



## **ILCA Print and Multimedia Reviews November 2009 – Available at [www.ILCA.org](http://www.ILCA.org)**

### **Mindful Motherhood: Practical Tools for Staying Sane During Pregnancy and Your Child's First Year**

Cassandra Vieten, PhD

New Harbinger Publications, 2009

200 pages, illustrated, references, no index, (US) \$16.95, softcover

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**Mindful Motherhood** makes quite a bold claim. It states that it is “the only book oriented toward teaching research-based mindfulness principles to reduce stress and improve mood in pregnant women and new moms” (website). Dr. Cassandra Vieten meets this goal exceedingly well.

Vieten is a licensed clinical psychologist whose training is focused on Integral Psychology, which “integrates a variety of spiritual practices into the practice of psychology.” While the book utilizes language from a Buddhist tradition, Vieten discusses how mindfulness is manifested in all of the prominent global religions as well as a secular approach. She reviews the scientific research on mindfulness to reduce stress and its effect on mood. There is overlap with the research cited to that of Dr. Kathleen Kendall-Tackett’s evidence in her approach to depression.

**Mindful Motherhood** is intended for the mother-to-be or new mother. It is a good resource for a woman who feels overwhelmed or distressed with her new role, especially for mothers dealing with a high-need or fussy baby. The chapters are short and easy to read from beginning to end or piecemeal. It is written in a clear, concise way that is easily integrated and comprehended. Many chapters conclude with practical exercises to strengthen the experience of mindfulness. Included in the book is a chapter on specialized yoga postures (asana). The drawings and suggested use of props allow any woman to benefit from the practice regardless of previous yoga experience.

Vieten repeats throughout the book that mindful motherhood is not a specific system of mothering. Through mindfulness, “you will increasingly make decisions that are in alignment with your values and reflect the kind of mother you want to be ... you’ll have an increasing capacity to tolerate distress, both yours and your baby’s” (p. 190).

The author provides many references to practicing the techniques while nursing or pumping and encourages readers to visit its website to facilitate connections with other like-minded women. She is conscious of the difficulties women can experience with breastfeeding, especially in the early weeks. While she does not give lactation advice per se, she does represent breastfeeding in a positive light.

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