

*An ideal gift for new mothers and mothers of young children*  
*Short Stories • Journal • Mothers' Toolkit*

Mothers tell their tales:

- ❁ The most sophisticated thing she had done all week was eat dark chocolate.
- ❁ She began sobbing when she couldn't figure out how to get to the bathroom with an eight-pound baby attached to her breast.
- ❁ She sank into the scent of her baby and found peace.
- ❁ She imagined a return to perky glory!

*Purple Leaves, Red Cherries* reveals how motherhood impacts women's lives.

- Discover how moms are handling their relationships, work, expectations, sex lives and more with 48 inspiring and thought-provoking short stories.
- Document your own unique experiences of motherhood in the book's guided and beautiful journal space.
- Come to grips with the impact of motherhood in your life using the practical suggestions and activities in the Mothers' Toolkit.

DESIGNED FOR  
BUSY MOMS

Pick me up, put me  
down and pick me up  
again when the baby  
calms down.



ELFERSY & KATZMAN

PURPLE LEAVES, RED CHERRIES  
A Gift for Mothers with Short Stories, Journal & Toolkit



# PURPLE LEAVES, RED CHERRIES

A Gift for Mothers with Short Stories, Journal & Toolkit

Tania Elfersy & Andrea Katzman | Illustrations by Nomi Melul Ohad



[www.purpleleavesredcherries.com](http://www.purpleleavesredcherries.com)

PARENTING/SELF-HELP





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*Purple Leaves, Red Cherries: A Gift for Mothers with Short Stories, Journal & Toolkit*

Published by:  
**Flower Cap Press**  
68 Dorrance Street, No. 303, Providence, RI 02903  
**[info@flowercappress.com](mailto:info@flowercappress.com)**

Front cover and illustrations by Nomi Melul Ohad  
**[www.purpleleavesredcherries.com/nomi](http://www.purpleleavesredcherries.com/nomi)**

Visual concept and design by TitanBrandWise.com

First edition 2011  
ISBN: 978-0-9829759-2-3  
Printed in Israel

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*Dedicated with love  
to our children*

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# Disruptive Wonder

by Tania Elfersy & Andrea Katzman



At the moment we each welcomed our first baby into our lives, we received the name of “mother” without knowing exactly what it would mean for us. We both are still discovering the fullness of that word as we journey through motherhood, experiencing its unique mix of joy, love, frustration, fear and wonder.

Mothering is so often invisible; we rarely noticed it before we ourselves became mothers. As we cared for our infants, motherhood began its slow and quiet course. Its effects trickled in between the cracks of our lives and flowed into underground reservoirs – occasionally creating a flash-flood, which always left its mark.

Looking back, we now understand that becoming a mother required a radical reinvention; we not only held a new baby, we owned a new identity. Motherhood demanded that we change in complex ways; no part of our lives was left untouched. We slowly redefined who we were – to ourselves and to others.

Today, as we share memories with each other, we realize that early on, we had few opportunities to reflect on what motherhood meant to us. We spent any spare reading time educating ourselves about child development and the impact of mothering on our children – on their self-esteem, their learning, their relationships, their ability to become well-adjusted adults. Yet we read very little about the impact of mothering on our self-esteem, our careers, our relationships and our ability to remain well-adjusted adults.





Our primary concern so often had been to be a “good” mother with happy children, which often led us to fixate on the “best” routes of parenting. That left little room for us to talk openly about the disruption motherhood brought to our lives as we entered a different mindset from that of our pre-mother selves.

Researchers tell us what we ourselves have observed: motherhood can be hard on women. One study concluded that half of all women with children under five regularly experience intense emotional distress.<sup>1</sup> Talking to other mothers, we quickly uncovered discontent on many levels. Yet we should not just sit back and assume this has to be the case.

We believe in the power of mothers connecting and sharing their experiences. We believe we can regain control of our lives before we feel washed away. We believe in the importance of realistic self-expectations and expressions of gratitude. With these beliefs, we have created *Purple Leaves, Red Cherries*.

Within this book you will find places to reflect, express, share and connect. We've included the voices of other mothers – 48 short stories, divided into 12 sections. As you journey through motherhood, we hope you will reread these stories and uncover new and different “red cherry” moments in each woman's tale. Mothering in the twenty-first century can sometimes feel lonely, but we hope that these voices remind you that as a mother, you are not alone.

In addition, we've created a hands-on Toolkit containing practical techniques to help you engage creatively in mothering. We've also included plenty of journal space throughout the book. We hope the stories, the Toolkit and the journal will help you to develop a more intimate and fulfilling understanding of your own experiences of motherhood.

This book is NOT another thing you “have” to do or complete. Instead, it is (we hope!) a source of inspiration, a safe space to express your feelings and a resource for preserving sanity and promoting happiness.

There is no timetable or required reading; feel free to dip in and dip out.

**Enjoy your explorations and discoveries. Enjoy *your* purple leaves and red cherries.**



1. Maushart, Susan. (2000). *The Mask of Motherhood: How Becoming a Mother Changes Our Lives and Why We Never Talk About It*, pp 9-10





*In the Beginning*



## *Transformed*

The day arrived. I had been consumed by work throughout my pregnancy and met my last deadline just before labor. I still couldn't believe that a baby would come out of me.

I wasn't ready.

And then I held Maya for the first time. Euphoria swept through me and left me breathless.

As I drew her close to my breast, the exhaustion of labor, the intense pain, my aching, bleeding body no longer mattered.

When we returned home I felt it was all a dream. I kept getting out of my bed to look at Maya asleep in her crib, wanting to make sure she was real.

The elation was more powerful than I could ever have imagined. I had become a mother and was transformed.

Natalie, mother of 3

## *Since the Beginning of Time*

Nine months pregnant, I stomped out of the middle of a nursing seminar.

"I just can't sit and listen to this anymore," I said to my husband. "How hard could it be? Women have been breastfeeding since the beginning of time!"

Three weeks later, I was crying in my pediatrician's waiting room as I prepared to tell him I just couldn't breastfeed anymore.

No sleep. Huge cuts on my nipples. Latching. Un-latching. Re-latching. Lubricating. Walking around the house topless.

The baby, the pediatrician reported, was gaining nicely and was fine.

"But," I whimpered, "I am not."

Liz, mother of 3

## *Fractions*

The lack of sleep completely overwhelmed me.

I felt tortured being awoken again and again just as I submerged into deep sleep. Mini cat naps became my excuses for sleep but they could not heal the all-over body exhaustion.

My baby completely controlled my schedule and I felt helpless. I couldn't fix it.

Desperate, I began recording the nap schedule, adding up the fractions of time to make it seem like some semblance of sleep. I thought I might feel better if I could convince myself that I had actually slept part of the night before.

It was only when my second child was born that I relinquished control over the sleep schedule. I accepted the fact that one day I would sleep again. . . . One day . . . .

Laliv, mother of 2



## *Memory*

I had always imagined I would look back on the birth of my children and recall joy. But when my twin girls were born it was the scariest experience of my life.

My girls came far too soon, nearly three months early. None of us were prepared, especially them.

Forced out of my unconscious body, their first weeks of life were spent in incubators surrounded by medical teams, monitors and machinery.

The day I was discharged from the hospital I left not with a bundle of babies, but a boxed electric breast pump. For years that memory made me choke.

But now, eleven years later, I no longer see two tiny fragile girls, but two strong, charming, loving, intelligent individuals.

Finally, the way they came into this world is no longer relevant.

Jo F, mother of 3





*My beginnings*

Handwriting practice lines on page 22.







*Body*



## *Love Affair*

In my twenties, I loved my breasts.

When I became pregnant a decade later, the love affair ended. The unimaginable swelling in pregnancy was followed by the rock-hard burn as my milk came in.

"Frozen peas," recommended the preternaturally calm woman from La Leche League. "Make it stop!" I cried in rage, bra wide open, nipples on fire, clutching tubes of lanolin.

Gradually breastfeeding became easier and I appreciated my breasts differently. Not just playthings: life-force!

When my daughter stopped nursing, it saddened me. I not only lost the daily intimate moments we had shared, I now had limp balloons where once were juicy peaches.

Luckily, modern bra technologies and helpful clerks have restored my shape, at least with my clothes on. And naked, at certain angles with dim light and squinty eyes, I imagine a return to perky glory.

Lisa S, mother of 2

## *Getting it Right*

Despite my buoyant boobs, firm skin and flat stomach, I was filled with insecurity. During sex I was concerned about getting it right.

Then came the moment I was naked on all fours, grunting and pushing out my first baby. And my husband was right there watching. How could I be self-conscious about my body again?

In pregnancy, birth and mothering I have learned to let go and strive for happiness, not perfection. These lessons have been imprinted on my body and I have taken them into the bedroom.

My body has displayed tenacity and power to withstand expansion, birth and contraction. Motherhood has left its physical marks and given me body-confidence.

When intimate with my husband, I am free to lose myself in the moment. I just like my body better.

And go figure . . . so does he.

Andrea, mother of 2

## *Kegels*

I can't use tampons anymore.

There are times (like in line at the supermarket) when the tampon will suddenly move down and I'll be stuck with something hanging out of my vagina.

After three vaginal births, my muscles down there have gone weak on me.

Is it not enough that my gravity-driven breasts have also shrunk to a former teenage size? That my tummy resembles a contour map of the Himalayas and that the veins in my legs have gone public?

Can I wear any of my new attributes with pride?

Mother of three with smaller breasts, bumpy tummy, decorated legs and can't-hold-a-tampon vagina!

Ah . . . mother of three. I'll forget the rest for now and think of my three little darlings. And maybe one day, I'll remember to do my Kegels.

Lillian, mother of 3



## *Down on the Floor*

I'm hitting 40. My knees hurt a bit and my back aches.

When my five-year-old wants to play a game with me, I beg him to sit at the table, civilized, on a chair.

"No," he says, "we have to sit on the floor!"

So with creaking bones, I lower my body down and we begin to play. We chat, laugh, sing and make up new rules as we go. He takes several turns in a row, thinking I don't remember that he rolled last or turned over ten cards at a time. His legs are crossed, mine sprawled. We are level, eye-to-eye, on the same playing field.

These are the best times and I remember them well, when I begged my Dad to sit on the floor and play with me – his bones creaking as he lowered himself down.

Renee, mother of 2





*Reflections of my body*

# Trade for Sanity

Sometimes when we're struggling, there may be a way to juggle our budgets and life choices to preserve our sanity.

Look at your budget, your choices and your circumstances. Use your imagination. Make a list of things you need and a list of things you already have – and are willing to give up. See how you can make a trade.

## Tania's Trade for Sanity:

With two children and a third planned, I needed help close by more than anything else. I traded living in a city neighborhood I loved for living around the corner from my supportive parents-in-law (in their aging, less hip neighborhood).

## Andrea's Trade for Sanity:

I wanted to work two mornings a week but a babysitter was too expensive. I found a group of moms who also needed childcare and we set up and ran our own playgroup. I traded being with my two children for going out to work and, every two weeks, babysitting for six boisterous kids (and cleaning up the wreckage afterwards!)

*I wish for:*

*I am willing to give up:*

For additional Trade for Sanity examples go to the Inspire Me section of our website: [www.purpleleavesredcherries.com/inspireme](http://www.purpleleavesredcherries.com/inspireme)