

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



# Module 12 – Birth Companion Preparation



# Module 12 – What you will encounter

- ♥ How to choose your Birth companion
- ♥ How to prepare as a Birthing companion
- ♥ What is required of a Birth companion – Physically, Emotionally, Mentally
- ♥ Moments when support is vital
- ♥ How to manage your medical team



# Birth Companion Preparation

- ♥ For thousand of years women 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



# Choosing your Birth Companions/

- 💖 Think carefully about who you want at your birth/during your labour. Be aware and make them aware that your feelings may change as time progresses, so they are not disappointed if you change your mind
- 💖 Have open, honest discussions without judgement
- 💖 Discuss alternative options and back up plans
- 💖 Discuss what you would like, what you wouldn't like, intervention you may/may not be open to
- 💖 Discuss fears or concerns that you both may have – alleviating tension BEFORE the birth, meaning you know where you stand
- 💖 Practice exercises together – massage, visualisation, triggers, relaxation, breathing



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



Your body will do the hard work and can do it alone, however, a companion can help with practical and emotional support

Fetching drinks and snacks, cool flannels, turning down lights, protecting your safe space, playing music, massage, verbal support, distracting you, providing a buffer between you and medical staff to keep you out of your higher brain



Companions help with practical and emotional  
support

Needs vary between people and throughout

labour so a companion must be adaptable and

open to change





Women become primal, vulnerable and receptive to words and emotions around them so a companion must be mindful, remain calm, quiet and attentive  
Observe, hold space, do what feels right and then make sure it seems right



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



Keep adrenaline out of the room

Step out if you need a moment as long as the  
mother is safe and supported



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



# What is require of a Birth Companion – Physically

- ♥ Being present
- ♥ Attending basic needs – Sips of drinks without asking, just gently raising a straw to lips between contractions, helping her to the toilet or into a change of position, bringing blankets or cold flannels or a hot water bottle
- ♥ Taking care of **ALL** practical things – bags, notes to the car, calling relatives, bringing snacks, change for the car park, filling the birth pool
- ♥ Some women like to be held or massaged or to dance together... Some to be left alone.. Some a combination, so a birth companion must accept and go with the flow



# What is required of a Birth Companion – Emotionally

- ♥ Love, support, encouragement, company
- ♥ Let her know you believe in her strength and power
- ♥ Remind her of other challenges that she has overcome
- ♥ Trust her intuition, her path to birth, even if it is different to your expectations
- ♥ Stay with her, be present, encourage and champion her
- ♥ Your trust and belief in her supports her at times of vulnerability
- ♥ Remember you are communicating with her birthing mind so it can be different to normal. Just holding a safe space for her in the most wonderful thing that you can do



# What is required of a Birth Companion – Emotionally

- ♥ Always come back to focusing on relaxed, deep breathing and relaxation triggers
- ♥ Remind her of her visualisations – her sanctuary
- ♥ Keep checking in – is what you are doing helping? Does she need/want something different
- ♥ Do not feel offended or upset if she does not find what you are doing helpful or useful
- ♥ Speak calmly, quietly and slowly, pausing after each phrase. Use simple language
- ♥ Remember that sometimes silence, just holding a safe space for her is the most wonderful thing you can do



# What is required of a Birth Companion – Mentally

- ♥ You are the gate keeper and protector of her safe space
- ♥ You liaise directly with the medical team, freeing her to concentrate on labour
- ♥ Make the birth team aware you are using hypnotherapy techniques so that they understand why you are so calm and do not mistake it for early labour





# Birth Companion – Vital Moments

- ♥ If there is a 'blip', a change in breathing and demeanour, remember the stages of labour – be a calming tree/space. For her to ride this adrenaline peak:
- ♥ Perhaps encourage her to voice any concerns, check in and do not expect to fix it. Just listen and hear, often this is enough
- ♥ Go through a letting go of fear exercise
- ♥ Remove the source of fear/interruption if you can
- ♥ Provide more privacy
- ♥ Avoid unnecessary people/exams/checks
- ♥ Change the environment – lights, smell warmth, sound



# Birth Companion – How to Manage the Medical Team

- ♥ Most of the time intervention is proposed due to timing constraints, resources, etc, rather than any problem
- ♥ Stay calm and polite
- ♥ Is this a guideline or evidence based?
- ♥ Is it vital at this time?
- ♥ Is anyone in danger? If no – “in that case, why do we need to rush?” “Could you leave us for 30 mins, we have some ideas of things to do, let’s talk again then”



# Birth Companion – How to Manage the Medical Team

...Then use BRAINS

**B** – Benefits? Why is this helpful

**R** – Risks? Advantages/Disadvantages – you can always ask for a second opinion

**A** – Alternatives – “it may be routine but are there other options?”

**I** – Instinct/ Intuition – Listen to it

**N** – Nothing – What if we do nothing? Why now? Can we wait 30 mins/10mins?

**S** - Smile



A guide for the birthing Partner – What to  
Expect, How you can help...



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

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>



# Having a Doula

Statistically, having a doula present at the birth, lowers the chances of a caesarean birth, reduces the use of opiates and other drugs, shortens the length of labour and birth and increases breastfeeding rates. Studies prove, time and time again that a doula is the best birth partner to help you increase your chances of having a positive birth and postnatal experience. Doulas know what to expect during birth, they can remain calm and present and support you and any other birth companions you choose to have with you



# Practical Exercise

- ♥ Take time to consider who you would like with you at your birth
- ♥ Make sure your companions are willing to learn with you so that they are a help during your birth rather than a hindrance
- ♥ Talk through your wishes with your companion, your birth preferences/care plan so they know inside and out how best to support you
- ♥ Practice massage and breathing techniques together BEFORE labour starts
- ♥ Keep writing your thoughts and feelings in your diary and any questions that come up as a result of this module

