

Tips for Conscious Pregnancy and Birth

- 1. View your pregnancy as a time for deep inner exploration within yourselves and relationships. Ask lots of big questions of yourself and partner such as:**
 - What do we want for our pregnancy and birthing?
 - What are our fundamental beliefs about pregnancy and birth and do they support our goals?
 - What are our fears?
 - What are our dreams?
 - What information/support systems will help us to achieve our goals?
 - Where can we seek more information?
 - What were our births like? Is there healing that needs to take place from our early lives?
 - Do we have other unresolved issues personally or within our relationship?
 - Why do we want to bring another life into this world?
 - What kind of parents will we be?
 - How can we strengthen our bond?
 - How can we practice deep intimacy amidst our changing roles?
- 2. Take lots of time for yourself doing things you enjoy. The following activities are great:**
 - Prenatal and partner yoga
 - Dance (belly dancing!)
 - Journaling/ Writing
 - Painting
 - Drawing
 - Swimming
 - Walking
 - Gardening
 - Meditation/ Deep relaxation
- 3. Affirmations are a strong way to manifest your desires for a healthy pregnancy, birthing, and postpartum period. You can write affirmations and then read/repeat them to yourself aloud or silently. Many of the suggested books contain lots of affirmations but it's good to make up your own. Here are some examples:**
 - My baby is growing, beautiful, and strong.
 - The universe loves and supports me and my baby.
 - I am and will be a good parent to my child.
 - I trust my body, and I follow its lead.
 - My mind is relaxed; my body is relaxed.
 - I am relaxed and happy that my baby is coming to me.

4. **Use visualization techniques to picture exactly how you want your labor and birthing to be. Visualization is also helpful for deep relaxation and meditation.**
5. **Communicate with your baby.**
 - Take time out each day to talk to your baby and send messages of love and happiness.
 - Mental, or silent, messages can be just as powerful as spoken ones.
 - Tell your baby what the birth will be like and that you are ready to receive him/her and will be patient until they are ready too.
 - Have partner and siblings take time to speak to the baby.
 - Read to or play soft music (classical is great) for your baby.
 - Sit quietly and receive messages *from* your baby.
 - Be mindful that everything that you feel your baby will feel as well.
6. **Do your homework. Educate yourself even more than you would with other major decisions/changes in your life to make informed decisions.**
 - Interview your care provider(s) carefully to be sure that their philosophy and protocol will support your desires and goals.
 - Ask caregiver(s) about their personal statistics for epidural, induction, c-section rate.
 - Seek out information from lots of resources (your care provider, internet, books, a doula, a childbirth educator, alternative health practitioners, support groups/organizations).
 - Learn what's happening in your body and with your baby through various times in the pregnancy.
 - Know what nutrition is best specifically for you and baby especially if you have a special diet.
 - Know your rights as a birthing mom to make choices and informed decisions about testing and medical procedures.
 - Find out more about tests routinely given for prenatal care to know if they are really appropriate/necessary for you.
 - Find out about all of the possible interventions performed in a hospital, when these become absolutely necessary, and your decision-making power over these interventions.
 - Research childbirth preparation and methods (i.e. Bradley, Hypnobirthing, Birthing from Within).
 - And don't forget about the postpartum: health, nutrition, exercise, breastfeeding, newborn care, and parenting.
7. **Avoid getting caught up on your "due date."**
 - It's really an ESTIMATED date.

- Only 5% of women go into labor on their due date.
- Babies gestate for different lengths of time 40 weeks is only an average length of time. Anywhere from 37-42 weeks is considered full-term.
- Consider a time that is your possible "birth month" instead.

8. Stay away from negative stories and messages about birth.

9. Surrender to this beautiful, magical time in your life, let nature run her course, and enjoy each step of the way!

Some Resources for Conscious Pregnancy and Birth:

Support Groups

- Baby in the Belly (Boulder), Kerry Cerelli 303-709-5174

Pre and Perinatal Psychology and Rebirthing

- Kathryn Rankin Kier (Denver) 303-440-3435
<http://www.karltonterry.com/index.html>
- Annie Brook (Boulder), www.anniebrook.com
- Myrna Martin (Boulder), www.myrnamartin.net

Reading

- *Birthing from Within* by Pam England and Rob Horowitz
- *Gentle Birth Choices* by Barbara Harper
- *HypnoBirthing* by Marie F. Mongon
- *Ina May's Guide to Childbirth* by Ina May Gaskin
- *Spiritual Midwifery* by Ina May Gaskin
- *Beautiful, Bountiful, Blissful* by Gurmukh Kaur Khalsa (includes yoga exercises)
- *Birth Reborn* by Michael Odent
- *Babies Remember Birth* by David Chamberlain

Film

- *Birth As We Know It* by Elena Tonetti-Vladimirova
 - Available online as a pay-per-view at www.birthintobeing.com or www.grapeflix.com.
- The Method: Baby and Mom Prenatal Yoga with Gurmukh Kaur Khalsa