AIMS For a better birth...

# Birthing Safely

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*Sarah Buckley* shows how undisturbed birth is safe, ecstatic and our natural state

Only the most astute would notice the signs. There is a gentle glow to her as she moves about the kitchen preparing the evening meal. Every now and then she pauses, drawing inwards as her breathing deepens, and she rolls her pelvis in an intimate dance.

She eats, aware of her hunger and enjoying the soup – her nourishment for the labour ahead. By the time the children are in bed, the waves of labour are strengthening. She is moaning, long and low, hands on her hips. She knows, by instinct and experience that fighting the pain will not help. Her task is to go into it – to surrender herself, allowing the process to flow through her like water.

Together in the bedroom, she and her partner embrace, but even his touch is too much when the next wave comes, soon after the last. She is searching the dimensions for the path that she trusts will be there for her, as it has been for her foremothers during this ancient initiation.

Restless, on and off the toilet, she finds her base at last. She stands on the cool bathroom tiles. An arm's length away is her partner, her lover, the father of her baby. She looks into his eyes; more deeply, it seems, than she ever has. 'I love you,' she says, at first quietly, but as the next wave builds she is louder and louder, 'I love you, I love you, I love you…' peaking and subsiding with the fierce waves in her belly. As she speaks her truth time stops; pain stops; and, holding her focus, she enters the deepest meditation that exists – the space where all is love.

The hours melt too, and although she is totally outside (ec) her usual state (stasis) she is also fully present in her body. She feels her body expand and her baby move down. Soon there is a familiar catch in her voice; an urge and urgency that tells her that the baby will soon be born.

Her helpers are close, watching without watching, realising the exquisite sensitivity of the system – mother, father and baby. Her friend wakes the older children, ushering them in quietly.

The room is quiet, candle-lit. The beauty of it overpowers her as her body pushes. It is work now, and focus; holding her baby, her body and her will in a delicate balance. Time speeds up, and there is a hot, tight feeling as her baby's head crowns. Alpha and omega: all endings and all beginnings here, in this birthing body. And then it is past. Her baby spills out: indescribable joy, relief,pleasure, grief; an ecstatic infusion as the children gather around crying, 'We love you baby, we love you.'

Her helpers keep their place. They sense all is well, without measurement. This is family time. They know,

too, that even one outspoken word at this time can have an enormous impact. With the father's help – never in his life as soft and as strong as he is now – she settles on the bed, babe on belly, dim lights, warm room, skin to naked, newborn skin. The sentience of the new one, wide-eyed and wet, is palpable. There is no disturbance to check anything, not even the baby's sex. Here is the moment, the welcome, the reunion, and it will never happen again. The cord and placenta can wait. There is no clamping or cutting while the mother and baby drink their fill of each other. There is a blanket and warmth. The ecstasy of this birth, this baby naturally born, will last for a lifetime.

**Natural ease, natural ecstasy**

The ease of the birth in this story is not incidental. It is an intrinsic part of Mother Nature's superbdesign. When labour and birth are not disturbed, our bodies produce high levels of the ecstatic hormones of birth. As well as facilitating the physiological processes of birth, these chemical messengers also have direct, powerful and pre-programmed effects on our emotions, instincts and mothering behaviours.[1,2]

The hormonal process of labour is almost identical to the process of sexuality, and involves the same hormones, with a similar pattern of release.[3] In both situations we need to be able to feel private, safe and undisturbed, so that we can drop our guard and allow our hormones, to flow easily. If we feel unsafe or observed during labour, our hormonal flow can be as compromised as during sexual activity. Ecstatic birth is more likely when supporters understand these basic needs, and respect the woman's decisions.

**Optimising the ecstasy of birth**

There are things we can do to increase the chance of an easy,safe and pleasurable birth by optimising our ecstatic hormones. Here are some ideas:

- Take responsibility for your health, healing, and wholeness throughout the childbearing years.
- Pay attention to good nutrition (beginning pre-conception), good physical care, psychological and emotional exploration and support, developing self-trusting and instinctive attitudes and building a loving connection with your baby.
- Choose a model of care that enhances the chance of a natural and undisturbed birth.
- Arrange support according to individual needs; trust, a loving relationship, and continuity of care are important.
- Consider having an advocate at a hospital birth such as a private midwife or doula.
- Take the opportunity to create your birth-nest, especially when birthing in a hospital or other unfamiliar place.
- Ensure an atmosphere where the labouring woman feels safe, unobserved, and free to follow her own instincts
- Reduce stimulation by keeping lighting and noises soft, and reducing words to a minimum.
- Cover the clock and any other technical equipment.
- Avoid drugs and procedures (including obvious observations) unless absolutely necessary.
- Avoid caesarean surgery unless absolutely necessary.
- Don't separate mother and baby for any reason, including resuscitation, which can be done with

the cord attached.

*Sarah Buckley*

*Sarah is a former GP, mother of four and author of Gentle Birth, Gentle Mothering. For more information, visit www.sarahbuckley.com.*

**References**

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