

Birth Is The Key

Birth – Diane Wiessinger, M.S., IBCLC
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Talking Points

Diane was an animal behaviorist before she became a renowned lactation consultant and La Leche League Leader. Because of this background, Diane was invited to prepare a talk on the breastfeeding and mothering lessons we can learn from other mammals. Intended to be a light, amusing talk about how other mammal babies find the nipple on their own, find solid food when they are ready, and wean without an organized plan, the subject matter took an unexpected and dark turn, all of its own accord. Diane began to discover:

- What happens when other mammal mothers are deprived of their chosen place, time, and sensations of birth?
 - What if the resulting birth is too hard... or too easy?
 - To what extent might this information shed light on our own mothering experiences?
- ❖ This culture has seen breastfeeding as being complicated and that most mothers can't do it. Why is this? As more research is being done we're realizing – human newborns are just like every other mammal newborn: They know what to do.
 - ❖ Sometimes mothers need to remember they don't breastfeed; babies breastfeed.
 - ❖ Why does it seem, really, that breastfeeding is still complicated and mothers are still struggling to establish healthy breastfeeding relationships with their newborns? How do you think breastfeeding relates back to the birth?
 - ❖ During birth, when the mother has been receiving medications, an epidural for example, the baby also receives the effect of the drug, sometimes up to a month. This can create problems for the baby when it comes time to nurse. The baby may not be able to recognize or attach to the breast, suckle well, and may even have problems bonding properly.
 - ❖ Birth is hard work but you were born to do it and you were built to do it! Birth is an event you want to experience, not be a spectator at.
 - ❖ UNICEF and the WHO realized back in 1990 that breastfeeding was doing just fine in places where women gave birth at home with midwives. It was in the hospitals where breastfeeding was in trouble. Why do you think this was?

- ❖ “Take birth away from women, and we take breastfeeding away from babies.” (28) A mother can always get breastfeeding back but sometimes it’s harder and more painful than the labor she tried to avoid.
- ❖ When giving birth naturally our bodies naturally give us a break after each contraction, our bodies also respond by producing hormones to help block the pain. Our babies are also gifted with these breaks and hormones to help them cope naturally.
- ❖ The hormones we get during birth are also present in our breast milk so when the baby nurses, he/she receives them there.
- ❖ Mothers and babies are flooded with oxytocin at the moment of birth. This hormone helps the mother and baby fall in love with each other. When it’s not present because of a medicated birth the experience can be flat, it doesn’t feel real, as if the baby truly isn’t ours. (When other mammals have medicated births in unfamiliar environments, mothers tend to reject the babies.)
- ❖ Having a long epidural adds so much excess fluid to the mother. It swells her face, fingers, ankles, breasts and nipples. This can make breastfeeding more difficult, it’s harder for the baby to latch and it slows down her milk. This can result in jaundice and supplements to the baby which increase the risk of early weaning.
- ❖ Epidurals can hurt in their own way. With half of your body numb you are restricted on your movements. Normally, women are able to adjust their position that feels the best (standing, squatting, hands and knees, etc.). When you can’t feel you’re just hoping that your body is OK with being on its back (or hopefully at least side lying and changing sides every 30 minutes) and taking the episiotomy that likely goes with it (your pelvis isn’t able to expand as it should when restricted to your back).
- ❖ This isn’t meant to scare you. Having a baby requires work, whether you decide to work during the birth or you have to work after. Read up on birthing naturally and good coping measures for a birth you will joyfully remember all your life. You’re more capable than you realize, you’ll surprise yourself!

Resources

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

Dianne’s website: <http://www.normalfed.com/>

Impact of Birthing Practices on Breastfeeding: <http://www.jblearning.com/catalog/9780763763749/>

What a new Baby Expects: from Birth to Going Home: <http://www.bellybelly.com.au/baby/what-your-baby-expects#.VHtJvTHF98E>