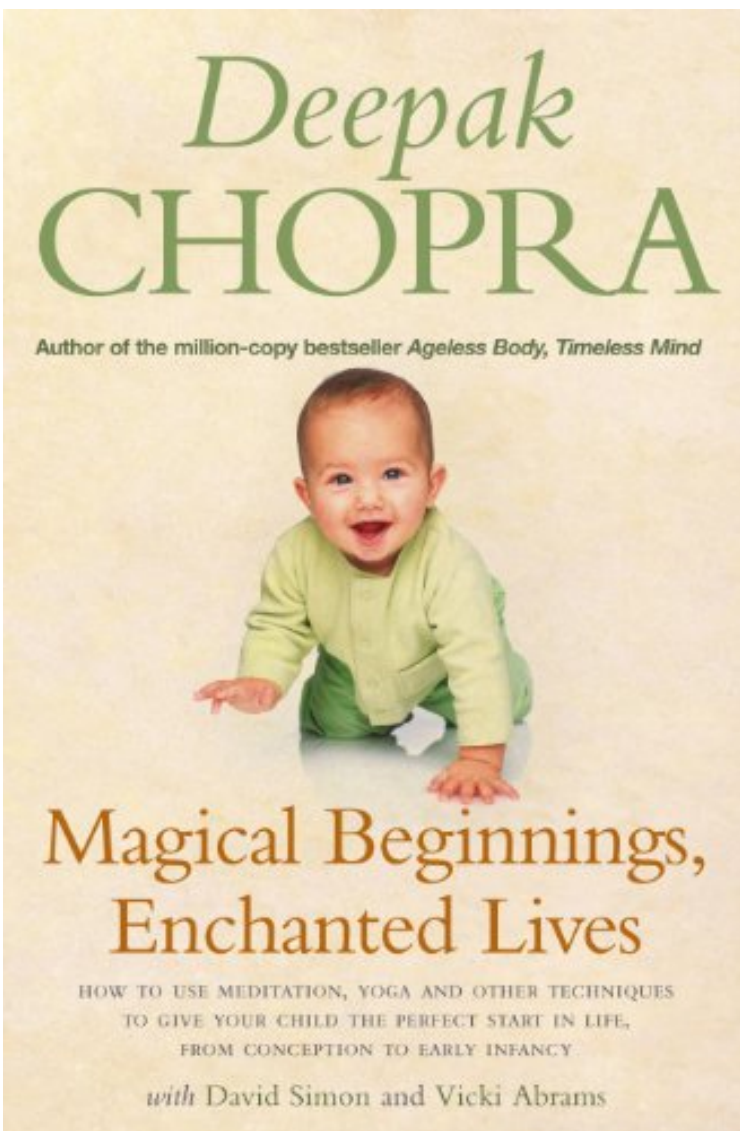


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Magical Beginnings, Enchanted Lives: How to use meditation, yoga and other techniques to give your child the perfect start in life, from conception to early



Par Deepak Chopra
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteur Using exercises and techniques developed over ten years of teaching a popular series of workshops at the Chopra Center for Well Being, Dr Deepak Chopra shows readers how to see parenthood

from a very different perspective. *Magical Beginnings, Enchanted Lives* uses meditation, yoga, dietary guidelines, natural remedies, visualization, journaling and drawing to enhance the experience of pregnancy and birth for both parents and baby. Also included are practical strategies to prepare the parents for labour and delivery, caring for the newborn child and enjoying parenthood. By applying established techniques from Deepak Chopra's internationally famous mind/body approach to the experience of pregnancy, childbirth and early infancy, *Magical Beginnings, Enchanted Lives* adds previously unexplored dimensions of physical health, joy and insight to elevate one of life's primal experiences to the realm of the miraculous.

Chapter 1: Creating a Baby

The body of a woman who is to conceive is being chosen as a channel for the expression of divinity into materiality. Although ovulation is a law of nature, Conception is a law of God. Edgar Cayce

When does life begin? Some spiritual traditions see the origin of life as the moment a soul intends to enter into human form. Others see the beginning as a sparkle in the eye of a potential parent who wants to have a child. While biologists and religious clergy may argue about whether or not life starts at the moment of conception, convention has it that the day a baby emerges from his mother's womb marks the beginning of life. However you define life's origin, the sacred journey of an egg and sperm merging to create a unique individual is as marvelous and miraculous as the creation of the universe itself. Spirit and molecules intertwine to manifest a new life.

The blueprint for a human body is encoded in every cell of a human being, which contains forty-six chromosomes and more than thirty thousand genes. These genes, composed of DNA, provide blueprints for the proteins that ultimately form the chemicals, tissues, and organs of a person. They are responsible for the texture of your baby's hair, the color of his skin, and to some degree, the unique characteristics of his personality. With the unraveling of the human genome, we are closer than ever to understanding how DNA influences both physical and psychological traits, as well as our predisposition to illnesses. Still, we are a long way from fully unraveling the mystery of how a few genetic words can code for the unfathomable biological diversity on this planet.

In every human being, half of the forty-six chromosomes are contributed by the mother through her egg and half by the father through his sperm. The merging and reshuffling of the genetic potential of Mother with that of Father gives rise to the amazing variety of life. According to Ayurveda, these primordial cells, known as *shukra*, are the essence of biological intelligence, and the most important products of a living being.

When a young woman first begins menstruating, her ovaries contain tens of thousands of potential eggs. Each month, from the time menstruation begins until menopause, a number of her eggs begin the process of development, but usually just one fully ripens and is released. Over the course of a woman's reproductive years, only about four hundred eggs reach maturity and have the chance to develop into a human baby. The egg or ovum is the largest cell in a woman's body and is about 100,000 times heavier than a sperm. It carries enough nourishment to sustain itself from the time it is released until it is implanted in the lining of the womb. This usually takes about five days, if along the way, the egg is fertilized.

Sperm cells, which carry the father's genetic material, are generated in a man's testes beginning in puberty and continuing throughout his life. Millions of new sperm cells are created each day, the vast majority of which are never released. During ejaculation, about three hundred million tiny sperm are released in a volume of about a teaspoon of seminal fluid. Only about three million sperm pass through the vagina into the uterus, most of which become lost or exhausted, so that less than three hundred enter into the fallopian tube where a ripe egg is waiting. For sperm, the 12 inches from the cervix to the egg is longer than a marathon and takes about ten hours to navigate. In most cases, fertilization occurs shortly after an egg enters the fallopian tube on its way to the uterus. Sperm cells that choose the correct tube reach the egg, encircle it, and attach themselves to its outer layer. The final competitors release the powerful digestive enzymes contained in their caps, which carve microscopic openings through the egg's external coat. Only a single sperm is allowed to penetrate the egg, which then instantly closes its gates to all other contenders. The victorious sperm sheds its tail and head while its genes align with those of the egg. The runner-up sperm, with their heads in the outer layer of the egg, continue waving their tails. This has the effect of rotating the now fertilized egg, freeing it to move toward the womb.

The egg and sperm, once comprising their individual energy and intelligence, entwine to embark on life's journey as a new entity—the seed of a unique human being. Over the next four to six days, the fertilized egg floats down the fallopian tube. Along the way it divides several times, taking on the appearance of a mulberry. Some of the outer cells prepare to form the placenta, while the inner cells begin the differentiation process that ultimately results in your baby. By the time the little bundle reaches the uterus, the original fertilized egg cell, now known as a blastocyst, has already expanded to a collection of about a hundred cells. While this multiplication is occurring, the inner lining of your womb prepares for implantation.

Hormones produced by your ovary stimulate the glands and blood vessels of the inner uterus to become soft and succulent. When the blastocyst arrives, its outer layers are able to snuggle into the lush inner lining of the uterus. This begins the process of the embryonic child tapping into Mother to nourish his body, mind, and soul. As many parents discover, it is not uncommon for this process to continue for decades to follow. According to Ayurveda, an ember of consciousness is present in every living cell. As your new baby begins to take physical form, sparks of consciousness in the individual cells unite with each other, igniting self-awareness within the unborn child. This flame of awareness, known in Ayurveda as Agni, becomes brighter as the level of biological sophistication rises. The fire is fanned by the essential vital force, known as Prana, while the essence of biological integrity, Ojas, organizes the developing cells into a cohesive unified system. On a spiritual level these three primordial forces Agni, Prana, and Ojas (or fire, breath, and earth) are the essential building blocks of life. These elemental energies fuel ones brilliance, vitality, and love. The passion for life inherent in the soul of your baby begins to be expressed at the moment of conception, or perhaps, even before. Why does life arise? According to Ayurveda, universal intelligence gives rise to life simply so it can evolve into complex expressions, capable of pondering and appreciating the mysteries of the universe. From this perspective, life is a cosmic masquerade, in which the goal is to uncover who is concealed. At the beginning of life, the disguise is quite transparent to the conscious mother who recognizes the deep spiritual connection that unites her babys soul with her own. Her most important role from the moment of conception is to nurture her child so he can rediscover his essential spiritual nature. In some traditions, this connection is believed to precede conception. In certain African tribes, people believe that the spiritual birth of a child begins when his potential mother first imagines him. She goes to a silent place and listens for the babys special song. When she hears it, she returns to her home and teaches it to her mate. While making love, they chant the song as an invitation for this soul to enter into their lives. Once pregnant, she regularly sings the song to her unborn baby and teaches it to the midwives in preparation for her delivery. They sing the song while the woman is in labor and as the baby is born into the world. The child learns the theme song, which supports him through all the stages of his life. He uses his song to celebrate his moments of glory and comfort him in times of loss. Growing a Baby By the time the blastocyst finds its nest in the luxuriant lining of the womb, some of its cells are producing an important chemical called human chorionic gonadotrophin or hCG. This substance stimulates the ovary to produce progesterone and estrogen, which nourish the womb until the placenta is able to make enough of these chemicals on its own. Levels of hCG are detectable in the blood of a pregnant woman as early as eight days after conception, and almost every pregnant woman has measurable levels by the eleventh day. Testing for this chemical is the basis of both urine and blood pregnancy tests. A level below 5 in the blood is considered negative, whereas a level above 25 is positive. HCG levels may rise to a peak of 250,000 between the eighth and tenth weeks and then gradually fall as you enter your second trimester of pregnancy. We can only marvel at the intelligence that underlies the development of a complex human being from a cluster of apparently identical cells. Where are the laws written that govern this dance of life? They are written in the experiences of millions of years of evolutionary time. We can describe what happens, can set up the conditions by which it occurs through in vitro fertilization or cloning, but we cannot fully understand how each cell knows which genes to awaken and which are to be left dormant. We cannot explain how flawless mirror images of eyes, ears, arms, and legs are formed in perfect synchrony. We cannot explain how different parts of the nervous system know to reach out to each other across vast cellular distances to transmit critical information. The orchestration of life occurs from a deeper domain of existence, which is mysterious and incomprehensible. Every living being truly has a magical beginning. Primordial Perception Continuous cellular activity marks the first month of pregnancy, setting the stage for the development of your babys tissues, organs, and physiological systems. As early as the fifth week after conception, the basic components of his nervous system are established, including a primitive brain, a spinal cord, and the sensory equipment for hearing, touching, seeing, tasting, and smelling. The anatomy needed to perceive and interpret the world forms rapidly once a new life comes into being. Hearing in the womb The acoustic system that enables your baby to hear develops through three different components the outer ear, the middle ear, and the inner ear. The outer ear begins as little buds that gradually fuse to create your babys sound-collecting dish. The middle ear is formed by linking up three tiny bones that transmit vibrations received by the outer ear to your babys inner ear. The inner ear is a remarkable apparatus that translates the pitch and intensity of sound waves into specific electrical impulses, which then communicate this information to the hearing region of the brain. The equipment for your unborn baby to eavesdrop on the world is well developed by the time you enter your second trimester of pregnancy. One of

the earliest accounts of intrauterine hearing is described in the New Testament (Luke 1:44) when John's mother, Elizabeth, tells Mary, who is pregnant with Jesus, "The infant in my womb leaped for joy the moment I heard the voice of your greeting! A number of modern studies have confirmed that by eighteen to twenty weeks of fetal life, your unborn child hears and responds to sounds in his environment. Although you might expect the womb to be a quiet place, it is actually quite rich in sounds and sensations. Tiny microphones placed within a pregnant uterus reveal that a multitude of audible vibrations enters your unborn baby's sanctum. Mother's heartbeat and digestive tract offer steady background noise, along with the pulsing rush of blood flowing through her major vessels. The rhythm and pitch of human voices are clearly perceptible in the womb. An adult listening to conversations recorded through a miniature microphone placed in a womb can understand over half of the words spoken by a man and over a third of the words spoken by a woman standing in front of the pregnant woman. To your unborn baby, it is your voice that is most easily recognized. Unlike outside sounds, which are muffled to some degree, the voice of Mother is actually slightly amplified. If you are singing, the sound in your womb can reach more than 80 decibels, which is as loud as a ringing telephone or vacuum cleaner. Your fetus hears your voice both as an airborne sound and as vibrations that move directly through your organs, tissues, and bones. An unborn child becomes familiar with his mother's voice long before he emerges from the womb. A baby learns to associate sounds in the womb with sensations of comfort or discomfort. The emotional state of his mother is communicated to the fetus through the molecules that she secretes. If Mother is engaged in a loving, nurturing conversation or listening to enjoyable music, her brain triggers the release of chemicals that reflect her calm, comfortable condition. These chemical messengers travel through the maternal and fetal circulations, now connected by the umbilical cord, entraining the unborn child's feelings with those of Mother. If, on the other hand, Mother is involved in a heated argument, her body pulses with stress chemicals that can trigger discomfort in her fetus. It's easy to imagine the distress of an unborn child regularly exposed to toxic sounds. His mother's heart races while her adrenal glands squirt out stress hormones. The unborn child activates his own fight-or-flight response, but unfortunately can neither run from nor wrestle with the source of its provocation. The seeds of anxiety, apprehension, and hostility are sown in utero. The baby-to-be learns to associate sounds with inner sensations. Do your best to avoid recurrent distressing sounds, since noise pollution has a negative effect on both Mother and Baby. Scientists report that mothers living along the flight path of a busy urban airport produce lower levels of growth-promoting hormones and are more likely to have smaller babies than those living an equal distance from the airport but not directly under the flight path. Similar findings have been reported in women who must work in factories where there is a constantly high noise level. To the extent that you can consciously choose, do your best to limit your exposure and that of your unborn baby to vibrations that distress. On the other hand, it is not realistic to expect that you'll be able to completely avoid upsetting noises throughout your entire pregnancy. We are not suggesting you should worry about causing harm to your unborn baby anytime you get upset, have a disagreement, or listen to loud rock and roll music. Life inevitably brings loud moments that cannot nor necessarily should be avoided. We simply encourage you to be aware that the being inside of you is eavesdropping on your life. Whenever possible, expose yourself to nourishing rather than toxic sounds, knowing that whatever you are experiencing is simultaneously experienced by your unborn child. From Publishers Weekly Chopra (Peace Is the Way; The Seven Spiritual Laws of Yoga; etc.) and his colleagues at the Chopra Center for Well Being offer pregnant women, their partners and healthcare providers a practical, thought-provoking framework in which to experience pregnancy and childbirth. Chopra advocates techniques drawn from ayurveda, the centuries-old Indian medical science, combined with daily yoga and meditation practice, to help deepen a woman's connection to herself, her baby and her own intuitive wisdom. Chopra says that the months during which a woman carries a child are a naturally introspective period and provide an ideal opportunity to cultivate awareness of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual states. To facilitate this process, the Chopra Center developed the Magical Beginnings program for parents and training programs for prenatal educators to aid them in integrating ayurvedic therapies (focused on nutrition, sound, sight, touch and aroma), meditation, yoga, visualization and journaling into a holistic approach to pregnancy. According to Chopra, Western images of childbirth can instill unconscious fears, causing undue stress to mother and child. To help women tackle these worries, he offers helpful medical information on the physical aspects of childbirth, ways to process difficult emotions, and suggestions for healthy communication between partners. In addition to pregnant women and their caretakers, readers interested in birthing and raising conscious children will likely be inspired by Chopra's

stirring call for mindful parenting from conception through birth and beyond. 23 illus. Agent, Muriel Nellis with Literary and Creative Artists. (Mar.)Forecast:Chopra's name alone could sell this book; print ads and national publicity will garner an even larger audience. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.