



Welcome to Your New Life

Anna Goldsworthy

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'You are fluid, composed of smoke or air, morphing between ectoplasm and skeleton. It is a dance, a cosmic strip show: a flash of spine, and then a rib cage, clean as a fish. Who is laying these bones down, one by one? Is it me who is making you, or are you making yourself?'

When Anna Goldsworthy, pianist and perfectionist, falls pregnant with her first child, her excitement is tempered by the daunting journey ahead. In *Welcome to Your New Life*, she shares the dizzying wonder and crippling anxiety that come with creating new life. Should she indulge her craving for sausage after sixteen years of not eating meat? Will her birth plan involve Enya or hypnosis, or neither? And just how worried should she be about her baby falling into a composting toilet?

This captivating memoir combines warmth and humour to reveal the love that binds families together. *Welcome to Your New Life* evokes the shock of plunging into a life-changing adventure and the kicking required to return to the surface.

'A keen-eyed, funny, tender, wonderful book.' - Chloe Hooper

'This book does what great literature should: it tries to get a grip on life - the making of it, the living-and-loving it, the leaving it. Goldsworthy's writing is so beautiful, so laser-acute and funny and moving that you feel you are living more vividly. *Welcome to Your New Life* seems essential to me now. I laughed and I cried and I absolutely loved it.' - Anna Funder

'warm, funny and candid' - Books+Publishing

Author

Anna Goldsworthy is the author of *Welcome To Your New Life* and *Piano Lessons*.

Anna's writing has appeared in the *Monthly*, the *Age*, the *Adelaide Review* and *Best Australian Essays*. She has won numerous prizes and scholarships for piano performance. In 2004, she completed a world tour performing in festivals and concert halls in Australia, Asia, Europe and North and South America. Her solo CD, *Come With Us*, was released in early 2008. In that same year she collaborated with her father, Peter Goldsworthy, on a theatrical adaptation of his book *Maestro*, which drew inspiration from her early life.

Welcome to Your New Life Details

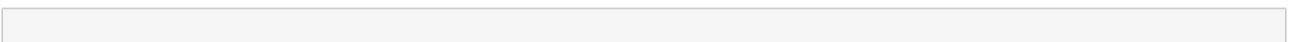
Date : Published April 1st 2013 by Black Inc. (first published March 19th 2013)

ISBN : 9781863955935

Author : Anna Goldsworthy

Format : Paperback 226 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Biography, Parenting, Autobiography, Memoir, Cultural, Australia



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From Reader Review Welcome to Your New Life for online ebook

John Nebauer says

The only thing more difficult than writing about childbirth is taking part in it — I presume. In *Welcome to your new life*, classical pianist and writer Anna Goldsworthy navigates the turbulent waters of pregnancy, birth and the first years of child-rearing with a successful blend of humour and insight.

We are reminded time and again how visceral the process of pregnancy and birth is. The very first image is one of a long-term vegetarian urgently craving the juices and fats of a *cevapi* sausage. Enduring the agony of childbirth, the end of the process is “a sweet, slithering riddance”. After birth, like all babies he is an amalgam of poo, mucous and vomit. Expressing milk for the first time, she burps him and “you express the elixir of life down my back”.

Everyone has opinions (some strongly held) about pregnancy and child-rearing that would be difficult to express without hectoring the reader. Goldsworthy, an admitted perfectionist, avoids regaling us with certainties, but we meet many who do not. Each of these encounters features a disjunction that Goldsworthy uses cleverly for comic effect.

At a pre-natal birthing video session, the scene is set with a gentle, herbal tea sipping about-to-be mother and her midwife. Soon thereafter, the gentle herbal tea sipper is transformed into a bellowing Ms Hyde as she begins to push. As this goes on, the “breezy midwife” comments that pushing is, “[s]ometimes accompanied by a burning sensation”.

Along the way Anna encounters demands for birth plans, censure for ‘not breast-feeding properly’, arrogant doctors and the myriad expectations that are routinely heaped upon new and expectant mothers, often in trying circumstances. It’s the very ordinariness of Anna’s experiences and her laconic description that provides the humour. During labour, Anna is presented with a hospital menu, and she explains that she is without a pen. The nurse responds;

She purses her lips. “You’d be amazed at how many women present at labour without a pen. You’ll just have to source one from somewhere.”

Alongside gentle humour, Goldsworthy plumbs fascinating depths. Her description of mother and baby as “lovers in reverse” is clever and poignant. The awareness that this new life is mortal weaves through the book like a subtle stage backdrop. While her baby is being born, her brother lies on a surgical table in London, the surgeons unable to control his bleeding. At the end of the book, Anna is again pregnant, and her beloved grandmother lies dying in a hospice.

As the reader progresses, we glimpse intimate details, but are also somewhat remote from the process. We are introduced to parents, siblings, and a supporting cast of friends, acquaintances and professionals, but we never learn the baby’s name (until the afterword). This, and the second-person perspective, helps us feel that the main protagonists draw ever-closely in upon each other as the narrative progresses.

To make a topic come alive for someone with little background in it is a great achievement. My greatest disappointment with this book was that it had a final page.

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Sep 19, 2013 Jacki (Julia Flyte) rated it really liked it

Anne Goldsworthy is an Australian classical pianist. This is an account of her first pregnancy and the early years of her son's life. It's written in the second person, as if she is speaking to her son, which means that we never learn his name (it's Reuben), which I found a little irritating. But aside from that, this is a wonderful, near flawless book. Goldsworthy has a wonderful way with words - her distraught son has a "mouth turned down at the sides like a ferocious carp". His newborn hands

...more

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May 04, 2013 Mark Young rated it really liked it

Another lovely book from the pianist who writes as well as she plays. Anna Goldsworthy (daughter of the author, Peter Goldsworthy, whose books I also like) describes the birth and early years of her first born son, as well as other encounters with illness and death in her immediate family. It sounds tragic and harrowing, but is worth reading, especially for the author's clear sense of her own foibles and perfectionism (the horror night in the beach house is worth reading if nothing else). It als

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Aug 16, 2013 Jill rated it really liked it

A funny and entertaining account of the impact of motherhood on a talented pianist and author, *Welcome to Your New Life* is beautifully written and thought provoking. The author's obsession with her child, his smell, mannerisms and sayings is genuine. I particularly enjoyed her description of how she navigates the myriad of advice from well meaning acquaintances, online blogs, facebook 'friends' and professionals of various types.

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Oct 28, 2014 Oanh rated it really liked it

Shelves: read-2014, women-authors, australian-authors, auto-biography

This cover makes me laugh so much.

I don't remember when I finished this book - very shortly after I started it anyway. Clearly I finished it during a phase when I was not using Goodreads because I failed to add it...

This was an enjoyable, enlightening book. It all felt truthful (not that I would know) and I've always enjoyed Anna Goldworthy's writing in *The Monthly*. That did not change with this book.

flag Like · see review

Jul 16, 2013 Eliza Genang rated it it was amazing

This is a remarkable memoir about pregnancy, birth and parenting a newborn. It is not an instruction manual nor a polemic and it hasn't even a hint of the sanctimoniousness or melodrama that normally taint motherhood memoirs. It simply shows what this period of life was like for the author. It is gloriously understated, funny in parts, and the language sparkles as it rolls on by, so beautiful that I slowed my reading to savour it. An amazing book.

flag Like · see review

Jun 26, 2013 Penelly rated it really liked it

This memoir follows the first year of motherhood for Anna Goldsworthy. It is beautifully written and since I've just experienced my first year as a mum, I could relate to an awful lot of this. Occasionally the author's anxiety was a bit overwhelming, but probably just because it was so believable. Moving, funny and personal.

flag Like · see review

Jun 29, 2015 Kelli rated it really liked it

Another perfect maternity leave read. Goldsworthy captures much of the strangeness of pregnancy and

awe/fear of raising a newborn with insight and wit. Have to wonder though whether her experiences with nurses and doctors were exaggerated for humour, as my health professionals have been much lovelier! If not... poor Anna! Such awful characters, but excellent caricatures.

flag Like · see review

Jul 27, 2013 Meghan Douglas rated it liked it

Shelves: australia, parenting

A recent motherhood memoir, with many moments that any middle class western mother can relate to.

Goldsworthy examines the shifts, subtle and obvious, in her life following the conception of her first child.

Some of the moments were quite poignant, especially those dealing with the circle of life, but they were also largely ordinary.

flag Like · see review

Jul 16, 2014 Rebecca Edmonds rated it really liked it · review of another edition

Probably like many others I wanted to read this as I go through the new experience of being a parent. I immensely enjoyed reading this book. I was able to relate to so many of the events the author experienced and felt like some of the feelings and emotions I have gone through were validated by these similar experiences.

flag Like · see review

Feb 11, 2014 Elyse rated it liked it

First half was a bit slow but the last few chapters were absolute gold. The insights and thinking about parenting in the modern world and the external/internal pressures that make things more difficult that necessary were hilarious and heartbreaking in equal measure.

flag Like · see review

Nov 12, 2014 Sue rated it liked it · review of another edition

Shelves: favorites

Loved this. She writes beautifully and having experienced much of what she did, it was lovely to relive it. She expresses her fears and doubts so clearly and the way the coming of a child totally stuffs up relationships. Should be given to every pregnant woman.

flag Like · see review

Mar 21, 2014 Basia rated it really liked it

Just so enjoyable. Thoughtful and smart. It was an easy read but written with such raw love and devotion.

Just about each chapter could stand alone as a short story about the joy, comedy and terror of parenting.

flag Like · see review

Apr 16, 2016 Guy Salvidge rated it really liked it

Very readable memoir about pregnancy and the first two years of the author's son's life.

flag Like · see review

Nov 08, 2013 Daisy rated it it was amazing

Shelves: non-fiction, parenting, memoirs

Absolutely amazing, cannot recommend more highly to parents!

flag Like · see review

Nov 26, 2013 Rosalie Day rated it really liked it

Delightful

flag Like · see review

Jan 20, 2015 Helen Wornall rated it did not like it

Didn't enjoy it at all

flag Like · see review

Jap_e rated it it was amazing

May 09, 2018

Nathalie rated it liked it

Mar 05, 2015

Carmen B rated it really liked it
May 22, 2013

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Ingrid Wassenaar says

This is a book by an Australian pianist, about her first child. It is part of the relatively newly established motherhood genre, which is poised between autobiography and misery memoir. There is an expectation of deep personal suffering as a founding validation of books like this. It is extremely difficult to avoid either wallowing in the grief of babyhood lost, or using irony to gesture towards said grief. In fact motherhood is terribly difficult to write about. It is a universal experience (even if you haven't had a baby, you once were a baby), and at the moment, there is a set of tropes that add up to modern motherhood: medicalized birth in conflict with idealized natural birth; sense of helplessness because many first time mothers have had careers instead of being carers; unpleasant social judgements usually arising from other mothers. Welcome to your New Life is built on all of these tropes, and that is fine, but where it falls down in is seeming like a musical performance, an act. This is even concretized in the acknowledgements, where, having elided the names of the entire family including the baby, all participating people are given their own credit. It looks like a theatre programme. One wonders what was really going on, off-stage.

Brianne Hastie says

This book was beautifully written and very touching. There were many moments I related to. But it lost a star for the over-the-top parodies of interactions with other mothers and health-care providers. Apparently her friends only gave awful advice, and health-care providers are all idiots who say ridiculous things. For a memoir, these just didn't ring true, although much of the other content did.

Anna Spargo-Ryan says

I did like it, I did. But I rolled my eyes just a little bit too. Imagine, if you will, Gwyneth Paltrow became self-aware and wrote a book about pregnancy and babyhood. It would be this book. It is mostly lovely, extremely introspective and the language is at times cluttered in a way that pulls you out of the story.

Somehow even the imperfections of motherhood are communicated in a way that makes them *sound* perfect. The rhythm of the story is that of perfection--a kind of lilting, quiet reflection--even though the events themselves are the embarrassing, jarring, heart-breaking moments with which almost every mother can identify.

Rach says

I could relate on a lot of levels.....gonna get a few mum's to be I know reading this instead of all that "what to expect when you are expecting" junk.....this keeps it way more real.

Sarah Kilmartin says

This book is a hilarious, beautiful and seriously frank account of one mother's experience becoming a mother and navigating the gauntlet of modern day pregnancy and motherhood advice, from medical practitioners, from blogs, from friends, from family. But this book goes beyond that...it actually reaches beyond those limits and makes you think about life and death (the chapter where her brother nearly dies is so painful to read) and whether the "human project" is worth it. She concludes it is and I honestly can't think of a book that has made me laugh, cry, nod in recognition and think about the big questions in new terms. Plus Goldsworthy writes so well you zip through the pages at lightning speed. I LOVED this book.

Kate says

See my full review here: <http://booksaremyfavouriteandbest.wor...>

I went through a stage where I was addicted to 'mummy memoirs'. Because being up at 2am feeding a baby wasn't enough – I had to read about it too.

By and large, I've moved on from mummy memoirs but a copy of *Welcome to Your New Life* by Anna Goldsworthy came my way and I read the first chapter. And then I read the whole book in one sitting. I enjoyed this book immensely from the very first page when a newly pregnant Goldsworthy, having been a vegetarian for 14 years, suddenly craves a sausage. And eats one.

"I do not just crave any old sausage, I crave this sausage: a stocky turd-like cevapi. Years of abstinence vanish, as my mouth remembers, my tongue remembers. The sausage's loud clang against the tastebuds, of spice and flesh and fat."

The story essentially follows Goldsworthy's pregnancy, the labour and the first few years of her son's life. There are no particularly remarkable experiences or challenges, it's all very normal. I'm sure some readers will want to fire up a debate about natural birth versus medical intervention or working mothers versus stay-at-home mothers. Goldsworthy gives you a little material if you really want to go there but quite frankly, I'm over those debates. Make the choices that are right for you (and shut up about it).

So back to the book. Goldsworthy is frank, funny, observant and beautifully succinct.

"Now that you have been here for two weeks, you are becoming wordly. Every day you reveal new accomplishments: That pleased noise you make after you sneeze: 'Ahhh.' I am not sure what it says about you, but it must be something special. Your quick karate chops, spasmodic and strobe-lit."

Honestly, newborn wasn't my favourite phase but I do love the randomness of a brand new baby – their crazy legs, their mad arms.

I suspect that I enjoyed much of this book because Goldsworthy and my experiences were remarkably similar – from the horror of being fitted for a maternity bra to the fact that her maternal health nurse was a militant Fran. Bizarrely, I had not one but two maternal health nurses called Fran. The first one was a total

nightmare and, much to the combined horror and high-fives from my mother's group, I ditched her and went to another (who fires their health nurse?). The second, also called Fran, was useless but not a nightmare. Is being named Fran on the job description for maternal health nurses?

Goldsworthy balances the funny with the deeper truths -

"...we spend fugitive days together... spotting diggers, sharing a rapture of the mechanical world. You have taught me a new way of looking: 'Fwut!' you declare, upon spotting a truck, so that even when I'm alone I feel a small flare of delight upon seeing one."

Yes, I felt the same way about wah-wahs (ducks). Then this -

"I remember what Fiona told me, when she brought Matilda home: I will never be happy again."

Interesting and surprisingly accurate – I had never felt a responsibility so great as when I stepped out of the hospital with my first-born.

And finally, just to prove Goldsworthy can really paint the picture for her readers, there's this recount of a breastfeeding demonstration class -

"It is a peculiar item of clothing, comprising two white pouches, each cradling a large load of breast. It is not quite a bra, and yet somehow familiar. "Not a glamorous item, perhaps, but extremely practical. Constructed, quite simply, from two pairs of plus-sized underpants." There seems to be a loud whoosh from the room: the collective evaporation of libido. Gone – perhaps forever? It is not enough to wear gigantic underpants that look like nappies: you must now wear them on your breasts. She shrugs off the underpants-bra and passes it around the room for closer study. The man in front of us makes a detailed sketch, with schematic safety pins at key structural points."

4/5 Is it all a little too slick? Perhaps. But I laughed, cringed and nodded my head in agreement in all the right bits.

Torre DeRoche says

Beautifully written, completely put me off wanting kids.

Fiona Lansdown says

Read this in about 3 hours, couldn't put it down, I thought it was one of the most realistic and well written accounts of parenthood that I have read.

Alison Condliffe says

I have liked all the calm, inspiring mothering books but it was great to read this book about someone neurotic and their story of motherhood. I identified with the perfectionist author and her anxieties and some

parts were very funny. It made me feel less alone, which is the benefit of books about motherhood.

Avril says

Fascinating, and a little terrifying. Anna is amusingly self-aware in her son-absorption, but sentences like: "Although I love all babies in the abstract, there is really only one baby" (p. 160) frighten me while also answering a question I've often pondered. How can some parents, who love their own children so greatly, not empathise with other parents whose children are hungry or cold or locked up in immigration detention? Is it because "there is a clear hierarchy of babies"? Does loving one's own offspring make one care a little less about the rest of the world, all those other babies who are not 'the one'? The blurb on the back of the book says that it reveals "the love that binds families together". This book is indeed funny and moving, as the cover promises, but it seems to me that it also reveals the love that turns its back on the wider world.
