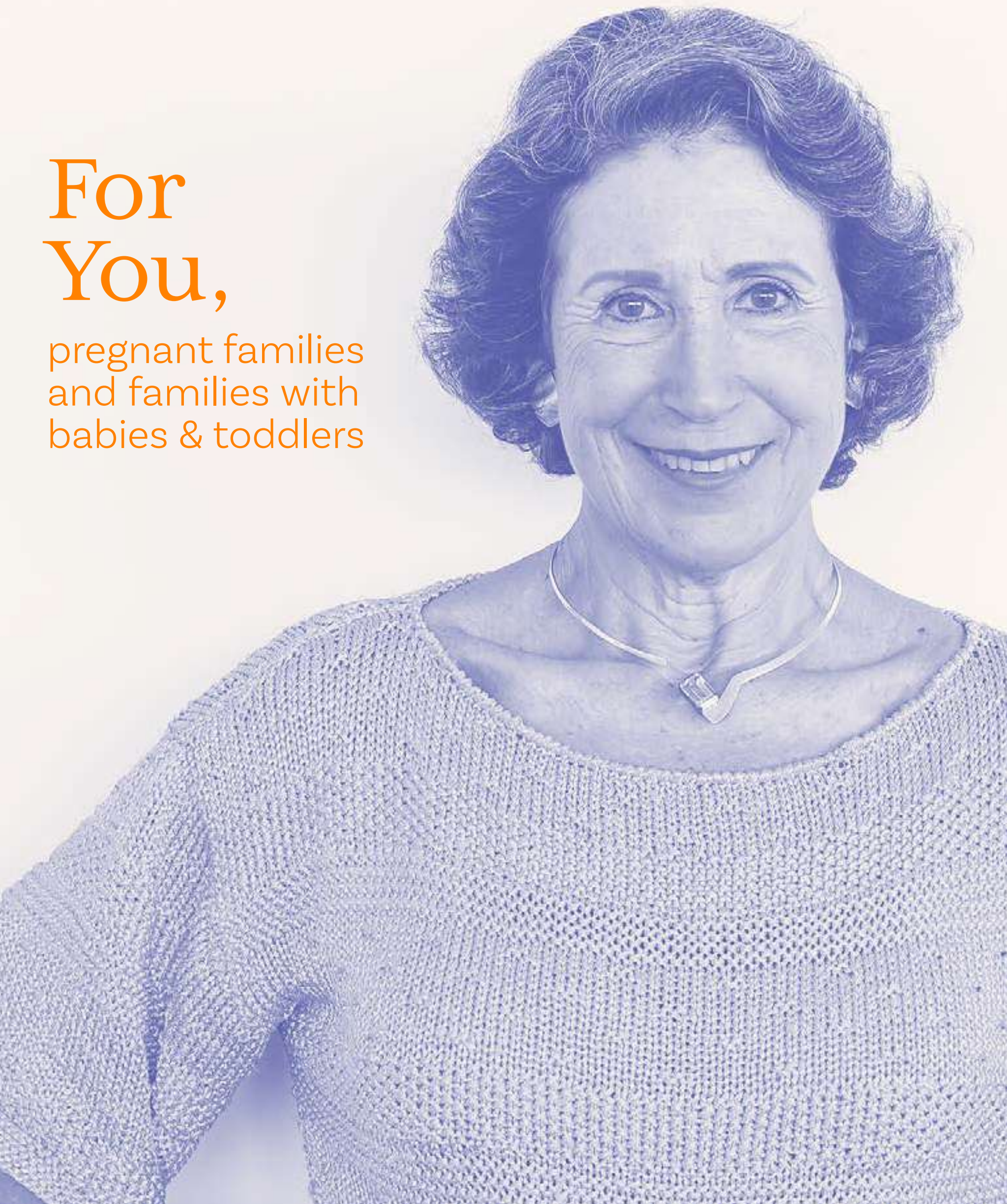


Maria Tereza Maldonado

For
You,

pregnant families
and families with
babies & toddlers



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& toddlers

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What I want to tell you

I wrote, “For you” motivated by the affection I feel for this period of our lives. I have included topics that have not been addressed in other books I have written about pregnancy and the first years of life. The chapters have been organized independently. They can be read in any order.

I feel as if I am personally talking to you about what has most called my attention in these decades of study and work.

Among other things, I am a mother, grandmother, psychologist, writer, musician, and lecturer.

My Master’s thesis in Psychology at PUC-RIO gave birth to my first book, Psychology of Pregnancy, published in 1976, two years after Mariana’s birth and three years before Cristiano’s birth. Balancing maternity and professional

life was a big challenge!

The discoveries about what happens in the early stages of life, especially from conception until age two, are fascinating. It was not possible to see what happened inside the mother's womb for centuries. Now, technological advances make it possible to observe with increasing clarity how the miracle of life unfolds. Studies are evolving so rapidly that I have already done four updates on the Psychology of Pregnancy!

These studies show that the emotional bond in the first thousand days (counted from conception to two years) builds a solid foundation of physical and mental health, protecting against many adverse factors we encounter in the course of life.

How does the family get pregnant?

Pregnancy happens in the woman's body, but the family gets pregnant. I like the term "pregnant couple" because of the enormous emotional repercussions for both the woman and the man. But when talking about the "pregnant family," I pay attention to what happens when we emotionally gestate grandchildren, siblings, nephews, and so on.

The emotional bond can be built in all families, not only in the traditional model. In families with a father and mother within the home, there is sometimes mistreatment, violence, and lack of love. Therefore, "structured homes" and "broken homes" exist in all types of family organizations.

Children can develop well (or not) in any way of being a family: with married, single, divorced, widowed parents, in new unions, with biological and/or adopted children, in homoaffective relationships (...)

The skills of the fetus and the newborn

Fetuses and babies are sensitive and active beings. At birth, they are already prepared to interact with people and learn from them (and teach them too). Non-invasive technologies have been increasingly used to study the skills of fetuses in the womb, even in the case of multiple pregnancies. So how do twins interact in the same “uterine home”? Maternal communication is highly influential, both in fetal life and after birth, including through the “silent voice” (communication by thought). The mother’s voice and noises inside her body most influence the memory of the fetus. For example, hearing the mother’s heartbeat calms the newborn. There is an infinity of subtle and invisible exchanges between the pregnant woman and the fetus in this intrauterine universe. Some are already measurable, as shown by several studies developed in the last decades. What is no longer mysterious has become (...)

Expectations, anxiety, fear

“If I get anxious, will I harm the baby?” This is one of the most frequent questions that pregnant women ask, based on information about the influence of stress on the fetal brain.

Pregnancy brings diverse emotional states and profound changes in the woman and in other people in the family. And this involves a mix of feelings, including anxiety.

In the course of life, we inevitably face stressful situations. But we can develop resources that allow us to return to the point of equilibrium. The most significant danger is chronic stress (...)



For you, pregnant families and families with babies & toddlers

What is included in your birth plan?

It is a document recommended by the Brazilian Ministry of Health, in which the pregnant woman declares how she would like to be assisted, her expectations regarding the birth, which procedures she agrees with and which she does not accept.

This preference plan can be made little by little during pregnancy, together with the partner. Recognizing that, depending on the circumstances, these choices may not be possible, and some things need to be readjusted.

That is why we talk about the possible birth, which will not always happen according to the items in the birth plan.

The recommendation to make a birth plan reflects the growing trend to recognize that you, the woman, are the protagonist (...)

Giving birth: the big transition

The idea of “labor pain” can take on new meanings, such as the idea of waves to be faced. For example, the American scientist Jon Kabat-Zinn, one of the precursors of Mindfulness, said that, in life, we cannot stop the waves, but we can learn to surf them. This is a beautiful image that can be used for labor contractions!

Mental preparation, through psychological prenatal care, meditation resources, positive mental visualization, anti-stress breathing, and anxiety management (...)

Guilt feelings “stick” within us

Where does this magnet of guilt and demand that clings to many mothers come from? First, it’s good to know that you, the mother, are not the only influence on the formation of your children!

This feeling comes from expectations and demands (from ourselves and others) to “do everything right. But making mistakes is part of the complex process of learning to be a mother and a father. And it is not easy to manage the time between our multiple roles.

Joy, happiness, worry, anger, sadness: everything is part of this deep love(...)

Depression in pregnancy and postpartum

Depression has multiple causes and can arise in the face of life's challenges. What stands out is the feeling of failure and inadequacy. The lack of energy and difficulty perceiving positive aspects of life and relationships aggravates the feeling of being incapable. Postpartum depression (PPD) has some characteristics that differ from depression at other times. Therefore, it is essential to make these distinctions to know when to seek specialized care.

“If I stay like this, in a low mood, will I harm my baby?” This is a common question, revealing the concern that complex emotional states will be “passed on” to the child during pregnancy or after birth. We have ups and downs: children need lovingly human mothers, not emotionally stable mothers all the time.

Knowing that the baby's father can also have depression is essential. The most common symptoms are (...)

The baby is born! And the “golden hour”?

The golden hour refers to the sensitive period immediately after birth, when the skin-to-skin contact between the newborn and the mother is of great importance for weaving the bond.

And some go beyond the “golden hour,” to consider that the forty days after birth are also “golden,” in the sense that it is a particular period for weaving the bond between family and baby.

It is worth leaving the fast pace of tasks and commitments to immerse oneself in one’s sensitivity and dedicate oneself to the connection with the newborn (...)

I need to go back to work. Now what?

Many women experience agonizing dilemmas and a lot of guilt about investing in their careers x the time to dedicate to their children.

A big problem is the rate of layoffs after maternity leave, many of them without just cause. Getting a new job is a challenge for women with young children!

For many women, thinking “outside the box” to create new ways of working as an entrepreneur is the chosen (or necessary, after losing their job) path. After the experience of motherhood, they try to weave (...)

Caring for the baby includes self-care

Concepts like parental burnout and exhaustion refer to extreme fatigue that compromises parents physically and emotionally and their relationships with their children. It primarily affects mothers, and this has worsened at the time of the pandemic.

Taking care of our well-being is a gift we give to the babies and little children we care for. Taking care of yourself is not selfishness. It is being aware that you are not unlimited.

In practice, there are days when we just can't set aside more time for self-care. That's why I like the concept of micro-self-care. These are short-term actions(...)

“My baby cries too much!”

The baby’s and young children’s crying in the pre-verbal stage is the primary way they communicate discomfort and needs that must be met.

Little by little, it is possible to “decipher” the language of the baby’s cry, to perceive different nuances to communicate hunger, thirst, and the desire to be held. In addition, crying is a means of venting the tensions of the day, as usually happens with late afternoon cries in the first months.

As verbalization expands and the little child can express himself with words (...)

How to deal with anger?

In the little child, anger arises in a raw state, almost always reacting to frustrated desires. With patience and persistence, you can show that it is possible to express anger without hurting others. In other words, learn to take care of anger so it does not take care of us.

However, many adults fail to complete this process: they are impulsive and act in violent ways towards children, partners, friends, and co-workers, especially when they are contradicted.

Many parents ask: What to do instead of yelling and spanking? First, calm down! Notice and talk about the feelings (...)

Resilience in the world from the pandemic

Raising children in the 21st century is a great challenge. The pandemic has already brought massive changes and will bring even bigger ones. There is always a lot to learn in the complex process of raising children.

Cooperation, solidarity, and strengthening of individual, family, and community resilience are key factors to live as well as possible in this challenging world from the pandemic.

Resilience is built throughout life. It is the ability to overcome the risk factors(...)

So, did you like it?

I have selected short excerpts from some chapters to give you an idea of the content of this book. It is aimed at pregnant families and families with young children and at professionals who have chosen to work with people going through this fascinating stage in the life cycle of families.

You can purchase the book, which is in digital format only.

Happy reading, and a big hug!

About the author

Maria Tereza Maldonado is Mariana and Cristiano’s mother and Lucas’s grandmother. M.A. in Psychology from PUC-RIO, where she taught in the Psychology Department. She has published over 40 books on family relationships, personal development, and building well-being, with more than two million copies sold.



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