

Comfort

IN LABOR



When most people think about childbirth, they think of pain. Indeed, there is a great deal of intense sensations and discomfort during labor. Your greatest chance of coping with this is preparing ahead of time. Focused breathing will get you through each contraction, relaxation exercises will help you rest in between, and various labor positions will help you remain an active participant in your baby's birth!

Learning to Relax (adapted from Aviva Romm's *The Natural Pregnancy Book*)

Setting the Stage... • Find a comfortable, quiet place where you'll be uninterrupted.)This means put your phone on do not disturb!) • Put on quiet peaceful music to help create a relaxed mood • If you have insomnia or find it difficult to relax try these techniques: First take a warm bath and drink a cup of your favorite relaxing herb tea (a chamomile and lavender combination is excellent). • If you are a restless type, do yoga or even take a brisk walk. This can help relieve your body of excess energy. Exercise is also a great way to relieve muscular tension, and relaxation is a perfect followup to any exercise. • Empty your bladder before you begin so you're not interrupted by the need to urinate for at least thirty minutes. • Proper yourself adequately with pillows so that you don't become uncomfortable lying on your back. These exercises can also be done in a chair or lying on your side.

Happy Baby Breathing Close your eyes and imagine your baby snuggled happily in your pelvis, surrounded by a golden-pink glow. Take a deep breath in through your nose and imagine your breath going down through your body to your womb and swirling around baby.. Then let it rise slowly back up through your chest, through your throat, and back out of your nose or your mouth. Become familiar with deep breathing because it is a great habit to use to get extra oxygen to baby and mom during labor! **Progressive Relaxation** Close your eyes and take deep gentle breaths, slowly and gently exhaling. With each exhale, work your way up your body, tightening, then relaxing each muscles, starting with the toes. Imagine that your breath as fingers that are massaging away areas of tension. Pay special attention to your pelvic, ab, and buttock muscles, as we tend to hold tension there.



Spend time outside! Breathe fresh air. Feel the warmth of the sun. Try to spend at least 30 minutes a day out of doors.

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Relaxing in the midst of chaos Address any fears that you have. It's okay to be afraid. Embrace it, and let it go. Try to have time each day to sit quietly, close your eyes, and take in all the sounds around you. Mentally hug each sound (your toddler fussing, the dog yapping, the garbage truck beeping) while taking a deep breath, then breathe out, blowing it away. While you do this, feel your muscles relaxing. Once all of that is out of the way, you can address your internal white noise. What are you afraid of? Are you afraid that your body won't open big enough to birth a baby? Take a deep breath in, and blow that away, replacing it with a positive affirmation. Are you worried that you won't be able to breastfeed your baby? Take a deep breath and breathe it in, then blow it away with a positive affirmation. Each time, relaxing your muscles even more. To really become an expert at relaxing and letting go, try doing this in the middle of the mall. ;) Being well practiced in this will REALLY help when you are in labor

Positive Affirmations Be aware of the messages that you are speaking to yourself. Catch thoughts of fear or worry and replace them with truth.. Prepare Bible verses or birth affirmations ahead of time that you feel will encourage you during your hardest work ever. Put them on notecards.

I WAS MADE TO GIVE BIRTH

I am strong.

B R E A T H E

| soften, | open, | release

MY BODY KNOWS HOW TO GIVE

BIRTH

Positions for Birth



You can help facilitate a faster and easier birth by staying mobile and upright for as long as possible!

Walking is a good thing to do throughout active labor. When a contraction begins, take a deep breath in, lean forward onto something (like a table or counter top or your bed), bend your knees and glue your bottom to the wall behind you, wagging your tail. Learn to move in a slow rhythm. This is your birth dance.

As the contractions get more intense, your head might get lower to the surface you are leaning onto and your bottom will go higher. Eventually you may find yourself squatting, directing all your energy down. This sends a message to your baby: **DOWN and OUT!**

There are many ways to find your rhythm and keep moving during labor. You can walk, rock, or sway. Yoga balls are a great catalyst for movement also.



Walking



Rocking



Swaying

Img Source: Comfort in Labor by Penny Simkin

Change positions, and change them frequently during transition, which is the most intense (and shortest) phase of labor.



Kneeling over a birth ball



Standing and leaning forwards



Sitting backwards on a chair

Image Source: Comfort in Labor by Penny Simkin



Many women get a lot of comfort by laboring in water. You can purchase a birth pool or use your own tub or shower.

Counter pressure and the double hip squeeze (pictured here) are invaluable tools for labor massage



Image source: Simkin

References:

Simkin, Penny. *Comfort in Labor*. Childbirth Connection.

www.childbirthconnection.org

Romm, A. (2014) *The natural pregnancy book* (3rd ed.). New York: Ten Speed Press.

All other photos belong to me (they are me!)

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