AIMS For a better birth...

AIMS Classic Book Review – The Birth Partner by Penny Simkin with Katie Rohs

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The Birth Partner

by Penny Simkin with Katie Rohs

Illustrations by Susie So, Gayle Isabelle Ford and Dolly Sundstrom

Harvard Common Press; Fifth Edition, 2018



ISBN-13 : 978-1558329102

Paperback : 440 pages

£12.95

Buy this book on Amazon

Reviewed for AIMS by Sue Boughton

There are not many birth preparation books that are written specifically for birth partners and out of those that are, many try to be funny and are not very helpful. This book was first published in 1989 and is now in its 5th edition, completely revised and updated. The Birth Partner has been a favourite go to for doulas, birth partners and other birth supporters for over 25 years!

Penny Simpkin has specialised in childbirth education and birth support since 1968, she is the author of several books, videos and teaching materials. Penny is also the co-founder of DONA [Doulas of North America], now known as DONA International.[1] After studying people's long-term memories of their birth experiences, Penny realised that one of the most important aspects of their care that affected their memories of birth was how well they were looked after. If their care had been kind and respectful, regardless of whether their labour had been long or complicated, the mothers experienced a positive, often empowering birth. This book was written to inform birth partners, to give them confidence in the labour process, knowledge of various aspects of maternity care, and understanding of the pros and cons of medical interventions and medications frequently used during labour and birth.

The Birth Partner is a wonderfully comprehensive guide to everything you need to know to be able to offer calm and effective support as a birth partner, from late pregnancy, during labour and after the birth. The more knowledge people have, the more confidence they will have to trust their instincts and to ask appropriate questions, and the more courage they will have to decline what they do not want or do not feel is necessary.

Penny's straightforward advice and information is clearly presented in easy to follow sections. She covers everything from practical questions such as "what to take to a hospital birth" and "what you need for a home birth", to explaining the basic physiology of labour and birth and how to help the process, for example: what positions and movements can be helpful during labour and why; and various comfort measures such as massage, breathing, and the use of water. She also explains the common problems that can occur during labour and gives impartial information on medical interventions and labour medication. There are handy checklists included through the book, these are printed on coloured paper making them easy to find. There are also many useful illustrations to help explain the practical aspects of labour support. Altogether this makes it one of the best guides to labour support I've read.

Author Bio: Sue Boughton is a birth and postnatal doula, massage practitioner, and an AIMS volunteer.

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[1] DONA International: www.dona.org