

You're Already Ready

Written by Laura Maxson LM



Most of the resources needed to cope with labor already exist within a woman. She must be open to whatever might work in the moment and surround herself with those who can help her find her way. Getting ready for labor is often about trusting that she is already prepared.

Sound ~ A woman in labor expects that labor will hurt. What she might not expect is that as she gives into the process, the pain becomes a song in her body and her voice becomes a powerful instrument, taking the intensity of labor and channeling it down deep and through her body. The simple act of making a controlled noise during contractions can be an extremely powerful tool to express the body's resonance with the forces of labor.

Movement ~ Often serving the same purpose as sound, movement provides an outlet for the power of labor. With each contraction, a simple repetitive motion such as rocking the body, nodding the head, swaying the hips or dancing the hands release tension. It provides a sense of timing or predictability that unconsciously counts down each contraction. The act of not moving,

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of being completely still and relaxed, can allow the powerful current of a contraction's energy to pass through the body, as electricity passes through high tension wires. Changing positions can feel disruptive in the moment - but surprisingly, after a few contractions settled into a new position, labor can seem more manageable.

Checking out ~ There is timelessness to labor that puts most women into labor-land. One minute can last an eternity, and yet, the hours can fly by. Covering clocks, putting down the cell phone and ignoring the passage of time can help labor flow without a watched-pot feeling.

Water ~ Warm water can provide relief from a strong labor. A shower or bath helps muscles relax, stress recede, and oxytocin flow more easily. Surrounded and embraced by warm water, a laboring woman's skin is stimulated all over, reducing the sensation of contractions. Joined by her partner, either fully in the tub or shower with her, just close by, she can more completely let go. A tub allows a woman to get completely out of gravity and become buoyant – changing positions easily. In the shower a woman can sit on a labor ball or the shower bench, hold the support bar while squatting, or just lean into her partner. Most women find privacy, warmth and unexpected respite in the shower – especially enjoying the hospital's unending flow of hot water.

Birth Doula ~ A woman might not think the presence of a birth doula could take the place of an epidural, but it often does. A birth doula suggests and facilitates techniques such as those mentioned above, while promoting privacy and intimacy between the laboring woman and her partner. She helps create a trusting, calm labor situation that helps labor progress in a very natural and manageable way.

Position Preference ~ Not many women plan to give birth on hands and knees, but it is one of the most instinctual and comfortable positions for birth. Side-lying and squatting are some other favorites. Women often unintentionally end up on their backs or semi-reclined in the hospital bed because the need for the bed to be broken down (the bottom taken off) for the delivery takes precedent. A woman may give her care provider an unexpected opportunity to practice alternative delivery positions if she declines to roll over to her back for delivery. Babies can come out in just about any position a woman can assume, and unless there is a medical need the woman's position of comfort should win out.

An Open Mind ~ Women certainly don't expect to ask for the very things they have requested not to have. Planning to avoid a routine IV is fine, but a woman who finds she can't keep anything down in labor may discover that an IV is just the medicine she needs. Understanding why it can be good to leave the bag of water intact, doesn't mean a woman hovering at 8 cm might find that breaking her water is what is going to help her get to complete without needing pitocin. A woman who wants to avoid continuous fetal monitoring might end up with a baby showing signs of distress which needs closer monitoring. She can welcome the appropriate application of technology in her labor.

The simplest things are often what have the most profound affect on how a woman copes with her labor.

www.Birthnet.org - information on safe, joyful and empowering birth, and an online searchable database of birth doulas and other care providers

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