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Month One: *In the Beginning*

YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE A BABY! The news fills you with a rush of emotion—a sense of wonder, perhaps, or sheer exhilaration and joy. Mixed with these feelings, however, may be sentiments of doubt, insecurity, and fear. Pregnancy imbues most women with a range of emotion. The sooner you get in touch with *all* your feelings, the smoother your pregnancy will be.

In our experience, nothing gives a child a more solid foundation in life than the experience of being loved and wanted in the womb. Ideally, all children should be conceived in tenderness and carried to term with adoration. Life does not always work this way. But even if your pregnancy has come as a surprise, even if it threatens to disrupt your life, your unborn child needs your love as much as you need air to breathe and food to eat. Because the unborn child requires affection and attention from both parents, you and your partner should emphasize positive feelings whenever you can.

To help you remain calm and tune in to your deepest feelings, you can listen to audio tapes featuring classical music. Research-

ers have pointed out that baroque music—including compositions by Bach, Corelli, Handel, Mozart, and Vivaldi—moves to the tempo of sixty to seventy beats per minute, a rate very close to that of the resting human heart. Impressed by this fact, Bulgarian psychiatrist Georgi Lozanov played music by Mozart for his students, and it increased their powers of concentration. Other researchers have shown that Baroque music stimulates alpha waves, the brain waves associated with alert concentration and a sense of calm. Finally, British audiology expert Michele Clements has discovered that most unborn children shift to a state of alert relaxation when they are exposed to the Baroque compositions of Mozart and Vivaldi. On the other hand, when they hear long orchestral pieces by Bach, Brahms, and Beethoven, they demonstrate anxiety in the form of increased kicking and accelerated heart rate. (The same negative reaction is also triggered by hard rock music and the unpleasant sound of a pneumatic drill.)

Given these findings, the first Womb Harmonics exercise, “Viva Vivaldi,” provides a musical program geared to strengthen your capacity to visualize and relax. At the same time, the music we recommend (recorded on audio tapes by you and your spouse or a friend) will calm your developing child, possibly stimulating brain cells required for concentration and learning later in life.

To help you unwind and tune in to your innermost thoughts, “Time Out for Mom” (Exercise 2), teaches you the technique of *alert progressive relaxation*, in which your body enters a sleeplike state while your mind remains alert. As you learn to enter and sustain this potent state of consciousness, you will rid yourself of bottled-up anxiety and become progressively more receptive to positive images and thoughts.

Exercise 3, “Daily Diary,” shows you how to give vent to your feelings by writing in a journal. You can use your journal to express your private thoughts and honestly confront your anxieties and fears.

You can also use your journal to help you practice the “Affirmations” of Exercise 4. Affirmations help you replace negative thought-patterns with a positive, empowering, hopeful out-

look. As you practice the affirmation technique, you may discover self-defeating, negative thought-patterns that prevent you from achieving your full potential. After you recognize these negative thoughts and discover what may be causing them, you can use our affirmation exercise to help you embrace a healthier, happier point of view.

Finally, the fifth exercise, "Dream Work," will help you explore your dreams, revealing your hidden thoughts and feelings. Though you may not remember your dreams, research indicates that you have them about four or five times a night. Virtually all psychologists believe that they provide a road map to your unconscious mind. Sigmund Freud viewed dreams as an outlet for repressed sexual and aggressive drives, but modern evidence suggests they serve a positive, healing function as well. By remembering, understanding—and to some degree modulating—your dreams during pregnancy, you can work to resolve many of your internal and interpersonal conflicts.

Whether you are recalling your dreams or writing in your journal, think of Month One of the Womb Harmonics System as a journey into yourself. If practiced faithfully, the five exercises that follow can help you marshal your resources and personal power. They can also bring to light hidden concerns and worries; by resolving these outstanding issues, you will help yourself become the best parent you can be.

The psychological techniques you will be mastering during your first month of pregnancy are much like a pianist's scales. Just as a pianist must practice her scales over and over if she wants to maintain her virtuoso skills, so too, you must learn to relax and get in touch with your feelings and those of your partner if you are to move through pregnancy with aplomb and ease. Once you master these basic techniques, we recommend that you practice them for a few minutes every day of your pregnancy.

We also suggest you introduce Month One techniques in a systematic and orderly way. Make sure you feel comfortable with the music and alert progressive relaxation exercises before you initiate the daily journal-writing activity. When you feel confident

about the journal-writing portion of your day, expand that activity to include affirmations and dream work.

Ideally, you should wait three to four days after working with one technique before you progress to the next. Remember that the techniques introduced in Month One will become integral parts of your daily life. If you try to bite off too much at once, you may feel overwhelmed. In fact, if you do not have a chance to integrate all five Month One exercises into your life during your first month of pregnancy, don't worry—just work them into your schedule during the month that follows. If you take the program slowly, you will be rewarded with a sense of ease and confidence that should carry you, your partner, and your baby through the next nine months.

An essential guide to learning how to communicate with and stimulate your baby inside before the journey to the outside world.

Dr. Thomas Verny, a pioneer in the field of pre- and perinatal medicine, and science writer Pamela Weintraub explore the many ways in which parents can nurture a relationship with their child before birth. By following this nine-month program, parents discover what every baby perceives at each stage of development and then practice exercises to explore each stage accordingly. Also included are exercises for pregnant women to help them stay calm, happy, and free from anxiety during this exciting but stressful time.

In *Nurturing the Unborn Child*, exercises for soothing, stimulating, and communicating with your baby include:

- Listening to music for soothing both mother and baby
- Relaxation exercises to lessen the mother's anxiety
- Affirmations to help the mother's confidence, self-esteem, and sense of sensuality during the pregnancy
- Dream analysis and dream induction for better understanding of thoughts and feelings about the pregnancy and birth
- Guided imagery for invigorating the mother's body and boosting energy levels
- Singing, storytelling, and dancing with the baby
- Playing with and massaging the baby to help him or her gain strength and vitality
- Partner dialogues for strengthening the bond between mother, father, and the unborn baby.

Thomas Verny, M.D., is a psychiatrist in private practice and founder of the Pre- and Perinatal Psychology Association of North America.

Pamela Weintraub is editor-at-large for *Omni* magazine and the author of eight previous books, including a series on heightened consciousness and sensitivity.



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