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HypnoBirthing® for a safer, easier and more comfortable birth

HypnoBirthing® offers women the natural, stress-free and drug-free birth that may be her desire but is not often her reality.

The technique is based on the work of pioneering obstetrician Dr. Grantly Dick-Read. In the early 1900s Dick-Read noticed that women who were calm and had positive expectations of their birthing, tended to experience less pain than women who were frightened. He came to realise that their fear created tension, and the tension caused muscles to tighten, causing a more difficult labour.

HypnoBirthing® Practitioner, Patti Good, says 'Childbirth does not need to be a painful scary ordeal to be endured. So often women face childbirth with fear as everything they have ever seen or heard about it is petrifying. It is incredibly difficult to relax when your body is this scared. HypnoBirthing® teaches the couple the tools and techniques to achieve relaxation and thus decreases the fear and significantly increases confidence in the birthing experience.'

Fifteen years ago, Marie Mongan, an American hypnotherapist, combined Dick-Read's ideas and her knowledge of hypnotherapy, to create "HypnoBirthing®". With the aid of hypnosis, a woman can bring her body into a state of deep relaxation in which the body's muscles can work the way they're meant to during childbirth.

Back in the 1950's when Marie discovered she was pregnant with her first child she got her hands on Dr Grantly Dick-Read's book on Natural Childbirth and was very much looking forward to a natural relaxed birth. Even though her labour was smooth and pain-free she was drugged for the birth and awoke sometime later, violently ill from the ether and was informed she had "delivered" a baby boy.

The same happened at the birth of her second child and only after telling her doctor she would fire him if he didn't allow her the birth she wanted, was she able to have the birth she wanted with her husband at her side (revolutionary for those days!).

Years later she helped her daughter birth in the same calm serene manner and as a result developed the HypnoBirthing® programme that is now recognised all over the world.

The programme is based on the idea that when the mother is afraid, catecholamines or stress hormones are secreted. Most of the oxygenated blood in her body moves to her arms and legs so that she can fight or run away ("fight" or "flight" response). As a result, blood is directed away from the uterus and the cervix, the muscles tense and constrict and the body experiences pain. This lack of blood flow to the uterus means that the muscles start to work against each other and can result in baby's head pushing against hard unrelenting muscle.

Conversely, when the mother is completely relaxed and free from any fear, her body is able work naturally to help her birth her baby. The two sets of uterine muscles are able to work together to open and draw back the neck of the cervix

so that the baby has a smooth path down. In this relaxed state the body also secretes endorphins, a natural painkiller 200 times stronger than morphine.

Am I going to cluck like a chicken? No, hypnosis is easily described as 'focused relaxation' where the subconscious mind is open to suggestion and does not mean you will be 'controlled' by the person hypnotising you (especially when this is your husband!). Relaxation is proven to be one of the most effective tools for dealing with tension, stress and discomfort and together with visualisation can help the body birth without the need for drugs.

During the course, each couple will learn breathing, relaxation and visualisation techniques that they will practice at home so they can call them up readily when they are needed during labour. This ensures that both mind and body are well prepared.

Hypnotic techniques can also help both parents and specifically the mom deal with any hidden or unresolved fear around birth or birthing. We have all been told so many horror stories and seen so many traumatic or comedic births on TV that it is no surprise that we find this a fearful experience.

The birth companion comes along to every class so that he becomes an integral and vital part of the team. He helps the birthing mum to stay relaxed and is fully equipped to make important decisions should the need arise. And let's face it, men are always great when they have a job!

With HypnoBirthing® thousands of women have enjoyed shorter labours and fewer Caesareans. They heal faster and their babies tend to be calmer and sleep and feed better.

Patti is an Accredited Journey Therapist and HypnoBirthing® Practitioner and is currently expanding her private practice to Harley Street. She specialises in helping women deal with emotional or traumatic birth and birth related issues. For more information on her work please visit www.babyjourney.com or call 0207 536 9135.

For general HypnoBirthing® information please visit www.hypnobirthing.com.

Trust your body and your baby, they know what to do!