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Shanti's "The recovery mama guide to your eating disorder recovery in pregnancy and postpartum" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Shanti McCabe, L. (2019). *The recovery mama guide to your eating disorder recovery in pregnancy and postpartum*. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. 208pp. \$20.95. ISBN 978178592821

With many books available on pregnancy and eating disorders, author and clinical psychologist Linda Shanti McCabe, a.k.a. “Recovery Mama”, presents a distinctive book which focuses on the unique combination of both topics. This guide is aimed at providing ways to handle recovery from an eating disorder, while recovering from pregnancy and postpartum. Based in California, McCabe has worked for over 20 years in the field of depression, eating disorders, anxiety and chemical dependency. She holds a doctorate in Clinical Psychology and is also certified in Postpartum International’s Perinatal Mood and Anxiety components of care.

This title is divided into ten chapters covering a wide spectrum of challenges that women contend with following inception, during pregnancy, and post pregnancy. The first four chapters focus on body image, post-partum depression, perinatal mood disorders, food, and sleep. Chapters five to seven focus on labor, delivery, postpartum, breastfeeding, and distress tolerance. The final three chapters discuss spirituality and recovery, motherhood, stay at home versus return to work, along with motherhood at an advanced maternal age. A list of resources is also included providing further information for those suffering from eating disorders, infertility, sexual trauma and infant loss, to name but a few.

For women who have struggled with an eating disorder, pregnancy can be a daunting prospect due to the physical and emotional changes taking place, combined with the fear that they may relapse from their recovery. This guide reminds women that there is no “one size fits all” when it comes to body type, pregnancy, and dealing with motherhood. The author advocates for self-compassion, self-acceptance, and self-care, while also demystifying the perfect Instagram/Pinterest mother ideology that is prevalent in today’s society which often prizes image over substance. Plenty of valuable information is provided on every facet of pregnancy and postpartum, including insights from other mothers, along with the author’s personal experiences as a therapist. A valuable aspect of this title is that the author does not shy away from highlighting topics that might be considered slightly taboo. This is evident with the inclusion of the final chapter which focuses on how to navigate motherhood at an advanced age, while dealing with the social stigma which is attached to becoming a mother over the age of 35.

Although this book is specifically aimed at pregnant women who have wrestled with eating disorders, it is also an excellent resource for any pregnant woman or those considering pregnancy. While being easy to read, and sometimes humorous, it features plenty of practical information and positive suggestions of how to cope with all the changes that are affecting body, mind, emotional stability, and personal identity, during one of the most significant events in a woman's life.

Reviewer

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