

Welcome to hb doulas first newsletter for 2008. I sincerely hope the following year is enjoyable and full of exciting challenges for you and your family. On parenting: 'It takes your breath away by how it affects your life.' Lynn, mother of two
Bronwyn van Hooijdonk
Company Director

Sense of Wonder

Just watch as babies embrace life with all their senses. They use their whole body to watch, touch, feel, test, smell, and hear. When they are given something, they turn it over and over in their hands as though it is the first time they saw the object. You can almost see the brain spinning around, absorbing information - "this is round like that other thing", "this is smooth", "this is long", "this is nice to chew", "this is cold to touch".

We now know that the brain is ticking over taking in all this information, sorting it to see where it fits with previous information and then using it to try something else. "Oh, this thing fits in my hand - I can hold it." It is amazing to see a toddler wave when someone leaves. They have formed a relationship and learned the things we do when someone goes away. Being able to move their hand in that way has been learned too.

Learning comes from wondering. How do we keep this amazing sense of wonder alive for children? There are several things we can do that only cost our time and interest. We point things out to them. "See the blossom on the apple tree." "See this earwig on the floor." This means that we have to notice what children do know and what they do not yet know about. We need to foster their own exploring and learning too.

Taking children on real experiences will also keep wonderment alive. What does it feel like to sleep in a cave? Can you find your way around the backyard in the dark? Solving problems is fun, creates wonder and develops the intellect. What do we do when the car won't go? What happens if you cannot get your jersey on? What do we do if it rains and we cannot go outside? The answers are created by our very wonder-full children!

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The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart.

Helen Keller

Early Attachment - life long memories

There may be occasions when you wonder if your baby's high-need stage will ever end. It will! The time in your arms, at your breasts, and in your bed is such a relatively short while, but your message of love and availability lasts a lifetime.

The Baby Book by William and Martha

Birth is
the transformation of woman to mother

Birth is
the physical manifestation of your power
and inner strength as a woman

Birth is
a dialogue with your body and your baby

Birth is
familiar to all of us

Birth is
what you make it

www.birthwares.com

The Benefits of Water for Labour and/or Birth

Greater comfort and mobility.

The mother has much greater ease and freedom to move spontaneously and to change position to assist the descent of the baby.

Reduction of pressure on the abdomen.

Buoyancy promotes more efficient uterine contractions and better blood circulation, resulting in better oxygenation of the uterine muscles, less pain for the mother, and more oxygen for the baby.

Helps mother to conserve her energy.

Immersion reduces opposition to gravity; supports the mother's weight so that her energy can be used to cope with the contractions.

Promotes deeper relaxation.

As a woman relaxes deeply in water, her hormones kick in and she starts progressing faster and with more rhythm; labour becomes more efficient.

Water relaxes the pelvic floor muscles.

Water minimises pain so effectively that for most women other pain control methods are no longer needed.

Water stimulates the touch and temperature nerve fibers in the skin.

It blocks impulses from the pain fibers, known as the Gate Theory of Pain.

Immersion is often more effective and safer than an epidural.

Some people call waterbirth an "aquadural."

Facilitates a dysfunctional labor.

Water can be an effective way to stimulate dilation of the cervix when the mother has difficulty progressing into the active stage of labour.

Water can reduce the need for drugs to artificially stimulate labor.

Often, simply getting into the tub will result in dramatic and rapid progress to full dilation within an hour or two.

Lowering of blood pressure.

When anxiety is causing high blood pressure, immersion in water often helps lower it.

Change of consciousness.

Immersion helps relieve anxiety and promotes relaxation.

Water helps a woman to let go and focus inward as labour strengthens.

Easier breathing.

Moisture in the air makes it easier to breath and can be helpful to women with asthma.

Facilitates the second stage of labour.

Many mothers are less inhibited in the water. The warm water softens the vagina, vulva, and perineum, leading to fewer injuries to these tissues.

Many women experience rapid second stages, with the baby emerging minutes after the body starts pushing, also known as the fetus ejection reflex (see Odent, *The Nature of Birth and Breastfeeding*).

Empowerment of the mother.

When a woman delivers her baby while remaining awake, aware and in control, it greatly enhances the birth experience for her and becomes a source of great personal strength and power that enriches her life forever.

Greater involvement of the father.

Because the mother's pain and stress is so greatly reduced, it is much easier for fathers to participate and take a more active role in the birthing process. Many men are reluctant to become involved in the birth experience when they know that the mother is likely to endure intense pain, trauma and suffering during labour and delivery.

Enhanced family relationships.

When the mother's pain is dramatically reduced, many fathers eagerly take a more active role in the delivery, resulting in a greater family bond. When fathers are more involved it increases the possibility of a joyous birth. Both parents and child get to share a wonderful experience that can enhance their relationships with each other for the rest of their lives.

Better parent-child interactions.

A mother who has had a beautiful and empowering birth experience will have an especially positive association in her mind and emotions to that child; and a baby who has had an easy, non-traumatic, not painful, gentle birth will have an especially positive association to the parent. This exceptionally positive start to their relationship will likely enhance the parent-child interactions forever.

Evolving humanity in a positive direction.

Many psychologists believe that babies born gently grow up to become more gentle adults, and have a greater ability to deal with problems non-violently.

Resources: Daniels, 1986; Balaskas, 1990; Lichy, 1993; Napierala, 1994.

www.waterbirth.com

Karil Daniels

Extract from *Lotus Birth* by Dr Sarah J Buckley 2005 www.sarahjbuckley.com

Lotus birth is the practice of leaving the umbilical cord uncut, so that the baby remains attached to his/her placenta until the cord naturally separates at the umbilicus, exactly as a cut cord does, at three to ten days after birth. This prolonged contact can be seen as a time of transition, allowing the baby to slowly and gently let go of their attachment to the mother's body.

Although we have no written records of cultures that leave the cord uncut, many traditional peoples hold the placenta in high esteem. For example, Maori people from New Zealand bury the placenta ritually on the ancestral marae (meeting place) and the Hmong, a hill tribe from South East Asia, believe that the placenta must be retrieved after death to ensure physical integrity in the next life. A Hmong baby's placenta is buried inside the house of birth.

Lotus birth is a new ritual, having only been described in chimpanzees before 1974 when Clair Lotus Day pregnant and living in California, began to question the routine cutting of the cord. Her searching led her to an obstetrician who was sympathetic to her wishes and her son Trimurti was born in hospital and taken home with his cord uncut. Lotus birth was named by, and seeded through, Clair to Jeannine Parvati Baker in the US and Shivam Rachana in Australia, who have both been strong advocates for this gentle practice.

Since 1974, many babies have been born this way, including babies born at home and in hospital, on land and in water, and even by caesarean section. Lotus birth is a beautiful and logical extension of natural childbirth, and invites us to reclaim the so-called third stage of birth for ourselves and our babies, and to honour the placenta; our babies' first source of nourishment.

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