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# Maternity Leave

A Novel



JULIE HALPERN

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*Julie Halpern*

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**Maternity Leave Julie Halpern**

**Julie Halpern's *Maternity Leave* tells the profane, profound and just plain funny story of a professional woman who thinks she's ready for a baby but her maternity leave proves otherwise.**

Thirty six year old Annie Schwartz-Jensen is a middle school teacher on maternity leave-a time she imagined as uninterrupted, blissful bonding with her baby. Instead she is dealing with her body leaking from every possible orifice, a baby who won't sleep, a husband who still wants to have sex with her (is he nuts??), single friends who are clueless, and a mother who picked now to take a vacation. The only people who REALLY understand Annie are the wonderful people she spends sleepless nights with on QVC: Keep those velveteen table runners and non-jiggle stretch pants coming!

As Annie navigates life with her new baby, she realizes that not all Mommies are created equal. But she is determined to find her way, love her baby, her husband, herself---even if she has to wear nipple protectors for the rest of her child-bearing life.

## Maternity Leave Details

Date : Published September 1st 2015 by Thomas Dunne Books

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Author : Julie Halpern

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## From Reader Review Maternity Leave for online ebook

### Rissa says

This was a quick, funny, realistic book and I thoroughly enjoyed it!

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### Ashley says

I missed my fortune by not writing this book as a middle school teacher who went on maternity leave. It was pretty much every thought that went through my head during those hard, but wonderful, first three months with a new baby. As Halpern puts it, "chaotic monotony." You know, when your to-do list is a mile long, yet you can't seem to get anything done, but you're busy doing something or attempting to do something every minute of every day, in a fog from no sleep all the while. If you can relate, or even if it seems a distant memory, this book is for you!

The author's humor and vocabulary was highly entertaining as well as her writing style and wit. There is so much to relate to within the camaraderie of motherhood (figuring out how to put on the Moby Wrap is one of them), I am surprised this is one of very few books on the subject in a narrative, first-hand account. The only part I did not like about this book were comments that teetered on the edge of mental health issues that seemed to be more than Baby Blues (PPD) and were never addressed.

I laughed out loud throughout this light read (which, let's face it, is the only kind of read besides parenting books and trashy celeb mags when you're a new mom). Then I cried at the end when she had to leave her baby to go to work because you never forget what that feels like after a tiny human has solely depended on you for three months. Then I shelved the book for a friend who is going on maternity leave...

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### Emily says

This was an entertaining read. I thought I would be more into since I have two kids and actually am on maternity leave right now. But I don't feel like this character reflected the norm for the trials involved with post partum life. Yeah, it is hard and frustrating, but I really feel like she reached a level where she could have used some professional help.

I did really like how she talked about post partum sex and the ups and downs of going back to work. One minor issue I had was she ate like crap though. I kept on waiting for her slow down on the doughnuts.

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### Ezgi ?? says

I know this is suppose to be a funny book. But I couldn't shake off how impeccable she told the story of life AFTER having children. I want to underline "after" twice, because the first time parents don't focus on the part after. All the books, doctor visits, friends' talks are about childbirth. This is so inefficient, because childbirth is only for few hours. Once you deliver the baby, that is forever and first months feel like forever!

You almost lose the feeling of being a human. Physical strain and emotional pressure are constantly causing you to make the stupidest decisions, such as folding laundry when you have 30 min until the baby is up and you haven't slept total of 8 hours in three days.

You want to go back and never have the baby, but sheer idea of your baby being away from you for 5 min makes you cry.

Funny times :) she did a great job telling the story of a clueless first time mom with humor and facts.

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### **Kourtney says**

If there were ever plans to write a story about how the first days of being a mom were, I would need to cancel them. Turns out my story has already been published - and here it is!

I could not believe how much I related to this book. Change the cat to a dog, and you had almost every crazy emotion I had felt back then. Now that my daughter is 6 months and I'm back to work, I forgot how it used to be where I would go a whole day without showering and be so mad at her dad that he got to speak with adults all day.

This book made me laugh until I cried, cry until I laughed, and made me feel nostalgic for those first days of motherhood. I recommend this to all of my mommy friends - sorry childless ones. You can read it and get a few chuckles, but you'll never understand how great this book is until you've gone through that door yourself.

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### **Penney says**

If you hate cats, this is a book for you! If you're self-righteous about breastfeeding exclusively and smile on martyrdom, you'll enjoy this tale! If you think parenting will be miserable and leave you feeling like a sad sack of poo, you'll find company to commiserate with here!

This book is not funny, ascerbic, enlightening, empowering or even interesting.

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### **Nadia says**

I absolutely loved this book. It's written as a journal or diary entry and is a first hand account of this new mother's struggle. As a mother, reading this was funny to read the super stressing times thinking "Oh I rememeber doing this." The book is just written really well and helps you side with the character's thoughts and feelings. I'd recommend this to any of my friends who have entered motherhood or are entering.

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### **Kaitlan Reeves says**

Hilarious book, best sarcasm I've ever read in a book!

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## Wisconsin Alumni says

Julie Halpern '96

Author

From the author:

Julie Halpern's *Maternity Leave* tells the profane, profound, and just plain funny story of a professional woman who thinks she's ready for a baby but her maternity leave proves otherwise.

Thirty-six-year-old Annie Schwartz-Jensen is a middle school teacher on maternity leave — a time she imagined as uninterrupted, blissful bonding with her baby. Instead she is dealing with her body leaking from every possible orifice, a baby who won't sleep, a husband who still wants to have sex with her (is he nuts??), single friends who are clueless, and a mother who picked now to take a vacation. The only people who *really* understand Annie are the wonderful people she spends sleepless nights with on QVC: keep those velveteen table runners and non-jiggle stretch pants coming!

As Annie navigates life with her new baby, she realizes that not all mommies are created equal. But she is determined to find her way, love her baby, her husband, herself — even if she has to wear nipple protectors for the rest of her child-bearing life.

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## Jennifer says

Maternity Leave is a women's fiction/humor novel written by middle-school librarian Julie Halpern. As the title suggests, this novel is about a woman's maternity leave after giving birth to her first child. Guess what? The character: Annie is a middle school teacher...very similar to the author. According to an interview with Ms. Halpern at the end of the audiobook, that is not where the similarities end. She actually incorporated many of her personal motherhood experiences for these fictional characters and it created a real and relatable story.

Ms. Halpern's honesty is painfully hilarious! She shows that giving birth, adjusting to your post-baby body, breastfeeding, considering sex again, keeping some normalcy in your marriage, and figuring out this parenting thing isn't always all it's cracked up to be. This novel is written in a series of journal entries that does not feel like fiction at all except for the generous dose of comedy on every page. Motherhood is such a blessing, no but's about it. It's also hard, uncertain, and has parents second guessing themselves at almost every turn. I applaud Ms. Halpern for commenting on all the craziness and cushioning it with a "love it or hate it" style of comedy. Her approach worked for me - she wrote all the things I felt ungrateful for thinking when I was a new mom. I think Ms. Halpern's novel will validate so many mothers who feel like they are literally going crazy. Yes, it all pays off in the end but you've got to admit, even "supermom" has her days.

## My favorite quote:

*"I tried running again this morning. Things went well for maybe a minute but then it felt like the bottom was about to drop again. What a bizarre sensation. I envision my vaginal area looking something like a hellmouth from Buffy the Vampire Slayer, and if I shake it up too much, everything: demons, vampires, Fallopian tubes is going to start flying out into the new dimension I opened. Not to mention the extra sixty*

*pounds of boob I feel like I'm toting around. I don't know if I can run even if I manage to stop up my giant nether chasm. Best walk instead."*

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### **Christa Schönmann Abbühl says**

I was pretty invested while listening to this book. It made me think about my own time at home with my baby 17 years ago. Although I have certainly forgotten a lot, I am pretty sure we had it much easier than the mother in the story. I really felt for her, and it may even be an important book, because it describes the ugly side of being a new mother, in a world that tells us it should all be happiness and rainbows. But don't worry, while the writing is very realistic, the book is also funny. And it ends on a positive note.

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### **Melissa (Mel's Bookshelf) says**

I think any new mother would appreciate this entertaining, relatively accurate (in my experience anyway) portrayal of early motherhood.

This story commences when Annie is in labour. She has a little baby boy they call Sam, and thus begins her journey, day by day through the first few months of motherhood. The highs and lows, the grossness and the laughter..

I really enjoyed the format of this book. It is journal entries along with Facebook statuses and email correspondences between Anna and her family and friends. This made it extremely entertaining and easy to read. The chapters are set out in days, and they are quite short so its easy to put it down and pick it up again later (great for when you are busy with the kids!)

It had some extremely funny moments and I could really relate to most of it (except for the part where she gets her husband to squirt her bottom with water while she poops on the loo whilst breastfeeding her baby at the same time – I can't say I could relate to that!). But it really had a lot of other moments where I would go "YES!!! THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT IT WAS LIKE!"

I related to Annie SO MUCH! I felt we would have been good friends! We had such similar experiences! I too have an older cat who has shared a big chunk of my life with me. I also love Buffy and Battlestar Galactica is my FAVOURITE SERIES! I am a complete nerd too!

I have read some reviews of this book describing how it doesn't describe motherhood accurately, and portrays Annie as borderline depressed. I don't necessarily agree with this. Annie's experience was so similar to my own, and I would not have classed myself as depressed. It's hard work suddenly having a tiny person to be totally and utterly responsible for. A total culture shock, and I was not one of these magical mothers who took to it straight away. It took me MONTHS before I had a bond with my son. It is not unusual to not have an instant connection the child you suddenly have in your arms and sucking on your boobs!

The first few months are HARD. They are filled with amazing highs but incredible lows, and sleep deprivation... I enjoyed that this book didn't skirt around this issue like others do. And the humorous

approach was really refreshing. I only wish I had read this 2.5 years ago, when I was up at 3am trying to get my screaming son to latch onto my boob whilst crying my eyes out, wondering if things ever get better.

Would I recommend Maternity Leave?

Yes, I would recommend it to any new mother, and any mother-to-be, who wants a pretty accurate portrayal of some of the difficulties of having a newborn. I would actually say its good for the new dads and dads-to-be to have a read through too, to gain some understanding of just how difficult it is to be a new mother when they go back to work. Overall an enjoyable and entertaining read!

Many thanks to Pan Macmillian and author Julie Halpern for a copy of Maternity Leave to read in exchange for my honest review.

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### **Shelly says**

This book is great for fans of Scary Mommy. It shows the reality that having a newborn is not all sunshine and roses. (I much prefer the stage my 3yo is currently in, even with his occasional sass.) It's written in a diary style, which I liked, and helped it to be the fastest I've read a book this year.

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### **MissFabularian says**

I listened to the audiobook version of this book. It sounded like a series of journal entries from a stay-at-home mom caring for her newborn son. Annie is a 36 year old middle school teacher with a doting husband, a caring mother, and a healthy peppering of snark used to describe her exhaustion in caring for her new baby. To read the rest of this review and listen to audiobook excerpt of the book [click here](#)

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### **Erika Daniels says**

A must-read for all new moms. Julie Halpern nails the emotional swings, the feelings of inadequacy, the deep love . . . it's so true it's scary. I especially loved her descriptions of the night during those early days. I thought I was the only one who was terrified as soon as the sun set and the world (except for the baby) went to sleep.

I read the negative reviews after finishing the book and think they mainly come from society's pressure to never admit to the pressures of motherhood. Yes, Annie appears to be suffering from a mild case of postpartum depression; yes, she eats like crap, swears a lot, and curses at the baby; and yes, she loves her child more than life itself. The more honest (and funny in this case) we can be, the better we will set new

mothers up for success.

This was a fun, all-too-real, fabulous read. I respect the people who are upset with Annie's inner angst but challenge the notion that someone is a bad mom because she spends the first few months of her child's life in a hazy bubble of confusion and anxiety.

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