

## Creative Fertility: An Interview With Jeannine Parvati Baker

Written by Michael Mendizza, Jeannine Parvati Baker

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There are many wisdom traditions that understand the importance of privacy, and of treating a baby, mother, and father like a holy trinity, allowing the parents to celebrate together by focusing on the needs of their baby as they continually honor each other for making this ordinary miracle possible. At birth, we do not distract ourselves with a machine that goes “ping,” or with a gloved hand to examine our progress. Instead we ask our babies, “How do you want to be born?” Then we listen and arrange ourselves to meet their needs and expectations. After birth comes the same question again. “How do you want to be in these arms?” “How do I nurse you?” We’re here to serve our babies. This is the only post-partum they will ever have. They are the priority.

Jeannine Parvati Baker explored these ideas throughout her life, and discussed them with Michael Mendizza before her passing in 2005.



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**Mendizza:** What is the greatest challenge for women today?

**Baker:** The greatest challenge for women today is to be who we really are. Women have a lot of expectations given to them by our families of origin and by our culture. And yet we are continually evolving to be all of the wisdom of the past, and move beyond to who we can be. This new potential is something we're inventing now. Historically, it is changing dramatically. Herstorically, it is the same. We all come from the same place. And yet, in this culture, we confuse ourselves. The Earth needs women. We need to come out of our hi-tech offices or own little kitchens and share some of the feminine qualities we embody so all can regain balance. In this millennium we're able to extend beyond this safe circumference, or sometimes unsafe boundary, of our own selves, and connect with others. It's through our children that we carry forth this wisdom.

Many of us have been confused, thinking we had to cultivate an external career. When I got real quiet and listened inside, the Earth told me what it wants. My career is to focus on my babies, my children, and make that the priority. Having done that I now have some credibility when I share with others how ecstatic it is to surrender to being a full woman, which in my experience means expressing all aspects of my fertility.

**Mendizza:** I've never heard anyone speak about fertility the way you do. The subject doesn't seem to exist in our culture. Why?

**Baker:** It's not only the vested interest of corporate America—that multibillion-dollar industry controlling women's fertility or the abortion industry. It's not only out there, it's something inside of us that is blocked. I experience some fear when I approach that awesome responsibility of knowing that my loving one man might result in a new life that will transform me, that will turn

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me inside out. That will show me, literally, the stuff I am made of, beyond how huge my own ego is. And show me how powerful my desires are. That is scary. But there is a primal power that comes to women when we consciously conceive babies. We are unprepared for that. My calling is to work with young women so that they understand that this is such a celebration, to become fertile and to know ourselves. This is the world's best-kept secret, the ecstatic journey to self-knowing. I am so grateful that I am a woman and I can co-create life, carry those fruits of my loving beneath my heart for nine months. It's allowed me to look at somebody who has real needs and serve them.

**Mendizza:** Can young women hear what you are saying?

**Baker:** Yes, they can. I love to go to conferences where we invite the young women with their mothers to attend. We have so much fun as we're exploring our stories around fertility. These young women have so much wisdom inside. To have the question placed to them: Do you want to have babies? When do you imagine you'll have babies? What are your future families going to look like? Many have never been asked these questions. Instead, fertility is looked at as some offensive habit to breed that must be controlled. Parents are more concerned with preventing a pregnancy than allowing their daughters to experience the fullest ecstasy that's possible when we first get to know ourselves as women.

Fertility is creative energy. Sometimes we're fertile, sometimes we're not. Sometimes we are creative and sometimes we're not. Sometimes we choose it to be in the form of a baby to show the world what our love looks like, and other times it may come out in acts of kindness, service. It may be a creative project of love in the form of art. There are multiple ways that women can express their creative fertility. I approach young women with an invitation: Let's turn the angle of the mind to see that fertility is actually the way back home to our authentic nature.

**Mendizza:** We are more mechanical, more mechanistic than ever before, less tied to our own biology and our ancestors. And that's reflected in our values, our consciousness, and how we view fertility and babies.

**Baker:** Perhaps it's because my father is an electrical engineer and I grew up soldering units together and I loved machines. And yet, if it ain't broke, why fix it? Conceiving a baby without technocratic assistance is possible for most women on the planet. If given a choice, of course,

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let's do that. We do have natural, conscious conceptions, which make a natural birth far more likely. If mothers hook into the birth machine, however, that's imprinted on that baby being born, feeling that it needs machines to survive. Then we get machines taking care of other machines and there's no end to it. Voluntary simplicity helps break this cycle of false dependency. In my kitchen I don't have many machines. We do not have a dishwasher. I don't have beaters. We use our bodies for this and we sweep our home because that helps us all stay fit. Our babies are living barbells that build strong bodies. I carry my babies with me all the time. It might appear that I'm a small woman, but I'm really strong. That comes from carrying my babies beneath my heart when they are womb-side, and then once they come Earth-side, I carry my babies on my body.

When we live from our authentic nature I think we are not only doing the best we can for future generations, we're also healing our ancestors simultaneously. For me, having children is that ecstasy. It's an amplification of pleasure that dissolves this illusion of being a skin-encapsulated ego. It brings the unity of consciousness and fertile sexuality. The extension of that, of course, is the orgasm of birth. Then breastfeeding a baby, as well, continues that deep pleasuring, so that my needs and my baby's needs are simultaneously being fulfilled. Then, down the road, I realize I'm also healing my mother and my father, who did not receive this. Because I'm nurturing their children, their grandchildren. And now I'm a grandmother myself. That's, for me, the living proof that enlightenment gets brighter and brighter in these babies' eyes. To have my own daughter, who has brought me so much joy in my life, amplify that when she gave birth to give me a grandchild who now is, as most grandmothers will also say, is the light of my life.

**Mendizza:** You give voice to many things that are not spoken.

**Baker:** I give voice to things most people are unwilling to speak about because we get judged by others.

**Mendizza:** You raise a very important question. Why do people have babies?

**Baker:** Because there is just too much love for two people, so they need to share it with another. This is why we have babies, to share an abundance of love. This is how we show the world what our love looks like, in the form of babies that are conceived, birthed, raised, and loved.

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**Mendizza:** Many parents have babies to serve their own needs.

**Baker:** I, too, am needy, Michael. It's part of being a human. I need to drink water. I need to eat and need to keep warm in the winter. Having needs is part of being human.

**Mendizza:** Conscious or not, you're there to serve the baby, and that was the reason why you have babies, to serve that baby.

**Baker:** My children are my spiritual practice. As you can tell, I have a huge ego, a keen sense of my individuation, purpose, and importance. Having a baby is like play for me, because I lose myself in the relationship. Suddenly here is a baby who's crying, communicating to me a real need. There is no doubt in my mind who comes first at that moment. There is no such thing as privacy once you have a baby. Especially a homebirth, where there has been no separation and I have my baby with me on my body. There is no such thing as privacy even as they begin to crawl and start exploring the household. I would go to the bathroom to be by myself, and here comes my toddler following me. They have no concept of separation, because from a baby's point of view separation is an illusion. In reality it doesn't exist. That's why babies are my teachers. Look in a baby's eye—any baby—and what do you receive back? Pure love, acceptance, and no judgments.

**Mendizza:** Your greatest joy actually comes from meeting the baby's needs. And the reason that you have the baby is to nurture that baby.

**Baker:** Let me be clear on this point. The reason I had this baby was for me. This baby is my spiritual practice. This baby is what draws joy out of my heart, but it didn't at first. Like almost all new moms, it was a shock to realize how selfish I am, how I thought I needed to get eight hours of sleep. Even before my baby was born, I was up during the middle of the night going to the bathroom. I'm up and down during the night in preparation for attending and awakening with the baby, to sleep with my babies and breastfeeding my babies.

So, I began to ask, where did this idea come from that I need eight hours of solid sleep? And then it came to me. This is a cultural idea. Now I have the great benefit of remembering my

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dreams. I'm awakened so often I would go into the R.E.M. sleep state many, many, many times each night and have many dreams, which is a key source of the Shamanic work that I do. And this is the gift that my babies gave to me. What I thought was a burden was actually a gift. And it was so simple. When my babies take naps, I slip asleep too. Because the most important thing for me was to stay in resonance with my children.

And now I see that things are getting better and better for children because there are more mothers like myself who realize that having babies fulfills our destinies as women. It's woven into the softest tissues of ourselves to be mothers, and that is an ecstatic experience. It's not a job or an obligation. It's an invitation to experience tremendous joy and happiness.

Yet in today's culture there is an illusion that you need a lot of help from experts who know more about your own body than you do. Which, again, brings us to the importance of fertility awareness, of helping young women and young men understand the cycles of creative energy that go through us and how to align our personal desires with that creative energy in ways that are best for all our relations. Because sexuality is a powerful creative force, and it does matter how we use it. It does have important consequences.

**Mendizza:** What is male fertility awareness and how does it blend with what you're talking about?

**Baker:** This is a question I continually ask my partner. It is a question for the men's community to answer. I have carried male babies and raised sons. I'm inviting men to come up with your stories. What I celebrate is the "gender-ocity" I see emerging between men and women, willing to tell the truth to one another. And out of that dialogue will come what is men's fertility.

**Mendizza:** Women carry the babies. They have a somatic experience of this unity, and men are estranged from that. In yesterday's workshop you said a hundred times that the baby and the mom are one. It's much more difficult for men to feel that. What is "real" for the mother is abstract for the father. There were two fathers-to-be in the room and they want to know how to connect with that oneness because this is their baby too. They feel as deeply as the women do. Women are biologically closer to the awareness you are describing.

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**Baker:** Every cell of that baby's body has the father's genetics. He resonates with his baby. How to get in touch with that resonance is massage, touching. It's so important. The communication that comes from his heart through his hands to the mama's belly—he can literally get in touch with his baby, feel his baby. I've watched at birth when fathers do that and when the baby's fresh from the source and the father says that first word, the baby turns to look at the father. He knows that voice. He's listened to that voice before he was born, before he was even conceived. He has chosen that one man out of all the possible fathers in the world to come to.

**Mendizza:** Intimacy is a channel of communication. It is through the woman that the man gains access to this other way of being and knowing. The woman carries the baby and discovers this somatically. Through the intimacy of the male-female relationship, this awareness is awakened in men. It is not readily available in the male culture. There's a great deal that men can learn from women.

**Baker:** And there's a great deal that I learn from men. It's mutual. There's a lot of honoring of the feminine and talk about how important it is to bring this back to the planet. For me, this is like the pendulum swinging. I want to see both happen at once. We need to honor both genders in this healing dialogue. Otherwise we're just swingers. Narcissistic to parasitic, back and forth.

**Mendizza:** Pregnancy and giving birth changes you. It opens you up to entirely new perceptions and experiences. A woman being intimate in a very deep way with her man can open up very similar sympathetic perceptions in him.

**Baker:** Just this morning our 16-year-old son, Quinn, woke up and came into bed, and the conversation came to a question: "Can you imagine what it feels like to grow a baby, and gain 20 to 40 pounds in nine months? And then within a year, if you're breastfeeding, all of that dissolve away?" Both of these guys, Quinn and his father, are pretty thin men, and I wanted to expand their understanding and perhaps compassion for women who go through this immense physiological, psychological, and spiritual change. And they couldn't imagine. It just blew their minds.

The other side blows my mind. The immense amount of surrender and trust that men cultivate when they conceive a baby. I'm in control. It's in my body. I can eat whatever I want to and it's

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going to affect your child. What surrender and trust you, brothers, have to give us to allow us that literal ecstasy of gestating your child. It's quite in balance. I learned my surrender, how to be my truth, through trusting nature—my inner nature—directly. Yet for a man to trust someone outside of himself, that takes an immense amount of surrender.



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