



## Pain & Birth

If our body is able to conceive, to make this little wonder of Nature called a baby, you can easily imagine that it will do whatever it takes to allow him to have the smoothest birth possible.

That's at this point that the becoming mother and the becoming father enter the stage in a way...

Our body « has known » how to give birth for ages and it's interesting to learn to listen to it and inch by inch realize that we can trust him.

Pain is scary, it's normal. Nobody likes being in pain, but we forget that the pain exists at first to warn us that there is something going on in our body. It's first and foremost an alarm signal and a protection mechanism.

The feeling will be different from a person to another depending on the intensity, the context in which it's experienced and the way we dread this pain.

The way of experiencing the pain can be modified through several factors, that make all the difference between pain and suffering.

### Factors that increase the perception of the pain

- The fear
- The anxiety
- The stress
- Being tired
- The cold
- The hunger
- The loneliness
- Being emotionally overwhelmed

### Factors that decrease the perception of the pain

- The relaxation (breathing, visualising, laughing, touching)
- The trust
- Being well informed
- Regular contact with the loved ones and friends
- Being active, rested and correctly
- A known and comfortable environment
- Letting go and living « here and now »

The people who support the woman in labor have this ability, this power to influence on these factors and can give to the woman the chance not to be a victim of her own pain anymore, but to be an active participant in it.

« The best way to go out of the pain is to go into it. » *Isabelle Brabant*



Emotionale Vorbereitung zur Geburt  
Anwesenheit während der Geburt

Begleitung im Wochenbett  
Massage, Entspannung

### Let's begin:

Nature is well done. In the end of the pregnancy already, during the 8<sup>th</sup> month, there are uterine contractions (called "Braxton Hicks contractions") that help the baby to prepare for the birth. They are not necessarily felt nor have any action on the opening of the cervix.

From the moment we notice that labor has begun (in most cases, because lots of cases are possible:

*A contraction is coming: what do we feel?*

The belly is becoming harder, the sensation can remind you of the pain of the periods, at the level of the kidneys for some, more localized in the belly for others... Anyway the sensation of pain comes gradually and doesn't appear at once, sticking us on the ground, powerless...

A uterine contraction is like a wave which is at first on a quite quiet sea. Between each wave there is no pain, and it stays like this until the end of the labor. It's cheering to know it is going to stay this way even in the middle of the storm. Between each wave there is 2 to 5 minutes time without any pain. This timeframe is precious to relax, to let it go and breathe calmly.

When we experience pain, the most logical reaction is to close up, to tighten everything inside of us to feel less pain. But the fear of the pain and the tensing emphasize the perception of the pain. As if you tightened your fist around a burning piece of coal... the more you tighten, the more it burns.

We can choose to accompany the wave rather than resist and row in the opposite direction, which leads to panic and being exhausted.

It's normal and human to want to control the situation. The control is an attitude that we have been developing for our whole life because we need it to gain our autonomy. I know it's difficult to believe that we will feel good and safe without this legitimate control habit. Yet a birth cannot be controlled. No one controls the coming life.

When we give birth, it's important to let go of control, to let go, otherwise the pain is experienced as it would be an aggression.

*We have got the choice to tell ourselves "I'm the one who decides. And I decide to open myself and to accompany the wave which is invading me. I welcome each wave that comes, and I allow it to do its work."*

The human body produces naturally hormones called "endorphins" which soften the pain and spread the sensation of euphoria.

In the day-to-day life, we use mainly the left-sided hemisphere of our brain: the one which analyzes, understands, decides, thinks...

Accepting to let go, to give ourselves up to the energy of giving birth makes us switch to the right-sided hemisphere: the one of the emotions, the one which feels, which is directly connected to the body.

Letting ourselves take by the wave, accepting what is happening, allows the body to make the endorphins run around. These are our own "sedative" which protects us from an intense pain, by generating a kind of numbness and putting us in a trance.

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**What encourages endorphins production :**

- The darkness
- The peace
- The emotional safety
- No « audience », respect of the intimacy
- Breathing

**Comforting and softness through touching** is a privileged mean of communication. Loving hands can give you the force to allow yourselves to open and relax... Laughing relaxes and opens also instead of closing up.

A reassuring presence: *talk to me... tell me anything but talk to me!*

Each woman, each couple finds gradually what fits them or what doesn't.

What concerns a lot the women too, is the length of the labor.

The length itself doesn't really matter, that's the way it's experienced that does. If during 5 or 6 hours we feel alone, neglected, rushed, like someone whose needs are ignored, then these hours could be certainly worse than 24h of an intense labor during which we feel loved, supported and respected...

The labor doesn't evolve in a linear way, nor foreseeable, nor calculable.

When you are in labor, you should remember that it's the pathway from the pregnancy to the motherhood and that it's composed of different steps.

All women are different from one another and we go through these steps with our own way, depending of our experience, our fears, our expectation but also our knowledge.

**The unknown is scary.**

Learn to trust your body and your baby. They both know how to do; however, we can help them.

Even in the heart of the storm which rose gradually, remember that you are not alone. The father and we, midwives, doulas and obstetricians, are here to watch over you and your baby, who both are in the same boat on this raging sea.

You will have moments of discouragement. As you are tired, you will doubt of your abilities to go till the end of the process. Yet, you should be aware that, even exhausted, you will find the strength to give birth to your baby.

And as soon as it is born, unbelievable but true: the pain stops. And the calm comes back...

Only the placenta, the nourishing organ of your baby, needs to give us the honor to be born.

It's also time to get to know your shaken and tired little baby, who also went through all the waves and the delivery.

Finally, remember that labor and delivery are the only two cases where pain doesn't mean neither danger nor disease, but an extraordinary work of the body to give birth to a child.



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By being aware of all this and by surrounding yourself as much as possible with reassuring elements during the labor, you will be able to tame your pain in your own way rather than make it your enemy. You will come out of it stronger



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