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MISTAKES NEW DOULAS MAKE



And Lessons I Learned to
Help You How to Avoid Them

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This guide is part of Lessons from My Doula Notebook™, a collection of resources I created to help new doulas grow their practice with clarity, confidence, and connection, without the hustle.





Lessons from my Doula Notebook

When I became a doula, I promised myself that if I ever figured this out, I would share the truth about what it's really like to start. These are the mistakes I see new doulas make again and again, including some I made myself. Learn from them now so you can begin your practice with confidence and clarity.

1. Saying Yes to Everyone

Many new doulas accept every inquiry in hopes of booking quickly. This often leads to burnout and working with clients who aren't a good fit. Not every client is your client.

Lesson Learned: Clarity about who you serve makes you magnetic to the right families.

2. Offering Free Services out of Fear and Lack of Confidence

Who doesn't love a freebie? I know I do! The issue here is not being intentional about offering free services, but doing it because you feel no one will pay, or you don't have the right amount of experience to charge.

Lesson Learned: Value your time from the beginning. Pricing with confidence is part of building a sustainable practice. Some training programs even normalize this by encouraging new doulas to offer free births starting out. But free doesn't build confidence or sustainability. It sets doulas up to feel undervalued from the very start.

3. Underpricing/Discounting Without Strategy

Speaking of free, another mistake new doulas make is undercharging or offering steep discounts that are not strategic. I once dropped my then \$850 package to \$150 because I wanted a client so badly. I thought a lower price would guarantee a yes. Instead, I bombed the consultation and lost the family. Just like freebies, discounts have a place. There should be a method to discounting your fees/services that does not revolve around fear or desperation.

Lesson Learned: Confidence sells more than discounts. If you lower your rate, do it with intention such as in exchange for reviews, photos, or testimonials, not desperation.

4. Copy-Pasting Without Distinction

A common pitfall is copying other doulas' packages, prices, or even websites and just changing the colors. This is dangerous because you have no idea what goes into another doula's pricing model and how they deliver their services. There's no harm in learning from one another, but families notice when nothing feels original.

Lesson Learned: Templates are fine for structure, but make sure your words and style reflect you. Distinction makes you memorable.

5. Lacking Professionalism

Families often tell me they chose me simply because I responded to their inquiry. Other doulas never followed up. Professionalism is not optional; it is what makes families trust you.

Lesson Learned: Simple things like timely replies, clear contracts, and follow-through set you apart instantly.



6. Trying to Do Everything Alone

New doulas often try to handle everything themselves, from social media to contracts, taxes, client care, you name it. The problem is that this is not sustainable long-term and can quickly lead to burnout.

Lesson Learned: Outsource small tasks when possible. Examples include using contract templates, basic bookkeeping systems, or scheduling posts ahead of time.

7. Networking Without Strategy

Showing up any and everywhere, trying to “get your name out there” from events to groups, various social media platforms, without a plan, spreads your energy thin. More exposure doesn’t always mean more clients.

Lesson Learned: Be intentional. Focus on where your ideal clients actually spend time. Strategic networking is better than constant networking.

8. Not Having a Clear Process

Winging it with onboarding, prenatals, or follow-ups leaves families uncertain. A scattered process looks unprofessional and lowers trust. Even a simple, repeatable workflow can be a powerful shift in your business.

Lesson Learned: Build a simple workflow. For example: inquiry → consultation → signed agreement → prenatal visits → on-call period → postpartum check-in.



9. Hiding Behind “New”

Some doulas call themselves 'new' long after their training. The label becomes a crutch. Families don't want disclaimers; they want confidence. Even though you may be freshly trained, you still likely possess some experience or personality traits you can highlight when sharing about your services.

Lesson Learned: Even if you are new, lean on your training, mentorship, and strengths. Show up as capable and ready.

10. Bloated Services and Packages

Many new doulas create overly complicated packages with too many add-ons. This often comes from fear that a simple offer won't feel “enough” or that families won't want to hire them without extras. The truth is, simplicity is powerful. Clear, streamlined packages make it easier for families to understand your value and say yes.

Lesson Learned: Start simple. Offer packages that reflect what you can deliver confidently. Add more later if it makes sense, but don't overwhelm yourself or families with “more” out of fear.

11. Constantly Chasing More Certifications

It's easy to believe that one more training or certificate will finally make you “ready.” This creates a cycle of always preparing and never fully stepping into the work. Certifications can add skills, but they can't replace confidence, clarity, and experience.

Lesson Learned: Focus on applying what you already know. Take action with the training you have, and allow your confidence to grow through serving families. More certifications may come, but they should add to your practice, not delay it.



12. Not Knowing What to Do Next

Many doulas finish training and then freeze. Without strategy, months pass without serving a single family. It doesn't have to be all or nothing. You can start with taking small action steps that make sense for your business. This could look like starting with a friend or family who already knows and trusts you.

Lesson Learned: Training gives you information. Mentorship and strategy provide the steps to move forward. Create a 30-day plan to keep momentum.

13. Comparing Yourself to Everyone Else

Spending hours scrolling other doulas' websites or feeds leads to self-doubt and paralysis. Comparison steals your creativity and confidence.

Lesson Learned: Look for inspiration, not duplication. Families don't want a copy of someone else; they want you.

14. Neglecting Self-Care

In my first year, I focused so much on clients that I neglected my own health. It caught up with me (by way of gaining 50 pounds) and reminded me that you can't pour from an empty cup.

Lesson Learned: Protect your energy and health. Rest, nourish yourself, and set boundaries. Sustainability starts with self-care.



15. Not Embracing Community

Everything shifted when I stopped isolating and added a backup doula and later a co-doula. Having someone to lean on gave me confidence and support while also making the heaviness of birthwork feel more sustainable.

Lesson Learned: Collaboration is not competition. Birth work is not meant to be done alone. Community makes you stronger and more resourceful.

Closing Note:

You don't have to repeat these mistakes. I created *The Doula's Notebook Collection* to give new doulas the strategies, scripts, and systems I wish I had. Confidence is not about waiting until you have more experience. It is about starting strong with the right tools.

