



# Chiropractic Newsletter

## Well-Being

### It's Time to Change the Narrative Around Birth

In our quest for natural, physiological, conscious, and empowered birth experiences, we often find ourselves feeling lost. Despite our best intentions, we may end up disappointed with the outcome, feeling shame, and questioning why we couldn't birth the way others seem to. Too often, we assume that if we are just "conscious" enough, "natural" enough, or simply "let it happen," we'll achieve the perfect natural birth. This unrealistic expectation leaves many feeling as though they've failed.

Who doesn't yearn for a better birth experience? I wholeheartedly believe that you and your baby deserve a journey where you feel empowered, free from fear, and equipped with the skills for an amazing birth. We should consider saying no to navigating labor and delivery blindly. Instead, we need to open our eyes to the potential of a truly transformative birth through "skills-based" labor and delivery methods. Approaches that go beyond conventional techniques by embracing conscious birthing while empowering you with knowledge, choices, and the physical and mental strategies required for each step of this miraculous process.

I believe in the power of knowledge and preparation. Knowledge is key, and practice of that knowledge is power! When we think about labor and delivery, preparing for childbirth is like gearing up for a marathon; you wouldn't just wing it on the big day. We should embark on the journey of our baby's birth with confidence and skill, equipped with the tools to navigate this incredible experience. By reducing fear, understanding the birth process, and practicing skills-based birthing methods, we can reduce fear and build a sense of control and confidence, resulting in a more positive and empowered birth.

Over my years of teaching birth skills, I have found that one



of the most powerful deterrents to a beautiful birth experience is fear and its effect on the vagus nerve. When women approach their impending labor from a place of fear, their bodies remain in a heightened state of fight or flight, and the vagus nerve cannot engage the "brakes" on the sympathetic nervous system. Fear inhibits the emergence of the "rest and dilate" state that is essential for a smooth birth. I have had the pleasure of witnessing the difference in women who enter labor confidently, with a solid understanding of each stage of labor, knowing what to expect and what to do, and who have partners who know how to skillfully help during the process.

The Skillful Birthing program was born out of a desire to help women navigate labor with greater ease and less fear. I observed that too many women had lost confidence in their ability to birth naturally, despite their strong desire for natural and conscious birthing experiences. Over 20 years ago, after experiencing childbirth myself and drawing from my background as an athlete, I recognized the need to help women and their partners prepare for labor and delivery with the same mental, physical, and emotional skills and focus used to prepare for any other physically intense event. It became clear to me that there was an incredible gap in training for labor and delivery.

Using my knowledge as a perinatal chiropractor, birth coach, and mama, I developed knowledge-based, hands-

on, skills-based methods that help women understand their bodies, how to work with their babies, and how to handle whatever may come at them during labor and delivery. With this preparation, women and birth partners face the big moment with readiness and the assurance that they have the tools needed for an incredible journey. It has been a privilege to see hundreds of women navigate labor and delivery with confidence, skill, and ease.

Skillful Birthing is one of a few birth preparation courses that not only helps decrease fear but also teaches methods for managing discomfort while providing the essential skills to support both mother and baby through the process. It goes beyond conventional childbirth education by empowering women with knowledge, choices, and the physical strategies needed for each stage of labor and delivery. Women who embrace skills-based birthing reduce fear and uncertainty, resulting in a more relaxed, informed, and actively involved birthing experience.

My goal in bringing Skillful Birthing to the online world is to provide families with a blueprint for entering the grand event of childbirth with confidence and skill. Just as athletes hone their abilities, birthing parents can equip themselves with the knowledge and techniques to navigate this transformative experience. Skillful Birthing takes physiological birth to a new level. Birth will happen to all pregnant women regardless of preparation. But you don't need to let it "just happen" to have the birth you desire. You can be an active participant in your labor and delivery process, working with your baby to create your desired outcome.

Skillful Birthing is designed for both the birthing woman and their support partner to attend together, ensuring a shared understanding and mastery of essential skills for the big day. It's not just about individual knowledge; the focus is on equipping both partners with techniques and skills to act synergistically, creating a harmonious and empowered

experience as you bring your extraordinary baby into the world.

### What does skills-based birthing look like?

- Decreasing FEAR of labor and birth
- Feeling EMPOWERED to make CHOICES
- Getting the KNOWLEDGE you need about the process
- LEARNING why pain occurs in labor and delivery
- DECREASING PAIN through relaxation and ACTIVE passiveness
- Learning how to DEAL with each STAGE of labor
- Becoming PROFICIENT at knowing your PELVIS, joints, and soft tissues
- PRACTICING body SKILLS to help your BABY navigate
- KNOWING what to DO when unexpected challenges arise
- Gaining the CONFIDENCE needed to EMBRACE the process of birthing your baby
- Learning birth POSITIONS and when to use them
- EASING your baby through the BIRTH canal by taking CONTROL of your VAGUS nerve
- Learning EFFECTIVE PUSHING skills for birth
- BEING PREPARED and an active participant in the birth of your baby

Knowledge is key; practice is power. It's time to change the narrative...Are you ready to have a better birth experience for you and your baby?

—Cheryl van der Mark, DC

*Pathways to Family*

*Wellness Magazine Issue #84*

