

Echo



Hypnosis can help relieve birthing worries

No one tells you how bad childbirth really is until you've been through it. It's one of those unwritten rules. While you await your bundle of joy, others just tell you it's all worth it. That's until after you've had your own. Then all the gory details about other people's labour come flooding out.

That could be a thing of the past if a growing method of birthing catches on. Already big in America, HypnoBirthing is now over here. It is a form of hypnosis, based on the theory that if you tell your body it's not going to hurt, then it won't.

The system is a coaching method teaching mothers to work with their body instead of against it. This involves learning a method of breathing, moving away from the traditional panting and pushing idea. Alison Bird is a clinical hypnotherapist who runs HypnoBirthing courses. Based in Colchester, she recently worked with a couple from Southend.

"It's very logical," says Alison. "The whole process is teaching people to trust their bodies to come away from the idea there has to be pain and to relax deeply. It's about returning birth to a natural thing, not a medical event." Alison says it all boils down to what she describes as "the fear tension pain philosophy". "If you're scared you tense up," she says. "When you expect pain, your muscles start working against each other. I'm not saying it's going to be pain free, but most people report they didn't have any pain relief."

Joanne Bury and her husband Chris, have two children. Beth, and five week old Connor. The couple, who live in Northumberland Crescent, Southend, had a conventional birth with Beth, but chose to use HypnoBirthing for Connor's arrival. "I had an OK birth in hospital with Beth, but I wasn't very keen on it," explains Joanne. "So we decided we wanted a home birth with our second."

Joanne is studying to be a hypnotherapist. Her friend found something about HypnoBirthing on the internet and sent it to her. After her own internet search, Joanne found Alison and signed up.

"The classes were really quite open discussions about the birth and what we wanted, as well as teaching Chris how to hypnotise me," explains Joanne. If you've got an image in your head of HypnoBirthing involving someone dangling a pocket watch, then you're way off the mark. "It's just about Chris talking to me," says Joanne. "We got so good he'd just have to put his hand across my face and I'd be gone." One of the advantages of the method is the father gets to play a more active part in the delivery. Connor's arrival in the world was totally natural, aided by breathing rather than drugs. "The birth was fine," says the proud mum. "We didn't even consider pain relief. When I had Beth as soon as I went into labour the first thing I asked for was pain relief. This time was totally different. It's not like it was totally pain free, but I'd say the contractions were more uncomfortable than painful. It was only in the last 30 seconds I had some pain."

Connor was born after an eight-hour labour, weighing 6lbs 12oz. Joanne and Chris noticed it wasn't just them who enjoyed a more relaxed birth. "He was really cool when he came out, Beth was a screaming banshee," remembers Chris. Joanne and Chris encountered their fair share of cynics. Not just about the HypnoBirth, but about having a home birth too. Says Joanne, "You have to be quite strong and stay determined you're going to do it your own way."

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