AIMS For a better birth...

Becoming a grandparent

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By Anne Glover

'*If I'd known how wonderful it would be to have grandchildren, I'd have them first*'
Lois Wyse

Expectation

Many of us are familiar with this cliché and probably have all laughed at it, until we experience this milestone for ourselves. Often being grandparents is not something we give too much thought to, until you're the only person in your group of friends who hasn't become one yet! It doesn't really matter at what stage in your life you enter grandparenthood as most people embrace the wonderment of the beginning of a new generation. It's rather special to see your grandchild, a little bit of you, join your family circle, and I feel the powerful emotional attachment, deep within my heart, when I whisper in my darling granddaughter's ear: "it's ok, granny's here".

Joy

When it was my time to become a grandparent, I had already attended and supported 125 births as a doula, and I'd also taught HypnoBirthing to many couples for a long time. I know from many years of

experience that the best hypnobirthing outcomes are from those couples who decide for themselves that they want to have hypnobirthing skills and techniques to prepare for labour and birth, and also to invest time in taking the course and putting in the practice. So I was feeling a wee bit of apprehension not knowing if my son and his partner would want to do hypnobirthing and if they would want me to be their teacher. Then there was the issue about having a doula. I never asked them outright if they were thinking about having a doula, even though I knew they would benefit immensely from having a doula. Funnily enough family and friends kept hinting at how lucky they were to have a doula in the family! I always felt it was important they decided for themselves to have a doula, as not everyone wants their mother or mother-in-law in their intimate sacred birthing space. Then the time came when they casually asked me when we would be starting the hypnobirthing course, and from there we started to prepare. Of course there was the usual talk about perineums, vulvas, vaginas, penises, and I proudly used my vulva, uterus and breast models to demonstrate the birthing process and breastfeeding, which caused a few giggles. Then there were the abundance of videos showing all types of birth as we progressed through the course. I remember watching my son as he became embroiled in a little part of my life as he realised what my work is really like!

Blessed

It was also a big learning curve for me as I had to be very mindful of my boundaries as a doula, motherand grandmother. I never took it for granted that I would be at the birth of my first grandchild and during labour and birth I couldn't help but feel immensely proud of my son and his partner. They embraced labour and birth with their newly found knowledge, and with me by their side for reassurance and encouragement. There really are no words to describe the immense relief and joy and love that I felt for them when their daughter was born. Such a cocktail of emotions all round! I'm so glad of my doula training and experience which provided deep guidance and knowingness to my son and his partner, and for that I will forever be grateful. I honestly felt truly blessed to be present at my granddaughter's birth, to hear her first cry, see her open her eyes and stare at her mummy, and to tie the cord tie, lovingly made by myself. Dreams really do come true! My son said to me at the birth of his daughter that nothing could ever prepare you for the intensity of birth, but as a doula, I know how his experience could so easily have been very different.

Falling in love

Postnatally, it has been the icing on the cake to be able to offer support as they grow into their own wee family unit, getting to know their baby, and adapting as parents. Again I'm very grateful for my doula training and experience as it keeps me up to date with all the advancements in newborn physiology, and also reminds me to be mindful of my boundaries. I absolutely relish in guiding my own wee family and cherish every moment I spend with them and their darling baby, who has fitted into our family as if she has always been there! It really is very precious to see your own son falling in love with his daughter, growing into his version of being a dad, being protective of his own wee family and seeing his newfound role flourishing. When he watches me with his daughter, he often says how crazy it is to think I did the same for him as a baby. That's what makes being a grandparent so special.

Legacy

We want the very best that life can offer for our children and that feeling digs deeper when it comes to our grandchildren. It's the wonderment of looking into the big deeply intelligent eyes of our granddaughter, seeing her grow so quickly, missing her if we don't see her for a day and feeling joy in her every sound and move. There is an excitement about the future and always feeling truly blessed to have this wee bundle of pure blissful joy in our lives. We want to be patient, kind and loving with her, and anticipate the future having fun and doing silly things whilst indulging her too. But as we build deep family roots, we also have a responsibility to share our wisdom and our life's experiences, to be a fabulous teacher and guide. There is also an expectation in society today to take on some sort of childcare role to support young families as they continue to build up their own legacy for their children. It feels such an honour to be included and involved as grandparents, and provide some form of stability. It's time now to just enjoy and cherish every single moment!

Author Bio: Anne has been working as a doula for 10 years in Northern Ireland and has supported 100s of women at some stage in their birthing journey. She currently volunteers on the AIMS Campaigns Team.