



How to Describe Birth to a First-Time Pregnant Woman

I'll come straight to the point: There is a severe lack of women on this planet who enjoy their birthing experience, let alone walking away from it with a profound depth of empowerment. What is going so wrong? When I tried to talk to mothers in my life about birth during my first pregnancy, little was shared. Time and time again I was met with an awkward smile, and these forced words: "You'll be fine." Unfortunately, to me those words only seemed to have the opposite of their intended effect.

Though the words were an attempt at comfort and support, which I appreciated, the energy behind that statement came across more like sympathy, as these women couldn't help but relive their own experiences, which to them would translate to my experience.

When we discover we are pregnant, we have access to two doors—but because so many choose the first door, or perhaps because we feel it is our only option, the second door is forgotten, even hidden. The first door opens up the status quo. The second door is unlocked when we choose to trust our abilities, our bodies, our babies, and the process, and then find the care provider who has the same belief—a care provider who believes you should be in control, and who respects that your birth will happen on its own timeline. Unless the need arises for medical attention, you have no reason to believe that your pregnancy and birth can't unfold smoothly and without medical management. That's difficult, however, when we are thwarted at every turn and told to believe the complete opposite.

What if, one by one, we felt that pregnancy and birth was ours, and not something to hand over? What if we thought of pregnancy and birth as the ultimate expression of our power—something to protect, not



give up? What if we all started to openly acknowledge our intuition, which is especially heightened during pregnancy, and what it means for guiding ourselves and our babies safely through our pregnancy journeys?

The word "risk" places a dark shadow over the word "birth." Why has this come to be? How differently would we feel about birth if we were exposed to the truth on a daily basis? The ratings just aren't there for the tabloid headlines which read: "Mother gives birth to healthy baby—again." Or "Mother went into labor spontaneously, listened to her body and her baby, and gave birth in a position that felt right to her in her home." Or "Mother calmly breathed through her contractions and birthed her baby with joy." What if we received a notification on

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social media every time a birth just unfolded on its own—mother and baby healthy, ecstatically happy, and now bonding and getting to know each other? Yes, complications happen, but if we truly knew of the multitude of births that just flow, our view of birth would change overnight.

As more of us go into pregnancy and birth with open hearts, an acceptance of the process, and true appreciation of our bodies and how beautifully they facilitate labor and birth, the more of us will emerge from the experience forever changed for the better. When a woman in our lives asks us about birth and how it felt, we won't just say "you'll be fine." We'll want to jump onto the couch, Tom Cruise-style, bursting with love, happiness, and enthusiasm that can't be bottled, unable to keep up with all the magnificent words that come to mind to describe the experience as best as possible. We can describe the experience for this woman, too!

I loved, absolutely loved, every single part of my homebirth—it was a portal to power, unwavering trust, transcendence, bliss, and total euphoria. It showed me facets of myself I did not know existed,

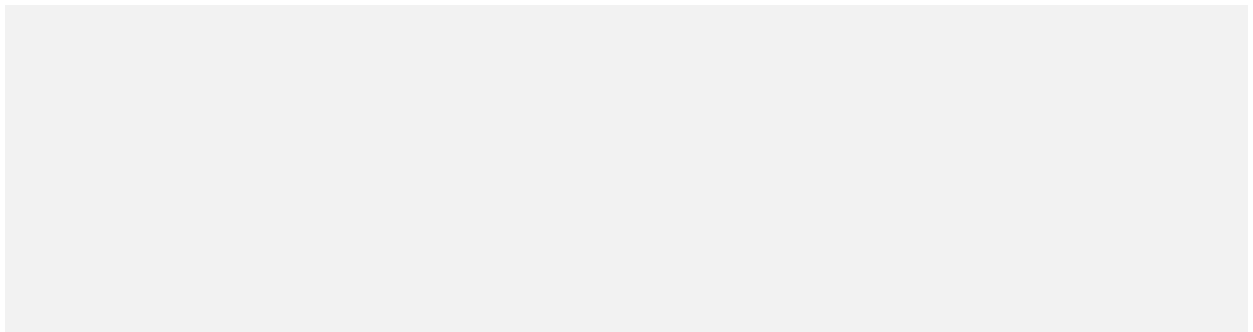


Photo Courtesy Of LouAnne Dunfee

and taught me that I can draw on this strength and power whenever I need it in life. It taught me that I am limitless. It fills me with utter delight to think of all women feeling this way about birth.

I'll just climb down from the couch now. Or join me up here and tell everyone how beautiful birth is, what they have to look forward to, and how giving birth has changed you!

- Alison Howley, *Pathways* #53



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