



Hypnosis for Childbirth: What is it, and why does it work?

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Mention "Labor and Delivery" to an expectant mom in her last trimester, and chances are good that her heart will begin to race, her mind floods with concern and in some cases, she panics. She knows that the day is coming when a force much bigger than her will take over, and her body will govern itself completely. For some women, this is a very fearful event, but for Hypno-moms, it is merely an exciting challenge.

These wise women use hypnosis to eliminate fear and pain from the birthing experience. In the past, the word "hypnosis" conjured up images of stage hypnotists re-creating Elvis, or mesmerizing others into embarrassing situations. Now it is common for hypnosis to be used therapeutically in the practice of medicine, in creating anesthesia for surgeries and dental work, and for personal therapy sessions. Even so, there are many misconceptions regarding hypnosis that can dissuade those contemplating this powerful tool.

Here are a Few FACTS about Hypnosis:

- * All hypnosis is *self-hypnosis*; the hypnotherapist is only a guide. A person chooses to enter into a hypnotic state, elects to stay in hypnosis, and decides to come out at will.
- * Approximately 90-95% of the population can be hypnotized. Willingness, belief and motivation have great influence over ability to be hypnotized.
- * During hypnosis you are neither asleep nor unconscious, and will always "come out" when you wish.
- * Strong-minded people more easily enter into hypnosis...the opposite of what is commonly assumed.
- * You cannot be made to divulge information or do anything against your will while in hypnosis.
- * Hypnosis is a pleasant way to relax and direct your inner mind to the positive aspects of circumstances.

What about Childbirth Hypnosis Classes?

When learning how to use hypnosis for childbirth, you are taught how the uterine muscles work efficiently together like they were designed to, when the body is completely relaxed. The depth of relaxation necessary can easily be achieved with hypnosis. Women learn these skills in classes, and practice them at home every day until the baby arrives. Birth Partners have a very integral role in the preparation process: listening to the scripts on CD, reading the handouts and guiding the mother into deep relaxation with hypnosis scripts. Birth Partners are an invaluable part of the birth process since they help the mother to focus and concentrate, as well as offering emotional and physical support. Other aspects of Birth should be covered in hypnosis for birth classes as well, such as: Nutrition, Exercise, Staying Low Risk, Fear Clearing Sessions, Birth Plans and Important Consumer Issues.

Fear and Expectation...

In other cultures, childbirth is regarded as a natural, normal event in a woman's life. Other women support the birthing woman, and young girls are often present to witness the event. In this way, birth is celebrated and honored. These young girls then grow up with the belief system that birth is a positive event and their expectations of childbirth reflect their attitude. As a result, their births are similar to their predecessors...without pain and fear. They develop a positive expectation of childbirth. In our culture, it is very much the opposite. For many generations we have been told that delivering a baby will be untold hours of painful, agonizing work, to be faced with fear and trepidation. We have all heard stories from well-meaning friends and family that sent shivers up our spines, and so the legacy continues. We experience pain in childbirth, in part, because we very much expect to!

In hypnosis for childbirth classes, the expectant woman is taught to surround herself with only positive people and messages, to create a positive new view of childbirth and the expectation that her birthing will be a beautiful, peaceful experience. Fear clearing sessions are integral to this process, as they allow the mother to address fears, work through possible solutions and then release them. Fear during birth can create tension, which creates pain, then more fear, and the cycle continues. Fear and anxiety can also create adrenaline production in the body, causing birth to stall or become dysfunctional, a common reason

for Cesarean section surgical birth. Freedom from fear can make a significant difference in the birthing experience. By learning and practicing hypnosis, hypno-mothers are able to enter into self-hypnosis instantly, and create their own natural anesthesia whenever and wherever they need it. This is important, since any drugs taken by a laboring woman can be detrimental to the process and to her baby. She has total control over her body, and is an active participant in her birth process. She is aware of everything around her, and as birth progresses, she naturally goes deeper inside herself, trusting in her body's innate ability to give birth with ease and comfort. The hypno-mom programs her own mind to give herself exactly what she needs.

Too Good to Be True?

Can women give birth without experiencing pain? They can, and there are many variables in birthing that can affect the outcome, and couples need to have a positive and realistic view of hypnosis for childbirth. Each pregnant woman and her partner must take responsibility for the choices they make while pregnant and how they can affect the dynamics and outcome. Many a wonderful birth has been thwarted by not making positive, informed choices, and yet these issues are easily learned and addressed in a consumer-oriented childbirth class like Hypnobabies.

Without a doubt, all hypno-moms are much calmer and more relaxed during birth (which automatically creates more comfort), while receiving powerful post-hypnotic suggestions to actually eliminate pain and fear. How effective is this? Statistics vary for each method of childbirth hypnosis training, depending on the length and number of classes/sessions and the skill and experience of the hypno-teacher, as well as the dedication and compliance to the program of each birthing couple. Ideally, childbirth hypnosis instructors will have backgrounds in both hypnotherapy and preparation for childbirth education, and will be able to address each woman's personal needs.

Statistics: The following are statistics for the **“Hypnobabies” method** only (a 5 week course, 15 hours of instruction) Other hypnosis for birthing methods do not offer such in depth instruction, and many do not track results.

- 1) Pain-free, entire birthings – 70-75%. Women who report that they felt nothing but pressure.
- 2) Pain-free until transition – 10-15%. Pressure only, until the 10-60 minute transitional period, with mild to intense degrees of sensation or discomfort thereafter. (Most of these women described the discomfort as “very manageable”.)
- 3) Pain-free until “active” labor - 10%, with mild to intense degrees of sensation thereafter. This group can have any number of things affect their birth experiences; labor complications, emotional issues, lack of support, or they simply did not do their homework! (20 - 35 minutes a day). Hypnosis for childbirth won't help a couple that has not done the practicing involved in preparing for their baby's birth.

All women using the Hypnobabies method of childbirth hypnosis reported that Deep Relaxation and Fear Clearing were invaluable to them during their births.

Benefits of Using Hypnosis for Childbirth:

- * Fewer drugs or no drugs at all means less risk of side effects on mother and baby.
- * Shorter labors - resistance of the birthing muscles as a response to pain is minimized or eliminated.
- * An awake, energized mother, due to total relaxation throughout the birthing process.
- * A calm, peaceful birthing environment.
- * Breech and posterior babies can be turned using hypnosis.
- * Fewer interventions and complications during labor.
- * Babies who are better sleepers and nursers due to fewer drugs in their systems.

It is important to remember that all drugs given to a woman in labor cross the placenta (it is not a filter or a barrier), and reach the baby in less than 5 minutes, in adult proportions. Using hypnosis techniques can help avoid them. Deep relaxation has even helped many a nervous birth partner to cope. They experience hypnosis in class as well as on their own CD! In addition, the skills you both learn for relaxation and hypnosis are tools you can use for the rest of your life.

Hypnobabies Hypnosis for Childbirth Course Content:

Prior to the first class you will receive your— “Painless Childbirth/Special Place” CD.

Class 1: Creating Positive Expectations of Childbirth— How Hypnosis for Childbirth Works, How the Mind works and the Mind/Body Connection, What Hypnosis is and is NOT, Demonstrations of Hypnosis, How Fear Affects Comfort and Length of Your Birthing, Gifts Your Body Gives You, Communication Exercises, the “Deepening” CD, and the "Learning Self-Hypnosis" Script.

Class 2: Staying Healthy and Low Risk— Importance of diet in pregnancy, Nutritional Guidelines, Avoidance of harmful substances, Comfort in Pregnancy, Sleep and Relaxation Positions, Stages of Birthing, Baby Sensitivity/Prenatal

Bonding, Prenatal Exercises to Prepare You for Birth, and the "Creating Anesthesia" Script.

Class 3: Your Birthing Choices/Planning Your Beautiful Birth— "Dateline" Video, Options in Birthing, Consumer Issues and Positive Communication, Creating the Birth Plan of your Dreams, Touring Your Place of Birth, Artificial Induction and Natural Induction Techniques, Natural Progress of Labor, and the "Hypnotic Childbirth # 1" Script.

Class 4: Your Birthing Time Begins!— The Onset of Birthing/Signs of Birth Beginning, How to Time Birthing Waves, When to Go to Your Baby's Birthplace, What is Measured in an Internal Exam, How to Handle Special Circumstances, Slow or Stalled Births, How the Birth Partner Can Create a Safe Birthing Environment, Benefits of a Professional Birth Assistant/Hypno-doula, the "Birth Partner's" CD, and the "Hypnotic Childbirth # 2" Script.

Class 5: Enjoy Your Beautiful Birthing!— Review of classes 1-4, Late First Stage/Transition or "Transformation", Trusting Your Body and Your Baby, Positive Birthing Partners, Fear Clearing, Exhale Pushing, Positions for Birthing, Birth of the Placenta, an In-depth Birthing Rehearsal, the "Birth Guide" CD, and the "Visualize/Create Your Birthing" Script.