

Welcome to the Serenity Hypno-birthing and Mindfulness online course notebook.

Just so you know a little bit about me and why I made this course. I have been working with families around pregnancy, birth and beyond for 15 years and I have loved every moment. I work as a cranio-sacral therapist after qualifying as an Osteopath in 2005. My absolute love for all things birth and baby really exploded when I was pregnant with my own little boy nearly 7 years ago when I became a breastfeeding peer supporter and then went on to become a doula.

For me, I wanted to have a natural birth, at home, as I knew that this was the best place for my physiology to work its best. I was very relaxed and trusting in my body but my husband was very nervous. He had previously had 2 traumatic birth experiences with his first two wonderful children and he was not so trusting in the natural process of birth and things going well. So, after reading loads of books and learning all about hypno-birthing and listening to relaxation tracks every day, I encouraged him to read the books too as I wanted him to feel the sense of excitement and joy and happy anticipation of our birthing day. He was not that great at reading the books, he couldn't commit to it. So I booked us a private hypno-birthing course. It helped him so so much to get on board with techniques and I am sure was a huge part of making our birthing day the amazing, wonderful and healing experience that it was.

I had a fast and very intense birth, at home in a pool. My husband caught our baby and handed him to me out of the water and when he was born, he just quietly and calmly looked at us both. It was wonderful and in those moments, a lot of emotional pain and anxiety was healed for my husband and as I became a parent, I felt in awe of the amazing power that I had within myself. I found great strength and determination that day, which has definitely made me a better person and I am sure that hypno-birthing techniques helped me get there.

Now I know that most can't afford private lessons, I know a lot of people have to birth alone without a companion, perhaps after previous trauma and so I wanted to make this course accessible to as many people as possible because everyone should have an empowering birth experience, no matter how they birth their baby. Everyone should be supported to find their power and their joy. I believe it is fundamentally important as you move forward in your new role as a parent to help you be the absolute best you can be for your baby and for yourself.

So a huge welcome. I hope you find this course inspiring and informative and that you have the most wonderful pregnancy and birth and go on to feel amazing as a family after your birthing day.

During this course you are going to learn about your body, about how it works not just during labour but day to day as well and how you can help it to work to its absolute best ability. You are going to learn techniques you can use to help yourself to feel calm and excited about birthing your baby, so that you look forward to your birth experience, not just the meeting your baby part, but all of your journey. You are going to gain knowledge about your choices and your rights, to empower you to speak up for what you want for your birth, for what feels right for you, which will give you an amazing confidence that you can carry through into becoming a parent. You are going to learn practical tools for helping you to breathe in the right way for your body at the right time, to learn massage techniques that you can use not just during your pregnancy and labour but any time you need it. You are going to learn about the stages of labour, what they look like, what you may feel, what to expect and what you can do to help in each phase in order for your body to express its amazing power in the best possible way.

I am here to support you, I love being a doula and supporting mothers through their pregnancy, birth and beyond, so if you need me, get in touch via the contact form or email or through the facebook group. Reach out, as we all need someone to hold a loving space for us during our journey in life and knowing that there is a loving space for you is such a comfort during what is the most amazing, life changing process you will ever experience.

You have a strength within you that is awe-inspiring, you are a birthing person and there is nothing more magical or wonderful in the universe. I wish you all the best with your birthing journey and your lifelong adventure as a parent.

Shellie

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Breathing for Dilation, For calm, Up Breathing, Breathing for the first stages of Labour

Begin by sitting or lying comfortably, take a few nice deep breaths to allow yourself to relax, drop your shoulders, let the tension flow out of your mouth with your out breath. You can even imagine blowing the tension away as hard and far as you can or blowing your frustration into a balloon that you can then just let go. Laugh to yourself about the farting sound it makes as you let it go whizzing around the room or just focus on your breath, whatever works best for you. Breathe in through your nose, a nice deep breath, filling your lungs and then slowly breathe out through your mouth with your jaw relaxed, exhaling any tension from your muscles, from your body, from your mind.

Then focus on breathing in for a count of 4. Breathe in as much air as you can during that count of four, feeling your belly expanding, imagine that lovely oxygen going all the way down to your baby. Then as you exhale try to count to 8. Make the out breath longer than the in breath. Don't worry if 8 is too much, try for 5 or 6 and with practice it will get easier. Do whatever feels comfortable for you and for your body but make sure your exhale takes longer than your inhale.

This breath will help you to feel calm and relaxed, you are breathing plenty of oxygen down to your uterus for it to work well and efficiently, you are breathing plenty of oxygen to your baby who will remain calm and happy and relaxed. You are helping your parasympathetic nervous system by stimulating your vagus nerve and allowing your brain to feel calm and relaxed so your oxytocin will build well and your adrenaline will stay low. You can use this breath during your surges. Remember that as your surges build in strength and length, they will build to around 45 seconds to a minutes long, so 4 of these breaths will take you through a surge. You can then just breathe at your own natural pace between your surges.

You may find it helpful for a companion to count out loud for you during your surges or you may prefer to just count inside your own head, or perhaps not even count, just allow your out breath to be longer than the in breath.

You may find visualisations or imagery helpful for you during your surges, like imagining breathing in a beautiful golden light that fills you with peace and calm, or imagine a wave building with your in breath and then tumbling down with your out breath, or you may like to imagine something for the duration of your surge, like walking down steps to a beach carrying a candle, placing it on the beach at the peak of your surge and then returning back up the steps as your surge fades. With each step you take, you feel more and more relaxed, sinking deeper into that calm feeling of relaxation.

Do whatever works for you, different things resonate with each of us. Find your happy place, your sanctuary, your rhythm, your ritual and know that it is helping you on your journey to meeting your baby.

Practice this breath every day. Even if you only practice for a minute a day – 4 breaths, it will help you to find it natural and easy when you birth your baby. It will help you to find peace and calm no matter where you are or what is going on around you. Practice with a companion, or alone. A good place and time to do it is before you go to sleep at night and when you wake in the morning before you get up. Also practice it if you feel stressed or something goes wrong because you will see how much 4 little breaths can help and you will know and trust your body and it's power to birth your baby.

Breathing Your Baby Down, Down Breathing, J-Breath, Breathing for Birthing Stage of Labour

This breath is used in the birthing phase of your labour which is sometimes also called the second stage or down stage. It is to help you to breathe your baby down.

You take a big, quick breath, in through your nose and then breathe out through your mouth. As you do so, focus your attention down in a J-shape, down through your body, towards your pelvic floor and out. Sending your breath with a strong purpose down through your body to help your baby to be born. You will feel a strong downward force in your body, this is the time to use this breath. You can revert to normal breathing between your surges. You will know when to use this breath as your surges will change in nature and will begin to move your baby downward with a strong involuntary pushing sensation. With each breath down, you are bringing oxygen down to your uterus and to your baby and you are helping your baby to be born and your body to focus on what it needs to do.

With this kind of breathing, you are helping your body to relax, to soften and to release. Avoid tensing and holding your breath as this will work against the downward movement of your baby and against the relaxing of your tissues to allow things to open for the birth of your baby. If you relax and breathe downward, your uterus will be getting all of the oxygen it needs to work effectively.

The best place to practice this breathing is on the toilet when you are going for a poo. Notice how much easier it makes going to the toilet when you are relaxed and breathing down, rather than straining and tensing. You can practice with your companion as well so they know what to expect and how to help guide you if that is helpful for you.

Visualisations

For some people, visualising or creating images in their mind is helpful, for others it is just not their thing. So read this, see if any of the images resonate with you or give you an idea for your own image or visualisation. The world (and beyond) is your oyster here. You can literally think of anything. Any colour, any place, any smells, sights or sounds, feelings, whatever feels right for you.

Some people like to use visualisations about something within their body and some people like to use visualisations about something completely separate from their body. So here are a few ideas of different things you may like to try:

During the initial stages of your labour:

When doing your breathing, you can imagine breathing in a golden light and breathing out any tension or anxiety, perhaps imagine breathing in a wonderful, relaxing golden light, then blowing out any worry or frustration out into a balloon and letting it go.

As your surge is building, imagine that you are riding a wave, enjoying the power of the sensation as it rises and then as it falls. Knowing that each one has a rhythm, that it will build and then it will subside. If the waves are feeling high for you, you can become a bird and soar above the waves. You are witnessing the power of the waves, surging but you are separate from them, you can be in awe of their power but separate from them.

Perhaps you would like to imagine walking down steps to a beach, carrying a candle and laying it on the sand at the peak of your surge, with each step you take, you become more and more relaxed, between each surge you can walk back up the steps of the beach, again with each step, you feel more energised and more relaxed.

Perhaps you would like to imagine your cervix opening with each surge like a flower, the soft petals opening easily and beautifully. If it feels right for you, you can imagine the wonderful smell of the flowers.

If ever your muscles feel tense or tight, it may help to imagine them melting like an ice cream in the warm sun or softening like butter.

During the birthing stage of your labour:

You can visualise the moment you meet your baby. Really feel it. Imagine how you will feel, imagine the joy at seeing your baby's little toes for the first time, feeling the soft skin of their little hands. You are so close now, soon you will meet your baby and begin your amazing journey as a parent with your baby in the world.

As you breathe your baby down, imagine your breath blowing ripples in a pond. Calming, softening, smoothing out, the ripples fluidly calming and softening.

As you breathe your baby down, imagine snowflakes falling, gently kissing your skin, softly melting. So beautiful, so peaceful, so quiet, so soft.

Creating a sanctuary in your mind that you can go to is a really helpful tool in life as well as in labour. When you feel relaxed, during a guided meditation, you can imagine a space that is safe for you. Your sanctuary can be a real place that you have been to, a wonderful holiday or completely imaginary – a time or place. Or it can be with cushions. Somewhere that feels safe and cosy and calming for you. The more you get to know your sanctuary, the more you visit it, the more powerful a space it will be for you. You can imagine the smells, the sights, the sounds, the feel of the fabric or the sand. The more you involve your senses, the more real and useful your sanctuary will become and just like home, the more you visit, the easier it will be to get there, wherever you are in the real world. So curl up somewhere comfy, let yourself relax and begin to imagine your sanctuary. Try to visit each day. Even if for just a few moments.



Simple Whole Body Relaxation

Take a moment to make sure that 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 simply drift away. Then bring your attention back to my voice guiding you. If it feels right for you, you can allow your eyes to gently close.

And when you are ready begin by breathing in... and .. out

You may like to breathe in through your nose... and out through your mouth..

Notice each breath as it enters your body and then as it leaves

with each breath in, you may like to imagine that you are breathing in a beautiful golden light

And this light is filling your body with energy, with peace and with calm

And with each breath out, the colour may change as you are releasing your body of any tension, any anxiety and as you breathe with a steady, even rhythm you breathe down to your abdomen, a nice steady rhythm, feeling your abdomen rise... and lower, feeling your breath going Way down and with each breath in, you become more and more relaxed

Breathing calmly, steadily and rhythmically

and each and every time and with each breath in...and... out, it becomes easier and easier to take yourself into this wonderfully relaxed state

3 2 1 relax

Now you might like to imagine the next breath you breathe this wonderful golden light into your mind, into your forehead, your cheeks, around your jaw, breathing this light in, allowing all the muscles in your face, in your jaw to soften, to release and with the next breath you breathe this light into your neck, your throat, your shoulders. Feeling the warmth as the muscles soften, releasing any tension. This light now moves down your arms to your hands, you may even notice a slight tingling sensation with your finger tips and with the next breath, you breathe the light into your chest and your lungs, expanding your lungs just a little more.

Breathing this light down your back and your spine, softening all the muscles of your back and now you breathe this beautiful light down to where your baby lies. Imagine this beautiful light filling this space around your baby, bathing your baby in warmth and love. Imagine your baby soaking up this wonderful warmth and love and feeling of relaxation and calm as you instinctively know that the more relaxed and calm you are, the more that you and your baby will benefit.

This is a special moment for you and your baby and this strengthens the bond that is already there and so as you continue to take deep rhythmical, relaxing breaths you breathe this light into your pelvis, down your legs, you knees, down to your feet and finally to your toes.

Your entire body is now wonderful relaxed.

...And so in a moment I will count from 1 to 5 and you will come up and out of your relaxation, even from the deepest level. On the count of 5 all sensations will be restored to their true perspective, you will have full flexibility, coordination and control throughout your entire body. Any feelings of lightness or heaviness return to their true perspective
On the count of 2 all sounds return to their true perspective
on the count of 3 you place yourself back in the space in which you entered into your relaxation, being aware if what is above you, below you, to your left and right behind and in front of you
On the count of 4 you will come up from this session and bring with you all the benefits, positive feelings and suggestions, feeling relaxed, calm and refreshed
and on the count of 5 you will open your eyes to be wide awake feeling full of energy and refreshed

Arm Stroking Guided Relaxation

Take a moment to make sure that 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 simply drift away. Then bring your attention back to my voice guiding you. If it feels right for you, you can allow your eyes to gently close.

And when you are ready begin by breathing in... and .. out

You may like to breathe in through your nose... and out through your mouth..

Notice each breath as it enters your body and then as it leaves

with each breath in, you may like to imagine that you are breathing in a beautiful golden light

And this light is filling your body with energy, with peace and with calm

And with each breath out, the colour may change as you are releasing your body of any tension, any anxiety and as you breathe with a steady, even rhythm you breath down to your abdomen, a nice steady rhythm, feeling your abdomen rise... and lower, feeling your breath going Way down and with each breath in, you become more and more relaxed

Breathing calmly, steadily and rhythmically

and each and every time and with each breath in...and... out, it becomes easier and easier to take yourself into this wonderfully relaxed state

3 2 1 relax

Now imagine that as all the stress and tension leaves your body, a wave of relaxation and peace flows down through you. You can feel this wave of warmth and light as it slowly spreads and fills every part of your body. You feel an overwhelming feeling of comfort and wellbeing as this wave of peace and relaxation, warmth and light, fills every part of you.

Your breath begins to slow down and deepen. Inhale, expand, exhale, release.

Breathing in and breathing out. Slower and deeper.

Now that you are relaxed, I will begin to stroke your hand and arm very gently.

Start stroking her hand and arm speaking slowly and calmly

You can feel my touch on your hand and arm. I am here. You are safe. Allow yourself to sink, deeply relaxed, completely comfortable. As I stroke your hand and arm you relax more and more deeply. You can feel my touch. It feels soothing and reassuring. You are safe.

Allow yourself to enjoy this wonderful feeling. Oxytocin and endorphins are flowing through your body.

Inhale peace and exhale releasing tension, breathing in and breathing out. You are deeply relaxed, you are peaceful and calm, filled with a wonderful warmth and soothing light.

Now the sensation in your arm and hand begins to drift and fade away. You know that I am still stroking your arm and hand but all that you feel is a wonderful sensations of comfort and warmth, you may even feel a soothing light or a tingle,

spreading out from my touch. As I continue to stroke your arm and hand, the feeling in your arm drifts further and further away, the feeling becomes more and more numb.

Inhale peace and exhale releasing tension, breathing in and breathing out, inhaling and exhaling.

As you breathe, you feel more and more relaxed, you allow yourself to sink deeper and deeper into relaxation. You are completely comfortable, completely safe. The sensation in your arm continues to fade, becoming less and less until you feel nothing at all.

Inhale peace and exhale releasing tension, breathing in and breathing out, inhaling and exhaling.

You discover that you have the power to move this warm, numb, comfortable feeling wherever you want in your body. You simply focus on a part of your body and the feeling becomes less and less and gradually fades away until there is nothing at all.

Enjoy this comfortable, warming, numb sensation that fills your body, this warmth and light, this peace and this calm.

You are now very, very relaxed.

Pause and enjoy this wonderful feeling of peace and calm, warmth and light that fills your body.

Know that you are powerful and strong, that you are perfectly designed to grow and to birth your baby.

Allow yourself to wonder and appreciate the power of your body, of your intuition. Trust that your body will guide you through your pregnancy, your labour and your birth.

You know that birth is safe, that you are safe, that your baby is safe.

You understand how important it is to be calm and relaxed and breathe deeply when giving birth and you feel confident that you are able to relax deeply at any time and in any place.

You understand that your body and your mind work together and are connected, so you prepare yourself for your positive and empowering birth, knowing and trusting your body was made to do this, that you are the power that is within your body to birth your baby safely.

You know that this is your body, your baby, your birth and the choices and decision during your journey are yours to make. You feel empowered by this fact.

Pause. Stop stroking

Inhale peace and exhale releasing tension, breathing in and breathing out, inhaling and exhaling.

You feel wonderfully relaxed, you know that this relaxation has been very powerful and that you now feel calm, relaxed and peaceful, you now know that you have the power to control the sensations within your body.

In a moment, it will be time to come back to the present, knowing that you can bring this sense of peace and calm with you and that each time you do this relaxation, you will become more confident and more relaxed and that it will be easier to access this feeling of deep relaxation more quickly and easily than before.

...And so in a moment I will count from 1 to 5 and you will come up and out of your relaxation, even from the deepest level.

On the count of 5 all sensations will be restored to their true perspective, you will have full flexibility, coordination and control throughout your entire body. Any feelings of lightness or heaviness return to their true perspective

On the count of 2 all sounds return to their true perspective

on the count of 3 you place yourself back in the space in which you entered into your relaxation, being aware if what is above you, below you, to your left and right behind and in front of you

On the count of 4 you will come up from this session and bring with you all the benefits, positive feelings and suggestions, feeling relaxed, calm and refreshed

and on the count of 5 you will open your eyes to be wide awake feeling full of energy and refreshed



Arm Drop and Release Guided Relaxation

Gently rest your hand on your companion, somewhere that you both feel comfortable. Perhaps on the shoulders, or on the baby bump.

As my hand rests here, allow your eyes to close, gently and easily, so that you can better focus on the sound of my voice. Feel as the muscles of your eyelids soften and relax so that your eyelids feel light and your forehead is soft and smooth. Focus now on your breathing. Allow your breath to slow and to deepen.

Inhale, filling your lungs, feeling them expand, Exhale, blowing out all the tension, allowing release. Breathing in and.....out.

Feel all of the tension and stress flow out of your body and simply melt away.

Focus now on your eyes, notice how they feel relaxed, feel a comforting warmth and relaxation spread to your cheeks as they soften, allow your lips to part and your jaw to rest, loose and relaxed.

Now allow your shoulders to sink to their natural level as you feel the relaxation spread down your neck, across your shoulders and on down through your back. You feel calm, relaxed and peaceful. Your whole body sinks into the lovely familiar feeling of warm relaxation. You are completely comfortable.

You know that you are safe.

You relax deeper and deeper. It feels so good to take the time to just allow everything to soften, to release, to relax. So comfortable, so easy.

Embrace this wonderful feeling of warmth and cosy relaxation.

Breathe in.... And out.....release..... Relax.... Let go.... Breathing in and breathing out. You feel the relaxation gently spreading throughout your body until every single cell feels wonderfully calm and relaxed.

You feel so calm and peaceful, happy and relaxed. And every time you feel my hand rest here, you will recognise this as a sign to let go and relax. You know you can access this wonderful feeling any time you wish.

Focus once again on your breathing. Breathe slowly and deeply. Breathe in.... And out.....release..... Relax.... Let go.... That's right, breathing in..... and breathing out.

So comfortable, so relaxed.

Now I shall lift your arm gently at the wrist. Just relax and let me take all of the weight (raise arm). Notice how heavy your arm feels. It feels so good to just relax and allow me to take the weight.

In a moment, I will gently release your arm and it will fall, landing in your lap and your relaxation will deepen even more (let go of arm).

Now again, I will lift your arm, slowly and gently. Feel the weight of your arm as I raise it (raise arm).

You are completely relaxed.

In a moment I will let your arm go again and as I do, your relaxation will become deeper and more profound. (let go of arm).

You are now so deeply relaxed.

And again, one last time, I'm lifting your arm (raise arm). You allow me to take the full weight of your arm. As I let go, your arm falls into your lap and you go many times deeper (let go of arm).

Rest now, comfortable and relaxed. Enjoy the feeling of calm and well being that radiates through your body. You now know that that this easy, deep relaxation is here for you when it comes to giving birth. Know that you can feel just as calm and relaxed then as you do right now.

You know that your body has been perfectly designed to grow and birth your baby, naturally, easily and comfortably. You look forward to giving birth to your baby because you know it is going to be the most amazing and empowering experience of your life, and you will meet your baby feeling calm and confident, happy and relaxed.

Now the time has come to return to the present so slowly and gently allow your eyes to open and return feeling confident and relaxed about birth, bringing with you all the lovely feelings of calm and relaxation that you have just created in this relaxation.



With a companion's support, I can allow my birthing brain and body to take over because I feel safe, comfortable and relaxed



If there is nothing I can do about it right now, then there is no benefit to worrying about it... If there is something I can do... Then I will do it!



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



with my own journey



When I realign with my inner guidance and stop judging my body and my feelings as bad, when really they are just offering me information, I am on the pathway to a birth and a life filled with understanding, comfort, growth and delight



I know that I can do this, I trust my instincts



Each inhalation fills my body with oxygen, feeding all of the cells in my body. Each exhalation lets go of tension and waste products, allowing my muscles and mind to relax even more





"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 my
heart"



When I am relaxed
my baby will be
too



I welcome my baby
with love and
confidence



I look forward to
holding my baby
in my arms



Giving birth
is powerful
and so am I



My job is simply
to relax and allow
my body to birth
my baby





My baby will be born
gentle,
calm
and safe



I trust in the
instinctive nature
of birth



Birth is a safe and
wonderful
experience for me
and for my baby



My baby's birth
will be easy
because I am so
relaxed



All the strength
I need is within
me



I am a strong
and capable
person





My surges will not
overpower me
because they are me,
they are my power



Every surge
brings me closer
to meeting my
baby



My birth partner is
at my back and has
my back



I breathe in a sense
of peace and
breathe out any
tension



I listen to my
body and I do
what it needs me
to do



As labour
progresses, I
become more deeply
relaxed





My baby is the
perfect size for
my body



My baby will come
when my baby is
ready



My baby knows
when and how to be
born



The birth of
my baby will
be beautiful



Relaxing my
mind, relaxes my
muscles



Where my mind
leads, my body
follows





I will birth my
baby naturally,
calmly and
comfortably



I trust my body is
perfectly
designed to birth
my baby



My body knows
how to nourish and
grow my baby



I feel calm,
relaxed and at
ease



I choose to birth
with love and
parent with love



I look forward to birth
as the most wonderful
and empowering
experience





I love and
respect my
pregnant body



I make informed
decisions that are
right for myself
and for my baby



My birth partner
is by my side and
on my side



Birth is
Miraculous
However it
Happens



Here comes
another wave
I can ride it



I quiet my mind and
let my body birth
my baby





I can do

Anything
for a minute



Nothing lasts
forever

This too shall

pass



I am built for
birth



They believed
they could
And so they did



I am a badass
birthing person
I have this



I am surrounded by
loving, nurturing
support



Relaxation Triggers

For this short relaxation, prepare your space. Be somewhere comfortable and relaxing, put on some relaxing music, get some nice essential oils in a diffuser, spray, burner or on a cloth or yourself. Then with your companion, you are ready to begin.

In a moment, you will hear me say the words "3, 2, 1 relax" and you will feel my hands on your shoulders 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

The more you practice this, the more powerful the triggers will become and help you during your birth.

The Little Things that Can Make a Huge Difference

Practice, practice, practice. Dedicate time to learning these techniques, to listening to the relaxation MP3s. The more you listen, the more powerful the suggestions become, the more easily you will be able to relax, no matter what is going on around you or where you are. You are learning with this course how vital it is to stay calm and boost your oxytocin and keep your adrenaline low.

Reading scripts during your labour is not going to be practical but you can listen to the relaxation MP3s if they resonate with you, or create your own if you feel something else will work better for you. You can use your triggers such as stroking, turning the dial down, the arm drop exercise, you can satisfy all of your senses in a way that helps to relax you.

Eight reasons for unnecessary discomfort in labour and how to combat them:

1. Tension

If you accidentally bump yourself, focus on going limp and relaxed. Breathe through the pain instead of tensing up. Like the surge exercise, relax and breathe nice slow deep breaths.

2. Paying Attention Too Soon

It is easy to become obsessed with timing contractions from the very first contraction. Don't waste your energy by paying attention too early. If they wake you in the middle of the night, try to go back to sleep or relax and do some mindfulness exercises to reserve your energy.

If you can talk through a contraction, they are likely just starting to thin and move your cervix forward. This process can take some time. So, try to ignore them and do something you enjoy like watching a movie, seeing friends, going for a walk.

3. Lack of sleep

A tired body is less able to deal with labour, causing everything to "feel" more so, be sure to get plenty of rest in the days leading up to your labour and use the early mild contractions to get some sleep or if you can't sleep, rest with a relaxation track or music.

4. Thirst

If you do not take sips of water or juice between your contractions, you stand a good chance of becoming dehydrated. When your body is dehydrated, your muscle output is decreased by 30%. Dehydration also heightens feelings of exhaustion and can elevate your temperature.

5. Hunger

Your body uses food as its energy source. If you are not eating during labour, you are depriving your body of energy it needs to labour. No one should stop you from eating!

6. Need to Urinate

During active labour, you may not be able to distinguish the need to urinate. Your uterus will put pressure on your bladder as it contracts. The best way to prevent pain from an over-full bladder is to urinate frequently (at least every two hours)

7. Performance Anxiety

Counting contractions and going to the hospital too soon can cause anxiety.

Being in the hospital too early makes the labour seemingly slower than if you had stayed at home and busied yourself with your life. Having nurses and doctors checking on you can make the "seeming slow" labour seem even slower, causing the mum to feel that she has to perform better, labour must get moving. This anxiety can be enough to send some women into the fear/tension/pain cycle.

8. Lying on your back

When you are on your back, the contracting uterus has to move "up" against gravity, which is much more work than simply moving forward. You can constrict the blood flow to the heart, causing you to be light-headed (this can also compromise blood flow to the baby)

Your sacrum needs to be able to move during labour to allow the baby space to pass through. This can be uncomfortable if there is pressure on your sacrum from you lying on it. Staying off your back can help in preventing labour pain.

Other quick fixes during Labour

Take a few deep slow breaths, breath all the way down to your baby. This will help to relax your body, reduce adrenaline production and boost oxytocin. It will provide oxygen to your uterus which is working hard, so will reduce discomfort, boost endorphins and just generally make you feel better.

Gentle stroking or massage – You have oxytocin receptors all over your skin. Stroking and massage boost oxytocin by stimulating these receptors, which in turn will boost your endorphins.

Have someone you trust there, to remind you that you are safe, you are cared for, they are holding a safe space for you. Hearing this from someone can be a huge comfort.

Relax your muscles – let your shoulders drop, Companions, gently rest your hands on your birthing person's shoulders and remind them to relax, to release, to let go.

Your Body, Your Baby & Your Birth

The thing that I have come across the most over the years that has upset the most people I have spoken to before they met a doula or did a hypno-birthing (or other informative course) is that they felt that they didn't get the birth they wanted to because they felt they HAD to do something they didn't agree with. That they felt they were told they HAD to have an examination or they HAD to have synthetic Oxytocin or they HAD to be induced on a particular date. So, let's get the record straight right now because I want you to have an amazing birth experience no matter how you birth your baby.

YOU DO NOT HAVE TO DO ANYTHING ANYONE SAYS IF YOU DO NOT WANT TO

EVERY DECISION DURING YOUR PREGNANCY AND BIRTH IS YOUR OWN TO HAVE THE FINAL SAY

NO ONE CAN TOUCH YOU OR DO ANYTHING TO YOU WITHOUT YOUR PERMISSION AND YOU CAN WITHDRAW YOUR CONSENT AT ANY TIME EVEN IF THEY HAVE STARTED

YOU ARE ALLOWED TO SAY NO, EVEN IF SOMEONE IS STRONGLY ADVISING YOU OTHERWISE*

YOU CAN DECLINE VAGINAL EXAMS, INDUCTIONS, MEDICATIONS, ETC

IT IS HUGE IMPORTANT THAT YOU FEEL IN CONTROL OF WHAT IS HAPPENING TO YOUR BODY WHEN YOU ARE PREGNANT, GIVING BIRTH AND AFTER BECAUSE THESE MEMORIES WILL STAY WITH YOU FOREVER AND SHAPE YOUR FUTURE AS A PARENT

*this is my polite way of saying if someone is saying you HAVE to do something as well as other well meaning advice. You still don't HAVE to do it.

It is a legal requirement that you have given informed consent for any and all things that happen to you. This means that doctors, midwives and nurses are legally obligated to give you unbiased, medical advice and to back up their suggestions by providing evidence based information and actual number statistics making sure you have a chance to ask questions and fully understand the procedure and the risks and benefits of both doing and not doing it BEFORE they touch you.

Actual number statistics is important – you can learn more about this in module 3 - Where to Give Birth and Why. As statistics can sound very scary if given for example as : your baby is 50% more likely for this bad thing to happen – sounds very scary but if the actual chances of it happening anyway are 1 in a million then it is 1 in 500,000 now, so maybe not so scary after all... It is easy to confuse with statistics and skew the wording of them to suit our own beliefs and agenda and this is why it is the law so that you do not feel coerced into something you do not want to do because someone else feels it is the right choice.

If you feel uncomfortable with your care provider you can request someone else, you can request a second opinion and you are allowed to disagree with any opinions. Remind your care providers if necessary that under human rights law, this is your body, your baby, your decision and they have to respect that, even if they do not agree. Remember: YOU ARE THE BOSS!

This does mean that you need to get informed so that you can understand how your body works, what will help you and what will hinder you in your journey, so that you know the risks associated with procedures so that you know if you want to

take that risk, if for you it outweighs not doing it. This is a huge part of feeling empowered in your birth and luckily for you, a huge part of the information available in this course and linked from my website is easily laid out for you to do exactly that. Everyone feels differently about risks and interventions. The important thing is that you make the decision that is right for YOU. This is YOUR BODY, YOUR BABY, YOUR CHOICE. YOU ARE THE BOSS!

When you are in labour you may not feel in the head space to say what you want or ask questions, this is where a companion and or a doula are invaluable because they will know you, they will know your wishes and they can advocate on your behalf so you can stay in your oxytocin bubble, safe in the knowledge that someone has your back utterly and completely. They can ask the questions about the risks and benefits, using thait B.R.A.I.N.S and relay to you between your surges to obtain your informed consent.

It is difficult to make a choice if you do not know all of the options available and this is where using the B.R.A.I.N.S acronym can be very helpful. Even more so is doing this course in advance so that you have the knowledge that is your power to make an informed choice that is right for you.

Important things to Remember

- Your body needs to feel safe, unobserved and uninhibited to birth your baby. Environment has a huge impact on how you feel and your birth experience so make the environment work for you. Satisfy ALL of your senses and think like a cat – you want safety, snuggling up, quiet, unobserved, lack of intrusions and questions.
- Your instinct is powerful – only you can feel what is going on in your body. Trust your body, trust your instinct and follow it. Your doula and or birth companion can support you in being heard if you feel you need to speak up about something
- Your body knows how to birth your baby so all you need to do is support it to work the best it can by breathing deeply and slowly and by using gravity to help your uterus to work the best it can, keeping yourself fuelled with nibbles of food and hydrated with sips of drink. Rest when you can so you aren't over tired.
- Your companion and your doula are there to support you – to hold a safe space for you, to ask questions for you to make sure you are fully informed. They are on your side and by your side and support you with any needs like fetching blankets, drinks, massage, guiding and counting through breaths if you wish and making sure your birth preferences are respected.
- Your Midwife (and if you need one your Doctor) are there to look after you and your baby from a medical point of view. They will monitor you and your baby's health throughout
- Your support people during your labour are important. How you are treated during your labour will stay with you. So make sure you have people you feel safe with, who you trust and who are able to support you fully, so that you can completely relax and feel safe in their company. You can request a different doctor or midwife if you feel it is necessary
- No one can touch you or do anything to you without your informed consent. You are the boss. Which I hope feels hugely empowering in itself. Nothing can be done without you agreeing to it. So take the time to understand, get informed, ask questions so that you only say yes to things you actually want and feel are the right decision. If someone pressures you after you have made your informed decision, this is harassment and you or your companion can tell them so.
- You do not need to be swept up by the conveyor belt of care. Your body, your baby, your choice. Speak up if you don't want something. Seize your power now as you become a parent so you feel empowered and in control.
- Professionals can offer guidance and opinion and experience but they cannot order you or force you to do anything that you do not want to do. You can always say no and they MUST respect this. You do not lose your human rights when birthing your baby. No means no and anyone touching you without your express permission is assault.
- People love to give advice and offer opinions, even if they are not really wanted. Especially when it comes to children and having children. You do not have to agree or listen to other people's opinions if you do not want to (including mine). This is your body, your baby, your birth and you are the boss. You choose what is right for you and your family. Just because your mother or your best friend or the midwife caring for you did things a certain way does not mean it is the right way for you. If you don't like the advice, look elsewhere. There is so much information out there. Some of it backed up by research, some of it not, most of it is just opinion or a case of I did it this way and things turned out ok... You are about to be in charge of caring for a little human. Use this time to think about how you want to parent. What is important to you and be prepared that what you think before you have a baby may well change after and that is ok. We are ALL learning, none of us know it all and we never will and that is ok. It is ok to make mistakes as a parent. We all do it. All we can do is honestly apologise and try to be better next time and that is ok and normal.

- Remember that how you are during your birth has a direct impact on how your baby feels and copes as well. If you are calm, it will mean your baby is more calm, as they are not receiving stress signals or hormones from you. So when you help yourself, you help your baby. Babies who enter the world feeling calm, really allows their own natural reflex expression to happen how it should, their ability to breastfeed and bond really well with you is hugely improved. It helps their brain to develop better and by doing this course you know all of the tools to help you be calmer and therefore how to give your baby the most amazing start to their life as well.
- Giving birth is a hugely transitional time in your life. You will only do it a handful of times, perhaps even once. So invest your time into having THE most wonderful experience because believe me it is worth it for you, for your companion and for your baby, not just on the day but for your whole lives moving forward as a family.
- Remember a positive birth can take many forms – it can be completely natural with no intervention but it can also be a planned caesarean with lots of medication. The important thing is that it feels positive and empowering for you, the birthing person and now you have the tools to make sure this happens for you.



Early Labour – In the Beginning

Stages of Labour	What is happening	Physical expression	Emotional Expression	Things that may be helpful
Latent Phase	Body is preparing for birth. The cervix is moving forward, thinning and softening as it is drawn up by the uterine muscles	Perhaps the mucus plug, perhaps waters breaking but not necessarily	Nesting, excitement, nervousness, anxiety, agitation, relaxation, sense of calm	Relaxation, rest, distraction e.g eating a nice meal, cuddles, playing games, watching movies
Early labour	Uterus is toning up, practising and establishing contractions and beginning to open the cervix	Contractions have a large gap between them often and last less than a minute – can talk through contractions	Excitement, nesting, nervousness, anxiety, agitation, relaxation, sense of calm	Relaxation, rest, distraction e.g eating a nice meal, cuddles, playing games, watching movies, deep relaxing breathing, relaxation scripts, a nice warm bath

Stages of Labour	What is happening	Physical expression	Emotional Expression	Things that may be helpful
Active Labour	Contractions are ramping up to open the cervix, they become longer duration, closer together and more intense 5-10cm dilation	More discomfort, back pain is possible, contractions are intense and cannot speak during them	Focused, more withdrawn and less responsive (all good signs), more likely to be primal in responses – less vocabulary, more direct and to the point	Deep breathing, relaxation, gentle touch, 3 2 1 relax, massage, being present and listening if she wants to talk, offer sips of water between contractions, offer nibbles, heat/cold
Transition Blips in the road	Adrenaline is spiking – reducing the efficacy of endorphins	Increase in heart rate/breathing, more aware, shaking, vomiting, loose bowels	“I can’t do this”, “I want an epidural”, “I want to go home”, feeling overwhelmed, fearful, worried or reassured all is going well	Reassurance, reminding this is a good sign of labour progressing, you are close to meeting your baby, deep breathing, relaxation, being close and present, protecting from intervention

Stages of Labour	What is happening	Physical expression	Emotional Expression	Things that may be helpful
Pushing	Cervix is fully dilated, Contractions change in nature to strong bearing down, the baby is travelling down through the cervix, vagina and pelvic floor one step forward, one back is very normal to allow gentle stretching	Deep grunting, moaning, primal postures – squatting, forward leaning, may be a bit of poo, babies head will become visible	Focused on pushing the baby down the birth canal, may feel nervous of new sensations, elated at new phase, primal responses common	Aiding squatting/forward leaning postures, reminding to breathe the baby down, go with the feelings and sensations, blow the baby out, warm compress, encouragement, reassurance
Crowning /birth	Adrenaline is spiking – reducing the efficacy of endorphins, the baby is emerging from the body	Grunting, pushing, baby emerging, tears, laughter	Worry about tearing pooing, euphoria, joy, overwhelming emotion, love, quiet, calm	Warm pack on perineum, be close, protect the quiet and calm space, interact with medical staff so mother and baby remain undisturbed

3rd Stage – Birth of the Placenta and the Fourth Trimester

Stages of Labour	What is happening	Physical expression	Emotional Expression	Things that may be helpful
Birth of the placenta	<p>Contractions expel the placenta and contract the uterus back down</p> <p>The baby is skin to skin with the mother</p>	<p>Placenta is usually delivered without much trouble</p> <p>Focus is much more (As it should be) on the baby</p>	<p>Joy, love, tears, amazement, fascination with the new baby</p>	<p>Protecting the quiet, calm environment for mother and baby to bond well and establish breastfeeding, ensure clamping and cutting of the cord is delayed until it has stopped pulsating, make sure plenty of time of skin to skin is allowed, keep the room/mother and baby nice and warm</p>
Fourth trimester	<p>Getting to know your baby, their cues, habits, feeding, changing nappies, bonding</p>	<p>Tiredness, healing, lochia (post birth bleeding)</p>	<p>Feeling overwhelmed, love, excitement, anxiety, joy, pride</p>	<p>Practical help around the house, cooking meals, providing water, hot drinks, snacks to the mother, company and support at night</p>

Making informed decisions

We are used to doing what we are told by authority figures. From our parents and teachers to bosses and politicians. It is hard to question people who we feel are in a position of authority or we feel may have more knowledge or expertise in a subject than us. When it comes to birth though, you are the only expert on you. People can give you their ideas, their thoughts, they can give you information and you can use that information to reach the decision that is right for you. Therefore it is important to know about how your body works best and to know the right questions to ask. I always tell my students, never be afraid to ask a question, no harm comes from asking a question.

Remember to use your B.R.A.I.N.S

B – Benefits – what are the benefits if we follow what you are suggesting?

R – Risks – what are the risks associated with what you are suggesting?

A – Alternatives – Are there any alternatives? If so what are they and what are their risks and benefits?

I – Instinct – What is your instinct telling you – it has a powerful sense of what is right for you.

N – Nothing – What happens if you wait for 5 mins, 10 surges, a few hours, a few days? Does this change the risks or benefits?

S – Smile – Because being friendly when you ask something ALWAYS helps

If you feel that someone is pressuring you into making a decision that you are not ready to make, you can ask “is someone’s life in immediate danger? Is this an emergency situation or can we have a few moments to breathe and think”. Sometimes, just one breath is enough to reflect and gather your thoughts and also sometimes helpful to break any tension that may be rising. Remember emergency situations are extremely rare so there is usually time to pause, take some time to think, to read or learn more information, so that you can really feel fully informed before you make your decision. You may choose to take the 1st option offered or you may want to try something else but remember the choice is yours. Your body, your baby, your birth – YOU are the boss. It is fundamentally important for you to take the time to allow yourself to make your own decision, meaning you make empowered choices, not feel forced into something you don’t feel comfortable with.

Oxytocin and Syntocinon are NOT the same

NICE guidelines state that induced labour has an impact on the birth experience of women. It may be less efficient and is usually more painful than spontaneous labour, and epidural analgesia and assisted delivery are more likely to be required. Induction of labour has a large impact on the health of women and their babies and so needs to be clearly clinically justified. In spite of these clear guidelines, our national induction rate in the UK is on the rise and in 2018-2019 was recorded at 33%, 70% of which are stated to be for 'post term dates'. Term in this context is 41 weeks, not 42, which is actually considered to be full term... So if you and your baby are well and you are not yet 42 weeks pregnant, please research your options, the risks and benefits to you and your baby of waiting rather than being induced and via-versa. Spontaneous labours are generally shorter, more comfortable and less likely to need intervention compared with induced labour. Synthetic Oxytocin, syntocinon is NOT the same as your own naturally produced oxytocin. It does not build gradually like yours does at a pace that is right for your body. It does not produce co-ordinated surges in your uterus, the surges are often strong and ineffective at opening the cervix. It does not pass the blood brain barrier, so it does not trigger endorphin and other hormone production such as prolactin and relaxin, which reduces your own body's natural coping mechanisms. In short, induced labour is not the same as natural labour, so if you don't need to be induced for a medical reason, really think about it before choosing it and if someone is giving you a medical reason, really make sure you do your research to understand if induction will actually benefit you and your baby.

Oxytocin is the key to labour. It is needed for natural labour to start, to build and to complete. Remember oxytocin is wonderful but shy. For it to build, you need to be happy and feel relaxed and safe. Remember it is highest in the early hours of the morning, so replicate the sleeping feeling as this is a good environment for oxytocin. The following are ideas to help a labour that has slowed or is being a bit slow to get going:

- Relax by listening to your MP3s or your positive affirmations
- Have your companion or doula give you a massage or book another complementary therapy session like acupuncture, reflexology, cranio-sacral therapy
- Snuggle up somewhere warm and dark with something or someone you love
- Rest and relax, trust your body and your baby to know when it is the right time to be born
- Remember Oxytocin is also the hormone of love. So cuddles, nipple stimulation and orgasm are all good ways for boosting your oxytocin.
- Remember to satisfy all of your senses – taste, touch, sight, sound – do what makes you feel comfortable and happy
- Oxytocin is shy, so ask people to leave you in peace for a bit if you are feeling observed, try to snuggle up and have a little snooze, it really makes a big difference.

Relaxation Script – Letting Go of Fears

Take a moment to make sure that 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 my voice guiding you

And when you are ready begin by breathing in... and .. out

You may like to breathe in through your nose... and out through your mouth..

Notice each breath as it enters your body and then as it leaves

with each breath in, you may like to imagine that you are breathing in a beautiful golden light

And this light is filling your body with energy, with peace and with calm

And with each breath out, the colour may change as you are releasing your body of any tension, any anxiety

and as you breathe with a steady, even rhythm you breath down to your abdomen, a nice steady rythm, feeling your abdomen rise... and lower

feeling your breath going Way down and with each breath in, you become more and more relaxed

Breathing calmly, steadily and rhythmically

and each and every time and with each breath in...and... out, it becomes easier and easier to take yourself into this wonderfully relaxed state

3 2 1 relax

Now you might like to imagine the next breath, you breath as a golden light, breath the light into your mind, into your forehead, your cheeks, around your jaw, breathing this light in, allowing all the muscles in your face, in your jaw to release, to soften and with the next breath you breathe this light into your neck, your throat, your shoulders. Feeling the warmth as the muscles soften, releasing any tension

this light now moves down your arms to your hands, you may even notice a slight tingling sensation with your finger tips and with the next breath, you breathe the light into your chest and your lungs, expanding your lungs just a little more

breathing this light down your back and your spine, softening all the muscles of your back and down to your pelvis

imagine this beautiful light filling your body and bathing you in warmth and love and a deep feeling of relaxation and calm as you instinctively know that the more relaxed and calm you are the more that you will benefit

Breathe the light down, down your legs, to your knees, down to your feet and finally to your toes. Feel the warm, relaxing glow spreading throughout your entire body like the cosy warmth from a fire and with each breath you feel more relaxed, more safe, more comfortable.

With each breath it becomes easier and easier to take yourself into this wonderfully relaxed state 3 2 1 relax

Keep taking deep ,rhythmical, relaxing breaths, enjoy this feeling of peace and calm and deep relaxation

And now you may like to imagine that you are far away, stood at the top of a cliff top path that leads down to a beautiful, secluded beach, a serene, calm, peaceful beach. Take a moment to imagine what it is like to actually be there now.

You may decided to take the steps that lead down to the beach. With each step down you feel yourself sinking deeper and deeper into relaxation, letting go, relaxing.

Each step down brings a greater sense of comfort, or relaxation, of trust in your body

When you reach the bottom of the steps you may feel the comforting warmth of the sand between your toes

Take a good, long, deep breath in, breathing in the soft ,warm, salty sea air, feel the gentle warm breeze on your skin, the bright blue sky above, the feeling of the sun as it shines down on your skin, take a good look around you and notice all the details, the light as it reflects on the shimmering sea., The sound of the waves gently lapping at the shore, the patterns left in the wet sand by the gentle waves, waves as they roll in.... And out....

Rolling in.... And out,,,,, to the rhythm of your breathing

And this is a special place for you, a place you can go to for complete calm, relaxation and peace

a place to go to whenever you choose

a place in which you feel, instantly calm, relaxed, at ease

enjoy this feeling of being so comfortable

that's right, going even deeper down now, 3 2 1 ...relax

And from this moment on and in the time leading up to the birth, you are progressively more and more relaxed... More and more calm in your thoughts and your feeling and you are protected from any negative images or stories you may hear about giving birth

it is as if you have a protective cocoon around you and negative images and stories just seem to bounce off leaving you and your baby unaffected

and if at any time you have any worries, any fears, you can choose to accept them for what they are they are simply thoughts, they are not real. They are thoughts about something which may or may not happen in the future, but they are still just a thought and because you are now so calm and so much more in control of your thoughts, you can now be aware of them, acknowledge them, thank them for their part in keeping you safe and then actively let them go

maybe you imagine tying them to a helium balloon and then watching as the balloon takes away your fears or your concerns, seeing them float away on the breeze

or you may choose to write them down and then burn them or throw the paper into the sea where they simply float away

whatever you choose, you find it easy to let them go

so these thoughts have no more power or effect and so as the wonderful day gets closer all the systems in your body are working in harmony, more and more effectively and your confidence in yourself increases Take a few moments to enjoy the feeling of release as your fears and anxieties float away leaving you with a new, strong sense of confidence and inner knowledge that your body and mind will be strong and capable during the birth and in the first few weeks and months after having your baby and that you will adjust naturally to the change in sleeping patterns and to the new demands and the new challenges of having a baby.

With this release, and new knowledge, you realise that you feel calmer, stronger and more energised. Know that this place is always here for you and that you can return at any time. As you turn to go, back up the path, one step at a time, you can feel the confidence, the calm, the serenity that you found here, building inside you. Safe in the knowledge it will stay with you and that you can return at any time for further relaxation and peace.

And so in a moment I will count from 1 to 5 and you will come up and out of your relaxation, even from the deepest level. On the count of 5 all sensations will be restored to their true perspective, you will have full flexibility, coordination and control throughout your entire body. Any feelings of lightness or heaviness return to their true perspective

On the count of 2 all sounds return to their true perspective

on the count of 3 you place yourself back in the space in which you entered into your relaxation, being aware of what is above you, below you, to your left and right behind and in front of you

On the count of 4 you will come up from this session and bring with you all the benefits, positive feelings and suggestions, feeling relaxed, calm and refreshed

and on the count of 5 you will open your eyes to be wide awake feeling full of energy and refreshed and so you are gradually coming up now, slowly beginning to move and stretch on 1 2 3 4 and 5



eyes open, and wide awake

Birth Bag Checklist

Make sure your bag is packed in advance. Pack a bag even if you are planning a home birth, just in case you change your mind about going in. Then put it in a corner (maybe even in the boot if you have a car) so it's ready. Birth companions, it is your job to remember these! If you have a doula they may have things in their magical bag so check with them so you don't double up.

Birth Bag – Things for the Birthing Person

- ♥ Maternity Notes – including birth preferences
- ♥ A large t-shirt or front opening nightie to wear in labour
- ♥ Toothbrush and toothpaste
- ♥ Hairbrush/comb
- ♥ Lip balm
- ♥ Essential oils and massage oil
- ♥ Pillows
- ♥ Wide Scarf or shawl
- ♥ Bikini top if you are planning a water birth
- ♥ Dressing gown
- ♥ 2 nursing bras
- ♥ Nipple cream (calendula is good for healing – nips and bits)
- ♥ Front opening Pyjamas
- ♥ Dark coloured towel
- ♥ Music and relaxation MP3s
- ♥ Fragrance spray and diffuser
- ♥ Warm fluffy socks and slippers
- ♥ Drinks – water, fruit juice, coconut water
- ♥ Snacks – non perishable e.g naked bars, nuts, dried fruit
- ♥ Hairbands/headbands
- ♥ Water bottle and straw
- ♥ Water spray bottle
- ♥ TENS machine if you are using one
- ♥ Chargers for phone, etc
- ♥ Hot water bottle or wheat bag
- ♥ Positive affirmation cards if they help you
- ♥ Breast pads
- ♥ Maternity pads – 2 packs
- ♥ Big comfy cotton pants or disposable knickers
- ♥ Comfy outfit for going home in
- ♥ Battery tea lights and fairy lights
- ♥ Bowl or sick bag for the journey, just in case

Things for the Birth Companion

- ♥ Change for parking (if you are taking a car)
- ♥ Snacks – energy bars, dried fruit, savoury snacks
- ♥ Drink – water, juice
- ♥ Deodorant
- ♥ Phone and charger
- ♥ Pillow for yourself
- ♥ A little bottle of something to celebrate the birth
- ♥ Toothbrush and toothpaste/breath spray
- ♥ A book/something quiet to do
- ♥ Trunks/Swimsuit if you are joining in the pool
- ♥ If you want a separate camera/video recorder
- ♥ Hypno-birthing course notes if they are helpful

Things for the Baby

- ♥ Car seat if you are going home in a car
- ♥ Muslin squares – 5
- ♥ Sleep suits with feet and hand covering x3
- ♥ Blanket
- ♥ Vests x3
- ♥ Nappies – allow 10 a day
- ♥ Cotton wool balls – use these instead of wipes
- ♥ Olive oil – helps to loosen sticky meconium poos from skin
- ♥ A going home outfit
- ♥ Hat x2

Resources

I have listed just a few here, for more links go to my website.

My Website: www.theserenitydoula.co.uk

You tube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCziYkgCz7XAV7htTNIbXZIQ>

Instagram: @theserenitydoula

Facebook: www.facebook.com/theserenitydoula

There are lots of links on this page of my website: <https://www.theserenitydoula.co.uk/clients>

You can also view my you tube videos here: <https://www.theserenitydoula.co.uk/videos>

Which? Birth Choice: www.which.co.uk/birth-choice

Information and statistics on all hospital and birth centres in the uk

The Birth Place Study: <https://www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/birthplace>

A study of 64,000 births in the UK. Evaluated the outcomes for birthing person and Baby in various settings including home, birth centres and labour wards. Well worth a look!

NHS Squeezy App: www.squeezyapp.co.uk/

App to help strengthen the pelvic floor through regular exercises.

Spinning Babies: www.spinningbabies.com

Advice on how to encourage a breech or back-to-back baby to turn into the optimum position for birth.

Inspiring Birth Photography and stories on instagram: @birthbecomesher, @thefirsthello, @tribe_birth_photography, @badassbirthphotography, @birthphotography, @positivebirthmovement

AIMS: www.aims.org.uk

Amazing booklets that give evidence-based and accurate information, lots of information on their website

Suggested Practice schedule – Do something every day!

Morning: When you wake up practice a few up breaths, perhaps scroll some positive birth stories or images on instagram in bed with a cuppa

Daily: Practice your j-breath/down breathing on the toilet

Evening: Practice a different technique each day, even if it just for 10 minutes – massage, relaxation script, visiting your sanctuary, listening to a relaxation MP3. Find what works for you and practice regularly. The more you practice, the more effective the techniques become.

Some people find having a visual schedule helpful so I have made one here with suggestions and then a blank one for you to fill in with the techniques you want to practice. So you can tick of when you have done it and notice how much more relaxed and wonderful you feel when you do! You can also tick off in a wall calendar or add your practice to one to help you to keep on track.

Day	Morning	Day	Evening
Monday	Up breath, positive birth images/stories	J-breath on the loo Read some affirmations	Listen to relaxation MP3 Letting go of fear
Tuesday	Up breath, positive birth images/stories	J-breath on the loo	Listen to relaxation MP3 Pregnancy relaxation
Wednesday	Up breath, positive birth images/stories	J-breath on the loo Read some affirmations	Listen to relaxation MP3 Birth affirmations
Thursday	Up breath, positive birth images/stories	J-breath on the loo	Listen to relaxation MP3 Practice your arm stroking relaxation
Friday	Up breath, positive birth images/stories	J-breath on the loo Read some affirmations	Listen to relaxation MP3 Visit your sanctuary
Saturday	Up breath, positive birth images/stories	J-breath on the loo	Listen to relaxation MP3 Practice massage techniques
Sunday	Up breath, positive birth images/stories	J-breath on the loo Read some affirmations	Listen to relaxation MP3 Practice your arm drop

Day	Morning	Day	Evening
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

Notes

A series of horizontal lines for writing notes.

Lined writing area for notes.

Lined writing area with 30 horizontal lines for notes.

Lined writing area with 28 horizontal lines for notes.

Lined writing area with horizontal lines.

