

# Serenity Birthing – Your Birth and Beyond, The Way that Resonates With You



# Module 13 – Serenity Birthing



# Module 13 – What you will encounter

- ♥ The emotional phases of labour – refreshing your memory from Module 2
- ♥ What is Serenity Birthing?
- ♥ Birth Preparation – Letting go of fears, effective pain management, trusting your body
- ♥ Hypnotherapy techniques, breathing techniques, massage techniques, birth pools, hot and cold, aromatherapy, birthing balls, birth companions, homeopathy



# The Emotional Phases of Birth

🌈 Phase 1 - The excitement phase

🌈 Phase 2 – The serious phase

🌈 Phase 3 – The self doubt phase



# What is Serenity Birthing?

- ♥ Overcoming fear
- ♥ Increasing the trust and confidence in your body
- ♥ Learning to deeply relax
- ♥ Breathing effectively
- ♥ Learning to stay calm no matter what is happening around you
- ♥ Protecting yourself from negative thoughts



Tools to approach birth so that you trust  
your body, allow yourself to birth  
instinctively regardless of where or how you  
birth your baby



# Birth Preparation – the Steps

Commit to preparing, regularly practising and believing in your body

1. Conquer your fear
2. Methods of effective pain management
3. Trusting the knowledge you absolutely CAN do this
4. Have a prepared birth companion
5. Use practical tools to help the birth process



# What taking these steps does

- ♥ Reduces the need for intervention and pain medication
- ♥ Means you are more likely to have a positive birth
- ♥ Allows you and your birth companion/s to be calmer and more informed
- ♥ Allows you to bond more easily and effectively with your baby
- ♥ Means your baby will be more calm and alert





# 1 - Conquer your fear

- 💖 Acknowledge, understand and face your fears head on – this prevents them emerging when you are in labour and feeling vulnerable/are busy
- 💖 Aim to resolve your fears and use positive thoughts and language
- 💖 By acknowledging them, you can realise that your fears are simply thoughts, the sum of previous experiences NOT actual reality
- 💖 Accept them, let them go, change them for more beneficial thoughts



# 2- Effective Pain Management

💖 Relaxation and breathing techniques

💖 Using water

💖 Changing positions

💖 Using natural ways to cope with the sensations of birth allow you to remain relaxed so that your contractions are more comfortable and more effective



# 3 - Know that you CAN do this!

- 💖 You were MADE to do this and you absolutely CAN do this
- 💖 Be confident that your body knows how to birth your baby so that you can trust, accept and relax through the process



# 4 - Your birth companion/team

- ♥ Make sure your supporters understand the process of labour
- ♥ Make sure they know what to expect
- ♥ The best ways to support you
- ♥ The best ways to work with your medical team
- ♥ This way they will be informed and confident, calm and relaxed



# 5 – Practical tools to help the birth process

💖 Help to build confidence, focus, control

💖 Positions to help labour

💖 Massage

💖 Breathing techniques

💖 Relaxation techniques

💖 All to encourage your natural physiology to work best



# What these tools will do...

They will help you to:

- ♥ Be calm, confident, quiet and focused
- ♥ Breathe deeply and rhythmically to work with your body
- ♥ Be in “the zone” and allow your body to work best
- ♥ Reduce and manage the “pain” of labour sensations
- ♥ Have a confident, calm, informed birthing companion who can advocate for you and who understands your preferences
- ♥ Shut down your neo-cortex, allowing your labour brain to work smoothly
- ♥ Overcome fear and anxiety that will reduce tension in your body, lower pain sensations and speed up your labour



When you are relaxed, your baby will be too



# You are learning to:

- ♥ Enter a state of deep relaxation whenever you need or want to
- ♥ Effectively breathe
- ♥ Use effective pain management to reduce your need for pain medication
- ♥ Be more relaxed which can help manage your energy levels, blood pressure and oxygen flow to your body and your baby
- ♥ Take time out to relax and focus on yourself
- ♥ Take time to bond with your baby





# You are also learning to:

- ♥ Increase your self-worth and self-confidence
- ♥ Increase your trust in your own body and its amazing abilities
- ♥ Go through labour with much less likelihood of needing medical intervention or pharmaceutical pain relief
- ♥ Have more effective contractions making labour more manageable and shorter
- ♥ Have a more positive birth experience leading to a more rapid post-natal recovery, reduced likelihood of post natal depression and an increased ability to breastfeed



# The benefits to your baby include:

- ♥ Increased natural maternal hormones that will be passed to them
- ♥ High oxygen levels during birth and all of the associated benefits of this
- ♥ Low levels of stress hormones transferred to your baby
- ♥ Your baby being more likely to be calm, quiet and alert when they are born
- ♥ Lower birth risks to your baby and higher APGAR scores
- ♥ Bonding in the womb which naturally and easily continues after birth



# The benefits to your birth companion..

- ♥ Increased confidence in how best to support you
- ♥ Understanding the process and changing needs to allow an instinctive birth
- ♥ Practical tools, tips and techniques to help during birth
- ♥ Tools to help maintain a calm and relaxed atmosphere
- ♥ Understanding choices, risks, benefits, etc to make informed decisions
- ♥ Confidence to work with the medical team for a positive birth experience for all involved no matter the path labour takes



# Benefits shown in research of Hypnotherapy

- ♥ Less report of pain
- ♥ Reduction in labour duration
- ♥ Reduced caesarian birth rate
- ♥ Reduced need/desire of pharmaceutical pain management
- ♥ If there is a need for pharmaceutical pain management, less will be needed/required



"Hypnosis is the only anaesthetic without  
danger" Dr Joseph B Delee 1930



Hypnosis is an effective method of relieving pain in birth without altering the normal course of labour" BMA 1892 and 1955



# What is Hypnosis?

- ♥ Hypnosis is a completely natural state of being. A pleasant state of relaxation where you are still aware of what is going on around you but you have mentally “gone” somewhere else
- ♥ Similar to daydreaming, your mind is drifting, floating, wandering
- ♥ Hypnosis diminishes the conscious, analytical, rational part of the mind. Allowing the subconscious, emotional, primitive brain to come to the fore



# Hypnosis – benefits and realities

- 💖 Hypnosis reduces your blood pressure, increases your energy, your body functions improve. You have calmer thoughts and more effective coping mechanisms in situations
- 💖 Natural hypnosis should happen 20mins per hour in the day – we don't notice it happening but if we are hyper stressed and stimulated the balance in the brain suffers





# Intended Hypnosis

Intended hypnosis is when we connect with the subconscious control centres of the brain so that our conscious mind is not blocking the flow of hormones. This part of the brain is much more receptive and if we connect with it in a state of relaxation we are much more likely to succeed and progress that determination and will power alone



# Hypnosis – Myth Busting

- ♥ ALL hypnosis is self hypnosis – Only **YOU** can control your own mind and choose which suggestions and visualisations to follow.
- ♥ You remain in complete control of where your mind takes you at all times
- ♥ You control a visualisation e.g. the suggestion of you are on a beach – you decide the shape, the colours you see, the light, the time of day etc



# Hypnosis – what it does

💖 With hypnosis you are communicating with the part of your mind that is responsible for ALL change. You are able to influence and convince and see a new reality/way of doing something that is more beneficial to you

💖 Our old memories, fears, experiences and behaviour patterns dictate our responses to the world. Hypnotherapy can “update” or “overcome” elements to make effective, positive changes



# Hypnosis is an enjoyable, comfortable state of mental relaxation

- ♥ It is NOT being unconscious or asleep
- ♥ It is natural with no negative side effects
- ♥ You are always under your OWN control NOT anyone else's
- ♥ It is well recognised in medical and psychological science
- ♥ Anyone can learn it



The sum of our experiences dictates our  
responses and reactions to experiences and  
our coping mechanisms for perceived  
danger



# Creating New Patterns

- ♥ New patterns are constantly created with new experiences
- ♥ Sometimes they are negative and sometimes positive
- ♥ We can shift negative triggers to positive ones by altering perception and attitude
- ♥ Altering perspectives involves recognising the actual situation vs our perspective/attitude/reactions towards the situation e.g. 2 different people's reactions to the same event



# The Power of Words

- ♥ Your physiological response will be the same to a real experience or something you have imagined – your primitive brain does not know the difference
- ♥ Changing words can change lives – Inspire, motivate, uplift with your words to others but also to yourself
- ♥ How do you speak to yourself? Are you kind, compassionate, caring?
- ♥ Your subconscious clings to words, especially in times of heightened emotion
- ♥ Your inner voice often represents your most vulnerable childhood times – How did adults speak to you as a child? - “You are such a lovely person” “You will never amount to anything”



# Your Inner Voice

- ♥ If your inner voice is critical, judgemental, negative, blaming – you will often feel guilt, shame, anxiety and fear
- ♥ If the words are caring, loving, supportive, full of praise – It results in more positive feelings, confidence and higher self esteem
- ♥ Always think to yourself – Would I speak this way to someone else? How would they feel? **BEFORE** you speak to your self
- ♥ Words we hear influence how we deal with life. This influence is fundamental and important. We can be influenced both negatively and positively





# Making Deep Relaxation Successful

- ♥ Make sure you are motivated to change – Understand why we may want to continue in old patterns e.g sympathy, attention, social acceptance. Know that this is a possibility so it can be addressed
- ♥ Desire and willingness to change – Patterns and behaviours can feel comfortable and not push us into areas that may be uncomfortable, especially dealing with childhood upset or traumatising events that have caused patterns. But know that there is an amazing feeling of freedom and lightness often when moving in a more positive direction
- ♥ Trust the process – Make sure you feel comfortable, reassured and confident in the techniques and the person you are working with
- ♥ Dedicate the time to practice – The more you practice, the more easy and efficient and effective the results will be



# Relaxation and Suggestion – The process

- ♥ Prepare your space – make it safe, cosy, warm, quiet
- ♥ Change your focus to being on yourself
- ♥ Breathe and physically relax
- ♥ Transition to deeper guided imagery and visualisation
- ♥ Create a special, safe place in your mind
- ♥ Use suggestion and post relaxation suggestion to make changes
- ♥ Return to the present and reality feeling refreshed and relaxed



# The techniques you can use in Suggestive Relaxation

- ♥ Letting go exercises
- ♥ Relaxation and breathing
- ♥ Visualisation
- ♥ Entering your sanctuary
- ♥ Relaxation and post-relaxation suggestion
- ♥ Positive triggers
- ♥ Future pacing
- ♥ Time distortion



"Peace does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble or hard work. Peace means to be in the midst of all of these things and still be calm in your heart"

Marel Morin

The Serenity Doula



# Preparing your Space

- ♥ Switch off distractions e.g. your phone
- ♥ Make sure you are comfortable and warm
- ♥ Know that there is no right or wrong – This is a time to relax and just enjoy being
- ♥ An empty mind is not necessary – if you have thoughts, accept them, acknowledge their presence and allow them to drift away. Then bring your attention back to the voice guiding you
- ♥ If you need to change position, sneeze, cough or scratch that is ok



# Changing your focus

- ♥ Slowly, steadily, you will move from an actively conscious state into a relaxed, hypnotic one
- ♥ You are shifting your focus from the here and now to an internal, focused, calm state by:
  - ♥ Concentrating on your breath
  - ♥ Relaxing the different parts of your body
  - ♥ Counting backwards from 10 to 1
  - ♥ Imagining the many levels of your mind – the highest being fully alert and awake, stepping/travelling down towards the deepest, most relaxing state, one at a time



# Relaxation and Breathing

- ♥ Relaxed, effective breathing helps to relax your body and mind
- ♥ Breathing down deep into your abdomen and diaphragm allows the maximum exchange of oxygen and release of carbon dioxide
- ♥ Slow, deep, rhythmic breathing triggers your physical relaxation response. Slowing your heart rate, reducing your blood pressure, increasing blood flow to your extremities, uterus and baby, relaxing your muscles, increasing your absorption of oxygen and increasing your health and well-being



Each inhalation fills your body with oxygen,  
feeding all of the cells in your body.

Each exhalation lets go of tension and waste  
products, allowing your muscles and mind to  
relax even more





# Guided Imagery and Visualisation

“The soul never thinks without a picture” Aristotle

- ♥ There is no right or wrong experience. Each one is individual but usually involves a wonderful feeling of relaxation that deepens as the session progresses
- ♥ Some have a sensations of sinking or going down – a helpful metaphor for reaching a relaxed state is to feel like a feather floating down or walking down steps
- ♥ Guided imagery helps your mind to take a break from thinking, planning, reality, conscious thought and moves toward imagination, focus, heightened awareness of your inner self.
- ♥ Guidance can be about seeing, hearing, feeling and works best when incorporating all of the senses
- ♥ Metaphor can be helpful e.g. comparing symbols and objects – feel your tension melting like an ice cream in the warm, comforting glow of the sun



# Creating your inner Sanctuary

- ♥ Your inner refuge is for you to go to whenever you like. Perhaps for just a few moments or you can stay longer if time allows. It is space that makes you feel safe
- ♥ It can be real or imaginary, indoors or outside
- ♥ By going to your sanctuary regularly in practice, you will learn the way, how easy it is to get there and the more you go, the easier it gets



# Suggestions in a state of Relaxation

- ♥ Suggestions are the magic of relaxation
- ♥ Once in a deep state of relaxation, your inner voice is quiet and attentive and your subconscious is free to listen to new ideas, words it can use to create new ways of thinking, feeling and responding
- ♥ Triggers can be used to create positive responses e.g. If x happens (trigger) then y happens (response)
- ♥ This is your advanced preparation and training so your body can respond to your positive instructions
- ♥ The more you practice and repeat these positive instructions, the better your body will respond
- ♥ The more we respond to a trigger, the more ingrained it becomes
- ♥ You can use touch, smell or movement, even sound to trigger a positive response



# Letting go Exercises

- ♥ These encourage awareness of issues, acknowledge them and thank them for their part in keeping us safe and then allow them to be released
- ♥ Letting go of fears and old, negative patterns can be very freeing
- ♥ You begin to realise that fear is nothing but an emotion. It is not real, tangible or permanent
- ♥ Many fears do not serve a beneficial purpose
- ♥ Worrying about something is a HUGE waste of energy – put them behind you and move forward into a more positive, beneficial way of thinking and feeling



# Future Pacing – Giving yourself a positive goal to work towards

- ♥ Our perception of ourselves becomes our reality
- ♥ Thoughts can become a self-fulfilling prophecy
- ♥ Creating positive images of the future, or succeeding in your goals, how it will feel, what you will see, how others will react, what they will say helps them become a reality
- ♥ Imagining the details – sights, smells, sounds, the smile on your face all helps it to feel more real in your mind



# Time Distortion

- ♥ Time becomes irrelevant in a relaxed state
- ♥ You can spend just a few moments in a relaxed state and feel as energised as if you have had a good nights sleep
- ♥ You can have all the time you need to feel wonderfully relaxed and refreshed between contractions and each contraction feels as if it lasts just a few moments



# Coming out of Relaxation – Exit

This is a gentle, careful process. Allowing you time to come back to “normal” There are usually 5 steps:

- 💖 Step 1: Restore sensations to their true perspective – full co-ordination, flexibility and control throughout your entire body. Any feelings of lightness or heaviness return to their true perspective
- 💖 Step 2: All sounds are restored to their true perspective
- 💖 Step 3: You are back in the room, becoming aware of what is around you. To your left and right, above and below you, in front and behind
- 💖 Step 4: You begin to come up, bringing with you and keeping all of the benefits and positive feelings of your experience
- 💖 Step 5: You open your eyes, wide awake, feeling refreshed and full of energy



# Overcoming Fear Practice

- ♥ Write any fears and concerns that come to mind, no matter how silly or small they may seem, onto a post it note or paper
- ♥ Simply by writing them, you are acknowledging them and beginning the process of letting them go
- ♥ Take some time to talk through your fears with someone who can listen and hold a safe space for you





# After your letting go exercise

- ♥ Once you have done the letting go exercise, go back to your notes and tear up any that come under the following:
- ♥ They no longer worry you
- ♥ You realise there is nothing you can do about it now so you will simply no longer let it take any of your energy or thought
- ♥ You are still concerned but you have plans in place to understand what you can do, so it no longer worries you



# Letting Go Exercise

- ♥ You will come to realise that fear is nothing but an emotion. It is not real, tangible or permanent
- ♥ Many fears do not serve a beneficial purpose
- ♥ Worrying about something is a HUGE waste of energy and does nothing but focus on the negative
- ♥ Lets put your fears behind you and move forward in a more positive and beneficial way



# Letting Go – How to do it..

- ♥ Take your fear notes... Screw them up, throw them in the fire, let them go. You can do this in reality but also in your mind, in a relaxed state
- ♥ Imagine each fear as a candle. Light the candle and watch it melt away in your mind
- ♥ Allow your fears to be leaves that float away down a stream or are blown away in the wind
- ♥ Allow your fears to be blocks of ice that melt in the warm, comforting glow of the sun
- ♥ Think of a metaphor that works for you... Floating up into the clouds like a balloon...
- ♥ It does not matter which imagery you use, use the one or several that work for you



# ...Letting go - how to do it

- ♥ Get comfortable, focus on your breathing, relax your body, enter a deeply relaxed state, perhaps go to your sanctuary and sit for a moment so that you feel safe and calm. When you are ready, move to the place where you are going to let your fears go
- ♥ Ask your subconscious to bring one of your fears to your attention
- ♥ Spend a moment thinking about it, accepting it, thanking it for the purpose it has served until now
- ♥ Ask your subconscious to hold on to any positive learning the fear may have given you up to this point and then let go of any negative or feelings
- ♥ When you are ready, let the fear go by whatever means you feel comfortable with
- ♥ Allow the fear to float, sink, drift away so that it is no longer part of you, no longer able to hold you back
- ♥ As it moves further away, any anxiety, any negative thoughts connected with the fear become less and less as you become more and more at ease, lighter, calmer, freer



# Letting Go

- 💖 This exercise can be done at any time... Even during labour
- 💖 You can spend a few moments acknowledging fears and then letting them go
- 💖 Freeing your mind and body to continue birthing, trusting your body is doing what it needs to do



# Ways to manage the sensations of labour

- ♥ Unlike most pain which is associated with injury, illness or stress. The sensations of labour are the result of **normal, healthy**, bodily function
- ♥ By **allowing** your body to do its job, by **accepting** and **recognising** the sensations of each contraction as **productive** and **positive**, you help to **reduce** the pain to a **manageable** level



# Deep Physical Relaxation and Beneficial Breathing

- ♥ Relaxing your body completely, removing all tension from your muscles and breathing deeply, calmly and slowly
- ♥ By learning and practising during pregnancy in a state of relaxation and with suggestions and positive triggers, you can condition your body to relax completely during a contraction. Helping to:
- ♥ Channel energy to your uterus where it is needed
- ♥ Keep your Blood Pressure low
- ♥ Make your breath really effective so you and your baby receive plenty of oxygen
- ♥ Make sure there is no opposition to your uterine muscles so your cervix will open easily and more quickly
- ♥ You will stay calm, focused and relaxed



The MORE you practice, the BETTER you  
get and the MORE natural it will feel  
during your birth





# No matter what else you do:

1. Breathe slowly, rhythmically and deeply. Feeling each breath going all the way down to your baby
2. During contractions, relax all of your muscles as much as possible, allowing your energy to flow to your uterus so it can work efficiently and effectively



# Breathing Techniques

- 💖 You have been breathing since the day you were born so you are already good at it
- 💖 You do not need complicated breathing techniques or patterns in labour. The less cognitive thinking you do, the better
- 💖 Breathe all of the way down into your abdomen to your baby
- 💖 Breath rhythmically and s-l-o-w-l-y



# Breathing deeply, slowly and rhythmically will:

- ♥ Increase your sense of calm and relaxation
- ♥ Ensure your abdomen and lungs expand giving your uterus all the space it needs to work effectively
- ♥ Your blood pressure will remain at a healthy level
- ♥ Your uterus and baby will receive all of the oxygen they need
- ♥ Your oxytocin levels will increase
- ♥ Your prostaglandin levels will increase
- ♥ Your relaxin levels will increase
- ♥ Your endorphin levels will increase
- ♥ Everything will become easier and more manageable as you become more relaxed



# Relaxation Breathing Practice

- ♥ Settle in a comfortable, safe space, free from distractions. This can be done with a birth companion or alone
- ♥ With your birth companion, get them to sit back comfortably against a wall or back of a bed and you sit between their legs, resting back comfortably. Their hands can rest gently on your abdomen
- ♥ Or you can find a comfortable position for yourself, resting your hands lightly on your lower abdomen
- ♥ Close your eyes, relax and focus on breathing deeply into your abdomen
- ♥ With each breath, send it all the way down to your baby
- ♥ Imagine all of your muscles relaxing, allow your abdomen to expand
- ♥ Keep your breath calm, rhythmical and steady
- ♥ Stay in the moment, follow your breath rather than forcing your breath in and out



# Birth companion tips for breathing during birth

- ♥ Be aware for any changes in breathing during labour
- ♥ If you notice a change, slow your own breathing, exaggerate slow, deep, calm, rhythmic breaths
- ♥ This is a useful non-verbal calming strategy in labour and can help everyone in the room



# Breathing Techniques – Horse Lips

Horse Lip Breathing – Relaxing the face and jaw helps the pelvis to relax, the birth canal and the perineum. Allow your lips to be floppy when you blow air out, allowing tension to release like a horse does



# Breathing Techniques – The long breath

The long breath – This is a specific type of breath that can be helpful during contractions. Take a nice slow deep breath in, taking your time, pause at the peak of the breath and then let the breath sigh out for as long as you possibly can. With practice, you can make this breath in and then out last 20 seconds or more each way. It can be very helpful in the rhythm of a contraction



# Breathing Techniques – The J Breath

The J breath – This specific type of breath can be helpful in the early phases of breathing your baby down the birth canal before they are crowning. With the bearing down urge in your body, take a nice deep breath all the way down to your baby and imagine them moving down and out with your breath like a J extending from your mouth down your spine and out through your pelvic floor. Form the J with the in and the out breath imagining the baby moving out in a J shape with your breath each time – practice this technique when doing a number 2 to see how effective it can be





# Breathing Techniques – Panting

Panting can be useful when your baby is crowning so they can emerge gently and slowly

This can reduce the risk of tearing

It can reduce the sensation associated with crowing as the baby compresses the perineum and helps to numb it



# Relaxation – Requires Practice

- ♥ Allow your body to relax completely so that your uterus can work un-opposed
- ♥ The more relaxed you are, the shorter your labour and the less resistance there will be in your pelvic floor
- ♥ First notice tension, be aware of it in your body so that you can acknowledge it and then allow it to release
- ♥ Practice daily – Go through each part of your body and take time to allow it to relax. Begin with your toes and work your way up
- ♥ Fill any tense areas with warmth, comfort and calm
- ♥ Spend time focusing on your baby. Seeing your baby calm, relaxed and at ease
- ♥ Another method of relaxation is to walk down an imaginary staircase, go down an escalator or a lift and with each step or each floor, you let go and become more relaxed, with each step you become heavier, softer and more tension is released



# Trigger and Response

**Touch:** Every time you feel a hand on your shoulder, a touch on your forehead, your body will respond by becoming wonderfully relaxed and calm

**Smell:** A familiar or pleasant smell can evoke feelings of relaxation especially if you use them in your practice regularly

**Sound:** A special phrase like 3, 2, 1 relax or particular music or sounds can trigger relaxation

**Sight:** Seeing an image in your mind or in reality can trigger feelings of relaxation e.g. a photograph or a piece of clothing

💖 Combining triggers can make them even more effective 💖



# Practising a Trigger Script – Example

In a moment, you will hear me say the words “3, 2, 1 relax” and you will feel my hand on your shoulder/forehead and as you do so, your body will become more and more relaxed.... 3, 2, 1 relax... That’s right.

And as you feel my hands press down on your shoulders, your muscles soften and release as you let the tension flow out of your body on 3, 2, 1 relax... Wonderful..

Each note of the music you hear is helping you drift down and down into deep, calm relaxation, on 3, 2, 1, relax

The lovely smell of essential oils is helping you to float comfortably, freeing your body, melting tension away, 3, 2, 1 relax



# Triggers are wonderful for Birth Companions too

You can practice with your birth companion

Triggers will help you all to enter a deep state of relaxation

They can be used at any time.. During pregnancy, times of stress, during labour or after your baby has been born in your lives as a family



# Visualisation

Remember it doesn't **have** to be an imaginary image that you see. It can just be the process of relaxation, a feeling of euphoria, calm or serenity

Find what works for you and:

Practice

Practice

Practice



# Visualisation – what to do

- ♥ Take some time to think of your special, safe sanctuary
- ♥ Note it down, add details
- ♥ Visit your sanctuary often and enjoy the sense of calm perhaps for a few moments whilst boiling the kettle or longer snuggled up in a comfy cosy spot perhaps whilst travelling on the train. Practice in noisy environments as well as calm to prove to yourself that you can do it



# Practice with a Pinch

- ♥ Take the time to relax with your deep, calm, relaxing breathing
- ♥ Use your steps down your path to feeling deeply relaxed
- ♥ Put your techniques to the test – get your birth companion or a friend to gradually increase a pinch on your leg or arm when you are in a deeply relaxed state. See how much better you can cope with the sensations than when you are in a “normal” state or even when you are stressed





Know that you can do this

Trust your instincts



When we realign with our inner guidance and stop judging our bodies and our feelings as bad, when really they are just offering us information, we are on the pathway to a birth and a life filled with understanding, comfort, growth and delight



When you practice relaxation, anxiety becomes less pronounced, advice and horror stories fade into the distance and you move forward feeling calm, centred and at peace with your own

*Journey*  
The Serenity Doula



If there is nothing you can do about it right now, then there is no benefit to worrying about it...

...If there is something you can do... Then do it!



# Tips for being positive

- ♥ Always state your goals/desired outcomes in the positive
- ♥ The mind cannot NOT do something e.g. don't think of a rainbow dragon... you will so frame phrases to yourself in the positive
- ♥ The more you can focus on what you DO want, the more positive a focus your mind will have
- ♥ Focus on the actual outcome rather than the process/environment, location, type of birth etc as these factors may change e.g. a SERENE birth, a PEACEFUL birth, a CALM baby



# Practical Skills

Think about:

- 💖 What you enjoy doing
- 💖 How you know when you feel relaxed
- 💖 What makes you feel calm and at ease
- 💖 What environment makes you feel most happy



# Practical Skills – The Practicalities

- ♥ Your needs and feelings are likely to change throughout your birth so have a wide range of tools such as:
- ♥ Tuning in and focusing on your body
- ♥ Visualisation and going to your sanctuary
- ♥ Deep, relaxed breathing
- ♥ Closing or opening your eyes and focusing on a person or object
- ♥ Changing positions when it feels right



# Changing Your Focus

♥ During intense periods of labour you may need to be more external – have more support from your companions with breathing, directed relaxation, massage or position changes

Useful techniques include:

♥ Refocusing your attention

♥ Using Metaphor

♥ Using an external focus point

♥ Movement – Rhythmic/Position change

♥ Mental activity – Repetition to help focus

♥ Massage

♥ Auditory stimulus - triggering deeper relaxation





# Changing your focus – Refocusing your attention

- ♥ Distracting your attention from discomfort by focusing on something else
- ♥ In the early stages of labour this could mean watching a film, knitting, baking a cake, talking, breathing
- ♥ Later in labour this could mean focusing on your body and what is happening inside – Your cervix gently opening, contractions massaging your baby, the baby pressing down, opening your cervix, relaxing your pelvic floor



# Changing your focus – Visualisation

- ♥ Visualisation – Going to your sanctuary or perhaps focusing on your body and what is happening inside – your cervix gently opening, your contractions massaging the baby, the baby pressing down helping your cervix to open
- ♥ Metaphor can be hugely helpful here – See your contractions as waves that you are soaring above like a bird – you can see the waves and be aware of them but you are separate from them
- ♥ Imagining your cervix opening like a flower, your muscles softening like butter melting in the warm glow of the sun



# Changing your focus – External Focus point

💖 You may find looking at your companion and focusing on them helpful or perhaps a crack in the wall or the feel of a piece of fabric

💖 Some people find focusing on a line to be helpful. Trace the line with your eyes or even your fingers. As your contraction builds, move along the line and then back as the contraction decreases again



# Changing your focus – Auditory Stimulus

- ♥ Listening to music or a relaxation script, repeating a rhythm or a chant can be helpful for focus
- ♥ You may naturally make sounds – Moans, groans as your labour progresses. With them keep your breathing deep, slow and relaxed, breathing down to your baby



# Changing your Focus – Mental Activity

- ♥ Repetition can help to focus your thoughts
- ♥ Some women find counting each breath is helpful, chanting or repeating a phrase
- ♥ Remember that Relaxation, Rhythm and Ritual are your coping mechanisms for labour – whatever form that may take



# Changing your focus – Movement

- ♥ Rhythmical movement may feel helpful such as dancing, swaying, leaning on a ball and moving it or sitting on a ball and swaying or bouncing, walking
- ♥ Later in labour you may feel the need to change positions at certain points. Listen to your body and go with your instinct. Do what feels RIGHT for you



# Massage and Touch

- 💖 Massage and touch releases endorphins and boosts Oxytocin
- 💖 Women either **LOVE** it or **HATE** it during labour so companions must pick up on cues and check in if necessary
- 💖 Remember needs can change from moment to moment in labour so go with the flow and be prepared to stop/start/stop again when it feels right



# Massage Techniques – Tickling/Stroking

💖 Good places are over the lower abdomen, on the hands, legs, shoulders, back

💖 Gently stroke with your finger tips, brushing the surface of the skin – Slow strokes help to calm and soothe, faster strokes can help to invigorate





# Massage Techniques – The Butterfly

- 💖 A specific tickling/stroking technique – use light and slow finger strokes underneath the baby bump
- 💖 This helps to distract the pain receptors during contractions and is usually very useful and nice during early and active labour as the cervix is opening
- 💖 Make sure to stroke below the belly button only as above can stimulate contractions (unless this is your intention)



# Massage Techniques – Firm Stroking, Kneading, Squeezing, Rubbing

💖 These feel good on the neck and shoulders, back, thighs, feet and hands

💖 Always stroke towards the heart on the back and limbs

💖 Kneading feels good on the shoulders



# Massage Techniques – Back Pressure

- 💖 This can feel good over the lower back and sacrum
- 💖 Press the heel of the hand firmly into the sacral area, gradually increasing the pressure until it feels right. Hold for the duration of the contraction or the mother can lean back onto your hand to increase and control pressure
- 💖 Check for feedback between contractions if you feel it isn't quite right



# Massage Techniques – Pelvic Pressure

- ♥ Place hands on either side of her upper pelvis and push inwards gradually increasing the pressure
- ♥ It provides counter pressure to the movements in the pelvis and helps the lower pelvis to open
- ♥ This can be done with a scarf or wrap
- ♥ Check for feedback between contractions if you feel it isn't quite right



# Massage Techniques – Knee Press

- ♥ Mum sits on a chair with support for her lower back and you sit on the floor in front of her. Put your hands just below her knees
- ♥ Take a deep breath and on her out breath push against her, just below her knees, gradually increasing the pressure
- ♥ You are moving her upper leg backwards
- ♥ This can help relieve pain in the lower back



# Massage Techniques – Stomach Support/Lift

- ♥ Stand behind the pregnant person, supported by a wall or bed
- ♥ Interlock your hands and put them underneath the stomach and lift gently or use a scarf or wrap (this can be done with them on all fours/leaning forward)
- ♥ This can help relaxation, lift the stomach and stretch the uterus
- ♥ It can help to relieve discomfort in the pelvis, lower abdomen and back
- ♥ This is very good if there is aching around the lower back, hips or pubis



# Massage Techniques – Shaking the Apples

💖 Ina May Gaskin Developed this technique – Stand behind the mother as she leans forward on a chair, bed, ball or hands and knees – vigorously rub her back, hips, bottom, thighs and legs between contractions as if shaking the apples from a tree – This stimulates and boosts energy

💖 Helps by: releasing lactic acid, releasing tension around the pelvis, increases blood flow to the pelvis and makes laughter more likely!



# Massage Techniques – Pressure Wave

- ♥ The mother is in a comfortable position, standing, sitting, kneeling
- ♥ Squeeze with big hands on the outside of her body, from head to toe
- ♥ Begin by putting your thumbs across her eyebrows, squeezing her head and slowly move down her body, squeezing on shoulders, arms, legs and finish by squeezing and putting your hands on top of her feet
- ♥ This can feel really good and nurturing.





# The Benefits of a Birth Pool

- ♥ Increases your privacy
- ♥ Provide significant pain relief
- ♥ Reduces the need for drugs and interventions
- ♥ Encourages a woman's sense of control in labour
- ♥ Facilitate mobility and enables the woman to adopt optimal positions for an active, physiological birth
  - Speeds up labour
- ♥ Promotes relaxation and conserves energy
- ♥ Helps reduce perineal tears
- ♥ Encourages an easier birth for the mother and a gentler transition and welcome to the world for the baby



# Making the Most of a Birth Pool

- ♥ Do not get too hung up on having a water birth, just in case it cannot happen for any reason
- ♥ Wait as long as you can before getting into the pool – In some hospitals guidelines are over 5cm dilation but if you choose not to have exams just wait until you feel you really need it – most importantly make sure your contractions are regular and increasing in intensity or labour can slow down if you are in the water too early
- ♥ Come out of the pool every few hours – have a walk around, go to the toilet
- ♥ Keep the water temperature comfortable for you in labour – having cold flannels to cool you can be helpful as you can get quite warm in labour as your uterus is working hard
- ♥ Make sure the water is 36-37°C near to when the baby is born
- ♥ Make sure you have practiced inflating and filling the pool **BEFORE** the birth as it can take quite a few hours
- ♥ If you do not have a birth pool, you can use the bath and shower to benefit from warm water



# Hot and Cold

- ♥ Heat applied to the lower abdomen, back, groin or perineum can be extremely soothing
- ♥ Cool flannels to the forehead, an ice pack or a cold spray can feel wonderful if you are hot (do not use if you feel chilled)
- ♥ Make sure the compresses are covered with a towel or covering so as not to damage the skin



# Aromatherapy

- 💖 Aromatherapy oils can be used for massage, in a diffuser or oil burner or in a mist spray
- 💖 Useful oils include lavender, neroli, marjoram, rose and clary sage
- 💖 Clary sage is thought to increase contractions so only use once you are in labour or past your due date
- 💖 Use oils during your relaxation practice so you associate being calm and relaxed – an olfactory trigger for serenity



# Drinking

- ♥ Keeping hydrated during labour keeps your body working well and your muscles working efficiently
- ♥ Keep taking sips throughout – your companion can offer you sips through a straw between contractions
- ♥ Ice chips, water, fruit smoothies for energy are all helpful
- ♥ Some midwives have been known to suggest a wee tippie in the early stages to aid relaxation and rest



# Birthing Ball – Pregnancy Benefits

The benefits can begin before labour:

- ♥ Helping your baby into a good position by encouraging good posture, strength and flexibility and opening the pelvis
- ♥ It can help relieve back pain – especially kneeling leaning forward over it
- ♥ It can build strength in your thighs and pelvic floor without you even noticing



# Birthing Ball – Labour Benefits

- ♥ Encourages natural swaying/rocking/rotation to help the baby descend
- ♥ Perineal support without pressure
- ♥ Helps keep good pelvic alignment for the baby
- ♥ Sitting on the ball is similar to a squat but takes less energy – opening the pelvis
- ♥ Allows your companion to provide massage or counter pressure on your back
- ♥ The ball can be placed on a bed for you to lean over to allow swaying with support
- ♥ With the ball on the floor or bed you can lean over it, encouraging pelvic motion and good positioning for the baby
- ♥ Weight can be supported entirely by a ball
- ♥ Moving on a ball helps breathing to flow more evenly allowing free expression of sound



# Birthing Ball – After the Baby is Born

- ♥ Provides support and a place to sit without excessive pressure on the perineum
- ♥ Helpful for good breastfeeding posture and allowing gentle movement and exercise whilst nursing
- ♥ Helpful for gentle bouncing and rocking motions to soothe a baby
- ♥ Helpful for winding your baby – have them on your shoulder and gently bounce whilst sat on the ball





# Homeopathy

You can buy birth kits with instructions in. Helpful remedies include:

- ♥ Arnica 200 – Muscle function, reducing exhaustion, pain and bruising (use throughout labour and after)
- ♥ Aconite 200 – Reduces fear, anxiety and panic – can help in a rapid labour or when fear on anxiety about birth (use throughout labour and after)
- ♥ Calophyllum 200 – Promotes strong, productive contractions in early labour/when exhasuted or when they are ineffectual, sharp, painful or short – (use sparingly when needed)
- ♥ Gelsemium 200 – Helpful for physical heaviness, muscular weakness, trembling, chills or in the self-doubt/transition phase
- ♥ Kali Carb 200 – Helpful for backache labours, posterior presentation, feeling chilled after a contraction
- ♥ Kal Phos 200 – For exhaustion or low energy
- ♥ Pulsatilla 200 – For weepiness, clingyness, pleading for help, short or weak contractions or those that have stopped entirely



# Birth Companion Preparation

- 💖 For thousand of years womean have given birth in their own surroundings with one-to-one care from loving, experienced women
- 💖 Birth companions should be prepared for birth as well so that they are informed, know the options and their pros and cons, understand the process of labour and the things that are likely to happen and when they are likely to happen during labour



The role of the birth companion is vital  
They will help you remain calm, focused and  
instinctive by protecting your safe space,  
the way that you want it



Act as a gate keeper – Keep external stimulation to a minimum



With a companion's support, the mother can allow her birthing brain and body to take over because she feels safe, comfortable and relaxed



# Practical Exercise

- ♥ Take time to practice your relaxation. Remember the more that you practice, the more effective and easy it will be to be relaxed during your journey through the birthing process.
- ♥ Make sure your companions practice their relaxation as well so the adrenaline is kept out of the birthing room and the Oxytocin is flowing freely
- ♥ Take a look at the videos on the serenity doula site and get familiar with breathing exercises and massage techniques before labour begins
- ♥ Remember to keep writing your thoughts and feelings in your diary

