

## **BIRTH STORIES – Facilitating with Integrative Energy Healing**

**Judith Ann Donaldson**

### **Abstract**

Combining evidence-based prenatal teaching with Integrative Healing Techniques results in healthier and wholistic birthing experiences. The total length of labor is shortened, the experience of labor discomfort is less, thus reducing the need for medical analgesia. There is an increase in the release of endorphins and an optimum position of the foetus prior to birth is facilitated.

Key words: Doula, midwife, birth, Integrative Energy Healing

I am an Australian-trained Midwife and have been practicing in a Family-Centered Birthing Unit in Western Canada for over 3 decades. Over the years I have included Energy Healing in my prenatal teaching and birthing. In Canada I have used by midwifery skills as an obstetric nurse, and as such, have had the responsibility of total care of the client, assessing progress through vaginal examinations and intervening with intravenous therapy, external fetal monitoring and assisting with epidural anesthesia and medications as ordered by a physician. In my work as a Doula, I coach the birthing mother to ease and facilitate her birthing experience. I have consistently witnessed that with this support birthing women requiring less analgesia, having beautiful controlled labors and deliveries with minimal medical intervention and subsequent outcome of self confidence and self worth in the new parents. Fathers and siblings of the baby also experience benefits from these sessions as they are made to feel included.

### **J.**

Pregnancies 4, Births 3

J appeared to be depressed when I met her at about 32 weeks along in her pregnancy. She was a 49 year old woman who had had her first child, a daughter, 22 years previously by Caesarean Section for a Breech presentation. Her second child, a son, was born vaginally 4 years following and was delivered by a midwife. Her third child, a son, who had had a normal delivery also, was then 15 years old .

J's Family Practitioner recommended that she have a doula for this birth as she was very upset about this pregnancy. In fact, J had thought that she was in menopause when she had stopped having menstrual periods. Her grown daughter, who had a young child herself, was also upset as she felt that the joy of her mother being a grandparent was taken away from her. J's 18 year old was not very interested and the 15 year old thought the whole idea of his mother being pregnant was "gross." The only family member who seemed pleased about this pregnancy was J's husband.

I met with J and her husband. She was fatigued and moved slowly and deliberately as we settled in the family living room for prenatal teaching. We discussed the physiology of anticipated changes that she should expect over the weeks prior to going into labor and in the days and hours before labor. We also reviewed what she could expect through labor. I demonstrated exercises she could do to prepare her body for the work she would be doing and we did breathing/ relaxation, body posture and pelvic tilt, as well as Kegel exercises to tone the muscles at the base of the pelvis. I suggested that she visualize a normal healthy birth.

The relaxation component of the private class was to have J. lie comfortably on her side, supported by pillows, as I played a CD of JS Bach's "Air on a G String" with ocean waves in the background. I also did a [biological energy field] alignment as I described a normal healthy labor and birth, thus planting the pattern of a natural birth into her biological energy field. Her husband was included in this visualization.

We talked about other coping skills, different positions to help in the progress of labor, and analgesics that she might be offered. I also explained my role as a labor support person and introduced J and her husband to Integrative Energy Healing. They were both amenable to my working with them in this way when it might seem appropriate during labor. We also talked about her children's reactions and J was able to share her feelings of disappointment.

J phoned me in the early evening a few months later to say that her waters had broken and that she was in early labor. What struck me was her complete change in voice. Instead of the dull, sad, slow speech, I heard a woman who was in control and feeling powerful and strong. The family was now excited and involved in this birth! I met J, her husband and daughter at the hospital where J was in well established labor and coping beautifully. All she needed from me was my presence and encouragement. Her second stage, in which the cervix is dilated and the baby is being pushed out of the uterus, was only sixteen minutes long. All she needed was my hand and a warm cloth on her perineum to guide her infant through the birth canal.

Her daughter was supportive and full of encouragement, as was her husband. Matthew was born after a four hour labor and was a hefty 8 lbs and 6 oz. J had just a small perineal tear. The infant went immediately to the breast and fed well.

A week later, I made a post-partum visit and the babe was well-established at breast-feeding and settling well at night. The 15-year old brother came bouncing in from school, demanding to see his baby brother and plucked Matthew from his mother's arms to give the child a cuddle.

I was blessed to be invited to the couple's wedding anniversary and the Blessing of Matthew six weeks later. The family was thrilled with their menopausal baby and the husband remarked that he had intended to take J to Hawaii for the wedding anniversary, but was instead happily changing diapers.

In following up a year later, I learned that Matthew was still breastfeeding and was a joyful addition to the family.

## **H.**

### Pregnancies 3 Births 2

H was a 40 year old young woman who had had two previous Caesarean Sections, apparently because both of her boys had been 9 lbs at birth. These boys had been born when H was 20 years and 30 years old respectively. H was in a new relationship and had not believed that she could become pregnant. She was in a turmoil when she discovered this pregnancy and after much counselling and meditation, decided to proceed with the pregnancy.

H was a student in Integrative Energy Healing and worked holistically through her pregnancy, maintaining good nutrition, exercise, open family discussions and seeking support from her partner and friends. I was asked to prepare her for birth with up-to-date information on vaginal birth after Caesarean section.

I met with H, her partner and 2 close girl friends who planned on being with her during labor. Our aim was to make this experience as beautiful and holistic as possible within the constraints of a hospital environment.

So that they would all understand, I discussed the physiology of pregnancy, the hormonal and body changes, and what to anticipate in the weeks and the days prior to going into labor. We also talked about danger signs and changes to be aware of. It is my experience that if a woman understands what is happening in her body, she is much less likely to be fearful and thus is more able to allow the birthing hormones to work in concert with her body.

We then talked about ways of supporting H through labor. We practiced a breathing /relaxation technique and I demonstrated pressure points that would help her cope with labor and other coping skills. We also discussed analgesics which might be offered to her. We completed the evening with H relaxing on the treatment table in the room where she did her Integrative Energy Healing with her clients. She had a wedge under her right hip to prevent hypotension and we played background music with the sounds of waves gently breaking on the shore as her husband and two friends worked on her biological energy field. I did a visualization of a beautiful controlled birthing experience, with the intention of imprinting this on her field and removing the memories of [any unpleasant experiences during the two previous Caesarian sections].

I was not present at H's birth because I was working in another hospital across town, but she reported that it was long and hard. She has some amazingly beautiful photos of the experience with her partner and two friends beside her through the whole time. Her third 9 lb son was born vaginally with a perineal tear and began breastfeeding immediately. H feels that the Integrative Energy Healing was an integral part of the success of this labor along with the strong support she received .

## **K.**

### Pregnancies 1, Births 0.

K presented as a healthy first time mother in her early thirties. She is of Japanese origin and married to a Caucasian Canadian. She had had an uneventful pregnancy but was anxious as it was usual in her culture for her mother to be present at her first birth. Due to the cultural differences, her Canadian family was concerned that she would need an advocate for her birthing experience and so I was invited to be her Doula.

Although K was familiar with the concept of Integrative Energy Healing she had had very little experience of it. She was very open to experiencing whatever I had to offer to make her birthing experience as good as it could be.

Several weeks before her due date, I met with K and her husband and we talked about the changes she had experienced so far in her pregnancy, why they had occurred and what to anticipate as the hormones changed over the next few weeks and as she went into labor. We also discussed breastfeeding and ways to prepare for that. She was shown the pelvic tilt - moving her core muscles towards her spine and flattening her back and demonstrated that she understood it, as well as good posture, various birthing positions and how to support the baby in its descent through the pelvis during labor. We talked about Kegel exercises to strengthen the pelvic floor and tone the perineum and their importance, not only in preparation for the second stage of labor, but also as a life-skill to keep the perineum toned. We also discussed ways of coping with labor and some analgesics that she might be offered.

They were eager students with many astute questions. However, by the end of three hours I felt that they were saturated. So I arranged to return the following week to demonstrate and teach breathing/ relaxation and to prepare K for labor with Integrative Energy Healing.

At my next visit, after we had agreed on what to expect for the onset of labor and when to call me, I demonstrated and they both practiced breathing /relaxation until they felt confident about doing that in labor. Having her husband familiar with the breathing techniques allowed him to be confident in supporting his wife during labor. His presence and working with K as needed created a safe environment and source of strength when she would feel most vulnerable. K then lay on my treatment table with a small pillow under her right hip (to prevent supine hypotension) and I did Etheric alignment, a stroking of the biological energy field from above the crown to below the feet while visualizing a beautiful birthing experience. I had her husband involved by having him hold her feet to ground her. We played Chopin's Air on a G String, with waves breaking on the beach, in the background. The purpose of this was to imprint a holistic and healthy birthing experience on her etheric field.

Two days before her due date, at 3.10 am, K's water broke. Her mother had arrived from Japan the day before. At about 4 am, her husband phoned me, reporting the rupture of membranes, but that she did not have too many contractions. I asked them to meet me in at the hospital anyway so that K could be checked .

On admission to hospital at 4.30 am, K was having strong contractions every 3 minutes and her cervix was 80% effaced and 3 cm dilated, well on her way to the 10 cm dilation required for birthing the baby. She was moved into a birthing room and I held her feet.

As she was in very strong labor, she was unable to do anything but breathe with her contractions and relax in between. I did etheric alignment, but she did not want to be touched. She was instructed in the use of Entonox, a mild analgesic (which is 50% Nitrous Oxide and 50% Oxygen) and began using that very effectively.

Most women develop their own ritual in dealing with labor. K's was to focus totally on her breathing while using the Entonox. She lay on her left side and tapped the side of the bedrail when she wanted her husband to give her the Entonox to breathe.

During the labor, I continued to be totally present for her and to do etheric alignment. Because she was progressing quite rapidly, her nurse called the family practitioner in for the birth. The doctor sat at the end of the room and watched, but did not interfere with the labor.

K's mother also sat in the background, present and aware, but allowing the process to unfold as it should. The room was beautifully quiet except for K's strong and rhythmic breathing. K reached full dilatation by 8 am and pushed in second stage for just 40 minutes, delivering her son, weighing 6 lbs 5 oz and with just a small perineal tear. He went to the breast within the first half hour.

At my follow-up visit on Day 4, K looked tired but was doing well. The babe was breastfeeding with a good latch, his mouth and gums surrounding the areola and drawing in the nipple, although he seemed to be nursing almost continually. At 6 weeks he was continuing to breast feed and was sleeping six hours most nights.

K's mother was able to stay for the first four weeks of her transition into motherhood.

## **N and S**

Pregnancies 1 Births 0

N and S commute between Los Angeles and Vancouver as his work is in LA. I met them one week prior to N's due date. He had two other children (in LA) and she had read a lot of books and spoken to many new mothers and so both felt that they had a good understanding of what to expect. However, they wanted a brief overview of Labor and Delivery.

I gave them my prenatal class, including the physiology of labor, what to expect and ways to work with the natural body rhythms, upright positioning during labor and included the breathing techniques which I have found work well. I also suggested methods of pain relief should she need it.

N had experienced Therapeutic Touch as her mother had often done this when N was growing up. I briefed S on the body's energy systems and explained a little of Therapeutic Touch so that he was aware of what I was doing. Then, with my usual music and sounds of water on the seashore, I had N lie down on her side as I visualized a normal, healthy onset of labor for her, and then the progress in labor and delivery of the placenta. I did etheric alignment and mapped a normal healthy labor into her physical, emotional and mental fields.

My Midwife mind was concerned because N's husband was 6 feet 3 inches tall, with shoulders like an ox. N had put on 45 lbs. The fetus had not descended into the pelvis and her uterus was almost pendulous. I let those thoughts go, not wanting to dwell on any negativity.

On September 23<sup>rd</sup> (4 days past her due date), N went into labor at about 7.30 am. She went to the hospital about noon and was 5 cms dilated. She walked and was upright until about 5.30 pm when she felt it had become too much and she requested IV Fentanyl for pain relief. Because her body was swollen with excess fluids (which sometimes happens in pregnancy), it took three trials to get an IV going, by which time her amniotic waters broke and she became fully dilated. She had 15 to 20 minutes of pushing, during which she used Entonox for relief. At about 7.15 pm she delivered a 9 lb 2 ½ oz boy, 23 inches long with no perineal tear. This was a brilliant first labor, lasting only 12 hours.

## In summary

Knowledge of the physiology of labor, along with the support of a partner who has experienced the same teaching, combined with Energy Healing and mapping the Etheric Field facilitates a normal healthy labor and birth. These enable the birthing woman to work in a positive and fulfilling space for the healthiest birthing experience possible for herself and her baby.

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