



Chicken Soup for the New Mother's Soul

Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, and Patty Aubery

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About the Book

Chicken Soup for the New Mother's Soul is a collection of stories from the hearts of mothers, old and new, about the most amazing and profound experience in a woman's life - the birth of her first child. It's a time of fear, excitement and exhilaration when new mothers experience unique love, unforgettable moments and the unbreakable bond between mother and child. In *Chicken Soup for the New Mother's Soul* you can share in these heartwarming tales of motherhood.

Jack Canfield

Jack Canfield is the cocreator and editor of the Chicken Soup for the Soul series, which *Time* magazine has called “the publishing phenomenon of the decade.” The series now has 105 titles with over 100 million copies in print in forty-one languages. Jack is also the coauthor of eight other bestselling books including *The Success Principles: How to Get from Where You Are to Where You Want to Be*, *Dare to Win*, *The Aladdin Factor*, *You've Got to Read This Book*, and *The Power of Focus: How to Hit Your Business and Personal and Financial Targets with Absolute Certainty*.

Jack has recently developed a telephone coaching program and an online coaching program based on his most recent book *The Success Principles*. He also offers a seven-day Breakthrough to Success seminar every summer, which attracts 400 people from fifteen countries around the world.

Jack has conducted intensive personal and professional development seminars on the principles of success for over 900,000 people in twenty-one countries around the world. He has spoken to hundreds of thousands of others at numerous conferences and conventions and has been seen by millions of viewers on national television shows such as *The Today Show*, *Fox and Friends*, *Inside Edition*, *Hard Copy*, CNN’s *Talk Back Live*, *20/20*, *Eye to Eye*, the *NBC Nightly News*, and the *CBS Evening News*.

Jack is the recipient of many awards and honors, including three honorary doctorates and a Guinness World Records Certificate for having seven books from the Chicken Soup

for the Soul series appearing on the *New York Times* bestseller list on May 24, 1998.

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Mark Victor Hansen

In the area of human potential, no one is more respected than Mark Victor Hansen. For more than thirty years, Mark has focused solely on helping people from all walks of life reshape their personal vision of what's possible. His powerful messages of possibility, opportunity, and action have created powerful change in thousands of organizations and millions of individuals worldwide.

He is a sought-after keynote speaker, bestselling author, and marketing maven. Mark's credentials include a lifetime of entrepreneurial success and an extensive academic background. He is a prolific writer with many bestselling books, such as *The One Minute Millionaire*, *Cracking the Millionaire Code*, *How to Make the Rest of Your Life the Best of Your Life*, *The Power of Focus*, *The Aladdin Factor*, and *Dare to Win*, in addition to the Chicken Soup for the Soul series. Mark has made a profound influence through his library of audios, videos, and articles in the areas of big thinking, sales achievement, wealth building, publishing success, and personal and professional development.

Mark is the founder of the MEGA Seminar Series. MEGA Book Marketing University and Building Your MEGA Speaking Empire are annual conferences where Mark coaches and teaches new and aspiring authors, speakers, and experts on building lucrative publishing and speaking careers. Other MEGA events include MEGA Info-Marketing and My MEGA Life.

As a philanthropist and humanitarian, Mark works tirelessly for organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, American Red Cross, March of Dimes, Childhelp USA, and many others. He is the recipient of numerous awards that honor his entrepreneurial spirit, philanthropic heart, and business acumen. He is a lifetime member of the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans, an organization that honored Mark with the prestigious Horatio Alger Award for his extraordinary life achievements.

Mark Victor Hansen is an enthusiastic crusader of what's possible and is driven to make the world a better place.

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Patty Aubery

As the president of Chicken Soup for the Soul Enterprises and a *#1 New York Times* bestselling coauthor, Patty Aubery knows what it's like to juggle work, family, and social obligations—along with the responsibility of developing and marketing the more than 80 million Chicken Soup books and licensed goods worldwide.

She knows because she's been with Jack Canfield's organization since the early days—before Chicken Soup took the country by storm. Jack was still telling these heartwarming stories then, in his training programs, workshops, and keynote presentations, and it was Patty who directed the labor of love that went into compiling and editing the original 101 Chicken Soup stories. Later, she supported the daunting marketing effort and steadfast optimism required to bring it to millions of readers worldwide.

Today, Patty is the mother of two active boys—J.T. and Chandler—exemplifying that special combination of commitment, organization, and life balance all working women want to have. She's been known to finish at the gym by 6:00 AM, guest-host a radio show at 6:30, catch a flight by 9:00 to close a deal—and be back in time for soccer with the kids. But perhaps the most notable accolade for this special working woman is the admiration and love her friends, family, staff, and peers hold for her.

Of her part in the Chicken Soup family, Patty says, "I'm always encouraged, amazed, and humbled by the

storytellers I meet when working on any Chicken Soup book, but by far the most poignant have been those stories of women in the working world, overcoming incredible odds and—in the face of all challenges—excelling as only women could do."

Patty is also the coauthor of several other bestselling titles: *Chicken Soup for the Christian Soul*, *Christian Family Soul*, and *Christian Woman's Soul*, *Chicken Soup for the Expectant Mother's Soul*, *Chicken Soup for the Sister's Soul*, *Chicken Soup for the Sister's Soul 2*, and *Chicken Soup for the Surviving Soul*.

She is married to a successful international entrepreneur, Jeff Aubery, and together with J.T. and Chandler, they make their home in Santa Barbara, California. Patty can be reached at:

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CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE NEW MOTHER'S SOUL

**Touching Stories About the
Miracles of Motherhood**

Jack Canfield
Mark Victor Hansen
Patty Aubery

 **Vermilion**
LONDON

Life is a flame that is always burning itself out, but it catches fire again every time a child is born.

George Bernard Shaw

Introduction

For most new moms, joining the ranks of motherhood is, without a doubt, a life-changing experience.

Whether she brings her child into this world naturally or adopts her precious bundle of joy, every new mom experiences hope, hope that her child will grow to be the best person possible, to be thoughtful and kind, fun-loving and happy.

But becoming a new mom can be scary, too, as uncertainties can often bubble through at every level. *Is my baby crying too much, pooping too little, or not eating enough?* Suffice it to say, most new moms survive these fleeting moments of questioning their abilities when they witness their child thriving and growing faster than ever imagined!

Without a doubt, becoming a new mom is the most challenging and worthwhile endeavor a woman will ever face. Referring back to Shaw's quote, it is up to a new mom to fan the sparks of life and to love and nurture her child into that amazing adult-to-be.

So go ahead—light that match of new motherhood and revel in its warmth.

Share with Us

We would love to hear your reactions to the stories in this book. Please let us know what your favorite stories were and how they affected you.

We also invite you to send us stories you would like to see published in future editions of Chicken Soup for the Soul. Please send submissions to: www.chickensoup.com.

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We hope you enjoy reading this book as much as we enjoyed compiling, editing, and writing it.

1

WE ARE? YOU'RE SURE?

Making the decision to have a child is momentous. It is to decide forever to have your heart go walking around outside your body.

Elizabeth Stone

The Footprint

“OH,” I MOANED as I readjusted the pillows to accommodate my ever-growing belly. *Hadn’t I just done that very thing ten minutes ago?* I sighed and rubbed my enlarged tummy. *Oh, how I missed sleeping on my stomach.*

The girl in the apartment above me was active and noisy again. It was difficult to sleep through the night during this last trimester, but with her and her visitors talking and listening to music above my head each night, it was nearly impossible.

I pulled my slumping body back up against the headboard.

My husband was at work. His hours were horrendous. I knew he’d much rather be here, but that was beyond his control. So that left me solo again. Being awake and alone this late at night, and at the end of my pregnancy, was a bad combination. Worries always seem the greatest in the dark.

What about this child inside me? Is it boy or a girl? I was pretty sure it was a girl, even though we had chosen not to officially find out from the ultrasound. *Will our baby be healthy? Will we be the parents she or he needs? And what of the birth process?* There was no guarantee that I could have this baby without a Cesarean. The unknown is always scary and intimidating.

With little prior knowledge of babies other than babysitting many years ago, I forced myself to read every pregnancy and parenting book and magazine for guidance through this crazy, exciting, and scary ride to becoming a

mother. Everything was progressing just as all of those books said it should.

Oh, sure, there were unusual things—nosebleeds first thing every morning and crackers on the bedside table to nibble on before getting up each day so that I could rise without nausea or dizziness. And the cravings? All I ever wanted were vanilla milkshakes, and I needed them frequently. *Oh, I could sure use one of those now.*

I rolled my head toward the nightstand to see the time. The bedside clock read 2:00 AM.

If this baby stuck to pattern, it was time for the kicking show. Every four hours the child would have a grand time playing, usually at the expense of my ribs or pelvis.

I rubbed my belly again. I found myself doing that a lot lately. "Well, little one, how are you doin' in there?"

In response, I felt a kick to my right rib. "Oh, hello." The show had begun and right on time too.

Several punches to my lower abdomen followed. "Goodness, honey. You sure are getting strong."

The baby continued the gymnastics routine for several minutes. I'd push the little body back to center whenever it flopped to one side or the other.

"Oh, little one," I sighed. "I hope everything will be okay."

Suddenly all movement stopped. A tiny hard spot had formed into a funny contortion just below my left rib cage. I placed my right hand gently onto the unusual lump.

The outline was unmistakable. It was a tiny, perfect foot. I could feel the entire thing from the heel to all five toes. A new peace washed over me. Although the child could not speak, I knew in that instant that my baby was going to be okay. For with that smallest of gestures, she had placed the first of many footprints upon my soul.

Paula F. Blevins



"I wonder what causes that?"

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A Little Pregnant?

I CAN'T HEAR the expression: "That's like being a little pregnant" anymore without wondering. Describing something that can't be halfway—that either is or isn't—should be easy, black or white. But, there are gray areas. I spent a week inside one of them last winter.

After months of trying to conceive, finally seeing something other than that forlorn single pink line on our home pregnancy test was breathtaking. It was the secret password, the big show, the pregnancy Olympics! My husband Steve and I kissed, danced around the bathroom, and stopped to look again. But as we squinted down, it slowly dawned on us that it was not, actually, two lines but a line and a half. *A half?* We stared.

"Maybe it needs more time," Steve offered up. "Maybe we should shake it."

"It's not a Polaroid," I countered. But we re-read the directions. We waited for three more minutes, then five. Then eyeballed it off and on for an hour. Nothing. Just a line and a half.

This was uncharted territory. This was not mentioned in the fertility books that I had been reading obsessively. We waited a few days and tested again—with the same result.

"I'm sure it's just a bad batch of tests," I said this time.

"Maybe you should see the doctor," Steve said. I was already on the phone.

Two days later, as I listened on the phone to the nurse sharing my test results, I heard some other things not covered in my books: "Something wrong with the levels ..."

"Doesn't look the way it should ..." "Too low to know for sure."

The only thing I could get out in reply was, "But, what about the second line?"

She continued, "Well, technically we're not detecting a high enough hormone level to tell if you're pregnant for sure, but there is an elevated amount, which means that you may be. We'll know more in a week when you come back to be retested."

A week? Am I or am I not? After hanging up, I felt the weight of derailed expectations swelling up inside: *But what about my breasts having gone up a cup size? I'm sleeping sixteen hours a day. I go to the bathroom four times a night. What else could it be?* And I felt different. I was just like those moms I had made fun of for saying that they knew right away. But now that it was me, I could tell something was up. And I was supposed to sit back and wait a week for my body to decide if it meant it?

While I waited for my body to decide, my mind and heart raced back over the past year. My husband and I knew we wanted children, and we knew we weren't in our twenties anymore. We started our baby quest innocently enough that summer by deciding to have a baby. Simple! We stopped using birth control and announced our intentions. This initial confidence that we'd become pregnant on demand was loosely based on my seventh grade sex-ed class, when we were warned that using fewer than three forms of contraceptives would cause us to become pregnant immediately upon having sex (or possibly the next time we thought about having sex). This proved to be the first of several misunderstandings I unquestioningly carried over from my youth.

Another was that my egg was simply hanging around midmonth waiting to be fertilized. When in reality it was like any modern woman who had things to do and a schedule to keep. If anyone wanted to see her, she'd be in

her office on the third Tuesday of the month through Thursday midmorning, but really the best time for her was 10:17 AM on Wednesday unless something better came up. And if you did get in to see her, there were no guarantees. This lack of availability came as a surprise—a surprise about which no one had sat me down earlier and said, “You know, your chances of conceiving each month after the age of thirty-five are only 30 percent. Maybe you want to get going with this.”

Already thirty-five, I knew every minute counted. Flash forward a few months to our new bedroom decor: basal thermometers strewn about, charts, graphs, and fertility books—dog-eared and piled high. The joy of unprotected sex had given way to phone calls saying, “Meet me at home by two o’clock today or my egg is out of here.” My husband dubbed this closely monitored period of our lives as the CNN-worthy “Egg Watch 2005.” Still nothing. *Were we doing it wrong?*

I started to channel conversations from wannabe grandmothers to their childless daughters everywhere: you know your eggs aren’t getting any younger! It became a rallying cry echoed by subway strangers and medical personnel alike when they learned of my “advanced maternal age.” While this waiting game could have been spun as an amusing diversion in our twenties (Sex! A lot of sex! Without condoms!), it now had turned into a period of self-recrimination: *What if we waited too long? What if I had waited too long? What if I can’t have kids after years of trying not to have kids? What if I stood too close to that microwave back in 1995?* It belatedly began to dawn on me that I might not be in control of this biological process.

As if to confirm my self-doubt, here I was a “little” pregnant. It threw cold water on my carefully researched plans. I hadn’t counted on starting out like this. There was nothing to do. *What was going on in there anyway? Had a little life taken root inside or not?* It was a mystery. In my

week of hormone limbo, I stopped reading about other women's experiences and began listening to my own body. I talked to it. I whispered my hopes and spoke of our family's future plans. I looked down to find my hands rubbing my belly at unexpected moments. I replayed an almost unconscious mantra of *We're so happy to have you here. We love you and want you so much.* I tried to come to an understanding with my body that if it would support this new life inside, I would pretty much give it whatever it wanted from now on. I visualized those tiny cells growing and thriving. I caught a glimpse of the simultaneous joy and utter terror of waiting nine months without knowing or being able to control what was happening in my own body. I got ready to make room for both.

Back at the doctor's office an impossibly long week later (on my thirty-sixth birthday), I surrendered more blood and waited for the news.

"Congratulations! Let's schedule you for your first prenatal visit next month." I patted my stomach and let out the long breath I had been holding. I was ready.

Stephanie Wolff Mirmina

I'm Not Telling

WHEN MY HUSBAND and I found out that we were expecting our first child, it took us less than a day to share our news with everyone we knew. I was six weeks along, and by the time my third trimester rolled around, it seemed as if the pregnancy had lasted forever. The novelty of talking about my cravings or our nursery decorations and listening to unsolicited advice and childbirth horror stories had worn off, and I just wanted to forget about being pregnant for a while. It didn't work out that way, as everywhere I went, people looked at me in shock and said, "Haven't you had that baby yet?"

The second time around, I wanted things to be different. Sure, I was excited, but I didn't want to share it right away. I was only five weeks along and I didn't want another endless pregnancy. Plus, our four-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Stephanie, wasn't the most patient person in the world, so I didn't want to endure nine months of agony as she waited—and waited—for her new sibling.

Wanting Stephanie to be the first person to know about the baby, my husband and I decided not to tell anyone for three months. This amount of time sounded good since, if my history was any indication, I would start showing soon after and wouldn't be able to keep the secret much longer, and it would still give us plenty of time to prepare for the baby. Keeping our news from everyone was a necessity. We live in the small town where I grew up, and I knew that telling just one person in the strictest confidence would result in three other people approaching me at the grocery

store the next day, leaning over to my daughter and announcing, "I hear you're going to be a big sister!" We didn't want to take that chance.

It wasn't easy to keep my pregnancy a secret. Whenever I had an appointment with my obstetrician (okay, I did tell one person; well, technically, he told me), I rehearsed what I would say if I knew anyone in the waiting room. And it wasn't any better at home. Although I had escaped morning sickness during my first pregnancy, this time I wasn't so lucky. I spent hours each morning—and afternoon and night—leaning over the toilet, vomiting as quietly as I could while calling out to Stephanie that I was fine. When I wasn't throwing up, I was in bed feeling as if I had gone without sleep for about a week after having been run over by a truck. There were times when I longed to call someone, anyone, and say, "I'm pregnant and I'm sick. Please take Stephanie for the day."

But I never did, because no matter how awful I felt, I loved having my little secret. Let's face it, as a mom, I didn't have many. My pregnancy and my baby hadn't yet become "public property." Nobody was telling me what to eat or warning me not to raise my arms over my head or saying, "You're going to have your hands full with two," or "Are you hoping for a boy this time?" I knew from experience that there was plenty of time for all that.

Right now, the only two people who were aware of the miracle were my husband, Jack, and I. We waited until Stephanie went to bed to share our thoughts, dreams, and excitement about our new baby—and my complaints about the pregnancy. We rubbed my belly and whispered to our baby. We schemed and planned and guarded our secret carefully, and we laughed about our "close calls," when our secret was almost discovered. All this stealth made me feel closer to my husband than I had since we had become parents.

Finally, we reached the three-month mark. After all the secrecy, I couldn't wait to share the news with Stephanie. "We have something to tell you," Jack and I said as we sat down with her. "We're going to have a new baby in our family."

Her eyes lit up. "A baby? I'm going to be a big sister?" She threw her arms around both of us. "I always wanted a baby!" she said. Then after we talked for a few minutes, she asked us to go into the kitchen because she had some things to do.

As Jack and I left the room, we heard Stephanie pushing the speed-dial button. "Granny, guess what!" she said. "We're going to have a new baby in our family! Isn't that exciting! I can't talk long because I have to call everyone I know and tell them!"

"Looks like our secret's out," Jack and I laughed as we listened to our daughter spread her happy news.

Carol Sjostrom Miller

Expectant-ness

WHAT I REMEMBER most about the months before my daughter's arrival was the "expectant-ness" with which I lived my life.

There was the good expectant-ness, associated with the knowledge that we were about to adopt a beautiful baby girl who would forever alter the lives of my husband, my two sons, and myself. This was the one I cherished. Then, there was the not-so-good expectant-ness, associated with the knowledge that my mother, diagnosed with terminal cancer and clinging to her final few months on this earth, would probably not live to meet her new granddaughter—a granddaughter for whom she had hoped and dreamed for years. This was the one I dreaded.

Unbelievably, it was the mingling of these two kinds of expectant-ness that helped me understand the true meaning of "expecting." I had received the call from my oldest sister, Linda, earlier that week, telling me that our mother was in the hospital again. "It didn't look good," she whispered. "Maybe you should come now, over the Thanksgiving holiday, to see her."

I was torn. I had already flown home to Indiana from Texas several times that year to see her, and my sons—ages five and seven—were looking forward to a chance to stay home this holiday. My husband, Brian, was also weary of traveling, but he understood the predicament in which I found myself. "Go home," he said that night. "The boys and I will be just fine here. You need to be with your mom."