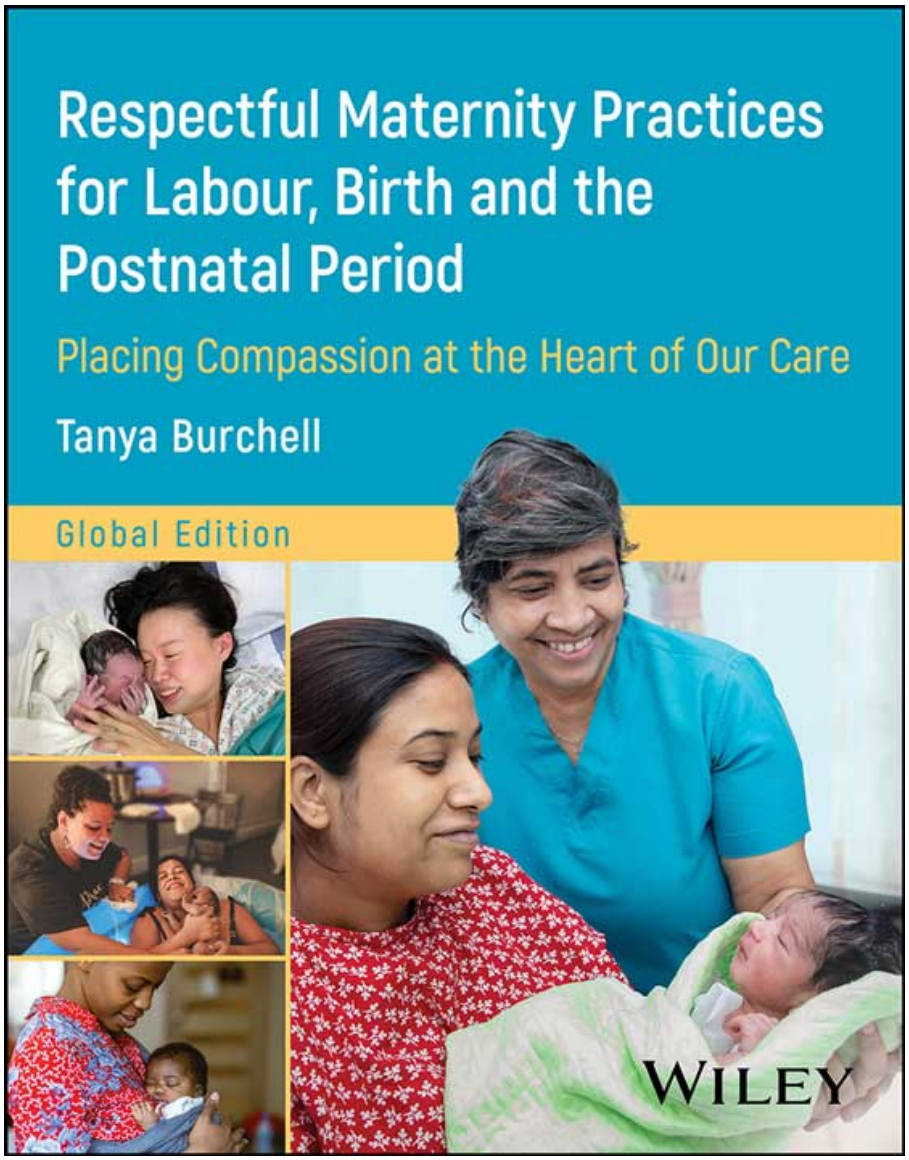


Description

Book Review: Respectful Maternity Practices for Labour, Birth and the Postnatal Period: Placing Compassion at the Heart of Our Care By Tanya Burchell

Review By: Afshan Ali – Midwife and Midwifery Lecturer

Social https://www.linkedin.com/in/afshan-ali-65105a319/



2026

John Wiley & Sons

Pbk

448pp

RRP: £29.95

ISBN 978-1-394-21011-4

Respectful Maternity Practices for Labour, Birth and the Postnatal Period by Tanya Burchell promotes compassionate, evidence-based maternity care that places dignity, autonomy, cultural awareness and human rights at the centre of practice. Written for midwives, nurses, obstetricians and student midwives, the book encourages healthcare professionals to look beyond clinical procedures and consider women's individual experiences throughout pregnancy, labour, birth and the postnatal period.

A central theme of the book is that women should be active participants in decisions about their care.

The text is organised into key areas of maternity care, including caregivers and future caregivers, the labour room environment, care during labour and birth, complex needs in labour, postnatal care, critical obstetric events and bereavement care following maternal or neonatal death. Throughout these sections, Burchell emphasises respectful maternity care, effective communication, informed decision-making and cultural sensitivity.

A central theme of the book is that women should be active participants in decisions about their care. Burchell argues that maternity services should foster trust, safety and positive birth experiences while ensuring women are treated with dignity and respect. This approach aligns with international recommendations that advocate informed choice and freedom from mistreatment during childbirth.

One of the book's major strengths is its holistic perspective, recognising childbirth as both a medical and personal experience.

The author highlights the emotional, psychological and cultural dimensions of maternity care and encourages practitioners to reflect critically on their own practice. Practical case studies, photographs and online resources help bridge the gap between theory and clinical application, making the text accessible to both students and experienced professionals.

Although the book's compassionate focus is a major strength, some readers seeking highly detailed clinical guidance may find that the emphasis on values-based care outweighs technical discussion in certain areas. Additionally, because the book promotes broad international perspectives, some examples may not directly reflect local/national maternity policies or guidelines within specific healthcare systems. Readers may therefore need to supplement the text with national guidance and evidence-based protocols.

Overall, it demonstrates that respectful, compassionate care is a fundamental component of safe, effective and woman-centred maternity services, with a strong focus on dignity, autonomy, cultural awareness and human rights making it a valuable resource for professional development and maternity education. **TPM**

Category

1. Book reviews
2. TPM Articles
3. TPM Journal

Tags

1. 2026
2. maternity care

Date Created
1st September 2026