

Why Is Everyone Talking About HYPNOBIRTHING?

SHOSHANA DENBERG

Today is the day. Or maybe not. You are starting to feel something; you're feeling different; you're not really sure what you are feeling so you call your obstetrician. The doctor tells you to come in... to check you (**internal exam**). As the good, obedient patient, you and your husband listen, and go in without asking any questions.

Does this sound familiar? You are excited! You want this to be the day. Your supposed due date passed a week ago. You are tired of being pregnant and not feeling your best, and you are ready to move on to the next stage.

And so, you take this very first step of having your labor managed by the medical establishment. There is actually a term for this. It's called AML or Active Management of Labor and it was introduced in the 1960s to reduce the C-section rate. This approach is over 50 years old; that's half a century! And it has had the opposite effect. Unfortunately, the C-section rate has been climbing. In fact, it has doubled in just the last 22 years!

So now you are in your doctor's office. He does an internal exam, tells you that your cervix has dilated to three centimeters, and that if you want you can



Shoshana Denberg carrying a happy, healthy baby out of the hospital, baruch Hashem.



"Being born tired me out. And I don't feel quite ready for clothing yet, thanks anyway."

be holding your baby in your arms today. Wow! Today! You are excited! At the recommendation of your obstetrician, you and your husband go straight to the hospital.

You go through the automated doors of the hospital. Unbeknownst to both of you, you have now crossed the line from the probability of having a physiological birth to most likely having a birth spurred on by one or more interventions (most births just don't stop at one intervention, it's a slippery slope).

Birth your baby is about growing your family. Yet the first stop at the hospital is triage. And guess what? No family allowed. Not even your husband! If you are comfortable with this scenario, fine. But what about all the women and their husbands who are not comfortable with it? You're all on your own having your first interaction with the medical system managing your labor. All in the name of having a safe and healthy outcome. Triage can last from a few minutes to a few hours—all by yourself.

Next step: labor and delivery. You are now most likely sitting in a wheelchair (**movement is best when in labor**), waiting to be taken to the room where you will birth your baby. The labor and delivery nurse asks you a bunch of questions and gives you a hospital gown. Please keep in mind that what we are wearing has a direct effect on how we feel and behave. For example, a woman always feels more motivated to work out when she likes her workout clothes. We definitely slow down when wearing pajamas. Wearing a hospital gown is no different. It makes you feel like a patient. In other words, you are meant to feel that you are receiving medical treatment and that the medical staff knows best as far as you and your baby are concerned. But wait! Didn't you just come to the hospital to give birth to your own baby? Does this mean you automatically need medical treatment? Of course not! So why is someone sticking an IV in you? Did you give consent? Were you even asked to give consent?

The nurse will say it's to keep you hydrated (**you can drink on your own**) and in case there is an emergency, they

have a line in place. A healthy woman expecting a healthy baby does not warrant preparing for an emergency. Yes, we need to be flexible. **But under normal circumstances, giving birth is a natural occurrence, not a medical event.**

So, the question becomes, can a woman give birth in a hospital and have it not be a medical event? The answer is YES! But only if the expectant parents are confident, well informed, and knowledgeable in how to advocate for themselves.

Next step: Doctor comes in and proceeds to do a cervical check, often without asking you for consent or discussing possible risks, which include infection. You can decline all checks, barring any special circumstance. He then tells you that progression is very slow, but that he can speed it up with a little Pitocin (**medication is easy to decide on when IV is already in place**). He then reminds you that you will be holding your baby a lot faster if given the medicine. However, the doctor fails to tell you that all medication crosses the placenta. That means your baby is also medicated! Oh, by the way, if you want an epidural, now is the time. But again, the doctor fails to tell you that once you have an epidural you cannot leave the bed. That means no more moving around. Oh, and because you can't get out of bed the nurse tells you that you must be catheterized. But really you don't need a catheter; it's just that the catheter is much easier for the nursing staff. But it is not the best choice for a laboring woman. And you can by all means refuse the catheter.

Next step: You are now medicated twice. As a result, your body has now become dependent on the drugs. There is no going back. You have now entered the arena of a medical birth.

And as such, the doctor comes back in, checks you again, and tells you he will be back soon.

Meanwhile, it's been hours with no food or anything to drink, except maybe ice chips or water, in case you end up needing surgery.

Your body is running a birthing marathon on an empty fuel tank! You are now at the point where you will do anything to get that baby out of you. It's getting late; it's close to 4:00. The doctor comes back in and tells you it's time to start pushing. Really? Is it really time? You don't even realize because you have been given an epidural. Therefore, you don't even know when you are having a contraction. Somebody has to tell you. With a physiological birth you know what to do and when to do it. You are in control. You know exactly when you are having a surge (contraction). You are in sync with your body naturally. You birth your baby exactly at the right time.

Next step: The doctor reminds you that you have pushed for a very long time. That you are exhausted. That it's getting late. Soon another doctor will have to take over. But you want *your* doctor to deliver your baby. You become anxious, yet you keep pushing when told and finally your precious prince or princess makes their appearance in the delivery room. Standard procedure at this point is to suction the baby, though this has side effects that hospitals don't talk about.

Next step: The doctor hands you your baby; you are beyond exhaustion. They tell you the cord has to be clamped quickly (even though delayed cord clamping is in your birth plan) and then minutes later they take your baby away from you to do all the checks. Imagine... you have just crossed the finish line of the Miami Marathon, a gold medal is handed to you, and then they attempt to take the medal away. This would never happen. You wouldn't let them. At the very least you would ask why and for how long. And keep in mind it's an inanimate object. Now let's go back to the birthing room. Your baby is handed to you and within just a very few short minutes your baby is taken away from you for what seems like an eternity. Barring special circumstances, you should be able to hold your baby uninterrupted for at least that first hour of birth, also known as the golden hour.

Next step: Having the baby breastfeed within the first hour does help with birthing the placenta. Oh, and did I forget

to tell you that you might have had an episiotomy without you even knowing about it? Let alone consenting to it.

The purpose of this article is not to scare you into not wanting to give birth. Quite the contrary. **Birthing your baby is one of the most beautiful, spiritual moments in your life. At least it should be.**

The best option for a healthy woman is a homebirth or a birthing center where she has a completely holistic, spiritual, and gentle birthing experience that does not generally happen in a hospital setting. But you can still give birth naturally in a hospital if you are well educated and able to make informed decisions for yourself and your baby. That's why it is so important to become educated about what type of birthing experience you intend to have, knowing full well that things can change in an instant.

When we are educated, we become empowered, which brings us much closer to honoring our birthing bodies the way G-d intended.

You may be asking yourself, how do I become educated? What do I want to achieve in my birth? If you want a calm, gentle birth, I have the answer for you. Hypnobirthing. Hypno(sis) birthing. So much is hidden in one word. The hypno part might be very daunting for some people. Or maybe it's the birthing part. But when you put the two together something magical happens.

Hypnobirthing has been recognized as the leader in childbirth education for over 30 years.

The founder, Marie Mongan, was obsessed with birth and babies from a very young age.

When she birthed her own babies, she told her obstetrician that she wanted a natural birth to which her doctor agreed. Unfortunately, her first two births did not go as planned. She received anesthesia and was told she could not see her babies until the next day! How crazy! This was the 1950s.

When it came time for her third and fourth births, she made it absolutely clear that he either honor her request or she would go elsewhere. In the end, she had very short labors giving birth naturally, in a calm, confident manner.

"When I heard about this hypnobirthing thing, I cracked up! Then again, it worked!"





Ghoshana and a satisfied (if somewhat surprised) client.

Fast forward to her daughter Maura becoming pregnant. Marie wrote a small book containing her thoughts and advice on birth; she gifted her daughter this book and in return Maura gifted her mother her first grandchild. This baby was the first hypnobirthing baby born into this world!

So by now you are probably wondering what hypnobirthing is all about. I am excited to tell you! It is not only a technique. It is also a philosophy. **It's about having a calm, confident birth with joy and ease in a more comfortable way.**

Hypnobirthing teaches you to prepare for childbirth; this is done through visualization, hypnosis, and special breathing techniques. You are able to release your fear around childbirth and to trust your body's ability to birth instinctively. When this is achieved there is a significant reduction in the C-section rate, in epidural requests, in the use of Pitocin, in analgesia use, and in the use of forceps during delivery.

Are you of the mindset that you will just go to the hospital pregnant and you will walk out with your baby? That women do this all the time and so will you? That you are perfectly capable of just winging it? As you have now learned, it's way easier said than done. Knowledge is power.

The more we know about what our bodies are capable of, the more confident we will be, and the more gentle the birth. **And this in turn leads to an easier postpartum recovery.**

The mind is the control center of the body. Hypnobirthing

conditions the mind to condition the body to do what you want it to do. A hypnobirthing mama will learn:

- Relaxation and self-hypnosis to release fear and tension
- Specific breathing techniques for each stage of pregnancy and birth
- To be proactive in relaying her birth plan to her health provider
- How to ask questions with confidence
- Natural ways to stimulate labor without chemical induction
- Gentle birthing techniques so that you can avoid hard physical pushing and tearing
- And the list goes on...

So, if you want to look forward to birth, to embrace birth, to feel confident and trusting in knowing that your body knows exactly what to do, then taking the hypnobirthing classes is for you. And a bonus to hypnobirthing is that the husbands feel more empowered and connected to the whole birthing experience. You and your husband become closer and the two of you bond with your baby in a way that would not have been possible without hypnobirthing. ❄️

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