



A close-up photograph of a pregnant woman. She is wearing a blue short-sleeved shirt and a blue headwrap. A colorful beaded necklace hangs around her neck. Her pregnant belly is painted with blue and green swirling patterns. She is holding a small object in her right hand. The background is blurred, showing an indoor setting.

5 Ways to Prepare Holistically for Birth

Picture by: Tanya Minotti Photography

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Preparing for birth in the modern day can be quite a challenge. I'm sure like most women, you have been bombarded with ideas about birth, watched dramatic scenes on television of women giving birth, and heard friends and family re-count their own experiences of giving birth. Maybe you've been lucky enough to hear some more positive accounts of birth too, or maybe you have been researching all you can find out on the topic. As you approach this time it's normal to feel some excitement as well as anxiety and apprehension about giving birth, whether it's your first time or not. Some women feel just as anxious about becoming a parent. The good news is there are many ways to prepare for this important time.

Perhaps you have even heard of women who did something in particular to prepare for birth and you have thought, "Maybe if I do that too, I'll get the same result/outcome. If I take that class, or have a midwife or birth in the same place, then I can achieve that too". Birth is a very complex thing, and can be influenced by a great many factors, however it isn't simply black and white as much as we would like it to be. Holistic preparation means preparing on all levels for birth (and ideally parenting as well). Gathering knowledge and information can be a huge factor and can be an enlightening process, but just taking on this step isn't always enough, and although it's preparing you mentally or intellectually, it **isn't** preparing yourself on all levels.



On a physical level there are various things that you are probably already doing to prepare for birth. At the core is your diet and lifestyle and these can impact on having a healthy pregnancy and birth. Learning ways to cope with labour pain and having tools to call on are important, these can make a world of difference. Understanding about maternal positioning, positions for labour and birthing, massage and other pain relief options including a warm shower or bath and aromatherapy are all helpful things too.

Last but not least, one of the vital parts of holistic preparation is that of the emotional and psychological level. This is not something that is covered in depth in most birth preparation classes, in fact often it isn't covered at all. I have come to realise after 11 years of teaching and mentoring over 500 couples in birth education, that this often

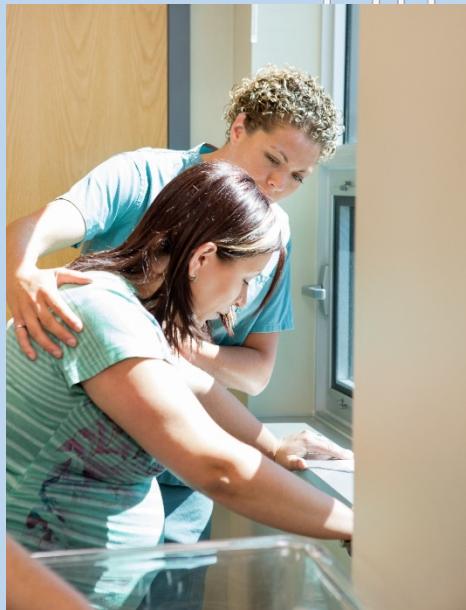
ends up being the most important part of the preparation. When I taught HypnoBirthing for 6 years I saw clearly that many of the “fear release” exercises used in these kinds of classes don’t work for most people, but instead make them think they have dealt with their fears. They usually don’t realise until they have a challenging birth or have something unexpected happen, that they weren’t well prepared at all. Having insights into your beliefs, ideas and assumptions can be extremely helpful, as well as exploring your own inner knowing and wisdom.



Here are 5 ways to prepare yourself holistically for birth

1. Choose your birth support team wisely

There are always at least a few options to choose when it comes to selecting a care provider for your pregnancy and birth. You may not realise the importance of who you choose and how this could impact on your birth. Maybe you have private health insurance and want to make sure you can use it, so your choice is based around this. Perhaps your friend had a certain Doctor or Midwife and you just choose based on this.



The most important thing to consider when choosing, is to ensure that your birth team (Midwife, Doctor, Doula, and Support People) are all on the same page with what your birth preferences are. If you are ideally wanting a natural, drug free birth but choose a Doctor with a really high caesarean and induction rate, your chances are greatly reduced. You may not realise that your ideas aren’t the same until it’s too late if you don’t ask the right questions in the beginning. So when deciding who to have on your birth team the best approach is to interview them and find out if they are on the same page.

This isn't always a straightforward process though, and requires you to ask the right kinds of questions. Often care providers can appear to be open to whatever you want to have happen, and you may not find out until when you're almost due or in labour that this isn't the case. You need to ask lots of questions of the care provider as well as others you know who have used their services. The kinds of questions you can ask could be:

- What is your rate of caesarean, induction, forceps, ventouse and episiotomy? If you are aiming for a natural birth then it makes sense to choose someone whose rates of these are low. The national caesarean rate is just over 30%, so someone with a 10-15% rate is ideal if you want a natural birth, and someone with an over 40% rate is best to steer clear of obviously.
- You could ask, "What are the most common reasons for the interventions mentioned above?". That way you can get a feel for their thinking and see if it matches your ideas.
- If a care provider says they only use these things when necessary, you need to ask when do they usually find it "necessary", as each provider will have a different idea about this.
- You can also enquire about what percentage of women they see who use no pain relief and gauge their ideas about natural birth or pain relief and whether they seem aligned to this idea (depending on what your preference is).
- Be wary of care providers who do not want to give you these details or say things like "oh you let me worry about that". You want to choose someone who is open in providing any details you wish to know in order to make an informed decision.

If asking a friend about their experience with a care provider ask them things like what they most liked about their midwife/doctor, was there anything they didn't like, did they feel supported in all of their wishes, did they feel they could ask them anything, did they ever feel not listened to or not supported etc. ?

When thinking about who else to have at the birth you need to consider if they can support you and hold the space for you and trust in the process. For birth to unfold



well, a woman needs to have the right environment and only have people in her space that she feels totally comfortable with, that she can be naked in front of and be totally vulnerable, swear and do absolutely anything and it be okay. Having someone else there who can't cope with the intensity of birth and seeing you in your raw and primal state, is not a good idea.

Many couples like the idea of it just being the two of them there, and this can work well. It's good though to consider having a back-up person just in case. Sometimes in a long or difficult labour, your partner may also need support and to eat and rest in order to be able to support you. Some couples hire a Doula for this (and much more) or you could have a friend or family member lined up just in case.

2. Go with Independent Birth Education

It's almost like a rite of passage for couples having a first baby to do hospital antenatal classes. Hospitals classes can be good to familiarise yourself with their routines and have a tour of the birth suite, but they can be limited in terms of practical tools and most importantly they only give the information they want you to have.

Independent classes can give you a range of information and usually with these kinds of classes, the person offering them, is a specialist in childbirth education. With some independent classes you can get the same info you'd get at the hospital plus so much more. Most of my clients have said that they could have just done my classes, some like to do both and I also have many that only do my classes. Here is a great article on why taking independent classes is beneficial

<http://www.bellybelly.com.au/pregnancy/independent-birth-education/>

3. Know yourself-not just information!

With the amount of information that's available in the modern techno era, you can find a plethora of articles, blogs, books and videos about birth, pregnancy and babies so easily. Are you the kind of woman who loves researching? Can you not get enough info about birth and babies? Do you feel like if you can just read or know

enough then you'll somehow be prepared? It can be easy to think that we can prepare for birth and parenting like we are studying for an exam, but sometimes no matter how well we prepare on this level, it just doesn't go deep enough, it doesn't prepare us for the unexpected or every scenario that could arise. This is one of the things that



makes Birthing From Within® such a unique and holistic preparation. As well as learning about birth and parenting, these classes focus on couples learning more about themselves and tapping into their own wisdom and resources, finding their own insights and ultimately knowing them self. This kind of

preparation along with pain coping and mindfulness practices are the most helpful ways you can prepare, and prepare in a way that almost no other birth classes do.

4. Be prepared to do what it takes to birth that baby

There seems to be a trend of women believing that there is a right or preferred way to give birth, and society in general reinforces this. In fact I admit to being responsible for this too in my years of being a HypnoBirthing Instructor, perpetuating the myth that its better or ideal to be calm, in control, quiet, confident and composed while giving birth. There are really good reasons to learn how to stay in the moment and manage pain especially in early labour, to lessen the release of stress hormones so that oxytocin and endorphins can do their thing, but this idea can go too far, and set many women up to feel that they missed the mark in some way.

Birth is big, and it is wonderful and it will probably bring you to your knees.

Don't go into it with a head full of fairy dust.

Be prepared. Be real. Learn everything you can. Accept that some pain and some unpredictability is part of this biological process.

Respect birth enough to recognize the awe inspiring power that it yields. Sarah Clark

birthrightdoula.com.au

One of my favourite quotes from Birthing From Within is along the lines of “On the day you give birth, 300,000 of your sisters from around the world will also be birthing with you”. It makes sense that with so many different

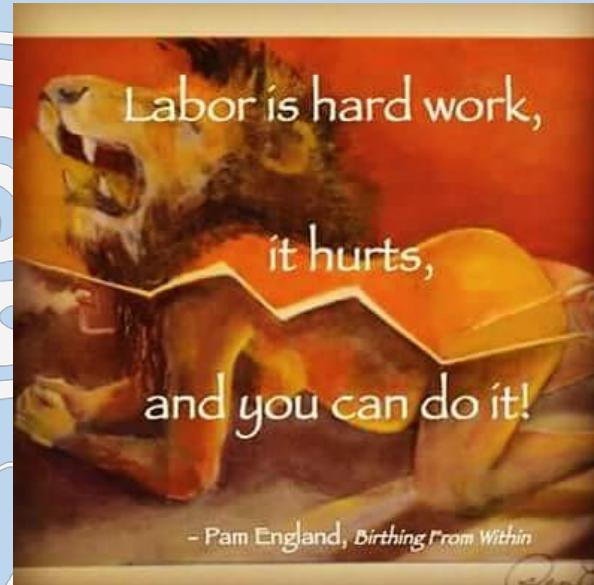
women birthing on each day that they are all going to do it differently. Although being calm and in control may seem like an appealing idea, it doesn't always end up having the desired effect. I have seen many women trying so hard to control their labour and behave in a certain way that it appears to slow things down and inhibit the process all together. Often because a woman believes that behaving wildly, making lots of noise and "losing it" is not okay, instead of just going with it and being prepared to just do what it takes in the moment to birth her baby, she may believe that she isn't coping and this can impact on her labour as well as how she feels about it and herself afterwards.

Exploring your own ideas about birth is helpful to understand what beliefs are there and how this might impact you in both positive and negative ways. Being open to many possibilities during labour can be more helpful, and by that I mean that you can still having a really positive intention for your birth, prepare and plan for that, and totally give it everything you have. The key is to learn how to be okay with doing whatever you need to do to birth your baby, even if this means doing something you would prefer not to.

Are you prepared to do whatever it takes?

Are you prepared to let go of ideas about your birth having to go a certain way, or you having to birth in a certain way?

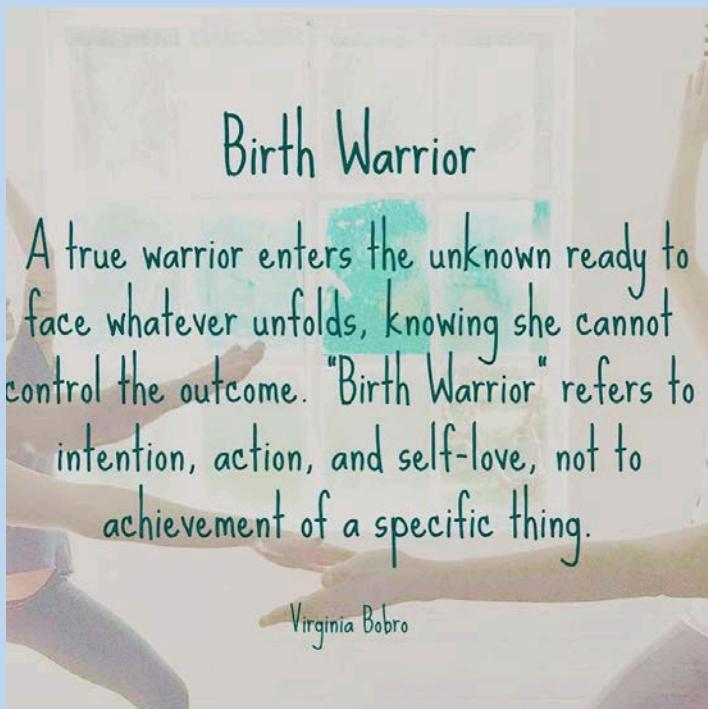
Are prepared to love and accept yourself whatever happens?



5. Understand the reality of birth, the unknown and be willing to look at your worries

It's easy with an event like giving birth to put a lot of emphasis on the outcome. After all it's something you'll probably only do a couple of times in your life. If you have researched a lot as well this can often serve to make you more determined that the

outcome and what does and doesn't happen is important. Every person wants a healthy baby- that goes without saying. When I'm talking of "outcome" here I mean a certain kind of birth, or way of giving birth. As much as we can all direct and have some control over our births, mentioned earlier in this piece, there are still things that we can't control. Like the rest of life, birth can sometimes go close to how we want it, sometimes it's the complete opposite, and sometimes things can show up in both positive and more challenging ways that are unexpected.



For most women, giving birth is intense, it's really hard work and isn't easy. No matter what preparation a woman has done it's less likely to be easy, effortless and calm. Although I know that it can be this way, in reality it just isn't for the vast majority of women, and while it's great for that small percentage who do, I don't think it's being honest about the reality of birth to tell women this is how it should be. When we focus on the outcome and achieving a certain thing, we can of course feel deflated, let down and upset when

it doesn't go this way. When it does go the way we imagined we can often become super proud and believe that if every other women just did what we did, she would of course get the same result- but this is not always true.

Birth and life aren't always predictable even when we try really hard, plan and do all the "right" things. We can't control birth any better than any other part of our life, so learning how to be okay with the unknown of birth (and life) is an essential part of birth preparation, and no class does this quite like Birthing From Within. Parenthood too is a big unknown experience and also comes with excitement and anxiety, so find a class that covers this important time too.

About Nicole

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As a mother of 3 children and childbirth educator, I know how important your birth is to you.

Having always been fascinated by the mystery and power of childbirth, I was drawn to this work in all honesty after listening to some friend's stories of giving birth, the intensity they spoke with shook me quite frankly. When I started out as a childbirth educator I was sure I had found the recipe for a great birth, instead I found out that one woman's recipe for success can leave another women feeling unprepared, disappointed and let down.

Because I care deeply about women and how they are left feeling after birth, I took action and sought a better approach. What I found and fell in love with, was Birthing From Within®. I now love mentoring couples to approach birth with confidence,

resilience and determination in a realistic, compassionate way. I've seen around 500 couples over the past 11 years, and am constantly learning and modifying what I do, so that my clients have access to the best approaches available.

You want the best right? So do I, that's why I committed to the most in depth Childbirth Education program available in the world. I have trained with two different methods and know that Birthing From Within is simply light years ahead of anything else out there.

An aspiring writer I have had some articles published in 2017. Take a look here:
<https://www.elephantjournal.com/2017/05/changing-the-way-we-share-our-difficult-birth-stories/>

<https://www.elephantjournal.com/2017/06/when-a-positive-birth-story-is-a-problem/>

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What you can expect from me

As a mentor it's my job to walk beside you as you find your own way on this journey. You can rely on me to have your back, to encourage you in the most compassionate of ways, without judgment and with a good dose of humour when required. I won't ever ask you to do anything that I haven't already done myself.

When I'm not at work

I am married and have 2 boys who are 11 and 7 years old and a daughter who is 3 years old. I also enjoy yoga, food and cooking, craft/creative things, reading and spending time with my family.



*birthing
from within*