

Supported Birth Doula Training



*“Helping a woman through labor
and being present at the birth of a baby
can be one of the most satisfying, rewarding,
and amazing experiences of a lifetime.”*

- Cecelia Worth

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Edited and written by Jana Wernor*



*“If a doula were a drug,
it would be unethical
not to use it.”*

- John Kennell

SUPPORTED BIRTH DOULA TRAINING

- I. INTRODUCTION
- II. BIRTH ART
- III. FILMS
- IV. REAL WOMEN
traits / profiles / issues / husbands / predictions
- V. REVIEW OF LABOR & DELIVERY
anatomy & physiology
- VI. YOUR JOB DURING LABOR
a labor support narrative / second stage / techniques & comfort measures /
doing "nothing" / emotional support / know your client / being OPEN /
mothering / advocacy / prodomal & prolonged labor / back labor
- VII. MEDICAL / TECHNICAL
epidurals / helping the woman with an epidural / fetal monitoring /
interventions
- VIII. COMPLICATIONS
induction / ruptured membranes / homeopathy / VBAC / cesarean
- IX. AFTER LABOR
breastfeeding / processing / postpartum
- IX. PRACTICAL
fees & contract / backup / business marketing / pitfalls / processing
- X. SUMMARY

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ON BEING A DOULA

Being a doula is not a profession for someone who wants to be "in charge." A labor assistant is there to serve women and their families, not control their births. She is not there to tell women how to have their babies, but to help them find their own individual ways to go through a process. The doula can lift some of the stumbling blocks along the way. It is not for her to direct the mother but to be a support alongside her, to help provide safe passage for mother and babe. She is not there to try to make the physician or hospital conform to her way of thinking; she is there to support the families' wishes. She should not project her own desires on the couple but should present them with clear, honest information with which they will make their own choices.

It does no good for the labor assistant to want things for the woman if the woman is not willing to do the intense physical and emotional work necessary to give birth.

The doula should trust the parents' ability to make the right decisions for themselves. If events take an unexpected turn, the doula can help the couple see that all is not lost. She can help highlight those issues over which they still have some control or decision-making.

adapted from Special Women, Paulina Perez

"It is terribly easy to tell people how they ought to have their babies and run their lives and bring up their children. To give advice seems such a simple, obvious thing to do when people are confused and muddled, especially when they are eager to be given a formula for success....I have learned that telling people how they ought to behave creates more problems than it solves and all too often means that they are unable to adapt to challenges confronting them, because instead of flexibility they are armed with a series of magic formulae which they hope will work when the going gets difficult.

It is much more valuable to give people information and *self-confidence* so that they can make their own informed choices in terms of the reality they face. To do that it is also important for you to know yourself, be honest about your own feelings and start from inside awareness rather than external mechanical acts."

Women as Mothers: How They See Themselves in Different Cultures by Sheila Kitzinger

TO THE DOULA:

For women in labor much of the birth process is about total permission to be themselves, feeling free to let down emotional and physical barriers, and releasing expectations or measures of performance. Feeling completely safe with another human being creates a kind of freedom that enables a woman to begin to test the limits of her own capacities and to experience internal resources possibly not recognized or risked before. This creates feelings of empowerment and creativity.

In birth preparation, your client's first task is to empty her mind of expectations and judgements that narrow the possibilities for coping with pain, surprises and the hard work of labor. Being "empty" will allow her to receive, moment-by-moment, the messages conveyed by her body, mind and heart.

The laboring woman needs to lose control, to surrender to and trust in the birth process, which takes place without her conscious control. She needs to let go of her mind, to let it happen, to abandon herself to the unknown. She must take it moment by moment and let the involuntary rhythms of her body take over.

Your job, if possible, as her doula, is to make her feel safe enough to do this.

Just like the birthing woman, you cannot afford to approach this experience fatigued, hungry, or physically unprepared. You need to be well-rested, stress-free, well-nourished, and alert to meet your client's needs. As her due date approaches you may want to make some adjustments in your daily schedule so you have more free moments to rest and relax. You'll want to have well-rested nights or include short naps in your daily routine. You need strength, flexibility and stamina. Finally, once with your laboring client you want to use good body mechanics to avoid strain, injury, or fatigued muscles.

You have permission to take a break when necessary from your client to refresh or re-energize yourself.

"The process of childbearing is universal, the basic order of events well-defined, but for each woman it will be an entirely unique experience."



Supported Birth was created by Jana Wernor in 1995. Beginning her training with certification from AAHCC (Bradley Method), she continued on to study academic Midwifery with ACHI (Association for Childbirth at Home Intl.), Advanced Labor Support with Penny Simkin, RPT, Birthing From Within Level One Childbirth Preparation with Pam England, CNM, and many other nursing and midwifery technical courses. She believes that the credibility of the "natural" approach to birthing must be backed by accurate technical knowledge, and that couples do best with a combination of objective information plus positive images and attitudes about a woman's capacity to give birth. No one birth outcome is expected, no one "method" is proclaimed. In addition, Supported Birth believes that handling the pain and intensity of labor without drugs will be made infinitely easier for a couple when an experienced and nurturing female labor companion is there with them for support. Thus Supported Birth's second level is the training of doulas (and teachers), and the promoting of a doula system within American hospitals.

Jana's daughter, Orit, was born naturally after 7 1/2 hours of labor.

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