



Book Review: Misconceptions: Truth, Lies and the Unexpected on the Journey to Motherhood

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Reviewed for AIMS by Marein Schmitthenner

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This book, by the renowned feminist, writer and lecturer on women's issues, gender and politics, Naomi Wolf, is a truly feminist birth book. Even though it was first published 18 years ago it has lost none of its relevance for birthing women and mothers. It is honest and authentic from the very first page, and Naomi Wolf truly shines a light on everything that is tricky about women's experiences of childbirth in our culture today.

It is a must-read for all mothers and mothers-to-be and should be passed on to dads as well! It is not an easy read - in the sense that it is brutally honest and describes so very clearly the difficulty and trauma of giving birth and becoming a mother in a system so desperately lacking in compassion and respect for women and their babies. Naomi very clearly dares to make the link between women having babies and losing their status in their relationships and society, and she dares to speak about the traps and outright lies in our birthing system. She eloquently and beautifully tells the story of her pregnancies and births, and her stories speak for themselves. They tell the truth about the lack of true information, touch the inhumanity and false positives of many tests during pregnancy; inform about electronic fetal monitoring, epidurals and much more. Naomi is also brutally honest about post partum depression: 'It is not the depressed new mother who is aberrant; it is her situation that is the aberration.'

Brace yourself, breathe deeply, read it, and start your mothering journey truly informed, in the best possible way. With an open mind and heart and open eyes, full of the wisdom of the mums who came before you. This book shows so well how our world changes on our way to becoming mothers, as well as our perception, our feelings, our viewpoint and our frailty. It shows how we might begin to be properly supported and get rid of the burden of guilt we so often feel.

Do not believe this book will put your mind at rest. This book will wake you up in every sense - informationally, emotionally, spiritually - to the sacredness and wonder of birth and of becoming a mother, and why we as a society need to honour and treasure this journey a lot more than we do.

Finally, I love how this book puts a finger on something else I have felt for years: That our society still assumes that we women cannot take the responsibility of giving birth and being mothers and being faced with life-changing decisions. Oh yes we can, this book shouts, and rightly so! Just give us a chance to do it our way.

Marein Schmitthenner is a birth/postnatal doula and AIMS volunteer.