



# Birthing Confidently

By

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The emotional climate in the USA is moving more and more toward people preparing *intellectually* and *physically* for most important events in their lives.

Preparation for *emotional* and *relational* awareness surrounding those events is often lacking. In addition, many women since the early 90's have a strong background as career women rather than homemakers. Being in the business climate, women's beliefs and value systems have shifted. Seldom are business-women asked to prepare for events from an emotional and relationship awareness level. Women have mainly had to learn to prepare for events *intellectually* and *physically*. Physical gathering and intellectual organizing of information for the project assigned has become a paramount way of preparation.

As a result, what I am presently seeing is that women tend to approach childbirth and early parenting preparation from the same perspective. The method of physically and intellectually gathering and preparing materials has produced successful results repeatedly for them in the work-place. Hence, many women feel that doing this type of preparation for childbirth and early parenting will create the same successful results. The woman approaches childbirth preparation as if her employer has just given her nine months to gather and organize the necessary information about pregnancy, labor and birth.

The woman feels assured that by preparing this way, she will create a joyful birth and early parenting experience. Unfortunately, all too familiar to many of us childbirth educators, this way of preparation is not enough for the woman and her partner. Throughout pregnancy, but surely in the final six weeks *before* and *after* delivery, emotions arise. Her labor, birth, and early parenting satisfaction will depend largely on how she works with those emotional and relationship factors.

"One's beliefs and feelings about having a baby powerfully influence how we experience pregnancy, labor and birth" (excerpt from the book, *Creating a Joyful Birth Experience*).

*Physical* and *intellectual* preparation are very important, but these tools alone are not enough.

They must be balanced with *emotional* and *relationship* awareness. For instance, today's women who are preparing for birth may have a general knowledge of American birthing practices, but

these same women also carry with that knowledge, emotional wounds they must deal with. Five decades of technological management surrounding birth has left many emotional scars of fear and trauma for women. These emotional and relationship factors must be addressed in order to separate the past from the present. (see the writings of Robbie Davis-Floyd.)

For instance, in American obstetrical practice, birth caregivers often speak of the Dublin study and the success of its "managed care" protocols. They speak of more technological management surrounding labor and birth such as the use of pitocin augmentation to speed labor. It is my, and others' belief that in our attempt to reproduce the fine statistics from such studies, we have totally overlooked the main component in their care system. The introduction of a doula or midwife. A woman who is knowledgeable about the normalcy of labor and birth and one who stays constantly with the woman and her partner throughout the experience; meeting their *emotional* and *relationship* needs surrounding all events.

Prior to labor and birth, the woman and her partner should be encouraged to address feelings concerning various aspects of labor, birth and early parenting. The element of planning one's birth and meeting personal emotional needs should be an integral part of childbirth classes today.

I spent seven years gathering resource material surrounding the creative birth journaling methodology of childbirth preparation and now include it in childbirth classes, support group meetings, and couple weekend retreats as a means for expectant parents to examine their emotional and relationship awareness surrounding birth and early parenting.