

Local mom pens motherhood "survival guide"



By Brock Weir

There are hundreds of books out there for the care and feeding of baby, but how many take the time to cover the proper care and feeding of mom as well?

It is an area that blogger Maria Lianos-Carbone knows all too well. A mom of two teen boys, she recognized that while that first year of motherhood was a "really rewarding and joyful time" in her life, it was a very challenging time as well.

There was the lack of sleep, the energy it takes to raise a child, nursing, and the perennially thorny issue of how to get the body back after baby.

Lianos-Carbone tackles these issues head-on "and with humour" in her new book OH BABY! A Mom's Self-Care Survival Guide for the First Year.

Published by Raincoast Books, the book officially launches this Saturday at Chapters Newmarket.

"A lot of books out there are geared more towards taking care of baby, the week by week in baby's development, how much baby should be eating, how many wet diapers a baby should have, and all those important things," she says. "I also found there are lots of humour-based books on motherhood, a lot of great, funny authors out there who share their personal stories, but I really wanted to get into the more serious topics that aren't really covered."

Among those more serious topics is post-partum depression. While she concedes there are books out there that tackle that topic, there is also "mom guilt," the how your relationship with your partner changes when you become a mom, the different roles, how to work together, waves of emotion, and finding one's self again "what she describes as "Depleted Mom Syndrome."

"I was feeling exhausted, rundown, not caring for myself at all, not being able to lose any of the baby weight, eating poorly, lack of sleep and all of those things you hear about," she recalls. "I had just had enough and reached a breaking point where I said, 'I've got to make some changes.' That meant either asking for help, joining a gym, or doing something that would give me a little bit more time and peace to focus on what I need because I gave so much to my kids."

Writing was, in many ways, the perfect outlet.

Lianos-Carbone comes from a broadcast journalism background and once her sons were born she says she knew she wanted to get back in the game. Yet, at the same time, she did not want to commute. Looking for something to do at home, she joined the blogosphere with an eye of self-publishing.

In the beginning, her blog was geared primarily towards parenting and motherhood, gradually morphing into more of a lifestyle outlet.

"The personal stories of struggles," says Lianos-Carbone of what immediately resonated with her online audience. "That became the driving force of the book as well: how a woman's life changes so much after having kids, finding the time to put herself first at times, the importance of self-care, and getting back to who she was before having kids. A lot of women lose a piece of themselves when they have kids because they are so focused on raising a great human being that all their focus and energy goes to their kids.

This is about trying to find it and get that back.

[During the writing process] I received quotes from other local moms. At the end of some of the chapters there are some quotes where they offer advice, tips, or their own story about some of these various topics. They were so willing to offer their own stories and share their advice. I was keeping things hush-hush, so when I did tell my readers the book was coming out, there was the sense of 'I wish I had that when I first had my baby because I knew everything about the baby but I didn't realise how much change I would go through as a woman, as a mother. It would have helped to have been a little more prepared for all the emotional or mental changes that we go through.'

Lianos-Carbone brings to the marketplace a book strengthened by personal and shared experiences, but when asked what piece of advice she would go back and give herself with the benefit of hindsight, her answer is simple: 'Don't be afraid to ask for help.' 'I think moms put so much pressure on themselves to show the world they can manage on their own, that we naturally become mothers, which we don't all necessarily become,' she says. 'To be a little bit gentler on ourselves and not put that much pressure on ourselves to fit that perception of what a mother should be. Coming from a Greek background, and my husband is Italian, mothers are put up on a pedestal where they can take care of a household, take care of a baby, have perfect kids, and there is pressure. You see celebrities that are having babies and getting that perfect post-partum body back after six weeks. That's not the norm. We have this high standard to look up to and, for the normal person, it is just not attainable.

'If I can help prepare another mother to feel more empowered, maybe just feel like she has a better handle on motherhood before baby arrives, then I will be thrilled. I think there are pretty good solutions and tips that can help certain issues that do arise, that we don't necessarily think about before having a kid.'

OH BABY! is published by Raincoast books and will be launched at Newmarket's Chapters location (17440 Yonge Street) this Saturday, March 24 at 11 p.m. Maria's blog, is [amotherworld.com](#).