

# Top Three Tips to Enjoy Your Birth



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# Enjoy Your Birth

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## A note from the author

My name is Sheridan. I have been a Childbirth Educator and Birth Doula since 2006. I teach [Hypnobabies Childbirth Classes](#) every week and attend one to two births a month. I support hundreds of expecting moms all over the world by moderating the [Hypnobabies Yahoo Group](#). I am also creating an [online childbirth series](#) to support expecting parents.

I am the mom of three boys. I have had three very different birth experiences. My first son was born by emergency cesarean at 34 weeks; my second was a vaginal birth with an epidural and my third was an un-medicated vaginal birth. Having had such different experiences helps me to understand that birth is unpredictable and we need to be prepared to make choices (and sometimes change those choices) along our journey. Experiencing such different births and discovering all the choices that face expectant parents created a passion in me for educating moms- and dads-to-be on these issues.

That passion is what led me to pursue formal training to provide doula services and teach childbirth classes. I love helping expecting parents prepare for their births.

**What if I had time to only teach three things** to any expecting mom? Whether she was planning an epidural, a cesarean or natural childbirth? What would they be? What would have the biggest effect on her birth experience?

Here are my top three tips to help you enjoy your birth!

**DISCLAIMER: The information in this book is not meant as medical advice. This book is to remind moms everywhere that they have rights and to encourage them to use them! Trust your body! Choose care givers who trust your body! Make educated decisions! Care providers give you information, but you have to decipher it and choose how to use it, ask questions, and get answers you are satisfied with. Remember, if you aren't satisfied, it is never too late to change to a new care provider--or you can choose to just say NO!**

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## Introduction

### *Imagine Your Birth*

Take a moment to imagine your upcoming birth.

Imagine that as your birthing time begins—on its own—you feel calm and confident. You trust that your body and baby know exactly what to do. You know that you have chosen the best care provider and birth location for you. You know that you will be supported in all of the choices you make during your birth.

Your birthing time moves along wonderfully at its own pace and you continue to feel calm and relaxed. You are able to easily make the best choices for you and your baby along the way. You have a wonderful support team helping you through every phase of the birth.

You follow your body's rhythm and move into different positions that help your baby to easily descend and move down and out.

After your baby is born, you feel thrilled to have such an enjoyable birth experience. You know that all the preparation you did before helped to create this positive birth.

*If this kind of birth seems impractical, even impossible, then I hope you'll find hope in this book. Births like this really do happen—and yours can be like this, too. If this sounds like the kind of birth you've always wanted, then I hope this book will give you encouragement. The birth of your dreams can be a reality.*

And yes, sometimes unforeseeable circumstances arise that require a change of plans. In the event of such a situation, a woman who had followed the tips in this book would be able to make choices calmly and move forward with a positive attitude, because of the preparation she did beforehand.

As you apply what you learn in this book, you can help to create the best birth possible for you and your baby. Let's look now at what these tools are, and how they can prepare you for your dream birth.

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### Tip Number 1: *Trust your body and baby (they know what to do)*

Women have been birthing babies for thousands of years. Your body already knows how to birth a baby, but often our mind gets in the way of letting our body do what it knows how to do.

Getting our mind out of the way may be easier said than done. Sadly in our culture we are inundated with scary messages about birth that further entrench in our heads the idea that birth must be painful and dangerous.

For example, there are TV shows that portray birth as a busy, risk filled experience – even when the birth being featured was not really that dramatic. I had a mom in one of my classes tell me her OB was on *The Baby Story*. When she said, “I saw you on *The Baby Story*.” He told her, “The birth was nothing like that. They film hours and hours of a birth and take five of the most ‘exciting’ minutes to show.”

Even well-meaning friends and family members may tell their scary birth stories as a way to “prepare” you for what to expect. Sometimes strangers share their ‘advice’ as well. One of my students was in a bank and a stranger told her such a scary birth story that she passed out from fear! Tragically, these negative birth stories often leave moms seriously doubting their ability to birth.

So what can you do to counteract the messages society is giving you and **strengthen** your trust in your body?

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## **Step #1 Take in positive messages about birth**

The images we compile in our heads have a profound impact on how we prepare for and look forward to (or dread) our birth experiences. The more positive the images are, the less stressed we'll be during pregnancy and the more eager we'll be for the day we go into labor. The more negative the images, the more we'll worry and fear the big day. It's important that you protect your mind from negative birth images during your pregnancy—here are some ways to do that.

- ❖ **Stop watching baby shows on TV.** They show the most dramatic moments of birth, because excitement sells. But they are often false representations of not only the specific birth being filmed, but of birth in general. [My birth video](#) would be considered boring and not very entertaining—yet it has inspired many moms and helped them to see birth can be an enjoyable, positive experience.
- ❖ It can be more challenging to **stop friends and strangers from telling scary stories.** But, you *can* ask them to stop if they start. Explain that your baby can hear them too, and that you only want to be exposed to positive stories because you are planning for a positive birth experience.

[Hypnobabies](#) has an amazing mental tool called the Bubble of Peace. This has helped many moms take in only the good and none of the bad information around them. Hypnobabies also teaches how to let go of fears and help your mind accept the idea that birth can be positive!

- ❖ **Actively seek out positive birth stories.** Reading books like [Ina May's Guide to Childbirth](#) and [Journey Into Motherhood](#), birth stories on websites like [Hypnobabies](#) and [PregnancyBirthandBabies](#) can fill your mind with peaceful images of enjoyable births. Even if the moms telling their stories chose a different kind of birth than you, just knowing their encouraging stories can give you support and help you form positive expectations for your own birth experience.

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## **Step #2: Learn about Normal Birth**

You should also try to learn about normal birth. What exactly is 'a normal birth'? From the [Lamaze website](#) we read:

"A normal birth is one that unfolds naturally, free of *unnecessary* interventions. A woman's body is beautifully designed to grow, birth and nurture a baby. To work properly, this elegant design requires *patience and trust*."

- ❖ **Learning how your body will work during birth** and what to expect during birth is also helpful in learning to trust that your body knows what to do. One of the most powerful pieces of information is the knowledge of how your uterus works. Did you know your uterus is the strongest muscle in your body when you are pregnant? Did you know it has two opposing muscles in it? Understanding how these muscles work is a key in staying more comfortable during your birth. (You can learn more about how uterine muscles work, in this video about [Dental Surgery and Birth](#))
- ❖ **Read positive birth stories and watch positive birth videos** that show moms having normal births. As you learn about other moms' experiences, and that normal birth does happen every day, you will begin to see how it can happen for you! There are over 250 positive birth stories for moms to read at [Pregnancy Birth and Babies](#). I have collected many positive birth videos on my [Enjoy Birth You Tube Channel](#).
- ❖ **Taking an [Independent Childbirth Class](#)** (typically one *not* affiliated with a hospital) is a great way to learn what normal birth is. It is well worth the time and money to be educated about normal birth. The information presented in class will go a long way in helping you trust your body and baby. There are many different choices for Childbirth Classes. Find one that fits with your desires for birth. Some moms find it hard to fit a live class into their schedule. The [Hypnobabies Home Study](#) is a great option! My [Enjoy Birth Online Classes](#) are another easy way to learn how normal birth works.

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## **Step #3: Learn to Follow your Intuition**

Learning to follow your intuition is imperative in building your trust in your body's ability to birth. Education is important—it will help you know the options you have and the pros and cons of each one. But when it comes down to making the choices before, during and after your birth, your intuition is the most powerful tool you can use to determine the best choice for you.

**I have three different examples** to share with you that show how a mother's intuition can guide her in making decisions regarding her birth:

- ❖ **Jenni** was planning a home birth, but "When I went into labor I just felt very panicked internally... something didn't feel normal to me... so off to the hospital we went. I asked for an epidural... a first for me out of all my births. I also declined AROM... another first for me; however, I felt very strongly that for some reason with this pregnancy and birth my water needed to be intact for as long as possible."

By continuing to follow her intuition throughout her birth, she was able to avoid a cesarean when it was discovered her baby was breech as she started to push. ([Jenni's Story](#))

- ❖ **Michele** was planning for a natural birth and had a care provider that was supportive of her desires. However, because of concerns for the baby discovered soon before her due date, she found herself in a situation where she had to have her baby that day. Her care provider was supportive of either inducing her or doing a cesarean. Michele surprised herself by choosing a cesarean.

She said this: "I was totally surprised at my own decision to have surgery rather than go through the natural process of birth. I'm a real naturalist about things and get a little nuts when I feel I can't work with the natural order of things. It was weird. No matter how much I wanted to make the decision to be induced it never felt right to me in the hour and a half I was making the decision. At the time I couldn't have told you why, it just was what it was."

After he was born by cesarean covered with meconium and was a fairly big baby, Michele felt strongly reassured that her choice was the best for the baby and her. ([Michele's Story](#))

- ❖ **Shelly** was my doula client planning a hospital birth, but really felt "drawn" to a homebirth, but never took the time to meet with a midwife. At 37 weeks she mentioned again to me the unease she felt about going to the hospital and I again suggested the idea of meeting with a homebirth midwife to explore that option.

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This time she took the time to meet with her. After their meeting she called and said, "We are having a homebirth and I finally feel great about my plans!"

Her birth was long and the baby's head was tipped a little funny, but Shelly and her midwife trusted her body and she birthed her little boy vaginally after 35 hours. When we met for our postpartum visit we both agreed had she been at the hospital she would have ended up with a cesarean.

**In all of these situations,** fear, society's expectations and information threatened these moms' best-for-them birth scenarios. But they were able to quiet those forces and connect to what intuitively felt right to them.

You can see by these stories that there is no one RIGHT choice for everyone. In some situations an epidural is a GREAT choice. In some situations having an un-medicated birth is going to be a GREAT choice. In some situations a cesarean is the BEST choice, in others a vaginal birth is BEST. Each situation is different and a mom has the right to choose what that is for her! Life is unpredictable, and we need to remain flexible and use our intuition to make the choices for us.

### **So how can you harness *your* intuition?**

There have been books written about the subject, but let me share an experience from early in my mothering career that showed me how intuition can be lifesaving.

I was on bedrest starting at 25 weeks with my first baby. I lay there every day and really had time to connect with my baby. I was forced to *stop and be quiet*. One morning I noticed he hadn't moved. I drank some juice and waited and I suddenly just knew something was wrong. I called the doctor, who instructed me to drink more juice and pay attention. I already knew something was wrong, yet I dutifully waited another hour. Then they made an appointment for me to come in for a stress test. I was thrilled when they found his heartbeat, but minutes later, they told me I needed to go across the street to the hospital for an emergency cesarean. He was in distress. He was born minutes after I got to the hospital. I often wonder what if I hadn't been forced to rest? Would I have noticed the lack of movement without being forced to be quiet?

I don't tell this story to scare you, but rather to impress upon you the importance and the incredible power of your intuition. I have since had two other babies. During these pregnancies, I was very busy chasing the other boys around. I didn't have time to rest. But I did take time every day to pay attention to my baby. (An organized way

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to do this is [Kick Counts](#). Listening to my Hypnobabies CDs also provided a daily opportunity for me to connect with my baby.)

I love what [Gavin De Becker says about fear](#):

*“Worry is the fear we manufacture; it is a choice. Conversely, true fear is involuntary; it will come and get our attention if necessary. But, if a parent or a child feels fear constantly, there is no signal left for when it's really needed. Thus, the parent who chooses to worry all the time or who invests unwarranted fears into children is actually making them less safe. Worry is not a precaution; it is the opposite because it delays and discourages constructive action.”*

Expectant parents can think of a lot of things to worry about, but by choosing to worry about everything, they may inadvertently block the true fear that can actually warn them if something is really wrong. If you are worrying about something, stop and be quiet and examine what you are worrying about and why.

*“True fears and unwarranted fears may at times feel the same, but you can tell them apart. True fear is a gift that signals us in the presence of danger; thus, it will be based upon something you perceive in your environment or your circumstance. Unwarranted fear or worry will always be based upon something in your imagination or your memory.”*

In my situation there was something in my circumstances—the baby not moving—that alerted me to the situation. Contrast that with my experience during my subsequent pregnancies. I could have worried continually this would happen with those pregnancies as well. I would be lying if I said I didn't worry at all, but I tried hard to remember this was a new pregnancy, a new baby and a new birth. I tried to focus on the fact that as long as the baby was active, he was fine. I knew that worrying about it wouldn't help. Of course I was very aware of how often the baby moved. One time the baby was a lot less active, but instead of worrying more, I took action, went in to get things checked out and discovered he was fine.

Letting go of worries is not always easy, especially if we are the type of person who tends towards that type of thinking. Here is [a link](#) with some more ideas about worrying and parenting.

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### Tip Number 2: *You CAN choose (so choose wisely)*

There are a lot of choices to make regarding your birth. It isn't just epidural or no epidural, hospital or home. You have so many choices presented to you--before birth, during birth and after birth.

I teach a whole childbirth series devoted to this topic called "[Know your Choices](#)". If you prefer to read books, I highly recommend [Your Best Birth](#). It is an easy to read book covering the different choices you have.

Trying to figure out all those choices can get really overwhelming – but hopefully this will help. Here are the three most important choices you can make to help you enjoy your birth.

#### ***Choice #1: Choose your Care Provider Carefully***

Take a moment to ponder this question...

How did **you** choose your care provider?

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Here are the most common answers. (OK, one of them isn't that common. Can you guess which one?)

- A friend recommended him to me.
- He was covered by my insurance.
- His office is close by.
- I found him in the yellow pages.
- I interviewed three different care providers and chose the one who was the best fit for my birthing desires.

It is well worth your time to really research your care provider, because the one you choose can have a HUGE impact on your birth.

Care providers can make or break a birth experience. Asking questions *long before the birth* can help you determine what they routinely do during a birth and if those interventions are what you want or not. Part of this requires learning about [what your choices are](#) during birth, so you actually know what it is you want!

I had a doula client who said that when she shared her birth plan with her OB he balked and said, "Sounds like you want a midwife." I saw this as an honest answer and talked with the mom about her choices. He was basically saying, "I can't give you what you want. Go somewhere else." But **the mom changed her birth plan instead of changing care providers**. Mind you, she didn't *have* to go to a midwife, I knew quite a few OBs who would have easily honored what she wanted. Flexible care providers are out there, you just have to be willing to find them!

### **Choosing a good care provider is NOT as simple as:**

Midwife = low intervention

OB = high intervention

Some midwives are VERY intervention happy and some OBs are very LOW intervention. So you need to ask questions of ANY care provider to see if they will support you in the birth you want.

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I have had students comment, "They are only going to be there when the baby is actually born, so does it really matter?"

The answer is a resounding yes! Their impact on your birth starts before your birth even begins. I moderate the [Hypnobabies Yahoo Group](#) and it is sad for me to hear the things some members are told by their care providers, sometimes starting early in their pregnancy. A common thing is, "Your baby is getting too big." I have a whole page on [Big Baby Bull](#) because I kept hearing more and more moms talking about this. And more often than not, doctors who state that concern will soon be pressuring you to induce, which begins a whole cascade of interventions that you may not have wanted for your birth.

Your care provider has a big impact on your birth. And if you are having a homebirth, you need to make sure she is a good match for you. You will be one-on-one with her in an intimate setting, for not only long, in-depth prenatal appointments but probably for the majority of your birthing time as well-and that can be uncomfortable if her personality rubs you the wrong way. Or you just don't feel comfortable with her for whatever reason.

### **How can you know if your care provider is a good fit for you?**

ASK your care provider! Ask every question you can think of. \*\*\*As a Special Bonus, I will send out a comprehensive list of questions for you to ask. The earlier you ask your care provider these questions, the sooner you will know if he or she is are a good fit for you. It may seem silly asking them at 20 weeks into your pregnancy about when they usually induce, but it is better to know the answers at 20 weeks, rather than when you are 39 weeks.

And, if you don't like the answers you get, then SWITCH! And if you just don't like the way they answer the questions, or if they try to scare you instead of having a conversation with you, those are good warning signs that they will probably try to scare you into interventions during your birth. Remember, *it is never too late to switch*. I have had doula clients switch at 37 weeks, but I know moms who have switched even later. Don't think, "I will just wait until my [next birth](#)." Follow your intuition on this one. If you don't feel comfortable with your care provider, find a new one. You will be glad you did. To learn more about choosing your care provider, [click here](#).

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**A Special Note for Moms who have had previous cesareans.** Depending on your location and your care provider you may not be getting complete information regarding your option of a VBAC (vaginal birth after cesarean). Some care providers tell their patients that they **MUST HAVE** a repeat cesarean. Or some over-exaggerate the risks of VBAC and negate to share the risks of repeat cesarean.

If you have had a cesarean, please visit [Birth is a Journey: Shouldn't we be able to choose our transportation?](#) I was lucky enough to have a care provider who truly supported me in whatever I chose. I chose a VBAC, but I think each mom has to make the best choice for herself. But she should have a REAL choice, with the REAL pros and cons of each choice and REAL support with either choice she makes. I have seen too many moms who want a VBAC, get undermined in their goal by a care provider who truly doesn't support VBACs.

### ***Choice #2: Location, Location, Location!***

Where is the best place to have your baby? What are your options?

- Hospital
- Birth Center
- Home

Take the time to research all three options. It may sound like a lot of work, but think of it this way. How many places did you visit when you were choosing a wedding location? How much time and money did you invest? Surely your Birthing Day is as important as your Wedding Day.

There are pros and cons for each location. I believe moms should take time to interview three different types of care providers—an OB, a Hospital Based Midwife and a Homebirth Midwife—and then choose the one they feel is best for them. Some moms feel safest at home; some feel safer at a hospital. Luckily, birth is not one size fits all. Choose the one best for you! But you won't be able to make an educated decision unless you have learned about them all. A great movie for learning more about hospital births and homebirths is [The Business of Being Born](#).

If after researching all your options **you choose a hospital birth**, please take the time to research the **different hospitals** in your area. Many moms pick their hospital because of convenience. This hospital is closest to them, or

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it is where their primary care physician is a member. If I suggest a different hospital, some moms tell me they feel it is inconvenient. They seem to feel their birth hospital doesn't really matter.

*The hospital you choose matters immensely.* It is hard for me to express just how important the hospital you choose is. Each hospital has different birthing "rules," and those rules will affect whether or not your birth choices are honored. There are four hospitals near me. I would only recommend one of them. Two are OK and one I would never go to-all because of their birthing rules.

I learn a lot about the hospital approach to birth by reading Labor and Delivery (L&D) nurses' blogs. At Rebirth's blog I read about her experience [caring for another L&D nurse from a neighboring hospital](#).

"This woman worked more years than I as a labor nurse but worked at a different hospital. The hospital she works at is known for some major old school obstetrics. This place still does routine episiotomies, tethers women in bed, elective inductions as early as 37 weeks, and even have a few doctors that will do maternal requested c-sections." (See link above)

Excuse me, did she say TETHERING a woman in bed? Umm, yes and this post was written in 2009. She goes on to explain how this mom was so surprised that

- she was allowed to drink something – in HER hospital they don't allow that
- she didn't have to get a vaginal exam – in HER hospital they require one every 2 hours
- she could labor down (wait to push until she feels the urge) – in HER hospital moms must start pushing at 10 cm
- she didn't have to lie on her back to push – in HER hospital all moms with epidural push on their backs
- she didn't have to send her baby to the nursery – in HER hospital that is routine.

**So where would you rather birth *your* baby**--Rebirth's hospital or her patient's hospital? Do you know what the routines in your hospital are?

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ASK your hospital questions about their routines. Go on the hospital tour, or call the L&D floor. Be wary if when answering a question, your OB says it's up to the hospital and the hospital says it's up to your OB. If *they* don't even know who gets to decide, that would throw up some red flags for me.

\*\*\*I will be sending out a sample list of good questions to ask.

To learn more about your choice of Birth Locations [click here](#).

(The first two choices—choosing a care provider and choosing a birth location—really go hand in hand. If your care provider is a hospital-based OB, you will birth in a hospital; if your care provider is a homebirth Midwife, you will birth at home. However, in some areas there are midwives that work in hospitals, so that is a nice option too.)

### ***Choice #3: Let your birth start on its own.***

It is imperative that you know your care provider's beliefs about an approach to inductions. Talk to your care provider EARLY (your very NEXT appointment, even if you are only in your 1st or 2nd trimester) about this. Their approach may require serious changes to your entire birth plan.

Why is this so important? On the new blog [My OB said WHAT?](#), you can see this *lovely* comment:

“It's SO weird that you're in labor! I haven't had a mom go into spontaneous labor in over a year!” -OB

What do you think the odds would be of YOU starting your birthing time on your own if you had this OB?

The odds would be pretty low and most likely you wouldn't know until he was pressuring you to come in for an induction. It is a challenge to change care providers that late in the game (though it **is possible**.)

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So on your **next visit**; ask your care provider today these questions:

- **What percentage** of moms do you induce?
- **When** during a mom's pregnancy do you like to induce? (On average first time moms don't start their birthing time on their own until 41 weeks 1 day! So if the care provider doesn't like moms going past 40 weeks and you are a first time mom, this is something to be aware of.)
- **For what reasons** do you induce moms?
- **What drugs** do you use to soften a cervix? (If they say cytotec, misoprostol or miso ask if there are other options available, such as cervidil or a foley bulb. Cytotec is NOT approved for use on pregnant women by the FDA and has been found to cause death in moms and babies. Yet, it is used daily in hospitals all over the country. Why? It cost 10 cents a pill.)

Some people are beginning to ask "[Why do OBs like inductions so much?](#)" Why are they ignoring evidence based information and choosing to induce moms even when it isn't medically indicated? Indeed, this decision of whether or not to induce can have HUGE repercussions for your birth, and this is why I think you should ask questions about your care provider's induction routine NOW.

However be aware some care providers do a bait and switch—they'll say they will do one thing and then suddenly do another. This happened with Angela, where she was told by one OB she would be able to go to 42 weeks before needing an induction and then was being pressured into an induction at 40 weeks, even though she and the baby were OK. Click the link to read about Angela [changing her care provider at 40 weeks](#), when he tried to pressure her into an unnecessary induction.

Enjoy Birth has an [Induction](#) episode in the "Know Your Choices" series. There is so much important information on this topic and learning about it sooner than later can help you let your birthing time start on its own. The episode discusses issues, such as:

- Risks of Induction
- What is a Bishop's Score & Why is it important?
- Good Reasons to Induce
- Questionable Reasons to Induce
- 5 Tips to Avoid an Induction

### Tip Number 3: *Gather Tools* (*mental, physical and emotional*)

If I gave you nothing but a handful of seeds and a patch of ground, you could probably find a way to plant them and they would probably grow. But if I gave you a shovel and watering can it would make your work much easier—and much more enjoyable.

In the same way, the more tools you have in your birthing toolbox, the easier and more enjoyable your birth will be. (Even for moms planning on getting an epidural having these tools can help them get to that point and they will still use them after they get an epidural as well.) Your body *does* know how to birth a baby—but with certain tools, it will be easier and more enjoyable!

#### ***Tool #1: The Power of your Mind***

- ❖ **Education** – We already talked about one mind tool on page 7 and that is *education*. When your mind is full of good information about birth, you will have the tools to make good choices for you and your baby on your birthing journey.
- ❖ **Hypnobabies** – In my experience the best tool to **harness the power of your mind is Hypnobabies.**

I used the [Hypnobabies Childbirth Hypnosis](#) program and it was amazing! My wonderful experience with the program is why I now teach it. I am also a birth doula for many of my students and I moderate the Hypnobabies Yahoo Group. It is so wonderful to see these moms having really enjoyable birth experiences by using the tools from Hypnobabies, so I sing the praises of Hypnobabies to everyone!

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Why is Hypnobabies such a great childbirth program?

- Hypnobabies provides deep levels of **relaxation and creates a natural anesthesia**, with self hypnosis to help you stay calm and comfortable before, during and after your birth. There are easy words and actions you and your birth partner can use to deepen your relaxation and comfort as needed. [Dentists use hypnosis](#) for people to stay calm and comfortable during dental surgery so hypnosis can certainly work for something that your body is *supposed* to do!
- **Hypnobabies helps you be in tune with yourself and your baby.** With daily relaxation practice and listening to scripts you have time set aside every day where you connect with your baby.
- **Eyes open** – Hypnobabies has eyes open hypnosis, which means you can walk and talk and easily move around during your birth, while still being relaxed and comfortable!
- **Releases fears** – Moms who take Hypnobabies, learn to create a Bubble of Peace, which can help protect them from others' negativity. There is also a wonderful Fear Release CD that helps moms to release their fears about birth, life post-baby and any other issues that may be causing them anxiety. This helps moms to avoid the fear/pain/tension cycle.
- **Hypnobabies gives you more birthing options.** Because you will receive a wonderful education about birth AND have powerful hypnosis tools to help you stay more calm and comfortable, you will have many more options during your birth. You will know what your choices are and you will be able to make them with confidence during your birth. If you are birthing at a hospital, you'll still have an option for medication—but an **epidural becomes a choice instead of a need**. Eighty percent of the moms who take my Hypnobabies classes choose to go un-medicated. Most of the moms who chose an epidural did so because they were tired rather than for pain relief. Of the moms who did not receive pitocin 94% chose to go un-medicated.

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### ❖ **Letting go of Expectations – Being Flexible**

This may seem counterintuitive. You educate yourself about your choices, you create birth preferences and choose a care provider who is supportive of them and you plan for the ideal birth. Why would it be important to let go of expectations when your birthing time begins? Because birth is unpredictable—there are many different aspects that can effect how it goes and none of them are under your control, except the choices you make. I find that a mom who plans and expects the best, but remains flexible and open to whatever her birth brings her, tends to enjoy her births the most. Flexibility is a great tool for maintaining peace during your birthing time.

Jennette was one of my doula clients. She was planning a homebirth and things started off great. After 12 hours of being at 6 cm with consistent, strong pressure waves, she chose to transfer to the hospital. She had been awake for over 40 hours and needed a rest, so she chose to get an epidural. After two hours of resting she was checked and was still at 6 cm, so she chose to get some pitocin and rest some more. Two hours later she was 10 cm and started to push and after an hour of pushing her sweet baby boy was born.

When I went for our post partum visit I asked Jennette how she felt about her birth. She said she was very happy with her birth experience. She said her main goal had been to have a positive experience and while it didn't go as she had planned, she felt supported every step of the way and made choices that were best for her. She said, "I feel like I have had an un-medicated home birth and a medicated hospital birth, so I had both experiences and they were both great." If she had been fixated on a home birth, the needed transfer to the hospital would not have been an easy transition for her. But because she was able to stay flexible and open to what she felt was best for her and her baby at the time, her experience—though not what she had anticipated—fulfilled her expectations.

## Enjoy Your Birth

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Then there is the amazing [birth of Fayth](#). After days of on and off pressure waves Holly's water broke. She went upstairs to get ready to go to the hospital. This is her account of what happened next. Notice how staying *flexible and calm* really helped her unexpected homebirth be a positive experience.

"I headed upstairs, and that is when I knew we were in for a change of plans. By the time I got upstairs I was feeling very sick. All I could think of was getting to the bathroom. I went into the bath and sat on the toilet and then my legs started to shake and I wanted to vomit. As all of this was happening to my body I was calmly thinking, so this is transition.

I knew there was no way we were going anywhere, but I didn't want DH (dear husband) to panic so I didn't say anything. Eventually DH came into the bathroom and said I need to change. I got up and walked 4 steps into our bedroom and had a wave that was so strong it knocked me to my knees. As soon as my knees hit the floor I thought OMG I have to either push or poop.

I ran straight to the toilet and squatted. I felt Fayth enter the birth canal and I pushed as hard as I could. And WOWIE did that feel good! So I did it again and there was her head. At that point I screamed at DH to call 911. He came running into the bathroom going "911? Why? We are going to the hospital". I looked up and said b/c her head is out. He totally froze like a deer in headlights! He looked at me and said "what do we do?" I said "catch". He slid across the bathroom floor and put his hands under me and I pushed one more time. Fayth slid right out and into her daddy's hands.

DH got me a towel and I sat down. As I squatted to sit on the floor the placenta delivered. Fayth just laid in my arms, she never did cry, she just looked around. We sat and stared at each other while waiting for the paramedics. It was the single most amazing 20 minutes of my life. I am still on a 'baby high' and get teary thinking about the whole thing. It was truly life altering. DH told me later that he never wanted to hear me say I couldn't do something again. He said if I could do what I just did I could do anything. He now calls me his supermom!

Thank you Kerry for creating this program (Hypnobabies) and giving me the tools to experience childbirth the way it was meant to be done!"

# Enjoy Your Birth

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## **Tool #2: The Power of your Body**

Your body knows what to do, and if you can harness its power you will find you have many tools you can use during your birth. For example:

- ❖ **Changing Positions** as you feel led to during your birth allows your baby to move easily down through your pelvis and helps you feel more comfortable.

I had a friend who was having her third baby. She always had quick, un-medicated births. When she was telling me about her births, she said how much she hated to be stuck in the bed at the hospital. I suggested that she get out of the bed and sit on the birth ball instead. She didn't know that was an option—the nurses put her in bed and she thought that was where you had to stay.

If you prefer to stand, then stand. If you feel like walking, then walk. If you want to sit, then sit. Know that your body will tell you what position is ideal, and just follow what your body wants! (Even if a mom is being monitored, she can be out of bed – just nearby).

What are some different types of positions to try?

- Upright – standing-walking-swaying, sitting, squatting, rocking
- Hands and Knees – leaning against back of bed, resting on ball, on hands and knees
- Resting – side lying down, birth ball and rest on bed.

\*\*\*I will be sharing a link to a wonderful pamphlet showing different positions and more tips to stay comfortable!

- ❖ **Your powerful uterus** helps your baby to be born. Welcome the power of your pressure waves!

Your uterus is the strongest muscle in your body when you are pregnant. It helps to open up your cervix and get your baby in the ideal position to be born. Some moms feel overwhelmed by this power. That is where Hypnobabies can be such a huge help. It helps you train your mind to interpret that power as pressure and helps you to stay relaxed during the pressure waves so that you allow your uterus to do its job instead of tightening up against that power.

## Enjoy Your Birth

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### ❖ **Let go of Expectations (Does this sound familiar?)**

This is a bit different than the one before. This is letting go of the expectations of numbers. A lot of care providers, nurses, and moms get hung up on the numbers of dilation or effacement. Keeping in mind that your body knows how to birth THIS unique baby can help keep it in perspective. You don't give birth by numbers.

Towards the end of a pregnancy, many OBs will routinely check the cervix and announce the dilation or effacement as though this is some kind of indication as to when the baby might be born. But it isn't. Knowing those numbers can often cause the mom unnecessary stress, before and during her birth. **A great idea is to refuse vaginal exams, or to say you don't want to know your dilation and/or effacement if you choose to have one.**

I have a friend who starts transformation (transition) at 3 cm. She gets to the hospital with strong, long pressure waves, yet the nurse doesn't want to admit her to the hospital because she is "only" 3 cm. By the third baby Dad KNEW to force the issue and insist the baby would be here soon. Indeed all her babies were born within an hour of getting to the hospital. This goes back to trusting a mom's intuition. It doesn't matter what dilation your cervix is or what the machine says—Mom's body knows what to do!

### ***Tool #3: The Power of Love (Emotional Support)***

It is important to feel loved in your birthing journey. Being surrounded by supportive people is helpful every step of the way. You will find them to be useful "tools" as you make choices and when you are actually birthing they will be there to hold you up and cheer you on.

### ❖ **Personal Love**

Hopefully you have a wonderful birth partner to be there by your side from beginning to end of your birthing journey. Having someone there to encourage you throughout your pregnancy and birth is so beneficial. If you don't have the support of the father of your baby, find another family member or good friend to serve as your primary birth partner.

## Enjoy Your Birth

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Sometimes birth partners don't know the best way to support moms during birth. I have a wonderful link to a pamphlet with comfort measures during birth, which is a great resource for birth partners. *In order to get the item referenced here, you must sign up for the [Pregnancy, Birth and Babies Newsletter](#).* Taking a childbirth class is also a wonderful way to prepare your birth partner to help support you. Hypnobabies is a great choice, because there is a Birth Partner's Guide to help your birth partner support you through your birth experience.

You should think carefully about whom else you want present to support you during your birth. Sometimes it is best to limit this support to just your birth partner. Less may be best. Having your mom or other family members there may distract you or make it difficult for you to relax. If you choose to invite them and find that during your birth that you don't want them there, you can tell your nurse. They are always willing to play the "bad guy" and kick them out of the room so you don't have to.

### ❖ Professional Love

You may want to add a **birth doula** to your support team. A doula can start helping you early in your pregnancy by referring you to care providers, birth locations and childbirth classes. She can also help support you during your pregnancy by answering questions and helping you create a Birth Plan. During your birth she will be by your side **continuously**. She knows about normal birth and can help remind you of your choices as things progress. She will support you in what *you* want.

Some birth partners are worried that a doula will take their place and then what will *they* do? I love this chart by Kim James, which answers the question, "[Do Doula's replace Dad?](#)" Often after a dad has experienced a doula at a birth, they become the biggest proponent of having one. I know my husband asked why we didn't have one for our first two births, after seeing at our third birth what a help doulas can be. He really felt it took the pressure off of him, and he was still a very active participant. Having a doula helped him enjoy the birth more!

## Enjoy Your Birth

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### ❖ Social Love

Having friends that support you in your desires for birth can be a great tool as you prepare. This may be more challenging for moms who are preparing for an un-medicated birth as they may feel misunderstood by friends who are not supportive of, or simply do not understand that desire.

I have a friend who was expecting her fourth baby. She was nearing 40 weeks and all her other friends were asking when she was getting induced. She called me one afternoon and said her OB was suggesting she get induced too and asked what I thought of that. Trying to be very diplomatic, I had my, "You need to decide what is best for you." Conversation with her. Finally she said, "Sheridan, I just want someone to agree with me that I am not crazy for refusing the induction and waiting for my baby to decide when to be born!" Once I knew what *she wanted* I was more than happy to let her know I totally supported her!

If you don't have any friends "in real life" that can provide support, you have some different options for finding some. Joining a Moms Group or going to a La Leche League meeting are some ways to meet moms in your area. There are also wonderful online groups where a mom can find support! For example, *Mothering Magazine* and *Baby Center* have great discussion boards. Meetup.com and Attachment Parenting International are also great places to find other moms (and API is likely to be full of moms who have or want to have natural births). And, of course, there's the [Hypnobabies Yahoo Group](#) which is an amazing and supportive group of expecting moms using different hypnosis programs to prepare for their births. I highly suggest joining this group if you want to find out more about Hypnobabies.

# Enjoy Your Birth

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## Take Action

Thank you for taking the time to read about these tips to help you enjoy your birth. Take the time to put them into action. You will be glad you did!

Please visit the [Enjoy Birth Blog](#) for more tips and support for pregnancy, birthing and raising babies!

Enjoy your birth!

P.S. If you got this E-book from a friend and haven't signed up for my [Pregnancy Birth and Babies Newsletter](#), please go sign up. You will get some follow up e-mails with bonus tips and downloads.

\*\*\*In order to get the item referenced here, you must sign up for the [Pregnancy, Birth and Babies Newsletter](#).

\*\*\*All of the quotes in this E-Book can be seen by clicking on the links right before the quotes.

Gavin de Becker's book [Protecting the Gift](#) is a great resource. I linked to an article written by him when discussing worry on page 10.

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