

WHAT CAN WE ALL LEARN FROM BIRTH TRAUMA?

When we talk about birth trauma it can seem like a daunting prospect to any expectant parents. This sheet is designed to help you navigate the birth of your baby in a way that will minimise risks for trauma and will hopefully give you some ideas about planning your birth.

There are certain factors known to improve a parent's satisfaction when it comes to giving birth:

Receiving continuity of care from a midwife, feeling in control, being with baby in the hour following birth, having a home birth, having a trusted and experienced birth partner & giving birth in an upright position

Think about how you could incorporate these into your pregnancy and birth. Could you write a birth plan to increase your feelings of control over the birth? Perhaps including your ideal birth scenario, as well as a plan b, c & d to include other situations that may occur, such as induction or c-section? Is there anyone who could support you during your birth?

Knowledge is power and it is key when it comes to birth. However, this notion can seem overwhelming with reams of information at our fingertips. Therefore, try looking to alternative resources- such as The Positive Birth Movement Meetings, finding a Birth Buddy through Tell Me A Good Birth Story or attending classes like pregnancy yoga, relaxation or hypnobirthing. These kinds of personal support can offer a wealth of wisdom that simply cannot be bestowed from a book.

If you know that you have any specific needs, such as gestational diabetes or high blood pressure, but you are keen to birth in a particular way, ask your midwife if you can have an appointment with a consultant midwife to put into place a specific care plan for birth. This could include options that are not normally recommended for people in your specific situation but that you feel are an important part of your journey to a positive birth, e.g. a water birth or a home birth.

It is important to understand that you are always in control. When it comes to any decisions that need to be made, your care team can make recommendations but ultimately you are the one that decides what happens next. This means that if you don't want a vaginal examination, you don't have one or if you don't want a continuous monitor strapped to your bump, you don't have one.

You always have a choice. If you are unsure about what choice to make, use the following acronym to help you formulate questions for your care team before agreeing or declining:

B- What are the benefits?

R- What are the risks?

A- Are there any alternatives?

I - What is my intuition telling me?

N- What happens if we do nothing?

WHAT CAN I DO RIGHT NOW?

If you are pregnant right now, remember it is your body, your birth and your baby.

Foster a sense of ownership over your body throughout your pregnancy, look to others for support, learn how your body works to give birth, practice the skill of relaxation. Check out the Birthrights and AIMS websites to learn about your rights and choices. All of these things will help you on your journey to a positive birth.

Birth isn't something that we should be afraid of, if you are feeling particularly anxious about it, then speak to your midwife and ask if there are any local resources to support you.

Talk to friends and family members about their births, read a variety of birth stories, watch videos of different types of birth.

Prepare a birth plan which involves not just your ideal plan a but also what you would like to happen in different eventualities. Discussing this with your birth partner and care providers can also help you think about your options and let them know what you might need from them in different situations.

Think about how you cope with new situations now. What helps you feel safe? Use this information to help you think about what you might need.

Make a postnatal plan too! To ensure you have support throughout your early parenting journey

FURTHER READING

The Positive Birth Book, Milli Hill

Your No Guilt Pregnancy Plan, Rebecca Schiller

<http://www.tellmeagoodbirthstory.com/find-a-birth-buddy>

<https://www.positivebirthmovement.org/groups/>

<http://www.birthrights.org.uk/resources/factsheets/>