



# Chiropractic Newsletter

## Discover Chiropractic

### Hold on, Don't Push!

Imagine you are pregnant, you've been in labor for 10 hours, and finally you are dilated to 10cm. "Hold on," says the nurse, "Don't push yet, we have to wait until the doctor arrives, just hang on." But you feel the baby there, and your body feels like pushing; how can you hold back?

What if the opposite happens? You are checked and told that since you are now at 10cm, your body is ready to give birth. So, you start pushing. And you keep pushing. And three hours later, you are still trying to push out a baby with no results.

Both are very common scenarios in a laboring patient, with the mom listening to the doctors and nurses telling them what to do instead of listening to their own body. How often have you heard this story? While this is not a normal birth scenario, it is certainly common.

In either scenario, the woman is doing what someone is telling her to do instead of listening to her own body. This was the scenario of Gretchen, who, 17 years ago, while pregnant with her first child, labored at home and by the time she got to the hospital and was checked, she was 9 cm dilated. She wanted a natural birth and stayed at home, as long as she could to facilitate that process. After 30 minutes of being in the hospital, she was told she was 10 cm dilated and was told to start to push the baby out. So, she tried. She got on all fours, she hung from a birth bar, she bent over the bed, she labored in the water, she tried every position possible to help the baby come out, yet nothing was happening. She never asked for an epidural or Pitocin, she wanted the baby to come out on his own. After more than three hours of pushing, the doctors told her they were going to use vacuum extraction or forceps to pull the baby out since there were high levels of meconium. Gretchen and Nate decided together that they wanted to do a cesarean in hopes that it would be the least invasive to the baby. She was devastated. The natural birth

went out the window.

What she learned that day is that her body wasn't ready to push; she didn't feel like pushing, yet she did because the doctors told her she was ready. That is like telling someone to head to the bathroom and go poop on demand. Does that ever happen? Or do you go when you are ready to go? In birth, a woman should be allowed to be in tune with her body and push when she feels like pushing, allowing her to honor her body's intuition.

**Listening to our intuition is that deep feeling that doesn't always have reasoning or logic. It just feels right.** It's that feeling inside that comes from within that we all experience, but often ignore because our educated mind gets in the way; the educated brain that "knows" but doesn't really know. In this case, being told to push when she wasn't ready left Gretchen in a position of pushing for a long time, which made her birth much harder. As a first-time mom, she didn't know better. She trusted those "in charge."

For the birth of Gretchen's second child, she wanted a vaginal birth after cesarean (VBAC) and this time planned a home birth (HBAC). "My midwife let me push when I felt ready, yet despite that, I was a bit anxious that I would be stuck pushing for a long time again, so I just labored in the water and let my body do what felt right. I didn't actively push, I just let the contractions do the work," said Gretchen. After a few hours, she birthed a 9 lb. 2oz. baby boy. Having her VBAC at home birth was very empowering and gave her the healing she needed.

Eight months later she was pregnant again, and this time she felt much more confident. She trusted that her body knew what to do and when to push. She was 10 cm when checked for the first time, but it was still over two hours before she felt her body wanting to push. When the urge

to push came, it only took about 20 minutes and out came a 10 lb. baby boy, again at home.

And just two years after that, Gretchen got pregnant again, this time with twins. Feeling confident in her birthing abilities and surrounded by a strong supportive birth team, she again chose to do a home birth. As she got closer to her due date, they determined that one baby could be breech, which is common with twins. Gretchen had no fear, she had a supportive birth team and knew that breech was a variation of normal.

At 39 weeks, Gretchen went into labor in the early morning. It was very fast and after only about an hour of contractions, her first daughter was born into her dad's arms at 4:32 a.m. weighing 7lbs. 5oz. The birth team arrived shortly after as she began breastfeeding and bonding with her baby girl. At 5:52 a.m., about an hour and a half later the second little girl was born footling breech, weighing 8 lbs. "My midwives let me do what my body needed. Each of my five babies were so different, but listening to what my body felt was key to birthing naturally," Gretchen said. "There was no pressure to birth the second baby; we waited until she and I were ready."

Often in hospitals, twins are born just minutes apart due to cesarean section or the use of Pitocin to force out baby #2. Being at home allowed Gretchen time to rest after the birth of the first daughter, giving time to recover a bit and build up strength for the second baby's arrival. Gretchen listened to her body, breathed into her contractions, and waited until she felt the need to push for the second baby. Gretchen became more empowered with each subsequent birth. She gained confidence and control over her involvement in the labor process, trusting her body to guide her through labor at her own pace.

Gretchen's story highlights the importance of trusting one's body and gut instincts, especially in childbirth. It contrasts

with the conventional medical approach where women are often told to "push" or "wait" based on the doctor's or nurse's timing. It shows how a more intuitive approach that prioritizes a woman's natural biological signals and instincts leads to empowerment over fear.

In this story, we see a clear disconnect between what medical professionals advised and what her body was signaling. Despite being at 10 cm, she didn't feel ready to push, but was encouraged to do so anyway, which resulted in fatigue, frustration, and labor complications. Her experience illustrates the challenges many women face in hospital births, where they may feel pressured to follow protocols rather than listening to their own instincts.

As a chiropractor and mother, I want to say how our gut instinct is so powerful. When the educated brain is being told one thing and our body knows it should be doing something else, we should be listening to our body and our gut instinct. Does your intuition do you wrong? Whether it's birthing your baby, nurturing your baby or making personal health decisions, truly understanding your gut instinct is so important.

Families should have the autonomy to birth the way they feel is best for their body, rather than feeling rushed or dictated by external medical guidelines. Listening to one's gut, particularly in something as primal as childbirth, should be given more importance. This principle extends beyond childbirth to decisions about breastfeeding and personal health, reinforcing the critical role that our instinct plays in navigating life's most significant moments.

*-Pamela Stone, DC*

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