

**CALLED TO THE
CHILDBIRTH PROFESSION:**

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR DOULAS,
BIRTH EDUCATORS
AND YOU**

Donyale Abe

Called to the Childbirth Profession: Opportunities for Doulas, Birth Educators, and You Copyright © 2012 by Donyale Abe

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In memory of my grandmother, Clara

A strong, talented woman

And for my girls, becoming women

I love you, heart, soul, and strength

Mommy ♥

CONTENTS

QUICK REFERENCE CHART TO PROFESSIONAL ROLES	III
BEGINNING THOUGHTS	VII
A NOTE	IX
THE CHILDBIRTH PROFESSIONAL	1
A CAREER?	5
THIS FIELD IS A GIFT	11
CAN I MAKE A LIVING?	13
WHERE DO I START?	15
I'VE BEEN IN THIS FIELD AWHILE, WHAT'S NEXT?	17
BLUEPRINT FOR CHILDBIRTH HEALTH CARE STUDIES	19
CHILDBIRTH PROFESSIONALS TO KNOW	31
CONCEPTS TO KNOW.....	45
SELECTING A TRAINING ORGANIZATION	51
A TO Z CHILDBIRTH PROFESSIONAL ROLES	55
CAREER JOURNEY	377
INTERNSHIPS AND GAINING EXPERIENCE.....	387
MENTORING AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE.....	395
STEPS TO FINDING EMPLOYMENT.....	399
BASIC STEPS TO START YOUR BUSINESS	405
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION	425
CALLING YOUNG WOMEN	435
NURSING AND THE CHILDBIRTH PROFESSION.....	439
MALE CHILDBIRTH PROFESSIONALS	441
NURTURE YOUR INTUITION.....	443
HONOR AND EMPOWER WOMEN.....	447
GROW!	449
HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU ARE CALLED?	451

CALLED TO THE CHILDBIRTH PROFESSION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 453
INDEX 455
THE AUTHOR 457

THE CHILDBIRTH PROFESSIONAL

Throughout this book, the career descriptor *Childbirth Professional* will be capitalized in most of its usage. The reason for capitalization is to stress the importance of the term, and also to place it into official use as a descriptor of the work done by many individuals. The professional roles described within this book will also be capitalized for emphasis.

Childbirth Professionals are defined as individuals that provide services and care to:

- Pregnant women and their families
- Families who are adopting children
- Families using fertility services
- Families that decide not to continue pregnancies
- Families who experience stillbirth, miscarriage, or unexpected loss
- Women who serve as surrogates and families that use surrogacy

Childbirth Professionals assist women through their reproductive lives, before puberty, during fertility and infertility, and beyond menopause. Childbirth Professionals don't usually provide medical care unless they are additionally trained as Midwives, nurses, or doctors.

Childbirth Professionals may take on many roles providing a range of services for families such as:

- Educators teaching childbirth and infant care classes

BLUEPRINT FOR CHILDBIRTH HEALTH CARE STUDIES

Individuals that are in the Childbirth Profession typically pursue training and certification for multiple roles. It is common for those in the field to be certified in these roles simultaneously. For example, an individual may be actively practicing as a Childbirth Educator, Breastfeeding Instructor, Birth Doula, Postpartum Doula, and a Perinatal Fitness Instructor. Many individuals have between three to six different certifications completed, and they have college degrees.

What is fabulous about this field is the culture of always learning, and there is much to learn. Those with multiple certifications are able to build a diverse skill bank to practice from, ensuring a thriving career and weathering challenging economic times.

However, the need to obtain multiple certifications can be costly, time consuming, and sometimes inefficient, as many of the programs cover the same core knowledge often even using the same textbooks.

I believe that a formal program of study should be offered that would lead to a college degree in Childbirth Health Care Studies. The program can be offered as either an associate's, bachelor's, or master's level degree.

This program would allow individuals to enter the Childbirth Profession upon graduation having obtained both a college degree and the practical professional skills usually only received through the certification process.

CHILDBIRTH PROFESSIONALS TO KNOW

This chapter provides summaries of Childbirth Professionals to know and learn about. They have contributed to the profession in a variety of ways. In them, you will find lessons to guide you along your personal career journey. Use the summaries you will read as a starting point to seek out more information regarding these professionals. You can read their books, watch their movies, Google their websites, and find them on Facebook.

These individuals provide historical background and allow us to understand the childbirth movement and how we arrived at modern day birth practices.

I find these professionals to be ordinary individuals who have done extraordinary things in their work to support pregnant women and their families. Some of them unintentionally became Childbirth Professionals through random circumstances, and some knew from a young age they had been called to this field. In their lives, I believe you will find parallels to your own lives. In their work, I know you will find inspiration.

They made a difference.

You too are called to make a difference.

The Childbirth Profession is in need of a new generation of individuals whose work inspires and brings change.

FERTILITY AWARENESS TEACHER ALSO NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING TEACHER

Fertility Awareness Teachers provide a holistic approach to birth control educating women about alternative methods that are noninvasive, do not use synthetic hormones, artificial devices, or require surgery. They help women become more knowledgeable about their bodies and their reproductive and sexual health.

Search words: fertility awareness teacher, fertility awareness educator, fertility awareness, alternative birth control class, natural family planning, natural family planning teacher training

GETTING STARTED

Read and learn about fertility awareness and natural family planning philosophy and techniques. If possible, start using some of the methods yourself. Contact fertility awareness and natural family planning organizations to learn about their training requirements. Take a training workshop or online class. Find a practitioner to serve as your mentor.



Career Journey ...

Natural Fertility Educator, Robyn Fausett

How did you get started as a Natural Fertility Educator?

I got started as an experienced Registered General Nurse, specialized in fertility and having worked in Assisted Conception Units in London and New Zealand, I am very aware of the high tech treatments

HENNA BELLY DESIGN ARTIST

Henna Belly Design Artists pamper pregnant women and assist them in celebrating a rite of passage, becoming a mother and giving birth to a child. The artists paint beautiful designs upon pregnant bellies, feet, or hands. The tradition of using henna, a paste made from the leaves of the henna plant *lawsonia inermis*, to paint beautiful designs and bring the wearer good luck dates back over 5,000 years.

Search words: henna belly artist, henna artist training, henna pregnant belly, henna artist business, henna certification workshop

GETTING STARTED

Use the internet to search and learn as much as you can about the technique, art, and business of henna design. Locate a Henna Belly Design Artist that can train you. Take a workshop about the art of henna. Be informed about the toxic chemicals that should not be used in henna paste.



Career Journey ...

Henna Belly Design Artist, Khadija Dawn Carryl

How did you get started as a Henna Belly Design Artist?

I am an artist at heart, and love drawing. Henna Body Art was my artistic outlet. I started doing prenatal belly art due to my love of pregnancy, and childbirth. It's a special time in a person's life, a time to adorn, embrace, and love yourself and your new baby to come.

Why do you do this work? What do you enjoy?

LACTIVIST

Lactivists support and promote breastfeeding. Many ways exist for individuals to build supportive communities, educate families, and implement health care practices that increase breastfeeding rates. Lactivists believe in and have a passion for breastfeeding.

Search words: lactivist, breastfeeding promotion, breastfeeding support, breastfeeding activist, breastfeeding activism, breastfeeding advocacy, nurse-in event

GETTING STARTED

Learn as much as you can about breastfeeding. Attend breastfeeding conferences, seminars, and workshops. Join organizations focused on breastfeeding advocacy. Be a cheerleader for a breastfeeding mom. Wear a t-shirt that supports breastfeeding or a supportive breastfeeding campaign button. Attend a “nurse-in” event in your community.

BOOKS

The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding, by La Leche League

How Weaning Happens, by Diane Bengson

Mothering Your Nursing Toddler, by Norma Bumgarner

MENTORING PROGRAM

Depending upon your Childbirth Professional role, it might be appropriate to create a mentoring program, and charge a fee for your time and expertise.

As a Childbirth Educator, I have assisted others to become certified by providing the following mentor program. For nominal costs, students would receive the following:

- Opportunity to observe a childbirth class series
- Assistance developing class curriculum
- Evaluation of teaching skills
- Administration of certification test

OUTLINE EXPECTATIONS

Before you begin to mentor someone, it is a good idea to have a written agreement about what is expected of each party. Ask your student what they would like to receive from the mentoring experience. This could be a simple email that mentions what day and time you will meet, and what subjects you will discuss. Also, include the length of time the mentoring process will last, perhaps two months. When expectations are clear, there is less chance for misunderstandings. Also, expectations allow you to see the growth and development of your student. For example, an expectation could be in three weeks the student will be ready to give a pregnancy massage.

THE CONNECTION

Not every mentoring relationship will be right, and that's okay. If once you begin mentoring someone, you feel it's not working out for

THE AUTHOR

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