

Kristy's birth experience

Two months prior to the delivery of my son, Brayden, I was asked by our Doula, Gerri Ryan, what kind of birthing experience I wanted to have. Up until that point, I had made many decisions about the kind of pregnancy I wanted. I had chosen to eat well, stay physically active, and remain healthy. Those were some of the variables that I felt well in control of. But my birthing experience, that was something that I had never considered. I soon realized that I had been viewing my impending labor and delivery as an event that the doctors had more control over than I. What an awakening.

My goal was to deliver a healthy child without the use of pain medication. That, I knew. And I feared that the doctors would try to induce me with drugs if I did not progress according to their schedule. I was not able to answer Gerri's question that evening and it was not until a month later that I replied. Our second meeting with her took place after my husband, Marty, and I had attended our birthing classes. Much more informed at that point, and having had time to give a great deal of thought to my answer, I was able to clearly define my vision. Ironically, I had concluded that the best way for me to attain the most control over my birthing experience, in addition to fully educating myself and Marty of our options, was to relinquish control. This involved the release of all preconceptions regarding the anticipated duration of my labor, how much pain I thought I would be able to tolerate, and the belief system that the hospital may try to bully me into receiving medications that I did not want. There was no room for fear, only trust and faith that if I turned myself over as a vessel for this baby to be delivered in the healthiest manner possible, the universe would, in turn, provide.

My commitment was still to deliver unmedicated, and Marty and I were thoroughly informed as to what alternatives to medication were available. I knew that the less time and energy I put forth feeding my fears and concerns, the greater my chances of success. And as badly as I wanted to succeed in my goal, I was still ready to accept and honor myself, should I have to ultimately resort to medicated pain management.

The morning arrived as I rolled over in bed and felt the release of what seemed like gallons of amniotic fluid. We were already off to a completely different start than I had anticipated. My plans to go through early labor at home were redirected. Because of the increased risk of infection due to my membranes breaking early, the hospital wanted me in as soon as possible. But I still took some time, reminding myself that I was only a passenger on this ride. I took a relaxing warm shower, focussed my thoughts, and drew from the strength of the many women who had birthed before me.

My contractions were healthy and increasing in strength as I was admitted to "triage" and then to "labor and delivery" but the monitor soon showed our baby in distress. After an hour or so of rest, intravenous fluids, and oxygen, he had stabilized and was doing well. The nurse approached us with orders to induce labor with the drug pitocin because my contractions had slowed while resting. I was clear on my options and did not plan to receive the drug when I knew that the contractions would increase if I could stand and walk around. Sure enough, upon rising out of bed, I was hit with one of my strongest contractions yet, and they progressed from there.

The hardest work was approaching, but I felt a great sense of personal victory, one step closer to achieving my goal. Once labor began to progress naturally, it was as if my body stepped in and said, "I'll take it from here...I'll release the endorphins that you'll need to get through this. I'll pace your contractions and, though it may seem at times that we're nearing your threshold, I'll make sure it's not more than you can manage. But you must trust me, you must believe in my abilities and never doubt, not even think for one moment that this is not how it was meant to be. Turn yourself over to me". What a gift it was, as well, to have the support and assistance of my husband and doula as my mind submerged deeper and deeper. And at some point, the past and the future ceased to exist. Each moment, each second was all that my being was able to process. The voices of my supporters echoed from afar, unintelligible at times, though comforting none-the-less. I welcomed the flow and I rode the wave home and our beautiful son was born.