

Description

This is our very first guest blog post, and we're honoured to host the words of Claire Kay.



Claire is a mother of three teenagers, and lives in North Wales. She is the founder of 'Birth Story Listeners' which is a Peer Support Group for mothers in North Wales, & also the 'Birth Trauma Christian Encouragement Group' online. Claire is passionate about a holistic approach to perinatal mental health; she loves to write campaign poetry and to speak at conferences, to raise awareness of how we can reduce birth trauma and perinatal mental illness.



I experienced birth trauma after the birth of my first baby in 2000. After that I decided to set up peer support groups online and in person, to support other women who had experienced birth trauma or other perinatal mental illness. Over the years I have heard so many women's birth stories through my work, and the one consistent thing that stands out above all else is the lack of emotional care for many women when they were having their babies, and the deep impact that this had on them.

Whilst we can never fully prevent birth trauma from occurring, I have learned that women are often able to cope with many things that happen during childbirth, especially so if they are treated with kindness, respect, compassion, dignity, privacy, consent, given explanations and options, and basically feel that they matter to the people who are caring for them.

One of my favourite sayings is 'the small things are actually the big things.' Little changes to the way we care for women can provide a protective barrier to their future mental health, reducing or possibly even preventing conditions such as maternity related Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) from developing – which can affect whole families for several years left untreated.

I'm from North Wales, and the Patron Saint for Wales is St David, a Bishop who lived in 6th century Wales. David is famed for bringing the gospel to the land much like St Patrick in Ireland. One of St David's most famous sayings from his life's work was to 'do the little things'. My hope for this poem is that it is shared far and wide, and that all health care practitioners begin to feel the power of the positive, protective effect that they can have on women's mental health when they remember to 'do the little things' for those women and families in their care. I want them to feel proud that they are actually contributing to reducing birth trauma, and perinatal mental illness by always remembering to be kind as this poem explains.



Midwifery Gold

There’s no smoke without fire, no day without night,

No courage without fear, no dark without light.

No life without risk, & no joy without pain,

No dawn without dusk, & no sun without rain.

But for some unheard reason in ‘birth’ we can think

Caring for just ‘bodies’ means we are in synch,

But we’re not ‘walking wombs’, & we’re not ‘talking heads’

We’re not detached flesh, we’re a tapestry of threads.

We’re souls & emotions, we’re spirit & prayer,

We’re hopes, dreams & nightmares, elation, despair.

We’re history & mystery, we’re sadness & pain,

We’re sexual & sensual, in this we’re the same.

Birth without ‘feelings’ denies who we are,

And yet in technology we’ve come so far,

But we’ve forgotten the human basics of life,

To preference the ‘physical’ can cut like a knife.

It leaves deeper wounds than the ones we can see,
It denies we have souls, what makes us ‘me,’
You don’t know it’s missing until it’s not there,
We’ve got to remember ‘emotional care!’

Emotional care is ‘with woman,’ right here,
It sees to our souls… it notices fear,
It offers respect, and it trusts and believes,
It sees beyond physical, it deeply perceives.

It gives explanations, it asks for consent,
It gracefully accepts a ‘decline’ when it’s meant.
It asks how we’re ‘feeling’ beyond what we feel,
It knows that emotional pain scars so real.

Emotional absence is storing up danger,
In a system of risks, it’s a chance we can’t wager,
You don’t know its value until it is missing,
It’s like falling in love, but never kissing!

Absurd and unheard, we can’t divide parts
of ourselves within labour, we are whole, we’re like stars
in the night, although unseen in day due to light;
Our emotions are there, our emotions are bright.

You might not perceive a woman’s dream,
You may not hear her inner scream,
You might not behold a woman’s fears,
You may not see inner rivers of tears.

So we need intuition, we need wisdom to see

With the ‘eye of our heart’, with compassion, to be

Someone deeply perceiving, beyond fleshy measures,

To read between lines, to dig out inner treasures.

That are there to be found when we contemplate deeper,

We must be ‘emotional care giver’ seekers.

The wounds of its absence can last many years,

In phobias, illness, depression and fears.

So let’s be more aware, ‘kindness matters!’ we’ll shout,

It’s essential promotion, to all talk about

The importance of caring for minds, bodies, souls

‘Emotional care’ is ***Midwifery Gold!***

©Claire Kay

If you want to listen to Claire reading her poem, listen here:

https://www.all4maternity.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Midwifery-Gold.mp3

Thank you Claire.

You can read more about Claire’s work on her Birth Story Listeners website.

Category

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