

# PAIN MANAGEMENT FOR LABOR

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**Bamboo Birth, LLC**

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**MINDSET & TOOLS**



# THANK YOU

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*Hello, I am*

## Kristen Bindel

*I believe that you should be the center of care. I am dedicated to empowering you with knowledge, tools, and confidence to bring your baby into the world.*

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# What you need to know.



## Pain Management

### What you need to know.

Many of us are under the impression that if we have a low pain tolerance, that we couldn't possibly have a birth without any medication for pain management... or that if we've experienced a lot of pain in a previous birth, that it will be like that the next time. *But that's not true!*

Birth is MORE about your **mental and physical preparation** and LESS about your pain tolerance. There is a difference between pain vs suffering. Pain is an unpleasant, physical sensation- you can feel pain with OR without suffering. Suffering refers to psychological distress. You can feel pain without having psychological distress. Your mental state has a very large impact on how you feel pain in labor. Fear in labor attributes to the Fear- Tension- Pain Cycle which creates more pain. (More on this in the Fear Module)

The truth is, **practicing** and **preparing** for birth with non-pharmacological options is extremely important, even if your plan is to have an epidural or other medication for pain management.

Nobody is guaranteed to have working medication for pain management. I don't say that to scare you, it is rare... but I say that so you can be prepared for it, and have coping methods in place if that happens to you.

With that said, there is NOTHING wrong with having medication for pain management. Medication can be the difference between pain and suffering, or a calm peaceful birth experience. You deserve an empowering, positive experience- whether that means meds or no meds!

# Other Sensations of labor and birth

In labor, I challenge you to feel sensations *differently*.

We're taught that labor is painful, but what if we think about these sensations differently? What if we think about the process as something that is happening with us and for us, instead of a painful experience happening TO us. Try thinking about the OTHER sensations you're feeling (this may help you perceive the sensations as less painful).

1

Feel the strength of your uterus muscles drawing up, and then draw down as the surge passes.

2

Feel the stretching of your ligaments also drawing up and down.

3

Feel and/or visualize baby moving down and applying pressure to your cervix.

other discomforts that may  
contribute to a painful sensation:

4

Maybe what you're experiencing feels more intense of painful because you're dehydrated or need to eat.

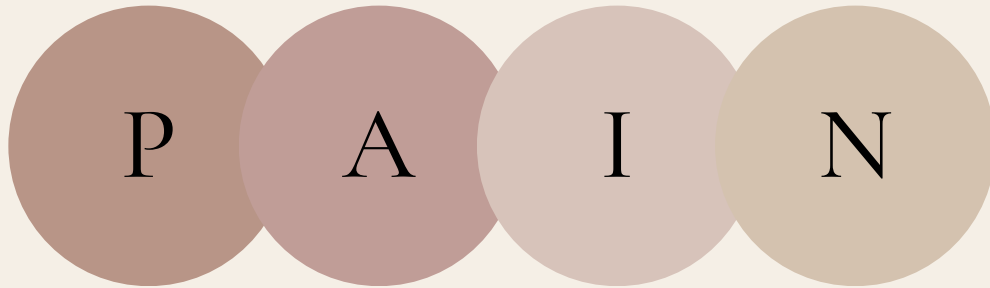
5

Maybe the reason it feels so intense is because you're tense and/or fearful. Maybe the position you're in is increasing pressure/pain.

6

Maybe what you're not feeling is pain, but rather muscle fatigue (think about doing an intense workout and challenge yourself).

# What do contractions *feel like?*



P

## PURPOSEFUL

Your contractions have a purpose! They are helping your baby move and navigate the pelvis, while moving baby down, applying more pressure to your cervix, and helping you birth your baby!

A

## ANTICIPATED

It's no secret that labor is intense. This is expected and anticipated. Having the tools to cope can make all the difference.

I

## INTERMITTENT

In labor, you will spend less time having contractions, than the time you spend in between contractions. Use this time to relax, recover, and reset.

N

## NORMAL

Normal. Birth is normal. Labor is normal. If you ever feel that something is not normal, talk to someone. However, more often than not- birth is safe.

Contractions feel different to everyone! This is because everyone feels sensations -and pain- differently.

I think it helps to think about contractions like waves on the beach. They rise slowly, drawing up and bigger, until they peak, and then they come back down. The most intense part of the contraction is right at that peak (which lasts approx. 20 seconds), before the wave crashes, and then releases. You'll have a few minutes of rest (or more/less depending on where you're at in labor) in between these waves.

Unlike other kinds of pain we experience in our lives, in labor it is Purposeful, Anticipate, Intermittent, and Normal.

There are factors that can increase or decrease the pain or discomfort you feel in labor. See the Pain Management Module for more.

# FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO PAIN

Let's look at some of the contributing factors to an increased or decreased sensation of pain in labor. I want you to think about what you may be able to do or implement to stack the odds in your favor to avoid some of these, or how you could use this knowledge to work in your favor for preparation and birth.

1

Your resistance to pain. How do you deal with pain in day to day life?

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2

How much pain you expect to feel, or in labor how much you anticipate the next contraction to feel while in between contractions.

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3

Your baby's position. If you've heard of Moms talk about "this terrible back labor" there's a good chance they experienced that because their baby was posterior.

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4

The way you view/think about labor and birth. If you think "oh gosh, I just want to get through this" you're much more likely to experience it differently than someone who is excited to give birth.

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5

Your position in labor. Studies show that women who labor and birth upright claim they experience less pain.

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# FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO PAIN

Let's look at some of the contributing factors to an increased or decreased sensation of pain in labor. I want you to think about what you may be able to do or implement to stack the odds in your favor to avoid some of these, or how you could use this knowledge to work in your favor for birth.

6

Nausea. Nausea and vomiting can make getting through contractions more difficult.

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7

Dehydration or hunger. Nobody wants to be "hangry" on top of being in labor. Being dehydrated can also make labor more painful... yet many hospitals have policies about no eating or drinking.

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8

The stage of labor you're in. For most people, labor will build and get more intense as it continues. Transition is often the most difficult stage, often you will not feel a "break" in between. However, you will probably feel this "break" come back during the pushing phase and may feel relief as you're able to push with the pressure.

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9

Lack of support, or not having the right support can make labor feel more painful.

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10

Your environment- Feeling watched, bright lights, unnecessary interruptions can all change the way you perceive pain.

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# *Pain Management Options*

## overview



|                                       |                              |                                      |                                    |                                   |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>I</b><br>Acupuncture               | <b>2</b><br>Acupressure      | <b>3</b><br>Aromatherapy             | <b>4</b><br>Birthing Environment   | <b>5</b><br>Comb                  |
| <b>6</b><br>Conscious Breathing       | <b>7</b><br>Counter Pressure | <b>8</b><br>Dancing                  | <b>9</b><br>Dim Lighting           | <b>10</b><br>Epidural             |
| <b>11</b><br>IV Medication            | <b>12</b><br>Heat & Ice      | <b>13</b><br>Hypnosis                | <b>14</b><br>Massage               | <b>15</b><br>Music                |
| <b>16</b><br>Nitrous Oxide            | <b>17</b><br>Positioning     | <b>18</b><br>Rebozo or Scarf support | <b>19</b><br>Relaxation Techniques | <b>20</b><br>Support              |
| <b>21</b><br>Sterile Water Injections | <b>22</b><br>TENS Unit       | <b>23</b><br>Visualization           | <b>24</b><br>Water Immersion       | <b>25</b><br>Words of Affirmation |

# Environment Checklist

The environment that you labor and birth in is an important part of making you feel safe. When you feel safe, it helps to reduce the "fight or flight" response and helps reduce adrenaline (which works against oxytocin). This, in turn, helps your body produce those GOOD hormones, which move birth along!



## FEW INTERRUPTIONS

Limit unnecessary staff from coming in and out of the room. Reduce any unnecessary conversation. This can really prevent Mom from getting in her "zone", and stop her from fully relaxing.



## DIM LIGHTS

Dim lighting helps to increase levels of Melatonin, which works WITH oxytocin in labor. (why do you think most labors start at night!?) Consider fake candles or twinkle lights instead of fluorescent lights!



## MUSIC

You can condition yourself to associate particular music with relaxation- practice this in pregnancy! Consider music that has special meaning to you, try hypnosis meditation. Tip: slow dance! it's great for movement and support



## SMELL

You can condition yourself to associate particular smells with relaxation. Lavender is a popular choice (talk to your provider first). Studies show lavender in labor and birth helps reduce anxiety and pain



## WARMTH

Warmth is associated with increasing levels of oxytocin. Many Moms run hot and cold throughout labor. Having a robe to toss on or off (or just over the shoulders) can be really helpful!



## SUPPORT

Feeling supported and loved during labor is incredibly important. Moms often want to feel like "we're in this together". Saying affirmations, providing massage, etc. will all help increase oxytocin.

# Conscious Breathing



*Really... Breathing for pain management???*

I know it sounds so simple, but there's a lot of science behind it! I've witnessed this technique work time and time again when I am supporting births as a Doula. I even experienced it with my own birth when I had my second child.

So why does it ACTUALLY work!?

Your brain can only focus (well) on one thing at a time. If you're focused on your breath, you're not allowing yourself to think things like "how long is this going to take" or "that last surge was really hard, how am I going to make it through this?".

The thing is... you don't "lose focus" in labor, you just focus on the WRONG things. When you are truly focused on breath, you're maintaining your anxiety and fear, and not allowing the Fear-Tension-Pain cycle.

Science has showed time and time again that nasal breathing is the BEST form of breathing, and has many benefits. Our nasal cavities were MADE for breathing- our mouths are just the "back-up system". The nose is a much smaller tube compared to the mouth, which also gives us much more control over our breathing, which is important. There's not much we can control in labor, but breathing is one of the things we CAN.

Think about the times you use your mouth for breathing. It's usually when we're under high stress, or when we're anxious. By mouth breathing in labor- you can signal to your brain "we're in a high stress situation", which is the opposite of a calm, focused birth. By using your nose, you can "fake out" your brain and make it believe you're calm and relaxed.

There are MORE benefits of nasal breathing. Nasal breathing triggers the parasympathetic part of our nervous system, which helps us stay calm and relaxed. When we use this with diaphragmatic breathing AKA belly breathing, we are breathing more efficiently. It also increases oxygen to our body and to baby.

# How to Use Conscious Breathing

## Controlled Breathing

This is my FAVORITE breathing technique. I still use it to calm nerves, and before bed at night to help promote sleep. Simply breathe in on a count of 3 and out on a count of 6. Breathing only with your nose if possible. Practice is key! Practice doesn't have to be time consuming- just practicing 3 breaths before bed will make a big difference on the big day. Your count doesn't have to be exactly 3 and 6...do whatever is comfortable to you- but the idea is that you double your exhale from your inhale to trigger the parasympathetic response. Having someone count with you, or breathe with you in labor can be extremely helpful.



## Color Breathing

Again, this technique takes practice, but is simple to do! You'll imagine yourself bathing in the color of your choice. As you breathe, imagine the color entering your abdomen and spreading throughout your whole body. As you breathe out, visualize the complementary (opposite) color leaving your body. You can imagine these colors having a meaning too.

Blue = relaxation and peace

Green = healing

Magenta = release

Orange = fun, happiness, joy

Red = energy and vitality

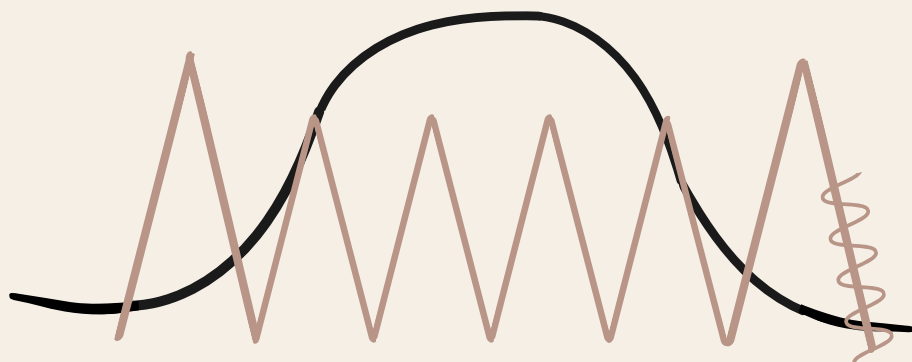
## Box Breathing

Box breathing (or square breathing) is said to help heighten performance and concentration. You'll exhale on a count of four, inhale through your nose on the count of four, hold your breath for four seconds, and then exhale again. This isn't my favorite technique for labor, but some people love it!



# Breathing with Contractions

*Here's what breathing with contractions may look like using my favorite breathing technique.*

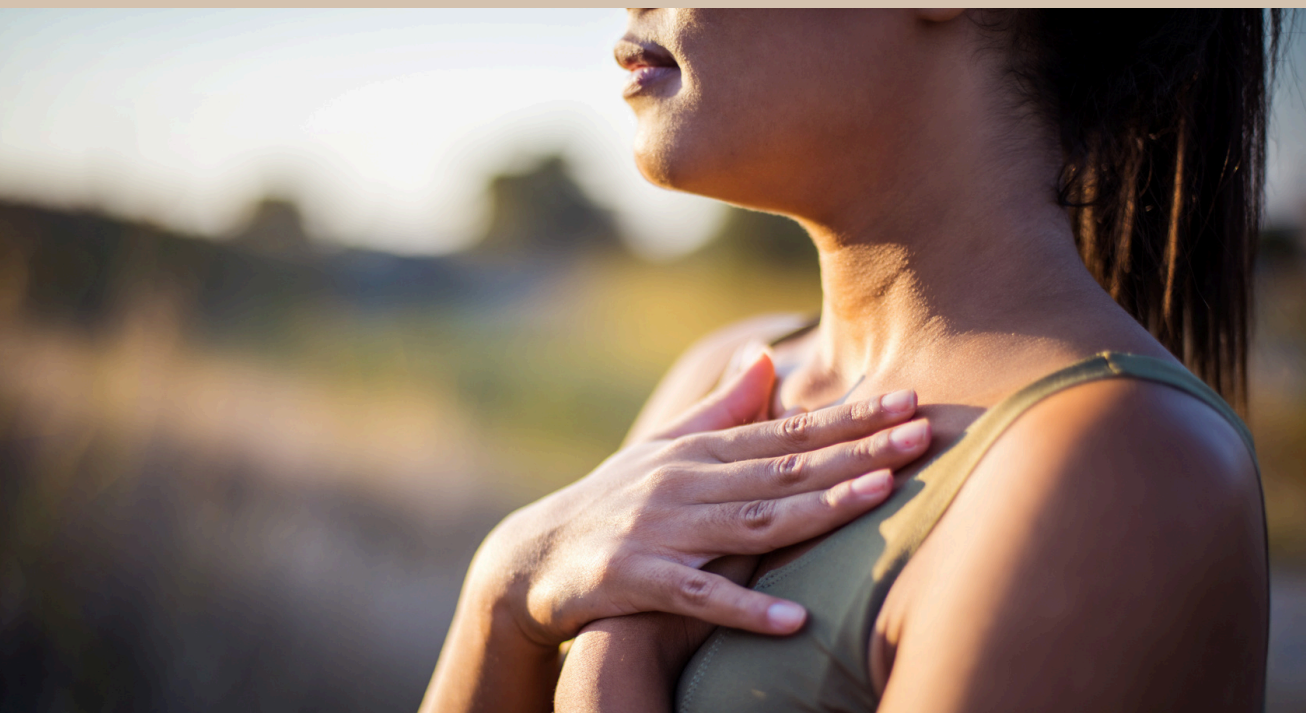


The Black line represents the contraction and the tan represents the breathing. As you feel a contraction begin, take a big and deep breath. This first breath will help you set the pace for the rest of the contraction. I still recommend an inhale of 3 seconds, and an exhale of 6 seconds, however- the first and last breath may be bigger (meaning you take and release more air). Maintain your breath throughout the contraction, focusing on releasing tension on each exhale.

Each breath takes about 10 seconds, and the peak of contractions only lasts about 20 seconds. Remember that when it feels hard... "just 2 breaths until this contraction starts releasing". Remember those small, achievable goals!

In that final breath, allow yourself to "shake off" the contraction as it completely dissipates.

You may also find it helpful to do a "cleansing breath" after the contraction as well. A cleansing breath works to calm the nervous system in times of stress. Simply take a quick, sharp inhale, and follow that with two quick, short inhales. It might be a sharp 1 second inhale, followed by two .5 second inhales. Then exhale at whatever pace feels best.



# Music for labor

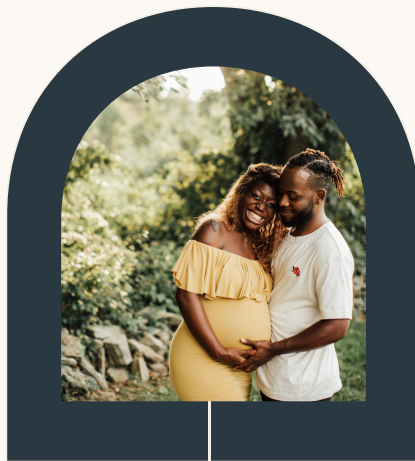
Randomized trials have found that people report lower pain intensity when listening to music in labor! Specifically in early labor.

I recommend having a few different playlists. You never know what you may really want or need during labor- and it could change in just a matter of minutes! This way, your partner can easily put on whatever suits you best during the moment.



## *Calm Meditation playlist*

Any self hypnosis, meditation, or calming music. I also like sound machines to help block out noise when music feels like "too much".



## *Sentimental playlist*

Any songs that resonate to you- your wedding song, or songs that you sing to your baby.



## *Pushing playlist*

You may need that "pump me up" kind of atmosphere, especially after long labors, to help muster the energy needed for pushing!

# 6 Popular Essential Oils for Labor and Birth

1

*Lavender*

The "Top Oil" for pain and anxiety- with studies done specific to labor and birth. It has also been shown to help perineal healing.

2

*Rose*

Another oil that may help reduce pain in labor.

3

*Bergamot*

A popular choice for helping with pain and anxiety.

4

*Peppermint*

Peppermint can be great for nausea and give an energy boost when Mom (or dad) feels tired. It can be added to the toilet to help mom urinate after birth.

5

*Bitter Orange*

Bitter Orange has been shown to be more effective than peppermint in reducing nausea in pregnancy.

6

*Clary Sage*

Clary sage can be used to help stimulate contractions- because of this it should not be used until labor.

*Tips*

Many birthing locations have a "no scent" policy, but if you ask the staff if they mind and/or have any allergies, they're usually very supportive of aromatherapy.

Smells can become very overwhelming during labor. I recommend putting diluted oils on a cotton round so they can be removed easily if it becomes "too much".

# Dancing

Small studies suggest that dancing in the first stage of labor have lower pain scores, significantly increased satisfaction with their birth experience.

*Tip:*

During a contraction, lean your weight on your partner, and allow your body to fully relax.  
Partners: be ready to catch!

# Dim lighting



Harsh, bright lights can actually change your pain perception- increasing pain. One of the first things I do when I arrive at a birth is turn off all the overhead lights and plug in some twinkle lights. It sets a really beautiful and peaceful scene- while also helping to take that "hospital feeling" away.

Dim lighting/darkness helps to increase levels of Melatonin, which works WITH oxytocin in labor.  
(why do you think most labors start at night!?)

# Massage

Studies have linked massage to less anxiety, an increased sense of control, and increased maternal satisfaction with childbirth. People randomly assigned to massage in the 1st stage of labor had lower pain score compared to usual care.



# Relaxation Techniques

## *Avoid the Fear-Tension-Pain Cycle with Relaxation Techniques*

Tension in your body during labor is going to make you perceive pain differently. It can release hormones that trigger the flight or fight response. Plus all that tension is making your body work a whole lot harder, and can cause faster exhaustion.

### *It takes PRACTICE*

It is HARD to fully relax in labor. As humans, we carry a lot of tension in our bodies on a day to day basis. It's great to know and be mindful of the areas that you tend to carry the most tension in (for me it's my shoulders).

On top of that, our bodies instinct when it anticipates pain or impact is to tense up and "brace" for it. However, this coping mechanism just makes pain worse. Have you ever heard that if you're in a car accident, it's beneficial to relax, as embracing and tensing for impact can result in more/larger injuries? It's the same idea in labor. Our bodies were made to give birth, and by using these tools, and preparing, birth doesn't even have to be painful.



### Fear - Tension - Pain Cycle

The Fear - Tension - Pain Cycle can have big consequences to your labor and birth experience.

SEE FEAR OF  
LABOR MODULE

## *Relaxing your Jaw*

Relaxing our jaws is particularly important. Our jaws are connected to our pelvic floor, so any time there is tension in our jaw- there is also tension in our pelvic floor. This is actually another reason why I prefer nasal breathing over breathing out through the mouth in labor. It is much easier to relax the jaw when the mouth is closed.

# Important steps to Relaxation

1

Be in a calm, safe environment. It can be helpful to start practicing before bed at night, or any time you feel stress or tension in your body.

2

Rest your tongue gently behind your top, front teeth. This ensure no tension being held in the jaw.

3

Starting with your face, release and ease all tension. Allow your forehead to smooth. Pair this relaxation with your breath... Relaxing deeper with each breath.

4

Release your hands. Keep them open and loose. Allow your shoulders to drop.

5

Continue this same pattern with the rest of your body, flowing from top to bottom- all the way to your toes.

6

Allow your entire body to go limp. Allow yourself to "slump" over. Some people call this the "rag doll method". The more you're able to do this, the easier labor will be.

*Tips*

1. Have your support person watch your forehead, hands/fists, and shoulders. These are often the first signs of tension, as well as the most visible.
2. Begin using this technique in early labor- even if you don't necessarily "need" it to cope, it can really help you get a sense of rhythm. PLUS it's easier to maintain throughout labor vs. being at a breaking point, and then trying.
3. Tell your birthing partner to be specific when giving you cues during labor. "Relax" can be a triggering word in labor. Instead, say "Drop your shoulders. Open your hands" etc.

# A Comb

## *How to Use it:*

Simply hold and squeeze during a contraction with the teeth going into your palm.

## *Does it Really Work?*

Some parents have told me that the comb method is what got them through labor! Others found that it created unnecessary tension. It's a simple and inexpensive trick to try! I've seen it most useful in the transition phase.

## *How it Works:*

The Gate Control Theory:

The idea is that you create a stimulus to activate nerves in a non-painful way at the same time you experience pain, which blocks pain signals from reaching your brain. The brain can only focus on so many things at once, so you're essentially distracting your brain from feeling pain. It's also thought that you're hitting acupuncture points which may help pain management too!

# Heat and Ice

Heat and Cold packs are an inexpensive way to help manage pain in labor.

Heat on the back or shoulders can help ease tension and encourage relaxation.

Ice on the forehead and shoulders can work to help create a distracting stimulus or help with Mom is overheating in labor (very common).

It may take a little while to be beneficial.

- Heat and Ice should only be used intermittently.
- Small studies have shown significant pain reduction and a shorter labor in those who used hot/cold packs intermittently in labor. (Ganji Z, Shirvani MA, Rezaei-Abhari F, Danesh M. The effect of intermittent local heat and cold on labor pain and child birth outcome. Iran J Nurs Midwifery Res. 2013 Jul;18(4):298-303. PMID: 24403926; PMCID: PMC3872865.)



# Hypnosis

Hypnosis is a way of altering your conscious awareness. Your subconscious is much more open to suggestion. Hypnosis can change the way you think, the way you feel, and change your mood. Hypnosis is voluntary. You are still in control. Hypnosis will not "make" you do, feel, or think anything you don't want to.

Studies show that those who use hypnosis are less likely to use pain medication, often rate their labors as "significantly better than average", and report having calm, confident, and empowered experiences.

My favorites are on [hypnobirthinghub.com](http://hypnobirthinghub.com)

## Tips

### Practice

It really does take practice to get "good" at self hypnosis.

With that said- it doesn't have to be a big ordeal, or something that takes a lot of your time. Plug in your tracks and listen while you sleep- your subconscious is still taking in all that suggestion. PLUS it can really help with that pregnancy insomnia.

Practice in conditions that aren't ideal as well... this will help you tune out unnecessary distractions on the big day. Repeat the words to yourself to help you get into it. Sometimes it can take awhile.

### Use these tools:

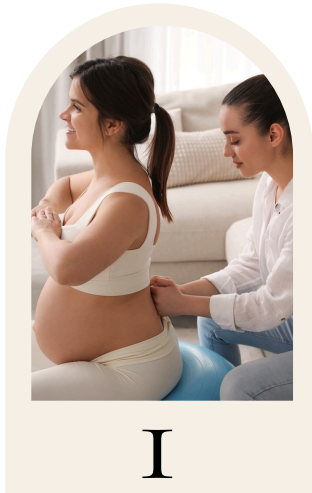
**Headphones:** This will help you really tune into the hypnosis and tune out unnecessary distractions.

**Visualize** as much detail as you can.

Repeat the words in your head to help you focus into it.

**Water:** Get in the bath! Studies suggest hypnosis may work best with water immersion.

# Counter Pressure in 3 Ways



I

## Sacral pressure

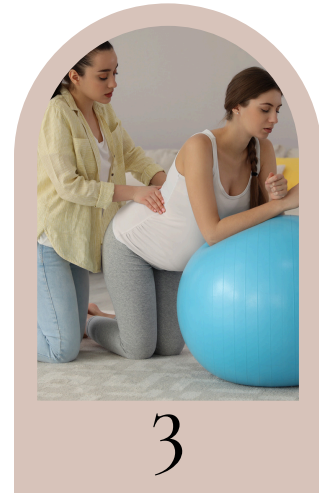
Feel for the triangular bone on the back of the pelvis (the sacrum). Place your entire palm flat onto the bone, and place directly down into the sacrum. This is great for back labor and early labor when back labor is very common. Similarly, you can also try placing two fists on each side of the spine and applying pressure on the lower back.



2

## Double Hip squeeze

This is the hip squeeze you may be familiar with from birth class. You'll feel for the femur head or the bony protrusion on the side of the hip. Right above that space is an indented portion of the glutei. (This is in the lower part of the pelvis.) You'll put the heel of your palm into that space-pressing up and in! This is great for early, active and transition phases.



3

## Pelvic press

You'll find the top of the hip bones (iliac crest). Then place a palm on each side, press and squeeze directly inwards. This squeeze helps to open the top of the pelvis, so it's great towards the end of transition, or just before/during the pushing phase.

*Tips:*

Having a Doula or another support person to trade off and take turns can be really helpful. I find that Moms either hate counter pressure, or they want it CONSTANT which can be extremely tiring. Using a ball to provide pressure can also target more pin-pointed areas.

# Positions

*Studies suggest that those who use upright positions and move around in the first stage of labor may have shorter labors, are less likely to request an epidural, and are less likely to have a cesarean.*



## Birth Scarf (Rebozo)



### *What is a Rebozo?*

The Rebozo is a traditional Mexican shawl that can be used to ease pains during labor and even during pregnancy. If you don't have a Rebozo, you can use a flat bed sheet. It's thought to relax muscles and ligaments that can help ease tension and create space for baby to get into an optimal position, and navigate the pelvis more easily.

### *How do you use a scarf or sheet?*

It's important to use the Rebozo **correctly** and ensure you don't have any **contraindications** for use. Talk to your provider before trying a rebozo and remember to use only gentle movements. You can do what is called rebozo sifting (seen left) or "shake the apple tree" (seen above). Spinning Babies is a great resource for this.



## Visualization

Visualization can be used in many ways during labor. The brain can only focus on so much at a time, so by being deeply immersed in visualization, you are distracting your brain from the pain stimulus.

You can visualize a moment in time, a place, or even practice envisioning your baby in the perfect position for birth, while moving down during each surge. Imagine your body opening and releasing to work with labor.

## Tips

Using your other senses can be really helpful with this. For example, if you plan to visualize a beach-bringing suntan lotion, set a warm environment, use a sound machine, or audio track to listen to the sound of the waves, use a fan to simulate the breeze, etc.

## Water Immersion

Randomized trials show that water immersion lowers pain scores and reduces the use of medications for pain relief.

An observational study found that 88% of Moms who had access to a tub and chose to get in, only 9% left the tub for additional pain management.

It gets the nickname of "The midwives' epidural" because of its shown effectiveness in labor for pain management.

**Tips:** Try using a bath with other pain management techniques: aromatherapy, breathing, relaxation, hypnosis, positions, music, massage, etc. Place a warm, wet towel over mom chest or back to help keep in the warmth.



"The midwives' epidural"

# Fear of Childbirth

*Fear of Birth can actually affect your birth, your birth experience, and postpartum.*

## *How can fear affect birth?*

A 2019 study found that those who were fearful of birth had prolonged labor, more likely to use an epidural, obstetric complications, and presence of traumatic stress symptoms.

## *What can I do?*

### **Educate yourself!**

Studies show that those who attend childbirth education classes have significantly lower scores of fear of childbirth, anxiety and depression than those who did not attend childbirth classes.

### **Work through your fears!**

What fears do you have? How can you educate yourself on those fears? Is there anything you can do to help stack the odds in your favor to prevent those fears from happening? What if those fears do become reality? What tools do you have? What support do you have? What can you do to promote healing and coping?



Use the Workbook to help you recognize and work through your fears. Create a plan to help you through it, and work out a plan for healing and coping if your fears do become reality.

## *Remember....*

Fear is NORMAL, but it doesn't have to control you. Life is unpredictable, and labor and birth are no exception to that. Ensure you have a supportive provider, and supportive partner. Know how to advocate and know what you want to advocate for. You got this!

# The Epidural



The epidural is often a very effective pain management tool.

*It lowers pain scores by about 2-3 points compared to the use of injectable opioids. Those who choose an epidural are less likely to report a need for more pain relief.*

*You should be aware of the benefits and risks of an epidural. Talk to your provider.*

## You should know:

- 1 The epidural can make you itchy. A cold cloth can help.
- 2 You will be required to have continuous electronic fetal monitoring, a urinary catheter, and B/P measurements about every 15-30 minutes.
- 3 Movement and change of position is still important and still very possible. Ask for assistance.
- 4 Your epidural can be replaced, turned off, or down.

## The Process:

1. You request an epidural.
2. Depending on the availability of the anesthesiology team, it typically takes about at least 30 minutes. If you don't have one already, your team will put in an IV, as a safety precaution.
3. You will sign a consent form, and be consulted on the benefits, risks, and some things you may expect.
4. You will either lie on your side or sit up. You will tuck your chin to your chest and hunch your back (like a shrimp) so your provider has easy access to your spine. Holding a pillow can help.
5. They will clean your back in the area the epidural will be, and place a drape.
6. They will insert inject a small needle to numb the area of the epidural. This may sting and burn, but is gone quickly and is often the worst part of the procedure.
7. Your provider will then insert the epidural needle in your lower back, which places the epidural catheter.
8. They will remove the needle, leaving the catheter.
9. They will tape the catheter to your back, so you can move without worry that it may pull.
10. Your epidural will begin working in about 15 minutes.

# Nitrous Oxide



## AKA Laughing Gas

Nitrous Oxide is a medication option for pain management in labor. It is said to provide less relief than an epidural. However, it can have similar relief to injectable opioids, but with fewer side effects for you and Baby. Many report high satisfaction and say they would use it again.

It is not available at all birthing locations.

Nitrous Oxide is delivered through a mask or a hose. It is odorless and tasteless. To use it, you will hold the mask/tube and breathe in and out through the mask/tube during a contraction.

Talk to your provider about the benefits and risks and discuss if this may be a good option for you.

### *Tips:*

- Start breathing in through the tube/mask roughly 30 seconds before the contraction begins. This is to help reach the peak of medication with the peak of the contraction.
- It is said to work best when you're still coping/managing labor pain well vs. being at a point where you are not longer coping.
- Nitrous Oxide may help with anxiety as well.

# IV *medication*



## Injectable Opioids

They can be given through IV or through an intramuscular injection. Studies suggest they provide moderate satisfaction and some pain relief in labor. However, two-thirds of people report moderate or severe pain 1-2 hours after the injection. Different hospitals have different options for medications. You can talk to your provider during your prenatal appointments about what they options may be at your particular birthing location. IV medications also require additional monitoring for Parent and Baby.

### Side Note:

You should be educated on the benefits and risks of any medication before it is given to you (pain meds or otherwise). While attending births as a Doula, I've heard staff call medications "safe" without offering any further information on the benefits and risks, or alternative options. I feel like that's very unfair for parents to make a decision based off being told it's "considered safe" instead of being given all the information they may need to make a truly informed decision. IV medications can only be given up to a certain point in labor. If you appear close to delivery, this will no longer be an option.

# Sterile Water *Inject*ions



## *What are Sterile Water Inject*ions?

Sterile Water Injections (SWI) are an injection of sterile water in specific locations in the back. The needle goes just under the skin to form a little bubble under the skin. It takes about 2 minutes to go into effect. You'll likely need multiple injections throughout labor. Each injection may last 15 minutes or it may work for hours.

## *How do they work?*

The DNIC method- creating a painful stimulus to help your body create more natural pain relief- endorphins. That said- to some, sterile water injections are very painful. Often described as burning or stinging- similar to a bee sting (or worse), but do say it decreases the pain of labor. They're not available everywhere. Ask your provider if this is an option at your birthing location.

# 30 words of Affirmation

1

I am ready to meet my baby.

2

I am safe. My baby is safe.

3

One surge at a time.

4

I allow my body to relax and release.

5

Intensity means progress.

6

Soon my baby will be in my arms.

7

I can do this. I am doing this.

8

My body knows what to do.

9

My baby knows what to do.

10

I get to meet my baby today.

11

I am confident and supported.

12

I trust my body and my baby.

13

I am prepared for whatever turn my birth may take.

14

I listen to my body.

15

I was made to do this, whatever way it happens.

16

I am doing my best.

17

I make each choice with love for myself and my baby.

18

There is no "failing" in birth.

19

I accept and welcome labor.

20

Every surge is one less.

21

I ask for what I need.

22

I am focused on a calm birth.

23

That last surge was hard, but I am ready for the next one.

24

I can do anything for a minute.

25

I am strong and resilient.

26

I am enough. I am doing enough.

27

I control the things I can control, and let go of the rest.

28

Birth is normal.

29

I am the best Mom for my baby.

30

I will heal.

# CREATE YOUR OWN AFFIRMATIONS

From THIS

to

That

|  |    |  |
|--|----|--|
|  | 1  |  |
|  | 2  |  |
|  | 3  |  |
|  | 4  |  |
|  | 5  |  |
|  | 6  |  |
|  | 7  |  |
|  | 8  |  |
|  | 9  |  |
|  | 10 |  |
|  | 11 |  |

*Take a specific fear...*

*... and turn it into a positive thought.*

*example*

"I could never have an  
unmedicated birth."

"I am going to give myself all the tools and  
education I can to stack the odds in my favor  
for an unmedicated birth, but know that  
medication is just another tool that may help  
contribute to a positive experience."

# TENS *Unit*

## What is it?

A TENS is a small device that uses mild electrical current to provide pain relief. In labor, two electrode pads are typically placed on each side of the back- right at the bra line, and two are placed on each side of the lower back along the underwear line. You might feel buzzing, tingling, or prickling sensation wherever the pads are placed.

## How does it work?

It's believed to work in two ways:

**The Gate Control Theory:** The brain can only process so much stimulus at once. When set at a low setting, the non-painful buzzing stimulus from the electrodes is thought to distract your brain and therefore block the pain receptors from reaching your brain.

**Diffuse Noxious Inhibitory Control (DNIC):** When at a high setting, it's believed the TENS unit works through DNIC. This idea is that by adding an additional painful stimulus, you trigger your body to create more natural endorphins, which help relieve pain.



## Where can you get a TENS Unit?

As a Doula, I bring the TENS CARE Perfect Mama Plus Unit, which is designed for labor and birth, however all TENS units have similar functions and can be purchased on amazon for \$20-50

## *Does it really work?*

In my experience, those who choose to use the TENS say that it helps a lot, especially in early/early active labor. They've also all agreed that they would choose to use it again.

# *Four Ways a Support Person* makes for a better birth

I

*More likely to  
have a normal  
vaginal birth*

2

*Less likely to  
have pain  
medication*

3

*Less likely to  
have negative  
feelings about  
childbirth*

4

*Labors are  
shorter and their  
babies are less  
likely to have  
complications*

\*IN THESE STUDIES, THE BEST RESULTS OCCURRED WHEN THE CONTINUOUS SUPPORT WAS PROVIDED BY A TRAINED DOULA.



## Aromatherapy & Essential Oils

### for Pain, Anxiety & More

Aromatherapy has been found to be particularly helpful in the first stage of labor to reduce pain and anxiety. Lavender, Rose, and Bergamot may be especially helpful for pain and anxiety.

Peppermint may be helpful at reducing nausea, as can bitter orange.

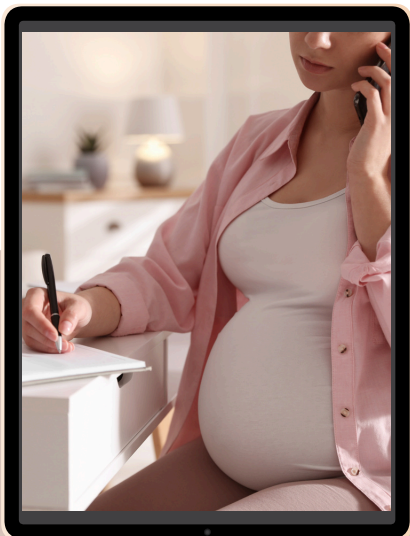
Clary Sage is said to help move labor along, although should not be used until labor, as it can stimulate contractions.

As always, talk to your provider before using any essential oils in pregnancy and in labor and birth.



# Want More Support?

Work with me 1:1



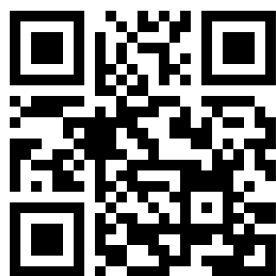
## Virtual Options

Birth Planning

Lactation 101

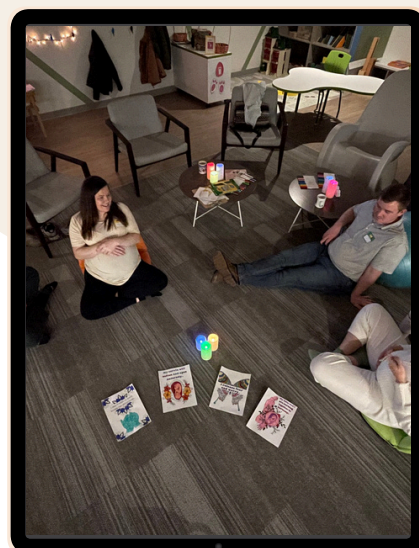
Postpartum and Newborn  
Consultations

LEARN MORE



## In Person Options

- Birth Doula Services
- Daytime Postpartum Services
- Lactation Support



# TESTIMONIALS

from past clients



"Kristen is an LGBTQ+ affirming doula (birth and postpartum and lactation counselor)! She meets families where they are and provides thoughtful knowledge with room for individual needs and differences, always honoring & empowering your choices. Doulas are worth all the money in the world. I've had one (including Kristen) at both of my births and would do it no other way. She also facilitates infant & lactation support at Lakewood family room - creating an invaluable and supportive community"



Kristen was knowledgeable and supportive for both me and my husband prior to delivery and in the delivery room. She gave me skills to make more informed and empowered choices, and answered and and all of my questions, or provided evidenced based information to help me seek out answers. Her approach is professional, warm, comforting, and positive. She worked beautifully in tandem with the delivery room team and was an invaluable advocate and consistent birthing support person through shift changes and stages of delivery. With her support, I delivered my first baby unmedicated as planned, and with my second, she helped me and my partner navigate some serious complications and changes to my plan. I'll never have another baby without her!



Kristen is knowledgeable, supporting and kind. Her personality is patient and gentle. We trusted her the moment we met her. Kristen made the postpartum journey smooth and less daunting for us with our twin boys. I would encourage any new mom to reach out to her!

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