



Labour of Love: The Ultimate Guide to Being a Birth Partner

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Labour of Love

By Sallyann Beresford

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316 pages

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Reviewed for AIMS by Anne Glover

This is a very informative, easy to read book, bursting with chapters of interesting detail. It is one of those books that you want to devour quickly, but also savour slowly so you don't miss anything. It focuses on the role of the birth partner and, as a doula, I absolutely loved reading it, as it felt like a revision and reassurance of what I do. In fact I could read it all over again as I enjoyed it so much.

Sallyann Beresford has been a doula for over 20 years and her experience and knowledge shine throughout this book. The book came about as she noticed that those clients who attended antenatal sessions with specific classes addressing the role of the birth partner, were more satisfied with their birthing experience. The author clearly defines a birth partner as anyone supporting someone during pregnancy, labour and birth, including a spouse, relative, friend, doula or midwife.

This book promises to give you all you need to know about the physiological needs of a labouring woman, and it really does that. The more you read and proceed through the book, the more your knowledge about birth options, plans and the birthing process grows. The material equips you with the confidence to go into the birthing space knowing what to expect and what to do. The content of the book also covers important aspects such as the process of hormones, comfort measures and pain relief, and finishes up with preparations for the postnatal period. Beresford has included dollops of personal birth experiences throughout the book, which bring a sense of reality to the content.

Even though all the content is aimed at birth partners, there is one specific chapter on the birth partner. In this chapter, the author introduces the PROTECTS acronym to ensure the birth partner remembers their role. It is an invaluable tool to have for labour, and can also be used during the postnatal period too. I will certainly be using it in my practice from now on! As a doula I also enjoyed reading the chapter on the safety word, which is a word or phrase previously chosen by the birthing person to indicate that they want to change their plan. This is something I often chat to my clients about and now I have a lovely reference for them in this book.

Beresford uses a straightforward style of writing to make the content accessible to most people. The consistent layout is appealing to the eye, with beautiful sketches of dandelions throughout, and diagrams, drawings and simple sketches to give clarity and understanding. The content is thoughtfully laid out to be interesting and eye-catching, with areas of shaded text scattered intermittently, which are easy to find but also make you want to read more, e.g. 'It is not a woman's job to explain why she doesn't want to consent!' (page 252). Each chapter begins with an inspiring positive quote, and there are 'Important to know' sections throughout. Beresford also puts a quick recap at the end of each chapter, which can be used as a revision tool or simply as a reference. The book is bulging with tips and handy titbits of information to help birth partners understand their role and how to be actively involved in the birthing process, if their partner wants them to.

As an AIMS volunteer, I was delighted to see the many references to AIMS website and publications throughout the book, and also to see AIMS listed as a resource: 'Support for women's rights in childbirth'.

When you purchase the book, you also receive a free download^[1] with links to the websites, research studies and articles that relate to information in the book. There are also free resources to print and take to the birth, such as a birth partner's checklist.

I would argue that this book is not only for birth partners as described earlier, but for anyone and everyone interested in birth!

Author Bio: Anne is a doula and HypnoBirthing® educator in Northern Ireland, and currently volunteers with the AIMS Campaigns Team.

[1] <https://www.birthability.co.uk/links-and-resources/>