AIMS For a better birth...

Lui's birth

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Rosie Jones tells her water and hypnobirthing story

Lui Allen Greensmith – 8lbs 4oz – swam into my arms in the 'good karma pool' in our dining room on April 3 2016 at 7.41pm. This was my second hypnobirth – but my first home birth – both beautiful life affirming experiences that will stay with my until my last breath.

I felt like a lioness – invincible, primal and so ALIVE in that moment when I scooped him up and brought him to my chest. I was the first person to touch him! The indescribable joy and triumph of 'I did it!' and the intense rush of love as I felt the weight of his body on mine. As with my first birth, hypnobirthing gave me the confidence and self-belief to trust in my body. I did not need pain relief – just the loving support of my wonderful partner Seb, and knowing that I would soon be meeting my beautiful boy.

This is my birth story... It was a week before my 'due date' and although I had been having surges in the early hours of the morning for over a week, I had got used to them fading away by day break. My daughter Mei was born at 41+1 so I was feeling relaxed – it was just my body practising and gearing up for the big event still, I thought, a few weeks away. I was also convinced that as with Mei, my labour would begin in the middle of the night. The weather was fine so we decided to go to Crystal Palace park for a walk. We were not more than a few hundred metres from the car when I suddenly became aware of my surges (with hindsight they had been coming and going sporadically throughout the morning but I had not given them much thought). I told Seb. He said he thought we were a few weeks away still (I was 39+1) and asked whether we should keep going. I said yes and then a few steps later changed my mind. I was finding it difficult to walk and I could feel the baby had moved down. I wanted to go home, it was time to go home and rest and get things ready...

We got home around 1pm, after a detour to the deli to buy some bits for lunch. Seb joked that I would need the energy if our baby boy was really on his way that night and if not we could just enjoy a nice lunch – he came back to the car laden with sausage rolls, ham, lovely bread and brownies! During lunch my surges continued to niggle away which surprised me. It was Sunday afternoon – I was so sure that they were going to fade away and start up again properly that night. After lunch Seb put Mei down for her nap. Seb and I then discussed what to do next. We decided to see whether we could send Mei over to a friend's for a play date with her little boy so I could rest and Seb could get everything ready incase the baby decided to come that night. Fortunately she was home so Seb got Mei ready to walk her round after her nap.

As soon as Seb left the house with Mei my surges intensified and started coming closer together. Suddenly I realised I really was in labour! It was 3 o'clock. I was excited and struck by how clever our bodies are – now I was no longer distracted by Mei – and knowing she was safe and happy playing with a friend – the baby was coming! Seb got home about 3.20 and as he did my phone rang. He had rung the midwives on the walk home and they were already calling me to have a chat and assess the situation. While speaking to them I had a particularly intense surge which left me unable to speak. I remember my midwife then saying to me, '*OK, I'm hanging up now and I'll be there in 20 minutes*.' My surges continued to increase in intensity and frequency so when she arrived at 3.45 I was already draped over my birth ball focusing on my up breathing. After a quick chat and examination she confirmed that I was 7cm and it was time to start filling up the pool! Big grins all round – we had only been walking in Crystal Palace a few hours before!

The next few hours then became a bit of a blur. Seb filled the pool for me and I was able to get in by around 4.30 which was a huge relief. The warmth of the water was bliss and helped me to rest between surges which were building and become stronger with each one. At 5.30 our supermarket delivery arrived, much to everyone's hilarity (perhaps not to the delivery man's!) At 7.17 there was a sudden downpour followed by thunder and lightning outside. It was almost like an announcement that our baby boy was on the last leg of his journey as shortly after this my waters finally broke and at 7.41 he swam free to meet us! He was beautiful and bigger than I expected – 8lbs 4oz of chunk! But despite this I suffered not a single tear.

At 10.20 Seb was able to go and pick up Mei while the midwives tucked me and Lui into bed. By 10.45pm all of us were snugly tucked up in bed – in the course of about 4.5 hours we had gone from being a family of three to four in the comfort and safety of our own home. While my surges at the very end of my labour were incredibly intense and all encompassing, at no point did I feel fearful or out of control. All the hypnobirthing practice paid off. I loved how clear headed and present I felt without pain relief and how supported I felt by Seb and my midwives.

It was one of the most powerful and fulfilling experiences of my life and I would do it again tomorrow in a heartbeat.