutes of uninterrupted time. Alternatively, you can break it up into a few work sessions across several days. Try to complete the exercise within one week so you can take action on what you learn.
- Remember to put a date on your ecomap. We are dynamic individuals and our relationships with others are always changing. Dating your ecomap helps you assess the relationships or connections as they currently are, instead of how they have been in the past or how you wish they were. You can repeat the exercise after a few months to see how things have changed.
- The legend on the next page shows how you can classify the relative strength/weakness of each relationship you choose to include on your ecomap. Using these specific types of lines will help visually make it clear.

PART 1: DEFINING YOUR IDEAL POSTPARTUM EXPERIENCE

Spend a few minutes brainstorming about the top 3 words you would use to describe how you want your postpartum experience to feel. You have likely been asked to do some similar visioning about your birth – think of this as similar, but entirely focused on what happens after birth.

Take a few minutes to free-write if that helps, or look through the list below and see what resonates.

Write your top 3 words here:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Connected. Beautiful. Loving. Abundant. Strong. Undisturbed.

Spacious. Free. Mighty. Grounded. Supported. Mellow. Quiet.

Thriving. Courage. Innovation. Creative. Bliss. Restful. Smooth.

Powerful. Thankful. Nourishment. Freedom. Growth. Tranquil.

Transformation. Healthy. Generous. Abundant. Blissful. Soft.

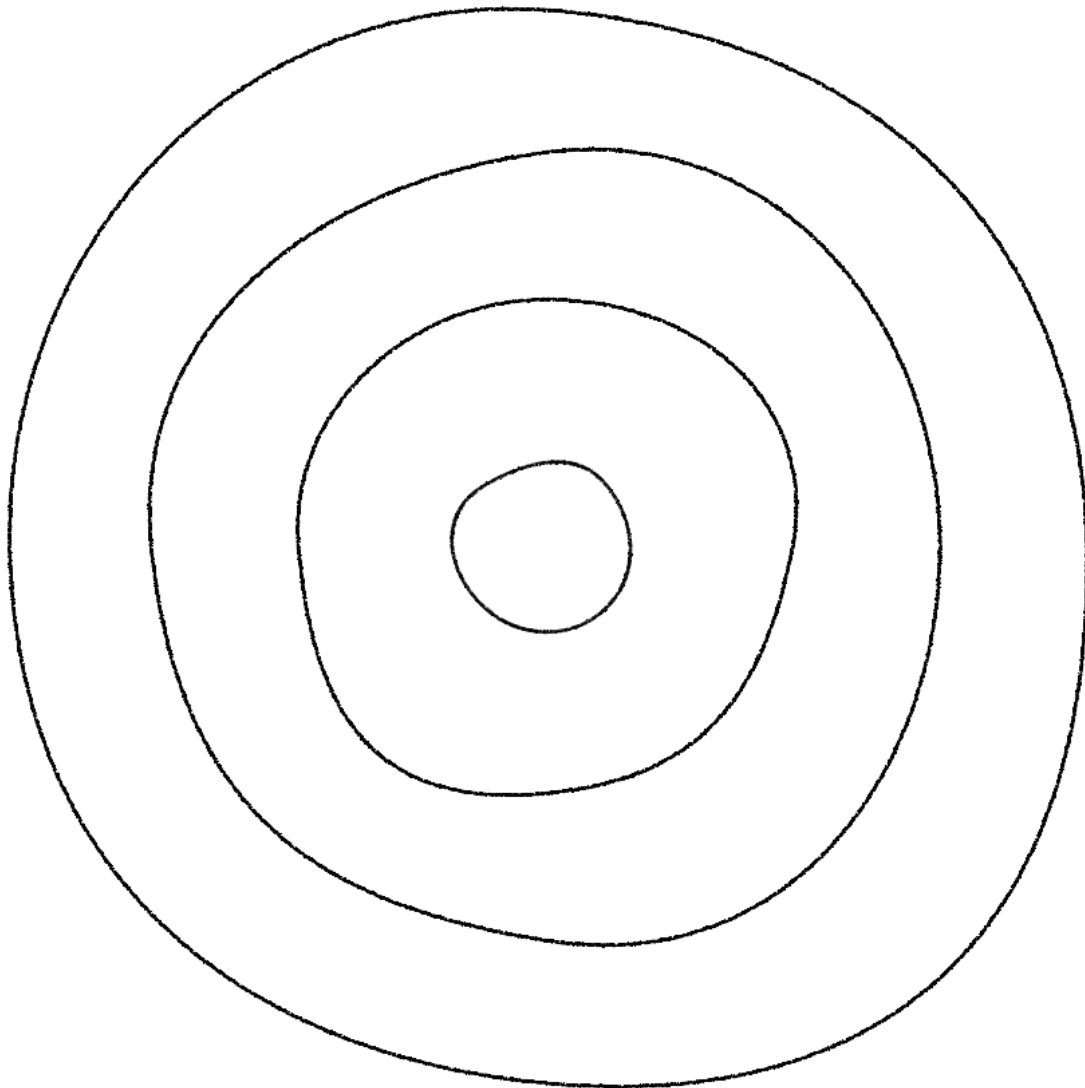
Vibrant. Content. Peaceful. Worthy. Connected. Grounded. Safe.

Empowering. Calm. Steady. Aglow. Luxurious.

Giddy. Harmonious.

PART 2: MAPPING OUT YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK

Below is the eco-map diagram you will be completing using the instructions on the next few pages, as well as the emails that accompany this workbook. The follow up questions will help you explore how these individuals can support you in achieving your desired postpartum experience that you identified in Part 1.



_____ A solid line represents an important, strong or positive relationship or connection that you can trust in.

---//---//---//---//--- A dashed line with diagonal lines represents a particularly stressful relationship or connection that does not serve you well.

----- A dashed line represents a weak relationship or connection in need of strengthening.

Draw Your Support Network

Begin by placing your name in the circle in the center of the diagram.

Family support network

The space between the innermost circle (you) and the first ring represents your family system. This may be your family of origin or chosen family. Brainstorm what people in your family play a role in your current self-care and who will be around during your postpartum period. If your family does not tend to play a support role in your life, then the next two rings may have more individuals in them than this ring.

Brainstorm your family support here:

Draw small circles with each person's name within the space of the first ring. Use the line that best represents your relationship with that person (see legend above) to connect them to the center of the diagram (you).

Community Support Network

The space between the first and second rings represents your community support system. Brainstorm who in your community (friends you know through work, school, worship, gym, yoga, neighborhood associations, etc.) plays a role in your current self-care and who you might like to have around during your postpartum period. This can include your digital community as well!

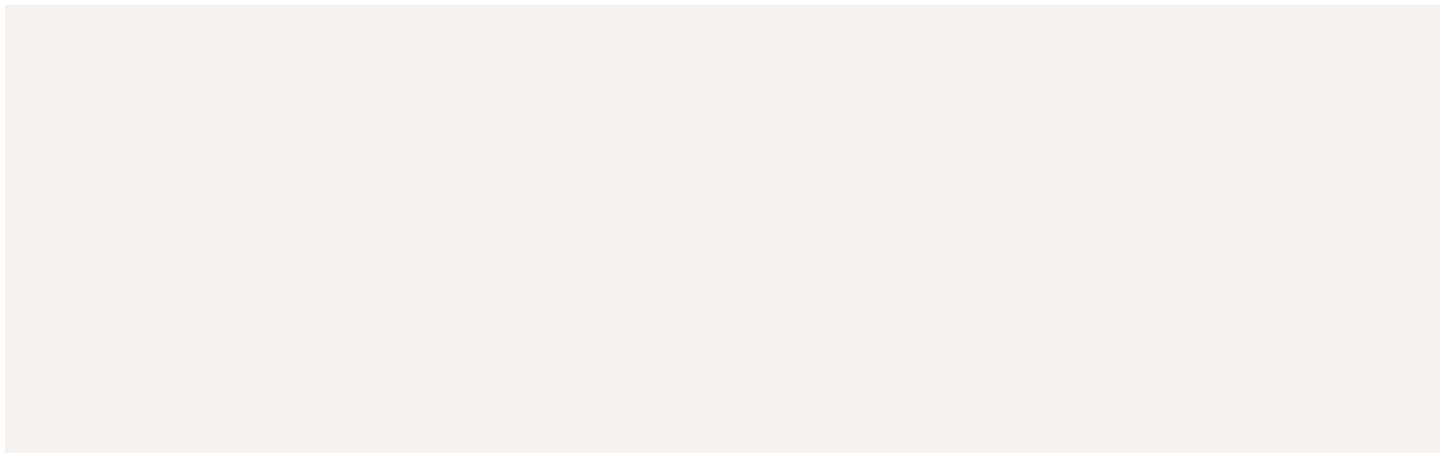
Brainstorm your community support here:

Then draw small circles with each person's name in the space between the first and second rings. Use the line that best represents your relationship with that person (see legend above) to connect them to the center of the diagram (you).

Professional Support Network

The space between the second and third rings represents the institutional or professional support systems in your life (doctors, therapists, doulas, chiropractors, etc.) Brainstorm the specific professionals or institutional representatives who play a role in your current care and who you might like to have around during your postpartum period. Often times, we need to do a bit of research to figure out who to put in this ring, so if at first it is hard to fill out, read the next section on postpartum professionals and circle back to complete this.

Brainstorm your professional support here:



Then draw small circles with each person's name in the space between the second and third rings. Use the line that best represents your relationship with that person (see legend above) to connect them to the center of the diagram (you).

PART 3: ASSESSING YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK

Your ecomap is now complete, and you have the information you need to assess the quality of your postpartum support network. Use the following questions to help you think about how you can reach out to your network (across the family, community, and professionals circles) for support in preparation for those first weeks with a newborn.

1. In what ways can the people with whom you have strong, positive, or important connections support your postpartum?

Set a specific date and time to share your ideas with these people and request their support. The more specific you can be about the ways they can support you, the better.

Fill in your ideas here:

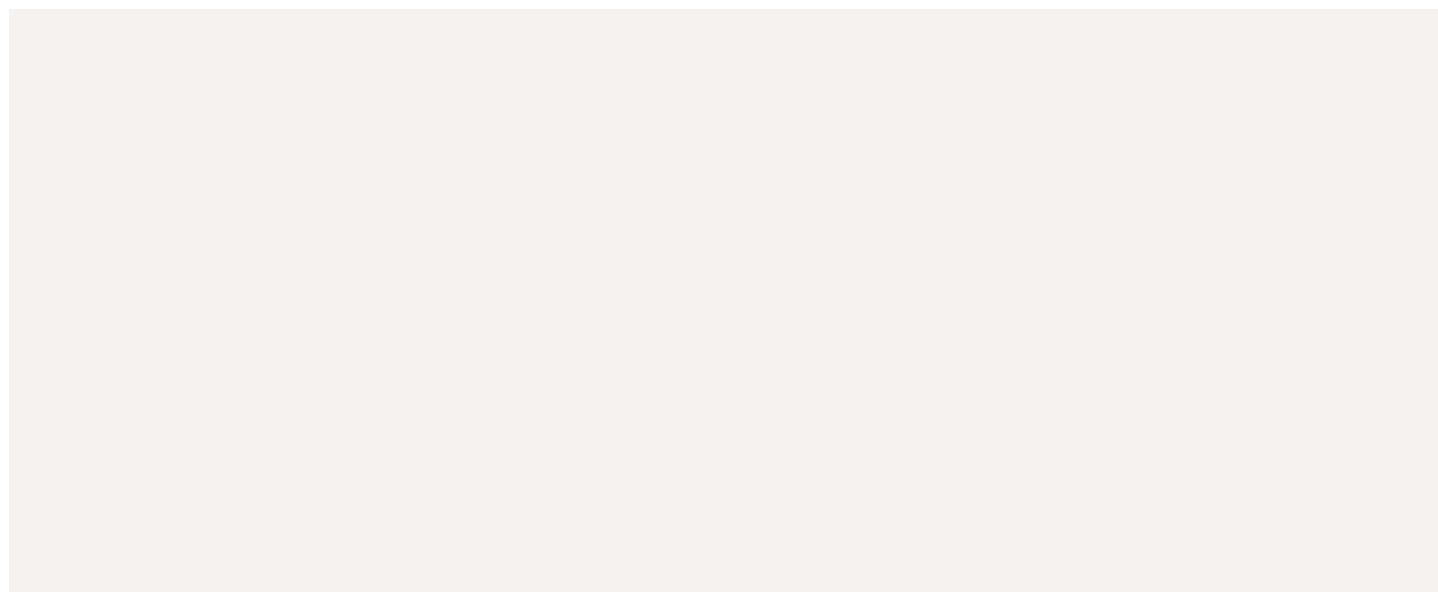
Suggestions:

- Have a friend organize meal delivery for you. (Sample meal train requests are available as downloadable bonuses with the purchase of The Expecting Entrepreneur.)
- Have a family member come help with cooking and cleaning.
- Schedule postpartum visits from your doula.

2. How can you make sure that your postpartum experience is not made difficult by the individuals you identified as stressful connections or relationships?

Brainstorm the boundaries you can set and communicate. This is a challenging step but one worth addressing before birth, so you don't have to exert energy on these difficult relationships postpartum.

Fill in your ideas here:



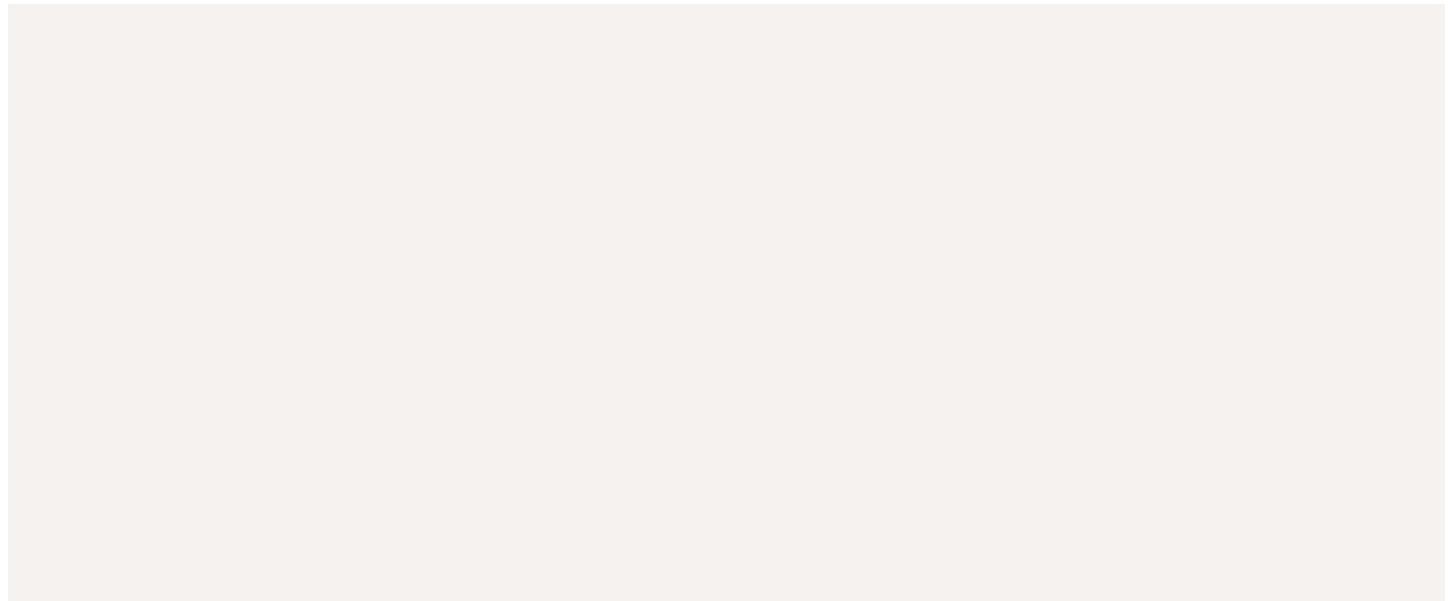
Suggestions:

- Make a crystal clear timeline for when you will allow visitors (e.g., starting three weeks after birth).
- Send out a list of ways people can help you in your early postpartum months. This list can include useful tasks like grocery shopping, walking the dog, and doing the laundry. It will also noticeably not include nebulous and unhelpful things like “dropping by to say hi” or “coming over to meet the baby.”
- Write down the names of any people you will have to have a hard conversation with around boundaries or other needs/desires. Consider practicing with your partner or a close friend to get comfortable with what you want to communicate.

3. Are there any gaps or missing links in your support system that you need to address to achieve your self-care goals?

Ideally, you want support at each level of the ecomap so your network is as strong as possible. Maybe you notice that you have plenty of strong connections at the family and community level but could use some professional support. Or you notice that you are relying heavily on visiting family members, and recruiting some community support might help you achieve your ideal postpartum network.

Fill in your ideas here:



Suggestions:

- Investigate how many postpartum visits you will have with your provider and how you can access additional appointments if needed.
- Make a list of community resources or postpartum support groups nearby so you have them on hand when needed.
- If you find that there are limited local resources, look into online resources for postpartum support (hotlines, mental health professionals, lactation consultants).

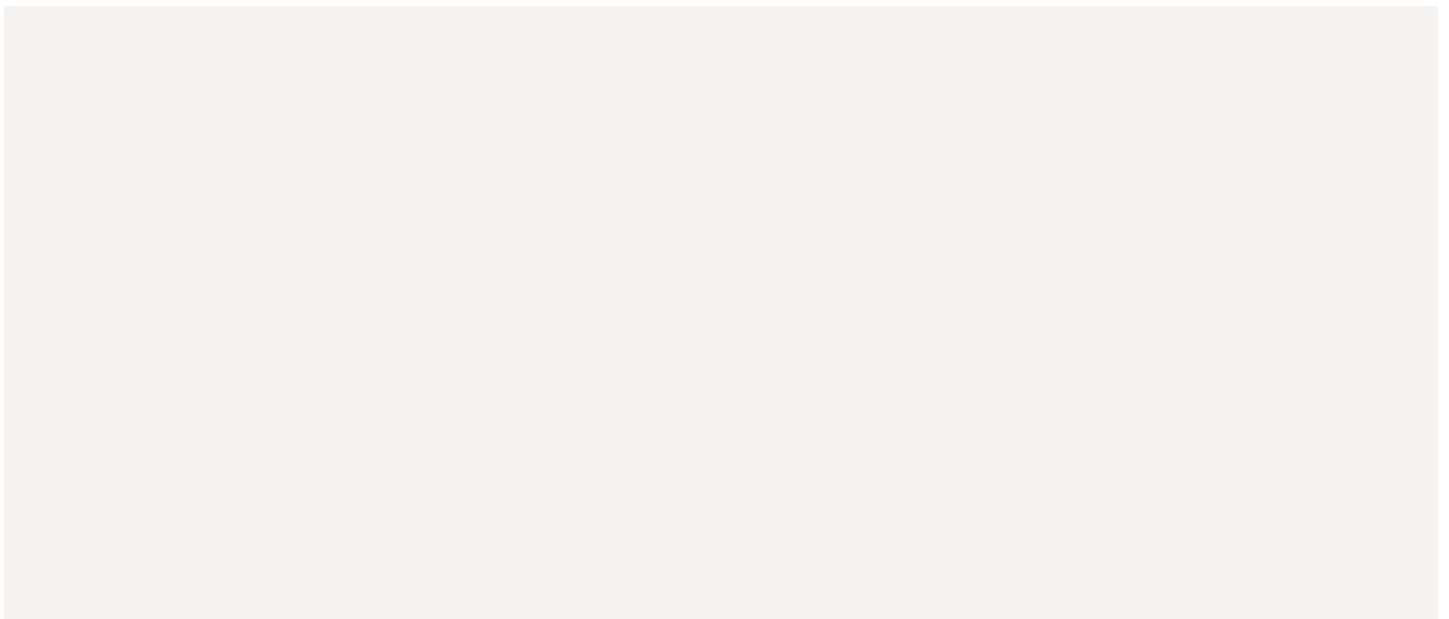
Congratulation! You have made it to the end of the Postpartum Eco-Map Workbook.

You have gone through quite a bit of work to make it to the end: examining family, community, and professional support, figuring out who your strongest allies in achieving your ideal postpartum experience may be, and addressing what boundaries you may need to prevent any unnecessary postpartum stress.

What happens next?

Now that you have your planning done, it's implementation time. Take a few moments to review your workbook and use the space below to list out what follow up tasks need to be taken care of and how you can be help accountable to making those happens.

These are my next steps:



If you have questions, comments, or other feedback, please email support@ariannataboada.com. I would love to hear from you and wish you the very best on this journey.

Additional resources are available at
www.theexpectingentrepreneur.com