

*Birth as Initiation*

Pregnancy – John “Doc” Edwards, D.C., CACCP  
Pathways #42, page 34



**Talking Points**

- ❖ Dr. Edwards sets a scene to open this article, a sort of dream-like state in which you are surrounded by those who love you, as you enter into some sort of “rite of passage.” He discusses the various moments in our lives when we step from “one state into a new way of being.”
- ❖ As a chiropractor mainly working with pregnant and new moms, Dr. Edwards sees the way birth as become an “outcome-driven event.” This article attempts to shine a light on the idea that “every birth is an initiation for both the mother and the child; there is a transmutation from one state to another that can never be undone.” (37)
- ❖ In preparation for birth, prenatal chiropractors like Dr. Edwards help balance pregnant women’s pelvises and clear their nervous systems that drive labor, so women can experience “safer, more comfortable natural deliveries.” But Dr. Edwards felt he was missing something. His C-section rates were much lower than the county average, but still higher than he had hoped. And he felt he was failing his pregnant and birthing patients.
- ❖ Our modern world has moved the experience of birth away from our daily lives. As Dr. Edwards notes, most women will not have seen a litter of puppies born, let alone a human birth. Our only experience of birth may be a television drama, with quick edits and false impressions of the birth experience. Many women entering the experience of pregnancy and birth have little awareness of their options.
- ❖ Dr. Edwards explains the importance of a doula in helping women experience birth more consciously and presently. A conversation with a doula friend, Chris, caused Dr. Edwards to re-think his own approach to helping women’s bodies prepare for childbirth.
- ❖ Chris taught Dr. Edwards that there’s a difference between expecting or visualizing a desired outcome and preparing for the process of birth physically, mentally and emotionally in order to be fully present in the process. “Most pregnant mothers operate from either a place of

conscious thought or subconscious emotion. We encourage you to go to a state of mindfulness, a connection with the broader consciousness that you get to through rehearsal and by acting on clear, unmuddled messages from your intuition.” (37)

- ❖ The important take-away for Dr. Edwards was that “in order for the body to do the work that comes naturally, it needs to receiving clear messages.” (37) Research has consistently shown that there is “no separation between your thoughts and your physiology” (37) *This would be a great article to discuss in tandem with Dan Siegel’s article – Relationship Science and Being Human.*
- ❖ Clear your fears, your worries, and be present with all delivery outcomes before labor begins. “Doing it literally impacts your cells’ and hormones’ ability to function the way they should.” (37)
- ❖ Through conceptualizing birth as an initiation, one where women need to be physically, emotionally and mentally present, Dr. Edwards re-defined his own “job as a chiropractor to unlock the wisdom that’s lain dormant within her—to integrate not only her neurology, but allow for the smooth dissolution of her sense of separate individuality into the expanse of divine consciousness in preparation for her initiation into new motherhood.” (37)
- ❖ With this concept, Dr. Edwards reminds us that “a chiropractic adjustment really can be that big. This is the preparation work every expecting mother should engage in at least three months prior to her baby’s arrival. The birth is going to happen to you; how you choose to prepare for it is entire up to you.” (37)

## Resources

Full references for each article are available at <http://pathwaystofamilywellness.org/references.html>

Dr. Edwards refers to Pam England’s online and print resources - <http://www.birthingfromwithin.com/>

A fascinating blog post reviewing “Birth as a Shamanistic Experience” on TalkBirth - <http://talkbirth.me/2013/09/10/thesis-tidbits-birth-as-a-shamanic-experience/>

## Responses

*Heather – I have had two babies (now 7 and 3). Reading Dr. Edwards article rings so true to my experience, and I will say that my second birth was worlds apart from my first. But I will also say that I was rationally aware of many of the points Dr. Edwards is discussing here with my first, but I just had absolutely no idea how to implement this present-ness during birth. I was far more prepared for my second birth because I not only had the rational understanding that I should be prepared and present (physically, emotionally and mentally), but I also had some actual physical, emotional and mental experience that allowed this knowledge to become internal wisdom. How can we, as a community of parents and soon-to-be parents, support first-time mothers through this initiation period?*