

HypnoBirthing® for a safer, easier and more comfortable birth

HypnoBirthing® is as much a philosophy as it is a technique. It offers women a rewarding, relaxing and stress-free method of birthing that teaches her, along with her birthing companion, the art and joy of experiencing birth in an easier, more comfortable, and often pain-free manner that most nearly mirrors nature.

It is based on the belief that childbirth does not need to be a painful scary ordeal to be endured. Now I'm not sure about you, but this is something that resonates strongly with me and my body and it did the same for Marie Mongan who developed this programme in 1989.

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.

And now for the science...

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.

Hypnosis – 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 history of fear

The course helps to highlight how this fear has been instilled in women over the last 6000 years. Once you have been shown how in history women were isolated during pregnancy and if there was any complication, sliced open by a goat gelder and left to die (the soul of the baby was more important) it is no surprise that women became quite fearful about giving birth.

Once the history has been explained the couples watch numerous films of 'easy' births and you begin to understand that it is possible for the past programming to be undone quite easily.

The Team

The part of the programme I like best is that 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!

Results

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. Now if that isn't a good argument I don't know what is!

Where do I find out more...

Patti Good is an Accredited Journey Therapist with a successful private practice in London where she specialises in birth and birth related issues. For more information on her HypnoBirthing classes please visit www.babyjourney.com.

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

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