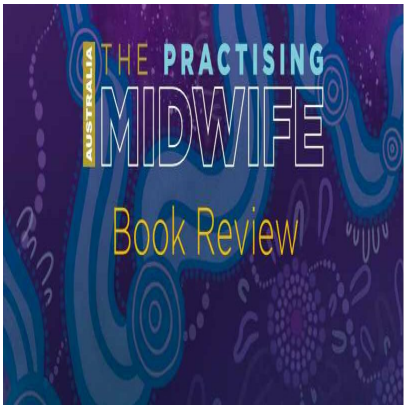
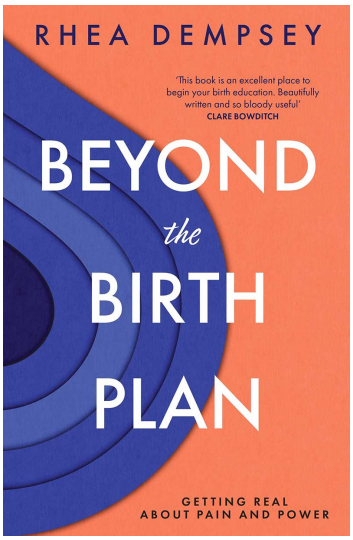


Description

Book Review: Beyond The Birth Plan: Getting Real About Pain And Power By Rhea Dempsey



Review by: Mel Howells – Serene Births Perth, Western Australia

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Rhea Dempsey wears many professional hats – childbirth educator, doula, counsellor, speaker and author. With over 40 years' experience, Rhea is a well-respected figure and a staunch advocate for normal, physiological birth.

Rhea adeptly bridges the gap between the physiological and the psychological aspects of birth, highlighting how crucial it is that care providers view women holistically and recognise that there are individual factors beyond the physical at play which may affect how a woman's labour and birth unfold. Rhea intertwines theoretical discussions with personal experiences, bringing a much-needed humanistic element to the professional dialogue on childbirth.

The onus doesn't fall solely on professionals; Rhea emphasises that the emotional preparation for birth must be undertaken by the woman, yet typical birth education classes underpin medicalised birth by failing to address the 'mind-body complexity of labour'. Discussing the emotional and psychological challenges of birth is a confronting conversation, but not to be avoided. If potential issues are explored during pregnancy, women and their support team won't be blindsided if they surface during labour and birth. If we reconnect to the essence of midwifery, being 'with woman', then we can support women through the emotional journey of labour and birth with the simplest tools – physical touch, soothing words and holding space.

Rhea's book is a must-read for birth professionals who want to improve outcomes for women and spark a culture shift towards providing genuine woman-centred care. It will be a confronting read for some, but change is driven by challenge. Rhea's work provides opportunity for reflection and growth. The system won't change overnight, but small actions make big waves. **TPM**

All4Maternity members can read an interview with the author who is a Doula in June 2024 issue of The Practising Midwife – Australia Edition here :https://www.all4maternity.com/an-interview-with-rhea-dempsey-author-and-doula/

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