

Module 7 Lesson 2

Are you feeling ready for the Return? Have you as a mentor or doula, begun to hear the Call asking you to return home with all that you have learned so far on this journey? We turn now to our clients and our hero/heroine/protagonist, who has been in the Underworld for this whole time, waiting, resting, reforming and forming, waiting to hear the Call to Return, the Call to the integrated self. That's where we are now in Module 8, ready to take the first steps up and out of the Underworld. One of the things that sets Birthing from Within training programs apart is the way that we look at postpartum. So first we talked about how we can prepare parents prenatally for what lies ahead for them in the postpartum Return. What types of things can we do to give them reasonable expectations, not only on a practical level, but also on an emotional and soul level? We talked about that, and then we talked about in Module 7 this place of inbetween and recognizing that there is wisdom and necessity in being in that place and not rushing out of that inbetween place of metamorphosis. Now in Module 8, a piece that is very unique to Birthing from Within is our map for seeing the postpartum journey that includes what we call the Birth Story Gates. I think you will find that holding this map in your mind as you work with parents, both prenatally and postpartum, will really guide you to lead them in a way towards healing, towards recovery and integration in a whole new way.

02:29

So I'm excited to share with you this material that we have curated for Module 8 that will be focused on the postpartum Return. You'll remember that in the beginning of this journey part of our goal as mentors and doulas was to awaken the adult archetypes in our clients, so that they enter the Ordeal with their adult archetypes at least close to the front of the bus, if not driving the bus. And you'll remember too that in the last module, we talked about how people are actually back in their Innocent again when they're in that inbetween place, that reforming place, they have not yet done this Return ever. They don't know, right? So they're in the place of innocence, that's the archetype. They're again kind of in that child archetype place. So part of our role now as mentors and doulas is to help to activate the adult archetypes for the way back home, for the Return.

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So what would that look like? How would you know if you were seeing someone who is moving from their adult archetypes in the postpartum journey, what might that look like? First you would see glimmers, at least, of self compassion and



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forgiveness for having to do things that they thought they would never have to do, not being in a place of self blame or even blaming of other people. So bringing of compassion to others as well. Another thing you might see in someone in the postpartum Return who has their adult archetypes activated, is a sense of unattachment to the story. Now that doesn't mean that they are in a place of, *"Oh, I don't care what happened."* It's not, *"I don't care."* It's not that. It's that their identity is not wrapped up in it in the same way it might have been closer to the actual experience or earlier on in their Return. Also you might begin to see an integration where they are beginning to consciously choose to do some of the things they said they would never do, right? So some of the agreements that they had sent to the Underworld. Now in this integration, they're bringing those things from the shadow to the light, consciously with intention. They're making a choice. So now they actually see a broader range of possibilities for the way in which they can manifest in the world. Pretty amazing.

Speaker 1 05:33

But how do we get them there? How do we act as guides along the way? That's the question. What does that mean for you as a mentor or a doula? How do you work to awaken those archetypes, the adult archetypes in your clients? Well, luckily for you, this module is chock full of processes and resources and ways of thinking and inquiring within that will help you to do just that, and begin to help your clients experience postpartum in a way that may be really different than the way most of our culture approaches postpartum and the recovery from birth. Okay, so let's go back to our map and remember where we had left off in the last module, which is that we were in this place here, the inbetween, where maybe our protagonist had begun to hear some calls from the upper world, but they were refusing them because they weren't ready. And maybe these were calls that were kind of superficial. Calls to come back to work, come back to going out to dinner and putting on a big face around how well we're doing, right? But those aren't the calls that we're talking about.

06:59

We're talking about the Call to the integrated self. It's a much deeper call, and it takes time for them to have been here waiting, being fed the Food of Life and the Water of Life and waiting, resting, reforming. So now that we think of them as having received this medicine from the allies and dusting themselves off, standing up, maybe shaking those new wings that they have, those wet wings, and beginning to be ready to take the first steps up and out of the Underworld. And it's really important, when we think about our work as Birthing from Within mentors and doulas, that we recognize and hold true this piece: that the Return is just as labyrinthine and tricky as the way down. And it isn't our job and our goal to rush them back up and get them to a place where they've reached the final gate before



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they're ready. In fact, part of our job is to help them be still enough that they begin to hear the Call, and then when that happens, we can be by their side as they go.

08:24

So part of our work is holding a fluid mindset around what this should look like, just like we did around what birth should look like. How should it unfold? The same goes here. We want to hold an open and fluid mindset, knowing that some people will move quickly through the Gates, and for other people it will take more time, and that there isn't a right way around the postpartum Return. We hold the medicine and we wait for them to ask for it. That's what's so amazing and powerful about our role here. Knowing that our protagonist must exit and begin to find their way out, and remembering that the path up and out is equally as long and labyrinthine as the way down, we recognize that they must pass through each of these Gates again, questioning, *"Who am I? What do I want to leave at this gate, or what do I want to reclaim at this gate?"*

09:37

And when we see this and hold this map, it gives us so many possibilities for the way in which our clients emerge from the Underworld. Our culture tends to see the postpartum journey as fixed. How did the birth go? What are they needing as far as postpartum care? Are they getting enough sleep? Questions like that. But in this model, we recognize that the story, the Birth Story, is always in transition even if it's in subtle ways, evolving. Not in a certain order necessarily, although in a minute I'm going to share the Birth Story Gates and we see them as being a typical progression. But of course, as with anything in birth, each person is going to experience it in their own way. So these Gates, these passages, are personal and each gate is an opportunity to learn something new, to integrate that shadow and the light, to step into new possibilities. These are the gates of storytelling, of judgment, of self-judgment, blame, shame, questioning, learning, letting go, moving from a place of no story through different renditions of the story, back up at the top to a place again of no story.

11:19

As mentors and doulas part of this is just for us to know and to hold as the map. We don't necessarily have to teach parents about the Gates. We might drop the metaphor around Gates and passing through and new discoveries, but for some parents understanding each and every one of the Gates and all the possibilities might feel overwhelming. As a mentor and doula if you hold that, it allows you to meet them where they are on their journey. So remember that this is the medicine that's in your pouch. Pam England created this concept of the nine Birth Story Gates. She did this after listening to hundreds and hundreds of birth stories being told to her, and she started to see the pattern, so she created this map that I'm



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going to share a bit with you now here in this video. Also you have a resource document in the module that will go into it even further. I encourage you as I go here and as you read and inquire around how to use this with your clients and the parents you work with, think about this too as an overlay for your own journey in becoming a Birthing from Within mentor or doula.

12:39

Where are you in this journey? Are you beginning to step back out from the Underworld, perhaps, and finding your way through these Gates? What do they mean for you? You might hold that in one hand while you hold in the other hand how this relates to parents, okay? So starting at the beginning, the first step up and out of the Underworld, our first Gate is one that we call No Story. Now this is a place where the parent hasn't begun to integrate what happened, who was there, how it went. They're just here in this place of just being. They don't have a narrative yet. They just need rest, right? It's coming off of this place in-between. If we think about the story of Inanna, there was no one down there saying, *"Oh, Inanna, how did it go? Did it go how you wanted it to go? Did you like it? Was it kind of cool? Was it hard? You did it! You're so awesome, Inanna!"* There wasn't cheerleading, there was no one down there trying to fix her or get her to quickly wrap her story up into a nutshell. She had no narrative yet, and that's where the parents are initially in their first Gate, although I will make a note which is that in our social media culture that we live in now, oftentimes, in fact, parents jump right out of the No Story Gate because they are already thinking about what story they want to project. So something to think about in our modern day postpartum journey.

14:38

Ideally, parents are allowed to be here at this place of No Story until they are ready to step through. Ideally, there aren't people who are projecting onto them how it went, what through their lens they saw happen. Sometimes support people will have an instinct to encourage and cheerlead and say, *"You're such a rock star, you did it,"* but maybe that doesn't relate yet to this parent. So what's lovely, same as for Inanna where she was just able to be, that they are able to begin to listen for the Call to Return, and to start to integrate their story without the overlay of someone else's ideas of how it went. Okay. So we have our first Gate, No Story.

15:26

The second Gate, we call Gratitude and Relief. This often relates to the surge of oxytocin that comes after a birth and a sense of just relief that it's over, gratitude. They may feel relieved just to have the baby in their arms, grateful that everyone is okay and just survived. This often is a time when a birthing parent might feel immense gratitude for their OB or their midwife or their doula, without discernment, yet just pure gratitude, thinking that they did an amazing job.



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Knowing this and knowing that this is just right where they're meant to be, the job here for a mentor or a doula is validation. It's just right for them to be in that place of gratitude and relief, even if you don't see it the same way, even if your perspective on how things happened is in contrast to what they think at this point, there's no need to correct them. It's just a matter of validating where they are. Of course they feel relieved and grateful. That's perfect in this moment.

16:50

So then moving on, we get to the Gate of Relationships. This tends to be along the lines of, *"Who was there, who really showed up for me, who didn't show up for me? Did I feel abandoned? Did I feel supported?"* It has a lot to do with the rules that we make around being in connection with other people and people being in connection with us. Sometimes people might ask themselves, *"Who told me the truth about birth and who didn't?"* What's interesting about this Gate is that our culture tends to focus most on what happened on the level of interventions or actions. So this often overlooked Gate of Relationships is actually often where the pain and disappointment, regret, confusion stem from. More so even than the things that happened it has a lot to do with how the birthing person felt, either in connection or in disconnection with the people that they had in their birth. It has to do with how they felt seen and loved and approved of, right back to those original rules. So this Gate here can be a very important one for each birthing person to walk through on their way back out, and also for partners and even for birth professionals. Sometimes we want to skip over this, but then when we look at it we recognize that right here is where a lot of the grief or disappointment actually stems from.

18:45

Moving on then to the next Gate, which is the Gate of Social or Bonding. And like I mentioned earlier, sometimes because of our social media culture, people jump right from here to here because they're already figuring out in their mind, *"What's the story that gets me approval, that gets me smiles, that makes people feel proud of me?"* or on the flip side, *"What's the story that makes people recoil or feel sorry for me or bring up a sense of pity?"* This is where the parent is beginning to identify *"What story works for me in my world?"* And this, again, goes back to agreements and rules. It's important to note, as we move forward here, that the first six Gates or so are child archetype gates, right? You can really get a feeling for that with these pieces here, where you can sense the child who is asking the question of purpose. *"What will gain me love and approval, what will allow me to fit in?"* So this bonding one depending on different cultures of different towns and locations, some parents may feel like they need to modify their birth experience in order to fit in, especially if it's a community, for example, that believes very strongly in natural birth and no interventions. And what if this parent's Ordeal actually involved an epidural or



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asking for help in ways that they hadn't planned on asking for help? You often will hear stories of parents who feel they can't tell their whole story at the park when they're with their baby in the stroller, because they fear rejection, right?

20:53

OK, so then we move on to what is named the Medical Gate. So this is where parents may land in a place of questioning what actually happened. And they may request their medical records, for example, or they may have a call with their midwife to say, *"Can you break it down for me what happened?"* Interestingly, in our culture this tends to be what is seen as the birth story, the objective, linear-timeframe explanation of what happened. Missing, of course, many of the details though, this can be an important part of the healing for people to have an actual understanding of. Some of the physiology of what happened, the decision making, the timing. But it's important to remember and to hold that while this is what our culture deems maybe most important, it's actually just a piece of the whole puzzle and one of the Gates that the parents need to walk through.

22:02

Next we come to a very important and interesting Gate, which we refer to as the Revolving Door. In and out, in and out, round and round we go between the Victim and the Judge and this is when a parent might spin with, "What happened? What should have happened? What did they do wrong? What should they have done? What should other people have done? Why did this happen to me? How could this have happened? I should have been stronger. I should have spoken up. They should have spoken up. They should have helped me more. I should have said no."

22:51

Familiar? Do you recognize this gate, either for yourself or for parents you work with? Yeah, this can be a long, spiraling conversation in and out, in and out. Often parents get stuck here. It's usually an internal conversation of what happened and who is to blame. The Victim tends to blame everyone on the outside. *"They should have done this. They should have done that."* The Judge turns it back and says, *"Actually, you should have done something different. You should have known."* And then the Victim says, *"But it wasn't my fault."* And then the Judge says, *"Really, why don't you do blah, blah, blah, blah, blah."* That's the Revolving Door, in and out, in and out, right? The Revolving Door is exhausting and it takes time, and it also often takes the assistance from a mentor or a doula, someone who knows this and sees this and can offer some guidance to step out of the Revolving Door and the seventh Gate. This is the key to integration.

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Finally, we get to the seventh Gate. This is the Gate of Forgiveness...the Gate of Forgiveness. So an important note is that you can't get to the seventh Gate if you haven't passed through the first ones. There isn't a way to jump from here to here without walking the path, doing the inquiry, asking, "*Who am I now?*" Taking some parts of the lost pieces, bringing them home, leaving some pieces that no longer serve. All of this journey takes us to a place of forgiveness, and is the key to integration. This is where our Hero/Heroine/Protagonist/Parent self can bring forgiveness to themselves and to others. It usually comes on the heels of feeling exhausted from this Revolving Door, from recognizing maybe they need a little help recognizing a glimmer of truth that maybe none of this is true. Maybe there is something that's more authentic, more real, more right. A bridge emerges to get them out of that Victim/Judge and into a place of forgiveness, and that's our role is to be there when they hear that Call to help walk them across the bridge of no blame, the bridge of forgiveness. And in order for people to get to the top and to be feeling fully integrated, this is the piece that they have to put back together, which is bringing some truth to this crack.

26:13

Remember down here the One Forbidden Thing? So helping people to recognize how whole they are now that they have experienced what they had originally always said they would never experience or never allow themselves to do. And now who are they that they can do that with so much more possibility? It's filling the crack with gold, and as Pam England says, the crack, One Forbidden Thing, that's a gift from the holy, that's an opportunity to grow as a human, to have a soul journey to be expanded, to be more fully authentic in our experience of life, and all of this feeds into that place of reintegration of wholeness. So our job as Birthing from Within mentors is to offer people the guidance they need to either get to this Gate or through it. And luckily, there's a map for that that helps you to guide parents through their Birth Story, which will help you move them and fill the crack with gold further on up beyond the seventh Gate, which is a really important Gate.

27:43

In fact, you can't really move beyond it either. This is sort of a threshold between the child archetypes and the adult archetypes. Do you see how that works? So then we get to the eighth Gate. That is the Hunter/Huntress, the Seeker. This is an adult archetype who is looking for new meaning. This is a really critical time to have mentorship as well, somebody who can shine the light, kind of like we did all the way back over here, shine the light on some new possibilities, some new truths, guiding parents away from habitual thinking, from old patterns, and recognizing their rules and allowing them to see a new path forward, a new way of being that's here at the eighth Gate. And then finally, the last Gate is one again of No Story.



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What does this mean? Now? How is this version of No Story different from this version of No Story?

29:05

So here, with the help of mentors along the way, the impulse and need to deconstruct and then reconstruct their story fades. It's no longer important. They have done the work. Their identity is not wrapped up in how it went, what went down, who was there for them, who wasn't. It's not about that anymore. It's not about external validation or internal validation. They are whole and complete now. And what's beautiful here, and we'll go into this more in the last module in Module 9, is people in this place are ready to then mentor other people, and not from a place of all knowing or competition or *"I've got it right,"* but instead coming from a place of true, authentic mentoring. Being able to validate people where they are, without having an overlay of their own agenda or their own story or their own framing.

30:18

So this becomes the complete circle, and in the next module we will tie it all together. Again, as a reminder, it's important to remember that this is a typical pathway, one in which we have seen people move through, and then to remember too, that, of course, some people may do it very differently, especially some who might have had trauma in that birth experience. They may jump immediately to Medical, *"What the hell happened?"* and try to figure it out there. Then they may come back down and walk up through these Gates. Or sometimes they'll skip these all together. So there isn't a right way or a must way to do this. This is a map to hold as guidance for you as a mentor and a doula.

31:08

So what are the tasks of the Return? What needs to happen? The Return is a profound process of integration and healing. It does not take place in six weeks, right? Let's just be real about that. In fact, for many postpartum parents, it takes maybe two or three years for them to integrate that whole story and for them to move through the Gates and get to a place where their identity is now no longer wrapped up in how it went or what other people think about it, the journey home from the crack. What did they have to do that they had said they would never do that their whole life they had agreed upon not doing in order to be accepted into the family system or the cultural system? And they had to do it right in the ordeal in the Underworld. Somewhere along the way, they did the One Forbidden Thing.

32:20

And now, who are they? What are the tasks that they must take on now in order to get to that place of integration? What do they have to leave behind of their old self



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so that the new self can fully emerge? They may, along the way, gather the lost pieces. Remember, in the story of Inanna she shed something at each Gate on the way down. Same with our parents that we work with, they had to set things down and on the way back up they have the opportunity to pick them up and decide, *"Is this something I want to take with me, or is this old rule, this old belief, something that no longer serves me, and should I leave it here?"* Or maybe they pick it up but they assign it a new meaning, right? So when Inanna left all the golden bracelets at one of the gates, those had been passed down to her from woman to woman to woman in her family. Those were, that was her lineage, her mother, her grandmother, her great grandmother, and on and on. So she had the opportunity, when she picked those back up to maybe think, *"Now I have my own story to add to this, and then to pass on to future generations."* And maybe she has the possibility of saying, *"And I choose to change some of these old stories and pass on a new story to the next generation."*

34:02

Parents on their postpartum journey have this opportunity too. This old story, this old belief, what does it allow me to do now that I didn't know I could do before? These are the tasks of the Return, picking up the pieces, leaving some behind, assigning new meaning, re-sorting and organizing of relationships. Who is there for me in a way that I need them to be and that works for me? This also leads into another task of the Return: caretaking of self and caretaking of baby and of partner, and moving through the gates with intention, with discovery. That's a task. And then the last one, which we'll go into more depth in Module 9, is an intentional choice around sending something in your life to the Underworld, something that you need to leave in the Underworld, in the shadow for a while, so that the new self has a chance to emerge and so that perhaps that piece has a chance to do its metamorphosis and then Return again too. But we'll go into that detail more in Module 9.

35:29

So recognizing and holding for the postpartum parents that we work with that this is a raw time, even if they don't manifest as being raw, right? That may come back to this, the Social Gate. What is acceptable? It's in our culture, at least where I live, people tend to bounce back pretty quickly because we have a very active community, and it's hard for people to admit that they actually want to stay in bed for a few weeks and be taken care of. So remembering that it's raw and that it takes time, and that most people along the way need some guidance and mentorship, because they are seeing the world with new eyes and they're feeling it with a new heart. That's why we want it to be slow, and we want it to be supportive, the return home, the return to the integrated self.

36:35

So in Module 8 ahead of you here now are many resources, including maps and resource documents and journal prompts and so on that will guide you in helping your clients move from their child archetypes to their adult archetypes. And some of these processes you might bring to people prenatally, and some of them are more designed to go into the postpartum phase itself. But here you'll find maps for helping parents through a difficult birth story, some for rituals of Return. There's information on postpartum mood disorders, an introduction of a concept we call the Good Enough Parent which is a great exercise to help people awaken the adult archetypes. So lots of juicy stuff here for you, lots of things to help you feel resourced as you move with the clients and with the parents you work with, towards the Gates and up towards the top, towards the integrated self for them and for you as a birth professional coming into a new phase of what this means for you in your life.

37:53

So what happens for our clients, the people we work with, when we help them to bring forgiveness and compassion to themselves? What is possible then, and what happens when you bring compassion and forgiveness to yourself along the way, as you pass through the gates of your process of becoming certified, what does that mean for you? Here we are at the threshold of the Return, one step at a time.