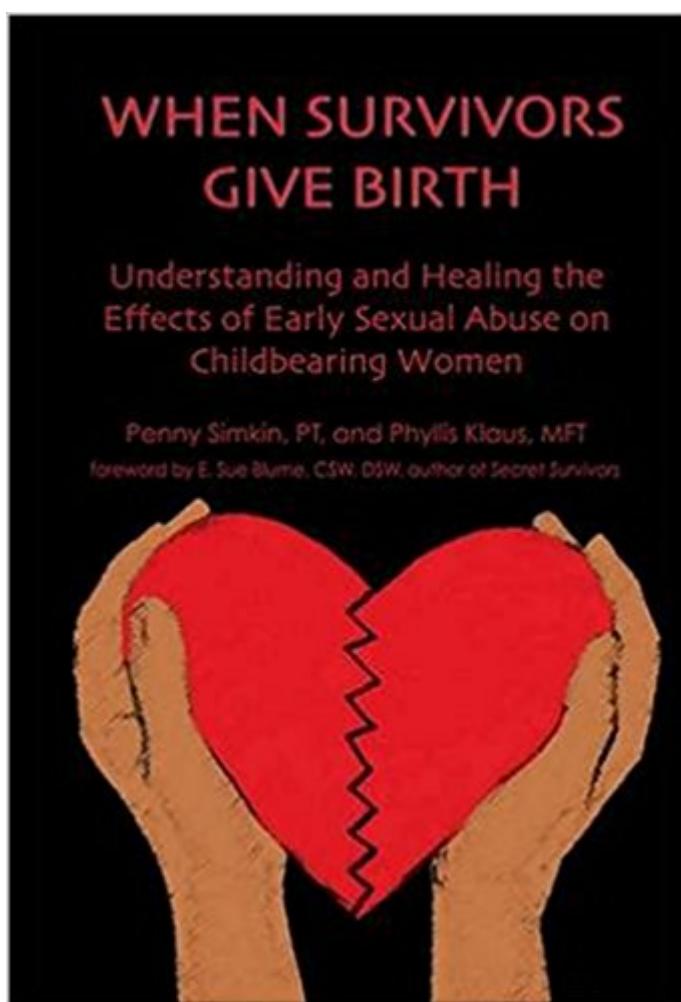


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# When Survivors Give Birth: Understanding And Healing The Effects Of Early Sexual Abuse On Childbearing Women



## **Synopsis**

When Survivors Give Birth is written for a mixed audience of maternity care professionals and para-professionals, mental health therapists and counselors, and women survivors and their families. The authors expertly and compassionately address the unusual and distressing challenges that arise for abuse survivors during the childbirth experience. The first section informs the reader of the impact of early sexual abuse on children, adults, and on all aspects of childbearing. The second section teaches skills in communication, self-help skills, counseling and psychotherapy techniques. The third covers clinical challenges and solutions for doctors, nurses, midwives, doulas, and others. Case histories throughout the book clarify and apply the content.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Penny Simkin, P.T., is a physical therapist, childbirth educator, doula, counselor, and writer. She is author or co-author of 5 books and numerous articles on childbearing. Phyllis H. Klaus, C.S.W., M.F.T., a psychotherapist, who specializes in women's reproductive issues. She is co-author of 4 books on childbirth and newborns.

I can't think of many books, of any genre, that I would say are truly revolutionary but When Survivors Give Birth is absolutely one of them. This book is a sweeping compendium of everything a provider might need in order to deal more effectively and compassionately with a pregnant woman who is a survivor of childhood sexual abuse. From triggers in pregnancy to

challenges in the postpartum period with breastfeeding, body image or dealing with the affects of a traumatic birth, the authors have meticulously researched the issue of childhood sexual abuse and how it affects pregnant women and new moms. Careful attention is also paid in helping the survivor understand the positive role that a doula can play in her childbirth experience as well as how to get providers to “recognize the needs and fears beneath the surface.” (139). In my mind the book has a dual target audience: survivors themselves and also providers who deal with survivors. Survivors themselves might find the personal

“stories” in *When Survivors Give Birth*. While they may be triggering to some survivors, their value is still immense, especially for providers who, again, may be unaware of how survivors might “look” or why they make the decisions they do. The stories provide a practical, real life view of what is being discussed in the chapter and how that impacts the pregnant woman. As a childbirth educator, trauma birth counselor and educational trainer, there is much information for me to takeaway from the book. And that’s coming from someone who has worked with survivors of intimate partner violence for over ten years. Traditionally there hasn’t been much work done with pregnant survivors or new mom survivors of any kind of abuse. Chapters like “How survivors can reduce the risk of a traumatic birth” include useful advice like, “risks can be reduced if the abuse survivor can identify and express her needs or even resolve some troubling emotional issues before the birth.” (emphasis mine 63). This is so important to be aware of. *When Survivors Give Birth* is a terrific reference for anyone who deals with pregnant women in any capacity: from birth doula to ob/gyn. My only complaint is that like Survivor Moms the Simkin and Klaus don’t spend as much time making the connection between childhood sexual abuse and intimate partner violence. CSA doesn’t happen in a vacuum and I wish that was more acknowledged in this book. One of the strongest pieces in *WSGB* is the section that focuses on the postpartum period. That’s a time when traditionally, the woman gets little or no attention from providers (“come back and see me in 6 weeks”) but which is a time of great vulnerability and change for even non-survivors. Simkin and Klaus meticulously explore the connection between postpartum mood disorders, for example, and survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Postpartum mood disorder screening for even non-survivors of abysmal but my hope would be that if more providers were to read this book, they might recognize all the more the importance on appropriate screening AND follow-up. *WSGB*, is the sort of book that one returns to again and again, both for basics like statistics, symptoms and practical tips on how to deal more sensitively to the needs of survivors of childhood sexual abuse but also for basics such

as creative problem solving, better active listening and additional resources

This is an AMAZING book. As a survivor myself and having not yet dealt with the past issues it was hard for me but my husband and my mom and mom-in-law all read it. It was SUPER helpful. The labour did not give me issues but the breastfeeding has brought all abuse back and this book has been sooo helpful to my family to help me cope. This baby was my first but I will be reading this book all over again if we ever get pregnant again!

Really good information. It assists in letting the reader understand the issues with good personal stories from those who have suffered abuse and then gave birth. It also helps draw the line between what a birthworker's job is and that of a qualified counselor.

This book was amazing for me, as both a labor and delivery nurse as well as a CSA survivor. It has changed how I practice, how I choose my words, and how I frame my interactions with my patients. It also makes me more patient with myself in situations where I may feel vulnerable, and gives me considerable insight. So glad that such a wonderful book is available for professionals in birth.

I am a huge Simkin fan, her writing is very easy to understand and this book is something that is an amazing tool. love that this topic is given the light it needs

This book, along with "rebounding from childbirth" by Lynn Madsen, are absolute necessities for midwives, obstetricians, and mothers alike. When Survivors Give Birth can be graphic, but it delves into areas most are too afraid or ashamed to get into in a tasteful and understanding way. I highly recommend this book to anyone who is pregnant or thinking of becoming pregnant with a history of sexual, emotional, or physical abuse.

As a doula, this book is invaluable. It was helpful to have the perspective of both survivors and their care providers, and it was encouraging for me to both have a resource to start helping clients and to realize that I don't have to have all the answers; I just need to listen and perhaps make a recommendation to a therapist or other specialist. I'm so thankful for this book.

This book was a good read for survivors of sexual trauma and abuse. There is very little out there that understands the triggers that a natural process like childbirth and pregnancy brings up in a

survivor. This book really addressed survivor issues and needs. It also identified triggers and issues that may have been lurking in someone's mind but not necessarily identified. The book also differentiates the concepts between those people who have already disclosed and have gone thru some type of therapy and those who have not yet disclosed.

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