

Fiona McArthur

Some Answers From Fiona McArthur on THE DON'T PANIC GUIDE TO BIRTH

For more information feel free to contact at fiona@fionamcarthur.com, she loves to talk about writing and birth anytime.



When you began writing romance novels did you think you'd progress to a non-fiction book on birth?

I'm a midwife. Birth and the amazing strength in women is my passion and a large part of who I am. In fact it took me ten years to be accepted for publication in romance and I didn't sell a novel until I wrote about midwifery. There's twenty one out there now.

With Don't Panic, the birth guide is part of the growth I began with my first birth in my first book. I love talking to women about birth, about ways to listen to their own bodies and ideas on how to use that strength. It's all about simple truths, basic principles like being off the bed while managing strong contractions and having support people there who are tuned into you. My romance novels taught me how to connect with women in writing so this is a natural progression. The guide's not a text book it's a conversation. Sometimes it's a hug.

You've worked a lot with adolescents as well haven't you? Is this book aimed at teenage mothers?

Not specifically but perhaps in honour of them. It doesn't matter how old or young you are when you birth. The mechanisms are the same. In fact it's the time I've spent with amazing young mums who aimed me towards this rather than the other way. The book is the written version of the short antenatal classes I've given over the last ten years with young mums and with older couples.

So who does it suit the most?

When you think about it – when a woman recognises that first strong labour pain - the expression on her face isn't one that changes with age. Or in my case as a mother of five, even with the number

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of pregnancies. A last minute brush up on what's going to happen and reminders on strategies seems like a darn good idea. It could be used by a woman and her support person as they start labour, the night before a medical induction, or for those days when early labour is fiddling and not getting on with the job. It's there for a crash course for a support person who's suddenly become more nervous, for a mum whose daughter is pregnant and asking her questions, or a sister needed as support, and even for new grandmothers because a heck of a lot has changed in the way women are encouraged to have birth now. Some women don't have a close female support and I'd like to think they could gain some confidence and reassurance from my little book.

It's a very small book.

Yes. Great isn't it. Handbag size, small price, and available to pick up on their way through a check out or bookshop. It works for travelling or as a last minute gift for a pregnant friend. I love that it's accessible for everyone.

What's your family think about you writing a birth guide.

My husband is my biggest fan. He's wonderful and very proud of my writing. We have five sons and the boys all think it's pretty cool mum has published books.

What about your workmates?

The people I've been catching babies with for twenty five years are very excited. I've had great feedback not just from the midwives but one of the doctors at work has given fabulous suggestions and it's been great to have his input.

So is there more Don't Panic Books to come?

The great news is Penguin is looking at updating this book fairly regularly so feedback from readers is something I'm really looking forward to. And then there's others ideas in the series. A Don't Panic Caesarean Guide because there's things you can choose to enhance an operative birth for mum and for baby, and a Don't Panic Breastfeeding Guide because the reality is new mums can get very nervous about breastfeeding too. A Don't Panic For Dad's is also calling me. I'm working on it but they're early stages.