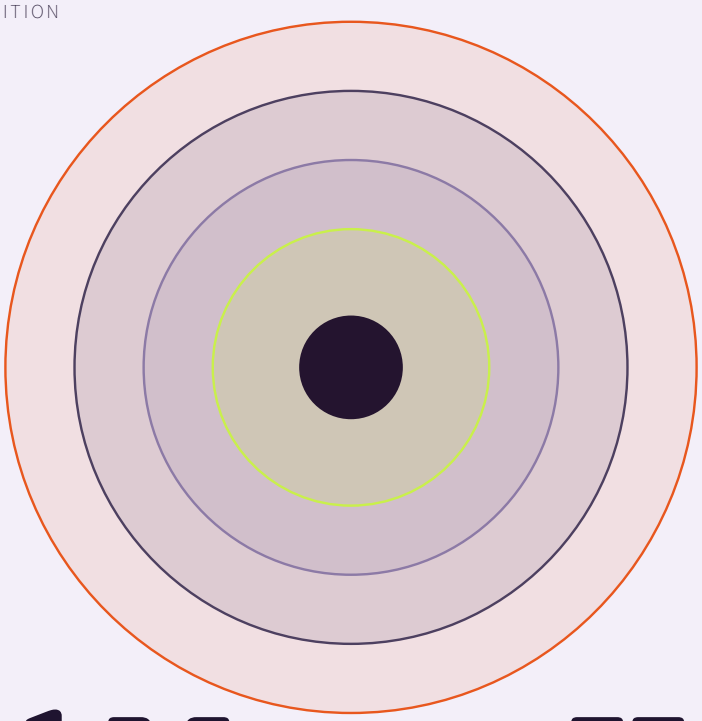


Good Moms Have Scary Thoughts: A Healing Guide to the Secret Fears of New Mothers

A reading of the book by Karen Kleiman (2019)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of Good Moms Have Scary Thoughts: A Healing Guide to the Secret Fears of New Mothers, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

Karen Kleiman is a clinical social worker and the founder of The Postpartum Stress Center, where she has worked with mothers facing anxiety and depression after birth for many years. In this illustrated book, made with the artist Molly McIntyre, she writes about the frightening, unwanted thoughts many new mothers have, often about something bad happening to their baby. Her argument is that these thoughts are common, that having one is not a sign a mother will act on it, and that the fear grows when the thoughts are kept secret. Short passages sit beside drawings, so a tired parent can read a page at a time. Kleiman explains why anxiety makes the thoughts sticky, why fighting them backfires, and how to talk about them and find help. She also separates these anxious thoughts from rarer emergencies such as postpartum psychosis.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A scary thought about your baby is a sign of how much you care, not a sign that your baby is in danger.

This is the heart of the book. A new parent's mind is tuned to spot threats, and sometimes it overshoots and shows you the worst case. Kleiman's point is that the thought upsets you because it runs against everything you want for your child.

2

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Thinking something is not the same as wanting it, and it is not the same as doing it.

Unwanted thoughts can feel like a confession. They are not. The book separates the thought, which arrives on its own, from what you choose to do, and that separation is what lets the fear start to ease.

3

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

The harder you push a scary thought away, the more often it comes back.

Trying not to think of something keeps it close. Kleiman encourages mothers to stop arguing with the thought and let it be there until it fades. It feels backwards at first, and it is usually what works.

4

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Secrecy feeds the fear, and saying the thought out loud takes away much of its power.

Many mothers hide these thoughts because they worry about what others will think, or what might happen if they tell. The book is written to break that silence, and it treats telling a trusted person as part of healing.

5

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

What makes a thought stick is the meaning anxiety gives it, not the thought itself.

Most people have odd, unwanted thoughts that slide past. Anxiety grabs one and asks what it says about you. Once you see the thought as noise from a worried mind, it loses its grip.

6

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Postpartum psychosis is different from scary thoughts, it is rare, and it is an emergency.

Kleiman draws a clear line. Anxious scary thoughts feel wrong and unwanted to the mother who has them. Confusion, seeing or hearing things others do not, or beliefs that feel real and strange are different, and they need urgent help the same day.

7

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Scary thoughts are treatable, and you do not have to wait until you can't cope to ask for help.

Talking therapy helps many mothers, and some also use medication with their doctor. The book encourages asking early, and it gives mothers words for raising the subject with a provider.

8

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Kind words to yourself work better than a fight with your own mind.

Shame makes anxiety louder. Meeting a scary thought with a calm, gentle sentence, rather than panic or self-blame, lowers the alarm and gives the thought less to hold on to.

9

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

You are not the only mother who has thought this, even if it feels that way.

The thoughts feel private and unique, which is why they are so lonely. The book's drawings show how ordinary they are, and seeing them on a page can be the first relief.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Write your kind sentence
- [ ] Save the help numbers now
- [ ] Choose one person to tell
- [ ] Bring one line to your next appointment
- [ ] Protect one stretch of sleep

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Name it, then carry on
- ◯ Don't search what a thought means
- ◯ Check in once a week

30 days · Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

- [ ] SETUP 1

Write your kind sentence

Choose one calm sentence to say when a scary thought shows up, such as: that is a scary thought, not a plan.

Put it in your phone notes or on the fridge.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 2

Save the help numbers now

Add your doctor's or midwife's number to your phone, and in the US the National Maternal Mental Health Hotline (1-833-852-6262) and 988.

Do it while you are calm, so they are there if you need them.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 3

Choose one person to tell

Pick a partner, friend, relative or professional you trust.

Tell them this week that you have been having scary thoughts that upset you, and that you know they are anxiety.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 4

Bring one line to your next appointment

Write down: I have been having scary, unwanted thoughts and I would like to talk about them.

Read it out at your next check-up, or to your baby's doctor if that visit comes first.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 5

Protect one stretch of sleep

Agree with a partner or helper on one block of sleep you can count on, such as one night feed they cover.

Anxiety gets louder when you are worn out.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Name it, then carry on

When a scary thought comes, say to yourself: that is a scary thought.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Don't search what a thought means

Skip the late-night search to find out whether a thought says something about you.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Check in once a week

Pick a day to tell your person how loud the thoughts have been, from one to five.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
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December 2026

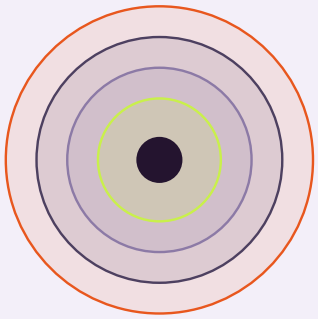
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28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



A scary thought is only a thought. Say it out loud, be gentle with yourself, and let it pass.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER KAREN KLEIMAN

Read it online, and vote on the takeaways:
hourlife.com/books/good-moms-have-scary-thoughts
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Good Moms Have Scary Thoughts: A Healing Guide to the Secret Fears of New Mothers · The reader's edition