

Birthworks®

International

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SIBLINGS AT BIRTH



Because it's ancient.....



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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

I believe that the more children can experience the life cycle, the more enriched their lives will be. In cultures around the world, many children commonly witness the births of their brothers and sisters. In the U.S., birth and death used to be in the home, but most women today are giving birth in a hospital where children are not often allowed to be present during the process. Children are losing one of the most important lessons of life: how we come into the world and how we leave. The experience of witnessing a birth is not forgotten. It is a memorable event that stays with us for a lifetime. Therefore, I believe children who have the opportunity to be at a birth are truly blessed.

If children can witness animals or human babies being born, birth is no longer a mystery. What is familiar usually feels safer than what is not. Someday when they or their partner gives birth, they may feel more secure because they've had the experience of observing a birth.

As my children were growing older, I wanted them to see a live birth, so when my youngest sister called and invited them to the birth of her third child, I immediately said, "Yes!" My children were ages 8 and 10 at the time and they wanted to see a live birth.

My sister called when she went into labor and we all headed to the hospital. She labored without any medical interventions and gave birth on her hands and knees on the hospital bed. My children were fascinated and were surprised how close they could be to her and see what was happening. Overall, it was a very positive experience and they feel closer to their cousins because they saw them being born.



Cathy Daub
PT, CCE (BWI)
CD (BWI)

We raised the question on Facebook whether or not children should be allowed to attend births (see page 8). The response was overwhelmingly positive that if children want to they should attend. As one woman said, "I wish you could see my two older girls with their baby sister. They are absolutely in love with her (even after 11 months). The bond was instant. They even held her before Daddy and I did. Stop worrying about everyone else's opinion. Do what you feel is best for you and your child."

When deciding whether or not to have children at birth, it is important to consider the following:

1. Children need to want to be at the birth. They should not be made to be there if they don't want to be.
 2. Someone needs to be there for the children at birth if they want to leave or lose interest.
 3. If you want your children to have the opportunity to witness a birth, the location of the birth becomes important. It is much easier to have children at birth at home where they have more freedom. Hospitals do not usually allow children to be at births, but some birthing centers are more lenient.
 4. The age of the child is important. Very young children may just not be interested. No matter how much preparation was given to them, such as reading stories and even showing films, at the actual moment of the birth they often run out of the room. Teens, especially boys, may feel embarrassed and choose not to attend.
- Having children attend births is a personal decision. I love what one woman said, "Don't let other people discourage you, because you don't want to regret not doing what YOU really want to do." When you follow your heart, whatever decision you make will be right for you.

BirthWorks believes...

Birth is instinctive...

We believe that the knowledge about how to give birth is born within every woman.

We help women to have more trust and faith in their own body knowledge that already knows how to give birth.

RESEARCH UPDATE

Siblings at Birth

Sally Dear-Healey, Ph.D., CCE BWI



According to the article “Family Transitions Following the Birth of a Sibling: An Empirical Review of Changes in the Firstborn’s Adjustment” by Volling, “Nearly 80% of children in the United States have at least one sibling, indicating that the birth of a baby sibling is a normative ecological transition for most children.”

Many people, including psychoanalytic theorists such as Sigmund Freud, believe that transition is stressful, leading to what could be considered a “developmental crisis.” Volling utilized thirty studies which looked at this transition to siblinghood (TTS) and found that “. . . the evidence did not support a crisis model of developmental transitions, nor was there overwhelming evidence of consistent changes in firstborn adjustment.” Nevertheless, this concern about the well-being of already-born children has contributed to the practice of routinely excluding children from births in hospitals, and even at some home births.

Years ago, I taught sibling birth classes at my local hospital. These classes were a positive opportunity for families who may have been unsure about how much (if at all) they wanted to incorporate their children into the birth of the new sibling, and if so, what was the best way. In addition to showing a short video (see resource on suggested videos), we discussed how hard mommy would be working to labor and push the new baby out; some of the sights, sounds, smells, and equipment they might encounter; how they could help throughout the labor; and how the new baby will look right after it is born.

In retrospect, other than explaining the benefits of

including a support person for the older sibling(s) if they needed to take a break or simply wanted to leave the room for some reason, I now realize the class failed to address what it would be like to have siblings at birth for the birthing mother: a crucial oversight. And, while it is difficult to predict how any child, younger or older, will react during labor and birth, it is also difficult to predict how their presence may influence birth.

This point was brought home by a recent article in *Mothering* written by Kirrilee Heartman entitled “Siblings at Birth? No Thanks.” Heartman openly shares that she “supports women everywhere to have siblings at their births,” but also openly admits that she “deliberately never planned to have siblings at the births of her subsequent children.”

Quite frankly, after reading her reasons why, and after attending numerous births where siblings (and sometimes other children) were in attendance—including the births of three of my grandchildren—I gained new insight into her reasoning. Simply stated, Heartman chose not to have them there so she could “birth smoothly . . . fully surrender, in mind and body, to the forces operating in (her) body.” She needed to feel safe, to have space to go deep within . . . and to be the centre (sic) of attention of the caregivers and support people present.” Heartman goes on to admit, “I know I could not achieve any of these things with my children present. I would be split in two—the birthing woman and mother, both jostling to be the dominant energy.” The beliefs of Heartman, and others like her, must be respected.

For other women, having their older children witness the birth of the new sibling is the best decision for them and their families. Their desire to incorporate their children into the birth, either pre-planned or by default, stems from their belief that birth is a family event and an experience with opportunities for growth and development. Clearly homebirth lends itself to this experience more than a hospital birth, although there is the rare hospital that will “allow” a sibling at the birth under specific conditions.

It is also believed that by including previously-born children in the prenatal, labor/birth, and postnatal experience, these children would exhibit fewer of the anticipated post-birth adjustment issues. These include behavior problems such as aggression, decreased affection and responsiveness to the mother, sleep problems, changes in feeding behavior, and regressive behaviors such as “baby talk” and bed wetting.

To illustrate, Dunn & Kendrick found that “mothers reported that firstborn children’s oppositional behavior was frequent three weeks after the birth, and that children deliberately engaged in naughty, demanding, and noncompliant behavior that caused considerable

stress for mothers.” Of course much of this depends on the individual family, child, and circumstances. For example, Volling (2012) found that “signs of regression may be linked to whether a skill is newly acquired or firmly established, and many of the self-help tasks of toileting, weaning, and dressing are intricately tied to children’s maturational stage.”

Another article by Volling et al., “Children’s Responses to Mother-Infant and Father-Infant Interaction With a Baby Sibling: Jealousy or Joy?,” looked at firstborn children’s post-birth reactions to mother/father interactions in 224 families at one and four months after the birth.

A summary of the findings reveals that “children’s reactions to the arrival of a newborn sibling vary considerably and include both negative (e.g. aggression, attention-seeking, protesting) and positive behaviors (e.g., joining positively, affection).” One of the conclusions of this research is that and again here “the primary attachment relationship between parents and firstborns is one central component of the jealousy triangle.”

In other words, following Bowlby and Ainsworth’s work on attachment, previously-born children who are securely attached are less likely to see the birth of a new sibling as a threat to their own relationship with the parent. It would follow that their attachment to the new sibling can be initiated, and perhaps even be reinforced, by their participation in that sibling’s birth. I have witnessed first-hand how this plays out, not only in my own experience with sibling-attended birth (my third birth was a homebirth attended by my two older children, then three and six years old), but with the births of my grandchildren.

Finally, while sometimes a family birth may occur by chance, having a plan in place helps to ensure the experience is more enjoyable and fulfilling for everyone involved. For example, what if the birth takes place in the middle of the night? Will the older child(ren) be woken up as soon as labor starts, when transition begins, or just before the baby is born? What specific role, if any, will the child(ren) play? Who, if anyone, will be there specifically for the child to help

explain what is going on and attend to their needs?

There are also other considerations, such as the age, gender, and the emotional makeup of the child. In other words, while it may be considered appropriate to have a two-year-old boy at the birth, what about a fourteen-year-old boy in the throes of puberty? These are decisions each family has to make based on their own circumstances and beliefs.

The article entitled “Preparing a Child for the Birth of a Sibling,” written by Virginia Coleman Smith, FNP-BC, MSN ICCE, provides some concrete suggestions, including promoting “self-esteem, autonomy, and sibling identity for the child, while providing anticipatory guidance (for) parents regarding the significance of their role in the child’s psychosocial development.” The author also emphasizes that “assisting a child to successfully transition the addition of a sibling reaps rewards for the entire family.” Smith also admits that there is “little current literature regarding preparation of a child for the birth of a sibling,” something I found to be true when searching for articles on this topic.

The role of the childbirth educator in preparation for birth can easily, and arguably should, include an emphasis on sibling preparation. Smith suggests planning classes that enhance the mother and child relationship and discuss anticipated changes in the home environment (adjustments in routines, sleep, meals, outings, etc.), safety issues (washing hands, soft spot, safe sleep, etc.), and strategies to assist with the transition process (time with child without infant, time with other caregivers, play dates, etc.). Parents should also increase awareness of the child(ren)’s perspective of the arrival of a sibling and how that impacts their emotions, physical needs, and routines/schedule.

Finally, there are specific things that families can do to help a child adjust to a new sibling. Some of the actions *Kids Health* (2013) suggests are: listen to the child express negative feelings about the baby and changes in the family, focus on frequent affectionate interactions, designate special times for looking at child’s baby pictures, take the child to prenatal appointments, and allow the child to think of potential baby names in preparation for the birth.

Video Resource: <http://www.mothering.com/articles/6-birth-videos-used-prepare-child-siblings-entrance/> (“6 Birth Videos I Used to Prepare My Child for His Sibling’s Entrance” by Olivia Hinebaugh, 1/15/2015).

“To the outside world we all grow old. But not to brothers and sisters. We know each other as we always were. We know each other’s hearts. We share private family jokes. We remember family feuds and secrets, family griefs and joys. We live outside the touch of time.” —Clara Ortega

CHILDREN PRESENT AT BIRTH

Rosemarie Gonzalez, MC, CMFC



My Experience

Five years ago, if someone would have suggested my children being present at the birth of my third baby, I would have said, “no way”. However, four years ago it became something to seriously consider.

My children were not in the house during the labor portion of the homebirth of my third baby, but were later brought to my home during the pushing stage, and were spending that time downstairs from me. They became restless, and came upstairs to see their sibling being born. I had spent nearly two hours pushing, and as soon as I knew my children were nearby knocking at my door, my third baby finally made an exit out of my womb and into my and my husband's hands. It appeared that I needed the comfort of knowing that my children were nearby and well. Without them it didn't feel right for me, which most likely contributed to a longer pushing stage.

Personal Choice

As with everything in labor and birth, it is a personal choice to have children present at birth. It depends on the comfort of the birthing woman as well as the children. Some mothers may feel like they cannot

focus with their children present, while others may have a sense of comfort knowing their children are near. Some children may not want to be present at the birth as they may feel frightened, while others may be excited at the thought of witnessing the birth of their sibling. The choice is based upon what each individual family prefers. However, if the birthing women and child are fine with the idea, there can be tremendous benefits.

A child being present at birth can help normalize birth for the child. The media tends to paint a frightening picture of birth, making it difficult for this generation to see the normality of birth. Being at the birth helps them welcome their new sibling into the family, creating an immediate bond.

Preparation

Preparation is very important. Some ways to help your children prepare include:

- Talk to your children about the birthing process. Discuss the possibility of you being vocal and making unfamiliar sounds, as well as the sight of amniotic fluids and blood. You can also read birth books, and/or show birth videos. Some childbirth preparation classes may even offer classes to help prepare children for birth.
- Have the children attend some of the prenatal visits to help them become familiar with who else may be attending the birth, such as a doctor or midwife.
- Give the children a job during labor and delivery, like getting mom drinks, giving her a massage, making meals, etc.
- Allow them to come and go from the birthing room as they please. This will give them the space to leave the birthing environment if they become uncomfortable or restless.
- Have a caregiver there to help take care of the needs of younger children, and also to take the children away in case the scene becomes too much for them, they become restless, or you need to be alone.

Birth is truly a wonderful, miraculous experience that can benefit families who are comfortable with the choice of having children present. When making the decision to have children present at birth, planning ahead can insure that the experience is a wonderful one.

Rosemarie Gonzalez is a BWI Childbirth Educator-in-Training. She looks forward to serving women and their support team through their pregnancy and birthing journey. Her website is: www.revivebirth.org.



SHARING THE JOURNEY

Sibling Presence at Labor and Birth

Brittany Sharpe McCollum, CCE (BWI), CD (DONA)

The decision of whether to have an older sibling present during a younger one's birth or not is a very personal one. Children and extended family were a part of the birth process until the move from home to hospital birth in the early to mid 1900's. However, there has been an increase in sibling participation since the 1980's with a larger number of home and birth center births and a greater midwifery presence.

Hospitals often have restrictions on the number of people and the ages that are allowed to be present in the laboring room, yet some are making accommodations when prompted. There is also a greater push to have siblings visit soon after birth. Birth centers do not restrict the number of support people or their ages, but often require a separate support person for each child that will be present. In homebirths, support people are unlimited, and although there are no restrictions as to the attendance of children, most midwives recommend that a separate support person be present for other siblings. For some families, the decision to have a child present at the birth is an important factor in choosing to birth at home.

The presence of children at birth is not an idea with which all parents are comfortable. The decision is a very personal one, and there are many factors to consider. A few reasons in favor of having children present include bonding, positive sex education, development of a respectful perspective on birth, an appreciation of fear and pain, witnessing "the miracle of life," learning skills in being helpful and encouraging during challenging times, feeling like they are an integral part of the family unit, and the possibility of diminishing sibling jealousy.

There are also many reasons why parents may choose not to have siblings present, including their own fear of the process, anxiety of the unknown, a loss of modesty for the mother, a child's possible shock at seeing "private" body parts, fear associated with the pain of labor, and seeing the mother in discomfort. Some researchers feel that children under the age of four should not be present at birth unless there is an older sibling or caregiver present to participate with them.

Another concern voiced by researchers is that children too young to verbalize their fears may



have difficulty being reassured, even with the presence of a caregiver. However, another viewpoint to consider is that when children are given the words to express their feelings and are given accurate information, they are kept from feeling isolated and are not left to imagine unknown situations. According to research cited by Cryns and Samuels, older children often find being present at a sibling's birth to be a positive experience. Midwife Sheila Kitzinger states, "Children who share in the experience of birth in a loving environment where there is no fear learn that birth is an important transition in the life of the family, witness the



power of a woman's body in the act of creation, and celebrate the birth of a new brother or sister."

Preparation for siblings is crucial for diminishing negative associations with birth and allowing the experience to be positive and comfortable for the child. This can include age-appropriate discussions of the body and the labor process, the encouragement of questions, reading books (see end of article for a list of excellent birth and sibling books), watching birth videos, talking about the sounds, positions, and sights of birth (including blood, the umbilical cord, and the placenta), positive birth conversations, inclusion of the sibling at prenatal visits, and possible help with blood pressure checks and belly measurements. It is also important to discuss with the child, as appropriately as possible, what the plan would be if a transfer to the hospital from a birth center or home became necessary, and how the child would be cared for in that situation.

When older children are given important roles during the labor process, they can feel even more a part of the birth. Older siblings can provide drinks and snacks to mom, help with touch measures such as massage, and even cut the cord for the baby. Older children may also provide comforting words and inspiration to a laboring mom, as illustrated in the birth video, *Birth Day*. Allowing the sibling to help keep their mother comfortable while helping the baby to be born can build confidence and feelings of importance in the child.

Older siblings may experience many different emotions when present during a labor. Most of labor is quite uneventful so boredom is common, particularly in young children. They may also experience feelings of discomfort, fussiness, fear, and excitement. When a laboring woman must tend to the feelings of her other children, it can keep her labor

from progressing and lead to her feeling stressed and overwhelmed.

Having a caregiver present for the older children is extremely important. Caregivers can help older children in preparing a gift for the baby; creating a special space where the child can play, yet still be close to their mother; and by providing activities, food, and encouraging sleep when tired. The caregiver is also crucial in helping a sibling work through feelings of fear or upset by providing the time and attention needed, and supporting the child in coming and going from the birthing room as desired. A caregiver would typically be someone with whom the child feels very close, such as a grandparent, aunt or uncle, or close family friend, and is fairly knowledgeable (or at least open to learning) about the birth process. It is often advised that the child take part in deciding who will care for them.

If personal choice or birth place policy prohibits a sibling from being present at birth, there are still ways to help older children feel comfortable with the transition into a new family dynamic. Involving siblings in the preparation for the baby, such as washing clothes and preparing and freezing meals, can help siblings feel like part of the process. Discussions with the child about where they will be and with whom while mom is in labor can also help them feel less anxious. Sharing pictures of the birth place and talking with them about the process of labor can further put them at ease. During labor, updating the child as to how mom is doing may help the child feel further connected. Younger children may also benefit from practicing how they will talk on the phone with mom if she will be staying in a hospital or birth center after the birth. It is believed by many psychologists that some of the problems encountered by older siblings, such as negative reactions

to the new baby, are due to separation from the mother at the time of birth. Studies cited in *The New Well Pregnancy Book: Completely Revised and Updated*, have shown that when older siblings are able to visit the mother during her hospital stay at least once, many of the difficulties caused by separation are eased.

Regardless of whether a child is present during the labor or not, open conversations about the child's feelings regarding the birth and the new baby are very important. Continuing to provide one-on-one time and emotional availability to the child in the postpartum period can help ease the sibling's transition into sharing his or her parents with the new baby and maintain feelings of love, unity, and cooperation among the new family dynamic.



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Sign up for **BLOSSOMING BELLIES** monthly newsletter with our upcoming classes, community events, discounts, and more! Check out our Doula Mentor Program for new and aspiring doulas!

See next page for a list of books on birth and siblings.

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Books To Help Prepare a Child for the Birth of a Sibling:

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My Brother Jimi Jazz,

Chrissy Butler

*Mama, Talk About When Max
Was Born*, Olson

*Mama, Talk About Our New
Baby*, Toni Olson

My New Baby, Annie Kubler

My New Baby, Rachel Fuller

AN UNEXPECTED GIFT

When we found out we were pregnant for the third time, we were in shock, but I soon realized I could have it all this time: the family-centered homebirth I had dreamed about, the belly casting I never created, the artistic henna on my belly, and I would finally get to eat my placenta. But most of all, I knew I could give my two boys something really special: witnessing the birth of their brother. What I didn't expect was what they would give me in return.

My second birth was at a birthing center and included my oldest son (at that time Mitchell was 2½ years old). However, he was out of the room until his brother Mason was in my arms, so he wasn't "part" of the labor and birth, which had always saddened me. I let other people's thoughts of "scarring him" persuade me into thinking he couldn't deal with birth. But during this pregnancy, and as a seasoned mama, I had no fear of birth and didn't fall for any influences. My husband, Sam, agreed so we moved forward and created our birth vision to allow both of our children to be part of the birth of Madox.

Since the birth was in our home, I knew the boys would feel comfortable to come and go as they pleased. We had Grammy take care of their needs so Sam could focus on me. The boys came in quietly, listened, curiously watched, fanned me, and even drew pictures of me in the tub with a huge belly. Once I was

in the tub and things really got moving, they stayed and observed. Mason stood by my head and Mitchell was at my feet, really interested in what was happening. Since I was home, I didn't really hold back: I hummed and even screamed. Beforehand, we tried to give them examples of crazy "birth sounds" to prepare them, and I went over what happens when the baby comes by using charts I had for teaching. They knew more about the vagina than most adults!

Since Mason was only 3½ years old, I am not sure how he really felt, although he tells me it was "cool" and "he got scared" when I yelled. I feel that short moment of me yelling in joy, "Give me my baby!" was totally worth it for him to be part of a life experience that most children never have the chance to witness. I believe this experience will help strengthen their future relationship as brothers.

I have no regrets including my children at my birth. Mitchell gave me kisses and hugs throughout the labor and birth, while Mason fanned me and kissed me. What I didn't expect was how much support these two little men brought to me during birth. I felt complete and open to sharing this journey with them, but they gave back much more love than I had ever imagined. This experience has made my heart fuller and given us all such a special bond—a feeling I will never forget.

—LI

OUR FACEBOOK REPORT: Children at Birth

We asked if children should be able to attend birth, and received an overwhelming affirmative response in favor of children at birth. Below are just some of the wonderful stories we gathered!



“Yes” Responses:

• Our oldest son, then nine, was present for my induction, labor, and delivery of our fourth child. I gave birth in a family-style birth center affiliated with a local hospital. My labor was five hours from start to finish and he was present for all of it. He wants me to say that he feels like the child should be mature enough to handle the emotions that are present in birth. He said that to watch a baby being born was “really cool—especially since it was my baby brother.” The two of them are nine years apart and have a special bond. He is very protective over him. Our youngest adores him. I have always been honest with my children regarding reproduction. My husband and I both felt it would be a wonderful experience for him. We chose to leave our other two in my aunt’s care. They were too young to grasp the situation. It is truly a magical experience to be present the moment a human being takes his/her first breath. CT

• As a midwife and L&D nurse, I’ve observed many children at birth. My favorite was an unexpected promotion to magician! There was a three-year-old child in the room, sleeping while her mom labored. It was 2:30 am, so not much woke her—until the commotion immediately preceding the birth (increased activity and bright lights) began. She sat up and rubbed her eyes, and as I held the baby up to place it on mama’s chest, she excitedly exclaimed in awe, “Mommy, look what she found!” I was pretty proud of myself, felt like a magician pulling a rabbit out of a hat and realized she thought it was all magic! Children’s views always offer a unique perspective, and I certainly remembered hers. TW

• Absolutely! But I believe it should be up to the discretion of the parents. My son had just turned three and was at the birth of his brother. We watched tons of birth videos in preparation and had my mom there solely as a support person for him should he need a break. He did great. He still talks about helping to cut his brother’s cord. It was a beautiful family experience. CB

• I think it’s appropriate, personally. Probably a lot of it would depend on the child. It is nature, it’s real life! Let ‘em learn! LB

• I had three home births and each daughter was at the next birth. It was wonderful and I think they are glad they were at the births. They are very close today as grown young women. Our midwife had recommended a cloth birthing doll in which we could demonstrate a birth by pulling out the little baby and attached placenta. DG

• With my last birth, son number three, both my two-year-old children were there while I labored. It was an

unattended birth with just my hubby and me. Our baby came in between cartoon breaks. The universe always provides the perfect amount of influence. I think that it is important for children to know how they get here in a natural and gentle way. IFE

• Yes, I believe children should attend births. It turned out to be a great birth control for my oldest, now 14 years old, who was present for her sister’s birth at home. She swears she will not be having a baby now. JM

• All humans deserve to witness live birth! It would probably somehow help to fix the world’s problems! MSK

• My twelve-year-old niece and four-year-old watched me give birth a few months ago. Since then, my son refers to pregnant women as miracles. JAT

• My then four-year-old daughter caught her own little sister. Guess that pretty much expresses my opinion on the matter. KSW

• My four-year-old held my hand while I birthed his brother. He said, “I’ll hold your hand as long as you need me to mom.” I wouldn’t have had it any other way. TDH

• My kids were present to see their siblings born. My youngest was four. After seeing two births he now wants to be an obstetrician so he can work with me when he gets older. AD

• At first I questioned about why she would want her nine-year-old boy to witness this? Her reply, “This is something he’s choosing to do (no one is forcing him to watch) and it’s good for a preteen boy to see a true representation of what a woman’s body is meant for and why it should be respected. She has also continued to nurse around him without a cover. This child will have a fabulous grasp on the female body as he enters his teen years. KK

• We weren't sure exactly how the younger would handle the actual birth, so we had a friend and her daughter come be a support person for each boy. They both ended up watching her be born on the bed. The younger son was more concerned about the blood and fluid after the baby was born than the baby herself coming out. The oldest had insisted for months that he wanted to cut the cord—and he did! He was very proud.

“No” Responses

• I personally didn't want my children present to deal with my contractions and having them watching me. I could not handle it and relax. Now I've attended births where children are present and age does make a difference. One little girl, a three-year-old, kept stroking her mom's

leg telling her it's all right wanting to comfort her mom. That seems so sweet but she was scared, and to put a child in an adult position of comforter to her mother, is very stressful and unfair for a child. Also, at one birth three older siblings were present when baby sister was born limp and needed resuscitation. One child said, “I thought she was dead.”—a feeling that is hard for adults to deal with, let alone a child. Everyone makes their own choice based on their family.

• As someone who assists with delivery, my answer is a firm NO! So many things can go wrong at a delivery that a child doesn't need to see! Plus, I feel it's a situation for the partners to share between themselves. RW

• Let's put MD behind your name then. Let's let the 3- or 4-year-old

sibling watch their mommy go from sitting in her chair/bed and all of a sudden her stomach is burning like it's on fire and the hospital staff rush to get her back into the OR for a stat section, because she is abrupting and her baby is suffocating in its own fluids! The hospital staff is working as fast as they can to try and save that baby and when it's all over the staff are wiping the tears or trying not to show their distress because the family is in mourning over a lost member. Oh and the little 3- or 4-year-old sibling is scared because they don't understand what just happened. Yes, let them be there so they can enjoy the birth at home, but if you are in a hospital setting think twice. Hospital staff are not there to dictate what you can or cannot do; they are there to take care of you and the baby. RW



A REASON FOR CELEBRATION: BirthWorks For New Zealand's Young Parents

New Year's Day saw people celebrating a fresh start the world over. But in Canterbury, NZ the birthing community was celebrating for a different reason. January 1, 2015 marked the first day of district health board funding for young expectant parents to do BirthWorks with The Birthing Room, through The Youth Alive Trust. And this is worth celebrating for multiple reasons! Whilst The Birthing Room has been facilitating BirthWorks in Canterbury since 2013, it is the first time the NZ government has actually funded a completely different kind of antenatal education (i.e. one that differs from the medical model). So it is the first time parents in NZ have been able to do BirthWorks for FREE.

The excitement and support from the midwifery community has been wonderful. Midwives are looking forward to young expectant parents receiving positive, empowering messages about birth. They believe this

not only sets up young people for a positive birth experience, but also for a life-altering path of good self-esteem and gentle, loving parenting.

In February, midwives, family doctors, and school and sexual-health nurses will be welcomed to an introductory evening of BirthWorks. This will be a special opportunity for key health professionals to ask questions, hear about others' experiences of BirthWorks, and see what the future holds for Cantabrian's young parents.

The Youth Alive Trust's antenatal education for young expectant parents is called BUMP. As well as BirthWorks with The Birthing Room, the BUMP journey includes antenatal exercise, budget advice, nutrition and cooking skills, breastfeeding support, postnatal playgroups, and a mentor throughout each parent's pregnancy and early-parenting journey. The first BUMP course begins on March 31, 2015.

— Rosemary Joyce

*“Sibling relationships...
outlast marriages,
survive the death of parents,
resurface after quarrels that
would sink any friendship.
They flourish in a
thousand incarnations
of closeness and distance,
warmth, loyalty,
and distrust.”*

—Erica E. Goode



HEALTHWISE

The Value of Plant Proteins

Cathy Daub, PT and
Horatio Daub, MD

I used to think that the only place I could get protein from was animal products such as milk, eggs, and meat. In fact, I can still hear my mother saying, “Drink your milk so you will have strong bones!” But we know much more now.

Proteins are found in both animal products and plants. We now know that what is absorbed into the body slowly tends to be healthier than what is absorbed quickly. For example, sugar is absorbed quickly—one of many reasons why too much sugar is not good for you. As it turns out, animal protein is absorbed more quickly than plant protein, making plant protein healthier for you.

We also know now that too much protein is not good for the body. Proteins are made up of amino acids which when absorbed into the blood, tend to tip the balance towards acidity. The body, which must maintain a very tight control of the blood pH, will take calcium from the bones to neutralize this excess acidity when too much protein is consumed. This is the reason that getting calcium from dairy products, which are high in protein, defeats the purpose because more calcium is lost neutralizing the amino acids than is gained from the calcium in the dairy products.

In addition, asking the kidneys to metabolize extra amounts of protein, especially animal protein, can tip the balance in some kidneys so that kidney function is adversely affected.

Since 1974, the World Health Organization has recommended that we get 5% of our calories from protein (6% during pregnancy). Consider this: 1. Breastfeeding babies are nearly doubling their size,

yet they do fine with human breast milk, which is 5% protein.

2. As adults, we do not need the 35% of protein received in a typical Western Diet.

Bottom Line:

1. If you get enough calories to maintain your weight from nutritious whole foods rather than processed foods, then you will have plenty of protein to satisfy the nutritional requirements for a healthy body.

2. Too much protein is not good for you, as it tends to deplete the calcium in your bones required to maintain their strength and prevent fractures. Too much protein also puts an extra load on your kidneys, which in some people may lead to deterioration of kidney function.

3. You can easily meet your protein requirement on a plant-based diet. In fact, broccoli has a higher percentage of protein per calorie than pork, salmon, chicken skim milk, eggs, beef, and cheddar cheese, but without the fat, cholesterol, and environmental toxins found in animal products.

4. Proteins are acidic by nature, but our bodies function best in a slightly alkaline state.

Recommendations

1. Decrease animal protein in your diet and increase plant protein. Eat more vegetables, fruits, nuts, and grains. Cut back on animal proteins in dairy, eggs, and meats, which also helps you to avoid the fat, cholesterol, and environmental toxins typically found in them.

2. Eat your broccoli and other leafy greens—they are powerhouses of nutrition and high in plant protein.

References:

1. Protein and amino acid requirements in human nutrition. Report of a Joint WHO/FAO/UNU Expert Consultation. *Technical Report Series*, No. 935. World Health Organization.
2. Pulde, Alona MD and Lederman, Matthew, MD, *Keep It Simple, Keep It Whole: Your guide to Optimum Health*. Exsalus health & Wellness Center. 2009.



Sweet Potato Barbecue Bowls

Yield: 4 servings

From *More Quick-Fix Vegan*

by Robin Robertson

Sweet potatoes and pinto beans team up with a smoky barbecue sauce in this lip-smacking bowl of goodness. Use your food processor shredding disk to save time shredding the sweet potatoes.

- 1 Tbsp oil or ¼ cup water
- ½ small red onion, minced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and shredded
- 1 15.5 ounce can pinto beans, drained and rinsed (or 1½ cups home-cooked pinto beans)
- 2 canned chipotle chiles, minced
- 2 Tbsp tomato paste
- 1/3 cup ketchup
- 1 Tbsp yellow mustard
- 1 Tbsp pure maple syrup
- 1 Tbsp tamari soy sauce
- 2 tsp chili powder
- 1 tsp liquid smoke
- ½ tsp smoked paprika
- salt, freshly-ground black pepper
- ½ cup water
- 4 cups chopped fresh spinach or baby kale

Heat oil in large saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and garlic; cook until softened, 5 minutes. Stir in sweet potato, cover, and cook until softened, about 7 minutes or until tender. Stir in the next 11 ingredients and as much of the water as needed to make a smooth sauce. Cook, stirring occasionally to heat through and blend the flavors, about 5 minutes. Stir in the spinach and cook for a few more minutes until wilted.

This recipe is delicious even without the chiles and liquid smoke.

CHILDBIRTH EDUCATOR WORKSHOP

Charlottesville Virginia, January 2015



Workshop Attendees

Top Row, L-R: Ashley Collins and Aubrey Israel-Hampton (Hostess)

Bottom Row, L-R: Kathleen Rucka, Dominique Denson, Jenny Fisher, and Cathy Daub (Trainer)

The Charlottesville BirthWorks workshop I attended in January was incredibly inspirational. As a childbirth educator-in-training, I left the workshop feeling excited and motivated to be a part of the birthing community. I came out with a sense of love, and a stronger understanding and appreciation for the miracle of birth. The workshops were held in the homes of fellow students, and I was so pleased to find such a cozy setting. Being able to explore such intimate topics such as grief, healing, and fears was made easier in the presence and comfort of a small, like-minded, compassionate group of women like the ones I had the pleasure of meeting.

I was also particularly pleased with some of the more hands-on concepts we explored, such as primal behaviors, pelvic body work, and comfort and relaxation techniques. The emotional training was well balanced with some of the practical skills and knowledge that will be just as vital for our future students. At the end of the weekend, I found I had an intense sense of confidence and faith in the instinctive process of childbirth, and am eager to pass on that same confidence to more women.

—Dominique Denson

DOULA EDUCATION WORKSHOP

Des Moines Iowa, December 5-7, 2014



Workshop Attendees

Back Row, L-R: Cathy Daub (Trainer) and Katie Kelly (Hostess)
Front Row, L-R: Katherine Laufer, Meghan Spees, and Courtney Buchman



Our doula workshop weekend began by introducing ourselves and learning what a doula truly does. I have to admit I thought I knew what a doula did, but after our weekend I realized I was sorely mistaken. Doulas do much more than I ever thought, and I'm amazed about how much more drawn I am to becoming a doula after my workshop with Cathy Daub.

Cathy spent the weekend teaching us techniques on how to help women in labor: some were familiar, such as general comfort and counter pressure; some were not, such as the side-lying hip release. We covered basic breastfeeding advice, types of labor, and what doulas can and cannot do in a birth setting. We also discussed releasing fears, our relationships with our own mothers, as well as the most important thing to remember as a doula: how can I keep the oxytocin flowing?

I am pleased to say that I learned a lot during this weekend—more than I ever hoped I would. I feel confident in saying that all attendees left the workshop feeling more secure and confident in their knowledge of how to help laboring women as doulas, and eager to finish their training so we could help women in labor.

—Katie Kelly

**Relaxing at the Des Moines BWI Doula Workshop
with Gentle Touch Massage**

CHILDBIRTH EDUCATOR WORKSHOP

Medford New Jersey, November 2014



Workshop Attendees L-R: Cathy Daub-Trainer, Jessica Ruscetta-Hostess, Michelle Tate, Jennifer Hendrickson, and Nancy Harisiades

This past fall I hosted and attended the BirthWorks Childbirth Educator Workshop in Medford, New Jersey. As someone in the process of certification, I really thought I knew what to expect. I thought that we would spend a lot of time talking and learning about childbirth and specifically about how women already know how to give birth: that it is instinctive. I was reading Cathy Daub's book, *Birthing in the Spirit*, at the time and thought I knew what was going to transpire over those three days. I was so excited I was with women who were equally thrilled to have Cathy's knowledge and experience to help us learn and grow.

What I didn't realize or was prepared for was how much I would learn about myself, and how much healing I would experience. The wonderful energy of the women attending the workshop was warm and loving, like a big hug each day. All of the exercises and lessons were not only preparing us to teach the classes

to expectant parents, but also teaching us more about ourselves, helping us to heal whatever we personally needed to heal. I felt full and more accepting of myself at the end of each day. What a terrific thing for expectant parents to experience: healing and acceptance.

By Sunday when it was time to say goodbye, I truly felt that I had shared a part of myself, and that each of these wonderful women were a part of me. This is how we can create a sisterhood, a sisterhood of educators prepared with all the years of information and lessons that BirthWorks has to offer, ready to help expectant mothers know that they are strong, powerful, and capable of birthing their babies exactly the way they want. I am excited to be able to help women in this way. I am also thankful that there are other women who share my passion for making a difference in the lives of pregnant women.

—Jessica Ruscetta

HOST A CHILDBIRTH EDUCATOR AND/OR DOULA WORKSHOP

Are you interested in hosting a childbirth educator and/or doula workshop for BirthWorks in your community? Could you benefit from getting a reduced training fee? We are looking for women who are, or would like to be, connected to their birthing community by bringing BirthWorks to their area. Before applying, please have a location for the workshop in mind, suggestions for advertising in your area, and allow for six months planning time. Write to sandyr@birthworks.org for more information about this unique and rewarding opportunity.

BirthWorks Childbirth Educator and Doula Training and Certification

BirthWorks has been an internationally recognized childbirth education program for over 25 years. Its innovative and experiential design develops a woman's self-confidence, trust, and faith in her innate ability to give birth and nurture her child.

Our childbirth classes are also approved by DONA (Doulas of North America) International to fulfill the childbirth educator requirement for their birth doula certification.

BirthWorks began offering doula training in 2006. The same philosophies embodied in our childbirth education classes are also in our doula trainings. Be able to offer women an extension of your childbirth classes by taking the BirthWorks doula training.

For information about attending our childbirth education classes or doula trainings in your area, as well as information about our childbirth educator workshops or finding a BirthWorks doula, visit www.birthworks.org.

2015 Workshops

Childbirth Education

April 17-19: Los Angeles, CA

June: Auckland, NZ

Accelerated Combo

Childbirth Educator/Doula

March 26-29: San Antonio/Austin, TX

June: Christchurch, NZ

New Childbirth Educator Students

Hannah Hale, ID

Kathleen Rucka, VA

Kate Wolfe, NZ

Postpartum Online Doula Program

in development at BirthWorks.

BirthWorks Trainers

Cathy Daub

Kathleen Furin

Sally Dear-Healey

Joan-e Rapine

Reviewers Needed

We need reviewers for new childbirth educators-in-training. If you are certified and have been teaching BirthWorks classes for awhile and want to become a reviewer, please contact the BirthWorks office at 1-888-TOBIRTH (862-4784) or info@birthworks.org. This is a great way to give back and help other women who are working on their certification.

BirthWorks Welcomes
To Our Newsletter Staff
TRISHA LAWRIE
Managing Editor



Trisha Lawrie is a certified BirthWorks instructor living in Painesville, Ohio. She and her family just returned from living in Scotland for several years. Trisha is a stay-at-home mother to three children, and enjoys reading, painting ceramics, and helping women to have positive, beautiful birth experiences.

BIRTHWORKS UPCOMING NEWSLETTER THEMES

- Post-partum Depression
 - Breastfeeding
- Optimal Pelvic Positioning

Contributions Needed:

Articles • Stories • Tips • Poems
Recipes • Book/Media Reviews

ANNUAL BIRTHWORKS MEMBERSHIP

Membership is \$30 a year. Not only does this money go to support BirthWorks programs and services, but being a member of BirthWorks means you are a part of a larger community of women who believe that birth works!

Contact us to Become a Member

BirthWorks International, PO Box 2045, Medford, NJ 08055
info@birthworks.org • www.birthworks.org

ON THE BUSINESS SIDE: Notes From the Office

BirthWorks on Facebook

Women are attracted to our organization because of its unique philosophies, evidence-based curriculum, and the comprehensive nature of our certification materials, as well as our educational and inspiring workshops.

BirthWorks currently has 5,000 friends on our Facebook pages, and that number grows daily. You can help spread the word about BirthWorks by encouraging your friends to follow us on Facebook. You can ask birth-related questions, post inspirational quotes, or mention birth-related stories you've seen in the news. Also, be sure to watch Facebook for great deals on products and/or services.

Become a BirthWorks Ambassador

Our goal is to have an Ambassador in every state by the end of 2015! If you are a student in one or both of our certification programs, being an Ambassador will help you make contacts to build your own small business, and at the same time promote the BirthWorks name. You can also be an Ambassador for BirthWorks even if you are not currently enrolled in one of our certification programs. If you, as a member, are attracted to our philosophies and want to help us further our mission, and would like to become an Ambassador for BirthWorks, please write to Mali Schwartz, chair of our Ambassador committee. Mali's email is: malischwartz@verizon.net.

Board Positions Open

BirthWorks continues to undergo exciting changes! In order to enhance the support we can provide to our members, as well as the birthing and parenting community, we are expanding our Board of Directors. BirthWorks is currently accepting applications for the following positions: Director of Public Relations, Director of Marketing, and Director of Fundraising.

Not only is this an opportunity to contribute your time and expertise to BirthWorks, it is a great way to keep your skills up-to-date and looks great on your resume! If are interested in applying for one of these positions, or you have questions about the requirements of a particular position, please contact the BirthWorks office by calling 1-888-TO BIRTH (862-4784) or via email at info@birthworks.org.

Help Spread our Message

GoodSearch.com and GoodShop.com are search engines that donate half their revenues to the charities their users designate. You use them as you would any search engine, and they are powered by Yahoo. Enter BirthWorks International as the charity you want to support.

BirthWorks Online Store

Please note that all orders from the online store, or those made through the office, will be sent by priority mail. Childbirth preparation workbooks will be sent by media mail. This means you need to get your orders in at least two weeks in advance of your classes so you receive them in time. If necessary, rush orders are available at an additional cost. You may also call the office to request UPS or FedEx options. Be sure to look for postal slips when looking for your package, as it has come to our attention that some orders have not been picked up.

iGive - You Save and We Grow

BirthWorks invites you to make a difference by taking a few moments of your time and registering with iGive to donate to BirthWorks International every time you shop at participating businesses.

After you register with iGive, which only takes a few minutes, whenever you make a purchase with a participating business, such as Amazon.com, a portion of your sale will go to BirthWorks. Right now there are over 1,000 participating stores, so sign up now!

Use this direct link to sign up:
<http://www.igive.com/C61Z1X0>.

Give a Gift of BirthWorks

BirthWorks helps women have better birth experiences, and now you can support someone by giving them the gift of BirthWorks. Enable more women to become trained to teach childbirth classes in their communities, by gifting tuition for the childbirth educator certification program, or for the childbirth educator and/or doula workshops. Make a donation towards the development of our postpartum doula certification program. And remember, your gift is tax-deductible. Just click on the "Donations" tab on our website.



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Praise for BG Birthing Gowns:

"I recently gave birth to my first baby, a girl named Lois Annemarie Sonnenberg. Early on in my pregnancy my aunt Cathy sent me a birthing gown. I was very excited when she explained that I could wear it instead of a hospital gown. I had been dreading putting on one of the drab hospital gowns that someone probably died in yesterday. I went into labor earlier than I expected, and on Halloween of all days. Needless to say I was resisting. But when I realized there was no turning back, I went and put on my new birthing gown. It was my way of accepting that it was time to have a baby, and I did. I put it on at the house, wore it to the hospital, and took it off after it got too dirty from my discharge. Then I put on the hospital gown that I took off to get into the shower where I delivered. In my head, I just wasn't going to give birth in one of those hospital gowns, so I think I probably would have ended up naked to deliver even if I wasn't in the shower. There is just something so wrong about delivering this perfect sterile baby by way of such a natural process in a recycled unattractive hospital gown."

—Kari Sonnenberg

PLACE YOUR AD
IN OUR
MARKETPLACE!

Contact our office
for details and rates at
888-TOBIRTH
or info@birthworks.org.

Submissions for next issue
are due April 1, 2015.