




# The Postpartum Eco-Map

Build the support network you need to transition  
into motherhood with ease and grace



*The information in this workbook is not medical or psychological advice, it is for educational purposes only. The information should not be copied or distributed beyond individual use.*

# START WITH THESE INSTRUCTIONS

Eco-maps are visual tools that help us assess our connections with family, community and social networks, paying special attention to the quality of these relationships.

This eco-map workbook will help you think beyond the birth plan and map out what you need to transition from woman to mother:

## As you work through each section, you will

- Explore your current support network
- Identify what connections could play a helpful role in helping you transition into motherhood
- Discover what additional support you may need to have the postpartum experience you desire.

## By the end of the workbook, you will have clarity about

- How your ideal postpartum experience looks and feels
- Who you want around those first few days after birth (plus how to diplomatically communicate boundaries with well-intentioned family and friends)
- What local resources in your community can help with your postpartum transition (everything from emotional support to help with meals)
- What you (and your partner) need to honor your physical, psycho-emotional, social and spiritual health as you welcome your little one

If you plan on going through the workbook all in one sitting, give yourself at least 40 minutes of uninterrupted time, and remember to review the instructions below before getting started.

However, do not push yourself to go through it all in one sitting – that's what the accompanying email support is for! You will receive a short email each day for one week to support you through completing each step.

Have additional questions or comments? Email [support@ariannataboada.com](mailto:support@ariannataboada.com).

# PART 1: DEFINING YOUR IDEAL POSTPARTUM EXPERIENCE

Spend a few minutes brainstorming about the top 3 words you would use to describe how you want your postpartum experience to feel. You have likely been asked to do some similar visioning about your birth – think of this as similar, but entirely focused on what happens after birth.

Take a few minutes to free-write if that helps, or look through the list below and see what resonates.

Write your top 3 words here:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Connected. Beautiful. Loving. Abundant. Strong. Undisturbed.

Spacious. Free. Mighty. Grounded. Supported. Mellow. Quiet.

Thriving. Courage. Innovation. Creative. Bliss. Restful. Smooth.

Powerful. Thankful. Nourishment. Freedom. Growth. Tranquil.

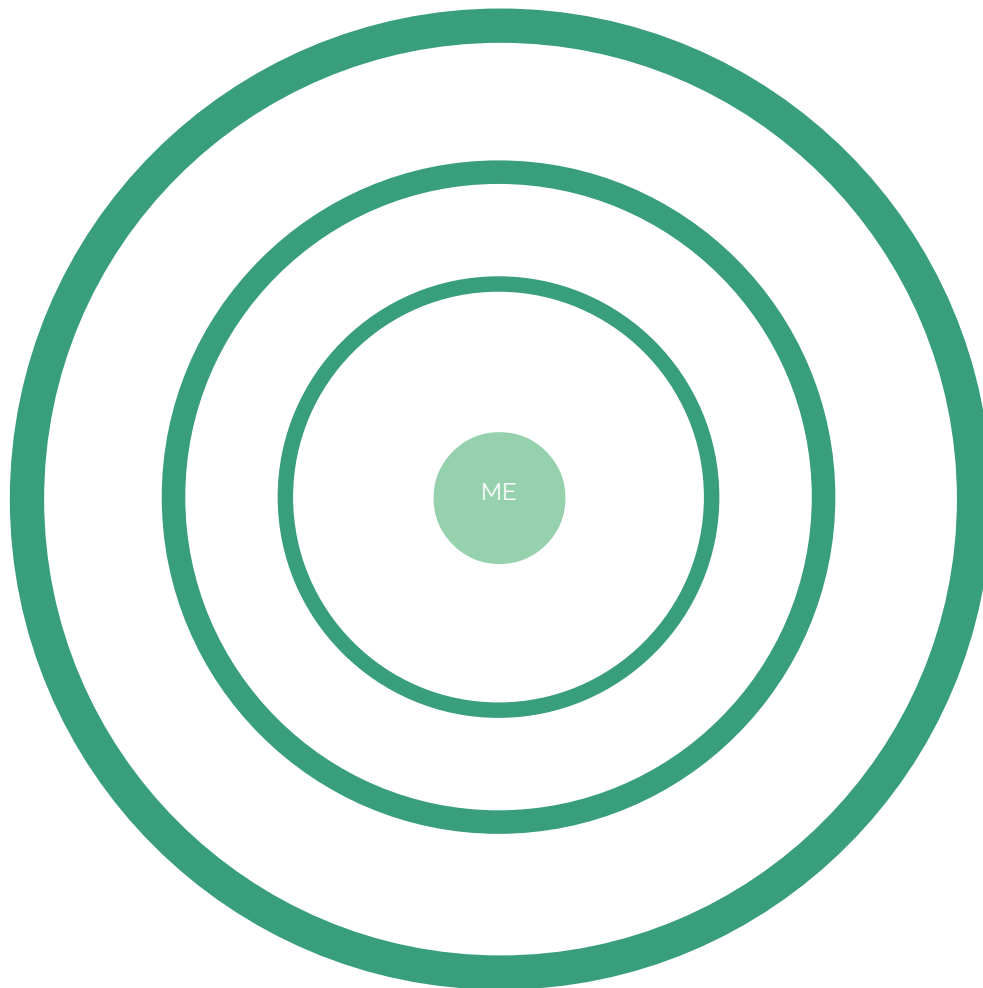
Transformation. Healthy. Generous. Abundant. Blissful. Soft.

Vibrant. Content. Peaceful. Worthy. Connected. Grounded. Safe.

Empowering. Calm. Steady. Aglow. Luxurious. Giddy. Harmonious.

## PART 2: MAPPING OUT YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK

Below is the eco-map diagram you will be completing using the instructions on the next few pages, as well as the emails that accompany this workbook. The follow up questions will help you explore how these individuals can support you in achieving your desired postpartum experience that you identified in Part 1.



\_\_\_\_\_ A solid line represents an important, strong or positive relationship or connection that you can trust in.

---//---//---//---//--- A dashed line with diagonal lines represents a particularly stressful relationship or connection that does not serve you well.

----- A dashed line represents a weak relationship or connection in need of strengthening.

To begin, place your name in the center circle in the center of the diagram.

NOTE: Remember to put a date on your eco-map. We are dynamic individuals and our relationships to others are always changing. Dating your eco-map helps assess the relationships or connections as they currently are, instead of how they have been in the past or how we wish they were. You can repeat the exercise after a few months to see how things have changed.

### **Family Support Network**

The space between the circle (you) and the first ring represents your family system.

Brainstorm who in your immediate family plays a role in your current self-care and who will be around during your postpartum period.

**Brainstorm family support here:**

Then draw circles with each person's name within that space of the first ring. Use the line that best represents your relationship with that person (see legend above) to connect them to the center of the diagram (you).

### **Community Support Network**

The space between family and the next ring out represents your community support system.

Brainstorm who in your community (i.e. friends you know through work, school, worship, gym, yoga, neighborhood associations etc.) plays a role in your current self-care and who you might like to have around during your postpartum period.

**Brainstorm community support here:**

Then draw circles with each person's name in the space between the first and second ring. Use the line that best represents your relationship with that person (see legend above) to connect them to the center of the diagram (you).

### **Professionals Support Network**

The space between community and the outer ring out represents the institutional or professional support systems in your life (doctors, therapists, doulas, chiropractors, etc.)

Brainstorm the specific professionals or institutional representatives that play a role in your current care and who you might like to have around during your postpartum period.

**Brainstorm professional support here:**

Then draw circles with each person's name in the space between the second and third ring. Use the line that best represents your relationship with that person (see legend above) to connect them to the center of the diagram (you).

# PART 3: ASSESSING YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK

## What does your eco-map tell you:

Once the Eco-map is complete, you have the information you need to assess the quality of your postpartum support network. Use the following questions to help you think about how you can reach out to the individuals in your network for support, as of now, in preparation for those first weeks with a newborn.

### 1. In what ways can the individuals with whom you have strong, positive, or important connections with support your postpartum?

Set a specific date and time to share your ideas with them and request their support. The more specific you can be about the ways they can support you, the better.

#### Fill in your ideas here:

#### Suggestions:

Having a friend organize a Meal Train for you

Having a family member come help with cooking and cleaning

Scheduling postpartum visits from your doula

## 2. What are ways in which you can make sure that your postpartum experience is not made difficult by those individuals on your eco-map who you identified as stressful connections or relationships?

Brainstorm what boundaries can you set and communicate, so that you are able to experience the type of postpartum period you identified in Page 1. This is a challenging step, but worth addressing before birth, so you do not have to exert energy on these difficult relationships postpartum.

**Fill in your ideas here:**

### **Suggestions:**

Making a crystal clear timeline for when you will allow visitors (i.e. 3 weeks after birth)

Sending out a list of ways people can help you besides “dropping by to say hi” (grocery shopping, walking the dog, etc)

If the person is someone with whom you will have to have a hard conversation with, consider practicing the conversation with your partner or a close friend to get comfortable with what you want to communicate and practice the conversation



### 3. Are there any gaps or missing links in your support system that you need to help you achieve your self care goals?

Maybe you notice that you have plenty of strong connections at the family and community level, but could use some professional support. Or you notice that you are heavily relying on visiting family members, and recruiting some community support might help you achieve your ideal postpartum network. Ideally, you want support at each level of the diagram, so that your network is as strong as possible.

**Fill in your ideas here:**

#### **Suggestions:**

Investigate how many postpartum visits you will have with your provider – four visits is the minimum recommended by the World Health Organization.

Make a list of community resources or postpartum support groups nearby you so you have them on-hand when needed.

If you find that there are limited local resources, look into online resources for postpartum support (hotlines, professionals, coaches)

## Congratulation! You have made it to the end of the Postpartum Eco-Map Workbook.

You have gone through quite a bit of work to make it to the end: examining family, community, and professional support, figuring out who your strongest allies in achieving your ideal postpartum experience may be, and addressing what boundaries you may need to prevent any unnecessary postpartum stress.

### What happens next?

Now that you have your planning done, it's implementation time. Take a few moments to review your workbook and use the space below to list out what follow up tasks need to be taken care of and how you can be help accountable to making those happens.

**These are my next steps:**

If you have questions, comments, or other feedback, please email [support@ariannataboada.com](mailto:support@ariannataboada.com). I would love to hear from you and wish you the very best on this journey.