



My Dream Delivery & My Doula

I have the lowest tolerance for pain of anyone I know. Before I decided to have a baby at 38 (I put it off largely due to fear of pain) my obgyn reassured me that I could have an epidural at any point. “You mean at the very first contraction?” “If that is what you want”. Deal. I decided to do it. My husband and I got pregnant on the first shot which surprised us both. Dang, no turning back now. As my pregnancy progressed (a perfect, symptom-free pregnancy) I could not fully enjoy it, as I was so worried about labor pain. I found out in birth class that if one has the epidural too early it is not good for the baby and there is a higher chance of getting a Cesarean. Yikes. I had to have help! A friend told me about Doulas (Greek for mother’s helper) who are part midwife, part coach, and completely there for the mother from the beginning of labor through latch-on of breastfeeding. My husband and I found a “Meet the Doula Night”, which turned out to be like speed dating for doulas. Each of the ten women stood up and told us about themselves, then each couple was allowed a brief interview with a doula before a buzzer would go off and couples would move on to the next doula. As the women spoke, my husband and I wrote notes to each other. He jokingly suggested the 20 year old, gorgeous blonde, but could tell by my face that with my feet in stirrups and looking my worst she would be the last person I wanted at our side. We both chose the same doula without question. Deidre is warm, calm, knowledgeable, and had aided scores of of births. Deidre it was.

Deidre came over twice before the birth. She answered all our questions and listened carefully to my fears of pain. Knowing that knowledge is key, she gave me articles and books about my fears. I learned a lot about the power of our bodies and that if we work WITH the pain, there are natural pain relief tips, as well as ENDORPHINS that release between contractions- “Bring them on, baby!!”

Even though I felt much calmer about my upcoming labor, when my water broke I panicked and called Deidre immediately. Since it was 11:00pm, she encouraged me to drink a glass of wine (sure, any excuse) and go to bed. I actually slept and I didn’t start contracting until early the next morning. By the time Deidre came over, I was having mild contractions with lots of time between them. As they got stronger and more frequent, Deidre pulled out more and more help from her bag of tricks. First came the stopwatch. This gave me a sense of control and knowledge about what I was dealing with. If I had a strong contraction she would congratulate me and reassure me that I had a few milder ones ahead of me (who knew?). Next came all the labor positions. She showed me how different positions would relieve pain. I must have looked ridiculous with my head on the back of our easy chair and my butt in the air. I didn’t care though as it really made a difference.

Breathing techniques helped, as did her huge yoga ball. My favorite was when she massaged me and pushed back on my legs “against” the pain. It really eased the pain. We actually joked around between contractions. Having Deidre there allowed my poor husband time to get ready and get things organized for our trip to the



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hospital.

I knew that at any moment I could say I was ready to go to the hospital and pain relief would be waiting. Distraction proved to be key. Every time I was ready to go Deidre would say, "Sure, would you like to try this position first?" Her final trick was to ask if I wanted to take a quick, hot shower with my husband before we left. The shower was amazing and really eased my pain. The "quick" shower turned into half an hour. I didn't know this, but all of these tricks had made me last through the contractions until "active labor". Being in active labor when one reaches the hospital is great because then I was given the epidural right away (I was already dilated five centimeters!) and there was less of a chance of "going backwards" in labor or having to be artificially encouraged to contract through medication. I progressed quickly and felt wonderful. Drugs Rule! I even slept for over an hour.

When it was time to push Deidre helped me to focus. The doctors were very concerned with my baby while she was there for "me". She watched my monitors and me carefully. When my blood sugar dipped she squirted honey in my mouth. She fed me ice chips, and even used aromatherapy (ex: anti nausea sprays) when I became light-headed. I felt like a boxer with someone in my corner watching out for me. As my husband and I were so overwhelmed with the situation at hand Deidre was our advocate when dealing with the doctors and nurses. She came armed with a copy of my birth plan (which she helped me write) and gently reminded the doctor that we wanted to bond with our baby immediately without having him cleaned first, and wanted to wait to have the cord cut as well.

When it came time to push, Deidre spoke calmly to me, counting and breathing with my husband and I and encouraged me to visualize my cervix opening. "You are getting huge and open". It worked. I pushed Max out in record time, quietly, without pain or screams. The atmosphere in the delivery room was calm. We had music playing, aromatherapy, and even electric candles.

After the amazing first moments with our baby, Deidre waited until he had successfully "latched on" to my breast and gave me tips on breastfeeding even though it was already 2:00 am! Deidre had "labored" with me the entire time!

After a couple of postpartum sessions, where she came and was there for me, just when I thought I had heard the last from my wonderful Doula, we received an amazing surprise in the mail- a disk of 20 pictures from the first seconds of birth! My husband and I did not even notice how Deidre discretely took amazing black and white pictures of our intimate new, little family becoming acquainted. Only when I saw them did I remember her offer to take pictures. We had no idea at the time. Wow! Those pictures are invaluable and no family member could have stayed focused enough to take them.

So, after our wonderful birth experience with Deidre I was not surprised to read that women who use Doulas are much less likely to need artificial interventions like inducing labor, epidurals, and C-sections. I am convinced that without her I would have been afraid of labor and gone to the hospital early, gotten an epidural too early, and been at risk of having a c-section. Most importantly though, the process of labor was a calm, beautiful, almost spiritual experience.

– Marion, Greg and baby Max

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