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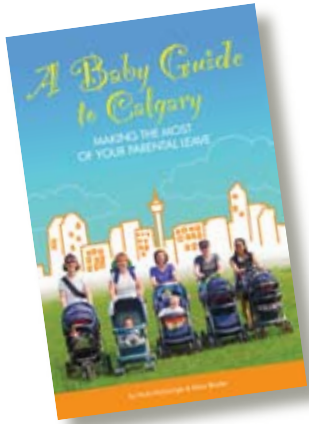
A QUEST FOR WELLBEING

Dr. Natasha Iyer's path and challenges to find her true calling.

JUST DO IT!

LET'S GET ORGANIZED

CONQUER CLUTTER



A Baby Guide to calgary Making the most of your parental leave.

WHILE PREGNANT WITH MY FIRST CHILD, there was a clear path of what to do, what not to do, what to eat, and comprehensive guides everywhere you looked. The "From Here to Maternity" book from Calgary Health Region combined with "What to Expect when you're expecting" were consistent in their information and I was confident that I was on the right path. At thirty weeks pregnancy, I ended up in the hospital with pre-term labour and asked the nurse if she could bring me the "From here to Maternity Book" because I hadn't finished the last part and didn't quite know how to give birth. She chuckled but did bring me the book. Thankfully, my baby held on and he was delivered 9 weeks later by c-section.

After returning from the hospital, there was a world of conflicting information. While there was general information available on what to expect in the first year, there was no central book on resources, services and activities in Calgary. Where do I get my baby immunized? How far in advance do I have to book the appointment? How do I meet other Moms?

GETTING A SHOWER SEEMED LIKE A DAUNTING FEAT, preparing meals was really thawing previously made casseroles, and the laundry piled and piled. It seemed that keeping baby fed, clothed, changed and entertained was taking most of my time. I was too sleep deprived, suffering from post partum depression and overwhelmed to even find out what resources were available for new Moms.

My son Declan was too fussy to get any time for me to research the internet, so information I could find came to me mostly by word of mouth. It turns out that there are lots of resources in Calgary.

In my case, breastfeeding was not going very well and finally someone mentioned that there was a breastfeeding clinic. They were a fabulous help and finally Declan was less fussy and the breastfeeding less painful. We were both sleeping a lot better. So during Declan's trip to the public health unit for immunizations, I started scouring the billboards for information

on what was available in Calgary. I came home with scraps of paper and started collecting them in a binder. Surely there was one place to find all this information? But there wasn't.

Elena and I met during their Calgary Health Region course entitled Birth and Babies. We kept in touch and started going for walks together on a weekly basis. Once when the weather was bad, I sent three invitations to visit Bernard Callebaut and eleven moms and their babies showed up! Our walks grew in popularity and had up to fourteen moms getting together weekly. It was a great way to meet others and get back in shape. I researched the walks to make sure they were stroller friendly, had free parking, coffee along the way and benches to breastfeed. We certainly turned some heads when seven pairs of strollers marched by.

All the moms, and one dad, came from very different backgrounds but they were all focused on providing their children with the best start in life while keeping their own minds and bodies active. I started to ruminate on my idea of a comprehensive guide for new parents in Calgary.

Elena and I chatted one day about swimming courses for newborns. She mentioned that she had research all the programs even down to the temperature of the pools. Ah ha! Perhaps a partner for the project! Elena and I got together regularly to move the project forward. Statistics indicated that there was a huge increase in the number of children born in Calgary and parents were tending to take fuller advantage of their parental leave. We decided to test the outline of our book with a focus group and offered a free lunch for moms. Our husbands looked after the little ones so that we could give our attention to the group. It was well attended! This feedback was the basis of the book's structure and format. We had assumed that people wanted an on-line service, however the feedback indicated that they don't have time to surf the net and want a book they can keep in the diaper bag or in the glove compartment for handy reference.

THE NEXT PART WAS TO RESEARCH, research and do more research. We divided the work by interest and corresponded on a

weekly basis to keep prompting each other to continue. Any spare 15 minutes were occupied with research. Our husbands would get the kids together and go to a local playhouse on the weekends so that we could concentrate on the book. For over a year draft copies went back and forth. We used the internet and phone research during our kid's nap times. Myself and Declan attended most courses and classes offered in Calgary and Elena went to most sites in Calgary. Together we put in about 2,000 hours into the research. Our fellow mom, Dr. Wendy Street-Wadey offered to write a section on dental issues as she was inundated with questions during most of the walks.

During the writing we realized that we had very different writing styles as well as parenting styles. We were frustrated that the book sounded like two authors, but of course it was written by two authors. Finally we decided to provide it to our editor. Our first draft back had more redline than black! Humiliating? Absolutely! We went through each and every correction and to our dismay, our editor was right!

We pulled together the focus group again and provided them a draft of the book and asked for feedback. thirteen parents (Moms and Dads) and a few doctors provided us written comments and filled out a questionnaire. What fabulous feedback! Definitely difficult to take, brutal at times, but fabulous none the less. As a result we deleted some chapters and added others.

FRIENDS AND FAMILY WERE KEY IN HELPING OUT with the project. We bartered our skills, services and made meals in exchange for favours. We received help with editing, graphic arts, typesetting, printing consultation and advice from anyone who would read a copy. My sisters did an amazing job, Corinna, is an accomplished graphic artist who designed the cover and completed the typesetting. My sister Juanita, who lives in Beijing, China, completed the artwork on her Christmas holidays. My brother-in-law did the webpage.

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Economics indicated that incremental print cost was low, but our fixed costs were large. This would only work if we targeted more than 1,000 sales a year. Was this achievable? How would we know ahead of time? Our discussions with stores like Chapters woke us to the large margins that big box stores take. Our economics couldn't support this. We would need to target smaller stores, and on-line sales to make this work. During this discussion we found that Elena and I had very different levels of appetite for risk. I continued on with the business and provided Elena compensation for her work. This reduced the strain on our friendship and Elena continues to be involved in the promotion of the book.

A crash course on publicity was offered by my neighbour in exchange for help with her wedding planning. My husband and I learned about working with the media, a product launch and press kits. We chose the day for product launch for just before Mother's Day in May 2006 at Monkeyshines Children's Bookstore and our print run was ready just two weeks before.

We focused on distributors that were excited about the product and were focused on our exact target market; soon to be moms or new moms. The book is targeted to first time parents to help them ease their transition into parenthood in Calgary. We currently have ten stores distributing our book and we are continuing to expand our network. Some stores have indicated that they have received increased traffic as a result of the book. People have been calling and putting it on hold.

Instead of selling 1,500 books over the first two years, we have already sold 1,300 in just six months. Another 1,500 have just been delivered and there is nothing better than looking at that pile of books to provide motivation to keep up working on the marketing and getting the product into the hands of our target customer.

I wish that I had this book when I first entered parenthood, it would have definitely eased the transition for me. Remember, enjoy this time with your baby, it is so special and yet so fleeting. **MP**

TIPS ON DEVELOPING YOUR DREAM.

1. Build an economic model at the beginning of your project to determine if it is viable.
2. Test and research to make sure it is something that is needed and there are few if any competing products
3. Ask anyone who can provide you some help to do so.
4. Be prepared to get some brutal feedback, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger and makes for a stronger product.
5. Take a calculated risk and put your passion behind it.

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