

## Talking Points & Resources

Hello Pathways Connect Group Participants,

### **Preliminary note: There is no wrong way**

To run your Pathways Connect Gathering, the steps below are to help guide you. However, we encourage you to embrace the flow of your gathering and allow for your meeting to take on its own momentum in whatever direction it might go.

### **Step 1: Select topics**

Prior to your group gathering, find and select one or more of the magazine articles that you found interesting and want to share. Pick topics that make you passionate, as these are the easiest to talk about and spark discussion.

### **Step 2: The Gathering**

Welcome everyone present in the group and ask each person to introduce themselves and share a little about themselves. Be sure to share about yourself as well.

### **Step 3: Introduce the topic**

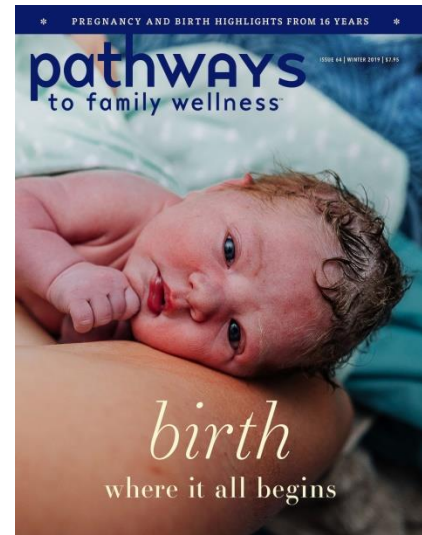
Share with the group your topic and why you chose it, why it interests you, and the importance you see in it. Summarize the article (some article summaries are provided below). You can read the entire article or article summary out loud to your group and share your thoughts at this time.

### **Step 4: Encourage conversation**

We provide questions after each summary section that will help people to engage. Make use of these questions or devise your own.

### **Step 5: Make the chiropractic connection**

At the end of each article summary are notes about how this topic relates to chiropractic. If you utilize these meetings to educate parents on the importance of chiropractic care you will be benefitting your office growth and the health of your community.



**PW #64 Introduction**

Welcome to the Winter 2019 issue!

Each season offers us unique opportunities to engage with the world in different ways. During winter, many of us turn more inward, as the cold weather encourages us to stay inside and the short days minimize physical productivity. Winter is a time to explore ideas and our reactions to them. This is our cold weather growth.

Our present issue is a compendium. The articles that appear are timeless and are our answer to the question, “Why does birth matter?” This is an issue that will serve as a reference for years to come.

Staying the Course contains eight articles that encourage you to explore concepts relating to parenting and will leave you feeling more confident in making and living the parenting choices that are best for your family. Your discussion guide offers questions for exploring several of these articles. *Pain in Labor: Your Hormones are Your Helpers*, by Sarah Buckley, describes the hormones of labor. A basic understanding of these paired with suggestions for working with them will help birthing parents maximize birth experiences and outcomes.

Living the Journey, the final section, offers five articles that address the wider support communities that are vital to new families. Discussing these ideas together with other parents provides an opportunity to stretch and try on new ideas. *A Way of Blessing*, by GeorGina Kelly, offers an opportunity to explore traditions that we may want to incorporate into our own pregnancy and new parenting transitions..

There are endless choices to make as parents, and each feels essential. Our goal is to offer options to explore and to nourish both your curiosity and confidence as parents. The community that you create within your Pathways gathering group will take it from there.

As always, your study guide contains questions for consideration and connections to chiropractic care to stimulate conversation and offer insight.

We wish you peace and confidence in your parenting journey. While the choices are yours to make, know that you are not alone. Your Pathways community is here with you.

**PW #64 Talking Points, Group Questions, and the Chiropractic Connection***Pain in Labor: Your Hormones are Your Friends*

By Sarah J. Buckley, MD

In this article, the author describes the hormones of labor and how they can assist or interfere with the birthing process. She begins by explaining that as mammals, humans generally labor at night. She adds here that a woman needs to feel safe in order to make oxytocin, often called the love hormone, which aids us both physically and emotionally. She describes oxytocin as a “shy” hormone, requiring privacy. Since it accomplishes many of the major tasks of birth and breastfeeding--causing uterine contractions, crossing the blood/brain barrier to help us fall in love with our babies, and pushing out our milk (let down), we need to do everything we can to facilitate its production. Experiences of safety, privacy, quiet, darkness, and having needs met all contribute to oxytocin production.

Catecholamines, often called the stress hormones, can slow labor by suppressing oxytocin production in the first stage of labor. During the second stage, they provide the necessary burst of energy needed for the mother to push out the baby.

These and other hormones described in the article provide all a mother needs for both her mind and body to birth her baby. Understanding these and working to facilitate their natural expression will facilitate positive birthing outcomes.

Questions for consideration:

- Did you have an understanding of these hormones going into your birth experiences? Were they described by your care provider or childbirth educator?
- If you were to be birthing in the future, how would this knowledge impact your choices and practices during the labor and birth?
- If you have birthed before, can you reflect upon your experiences and identify moments that were impactful in either a positive or negative way?

Chiropractic connection:

Chiropractors are advocates for natural birth. They work with women throughout their pregnancy to trust and work with the natural processes of their bodies. The importance of biomechanics on endocrine (hormone) function is substantial, and awareness of this fact is taking place in the birth community. Chiropractors help balance the pelvis which relieves uterine space, allowing the mother and baby to come into easier positions and greater alignment for birth. In addition, chiropractic frees the nervous system to function with greater ease and effectiveness, and this supports ideal physiological (hormonal) processes during birth.

*What Do We Know? Anthropology and Birth Activism*

By Robbie Davis-Floyd

The author, Robbie Davis-Floyd, is a well-respected anthropologist specializing in the field of birth. In this article, she describes a competing emotional experience--more than anything, she values and respects that each woman will make her own choices regarding her birth experience. At the same time, she is an expert who has studied and publicly shared the evidence-based realities of much of typical hospital-based birth in the US: Epidurals and the continuous fetal monitoring that it requires are both associated with negative outcomes for both mothers and babies and at the same time part of a money-making industry that hinges on women continuing to make these highly medicalized choices. The author explains, "Doctors 'know' that they are giving women 'the best care,' and 'what they really want.'" Birth activists, including myself, know that this "best care" is too often a travesty of what birth can be.

Questions for consideration:

- Do you feel that birthing women thoroughly research or have access to the evidence-based realities of birthing choices? If you are parents, where did you go to seek information in making your choices?
- Whose responsibility is it to ensure the information parents are accessing is accurate and not just serving the interests of money-seeking industries?
- Since out of hospital birth has been proven safe, why does only 1% of the population choose this type of birth experience?
- Why do you think hospitals routinely employ policies such as continuous monitoring or induction before 40 weeks when the evidence is that they put patients at risk?

Chiropractic Connection:

It with trust in women's ability to birth naturally that sets the stage for a normal, natural birth process to happen. So often, fear accompanies birth instead of excitement. Chiropractic can restore the trust we have in our bodies and keep opposing cultural fears from dictating or limiting our choices. Chiropractic has provided the atmosphere that has helped pregnant moms discover a new model of birth that aligns better to their values. So many moms express how it helped them have the birth they knew was possible. Chiropractors are usually in touch with excellent midwives and doulas who further encourage moms about their inherent ability. With this community of support, birth can become a source of strength for the new family.

*Why Home Birth is Necessary*

By Ina May Gaskin

“When there is no home birth in a society, or when home birth is driven completely underground, essential knowledge of women’s capacities in birth is lost to the people of that society—to professional caregivers, as well as to women of childbearing age themselves.” These are the words of Ina May Gaskin, the pioneering midwife credited for sparking the movement to change birth through improved options. As founder of “The Farm”, a midwifery center that began in 1970. Natural birth practices, mother-center techniques, and a profound belief in the ability of women’s bodies to birth earn her the right to state, “Our cesarean and instrumental delivery rates combined are still below 2 percent, in sharp contrast to the U.S. cesarean rate, which is now nearly 31.8 percent and climbing.”

In her article, the author describes how her first book *Spiritual Midwifery*, was a founding part of the natural birth movement that began in the 1970’s. She describes how over time women came to trust their bodies and choose to leave interventionist birth behind. In addition, she lists natural-birth techniques and tools that have come to be adapted by hospitals, to include birthing tubs and using positional change to facilitate rotation and birth of the baby.

In closing this historical look at changes in birth since the 1970’s, the author concludes, “Of course, this is not to say that women should be required to have home births. However, the option to give birth in the place of choice should be open to women who desire it, as long as their physical condition permits it as a safe choice.”

Questions for consideration:

- Have you read *Spiritual Midwifery*? If so, what was your reaction?
- How do you feel about the author’s concluding statement that, “Of course, this is not to say that women should be required to have home births.” ?
- In what ways do you think your personal experience might change if you birthed at home?
- In what ways might we change as a society if babies were routinely birthed at home?

Chiropractic Connection:

In so many ways, chiropractic philosophy aligns with the homebirth movement. A substantial percentage of the homebirth population is made up of chiropractors themselves. The normal physiology that makes natural birth possible doesn’t require technology. Similarly, the founding principles of chiropractic care that are based on the innate intelligence of the body, says this intelligence is autonomous. It is, in fact, every individual’s birthright. There is a wealth of autonomous wisdom inherent in the birth process, and chiropractic care appreciates this as a basic fact of life, to be appreciated, understood, and trusted.

*You're Not Allowed to Not Allow Me*

By Cristen Pascucci

“For most women, pregnancy and childbirth are one of the few times we let other adults tell us what we are “allowed” and “not allowed” to do with our own bodies.” With these words, the author calls to our attention the use of language and policies used to control our labor, birth, and immediate postpartum experiences. She goes on to explain that this is the case despite both evidence and even national policies that contradict hospital policies. In addition, informed consent, a legal obligation on behalf of care providers, exists to ensure legal autonomy and bodily control.

Having explained the realities of existing protocols and legal requirements, the author goes on to list practical suggestions to facilitate birthing mothers to become experiences as ‘...full owners of their bodies’ and not representatives of their babies. These include gently but firmly calling out providers using this kind of language, as well as choosing providers who use respectful language.

## Questions for Consideration:

- Have you had experiences with care providers using overly directive language, whether you were pregnant or not? How did you feel in these situations?
- Would you feel comfortable calling them out on their attitude and word choice?
- How easy would it be to do so while laboring--perhaps naked, inward-focused, or experiencing strong labor?
- Do you stay with providers who are overly directive? Why or why not?

## Chiropractic Connection:

The innate intelligence of the body does not need to be owned or controlled for ideal birth outcomes to unfold. The fear of losing “control” is what leads to most conflicts of interest between medical providers and individuals. The desire for control is unfit for the birth setting. There is a hierarchy of protocols that exist in the current system of medicine that is founded on control. In addition, all new evidence, research, or consumer preferences are stalled, as they are first reviewed from the lens of this established hierarchy. This inherently limits individual autonomy and choices. Midwives, doulas, and chiropractors all represent a form of service where the birthing mother, her baby, and her choices take full precedence. There is no rigidity, since it is recognized that the opposite of rigidness--loving trust and openness for the process--is what will truly protect the birth setting and assure safer outcomes for the greatest number of people.

*Induction*

By Henci Goer

In this article, medical journalist Henci Goer reviews the evidence behind waiting for potentially larger babies to birth at the time of their choice over induction. The first point she explains is that induction denies both mother and baby the self-created hormonal cocktail that facilitates the efficacy of labor, pain relief for mothers, bonding, and early breastfeeding. Next, she cites research describing the likelihood of babies outgrowing the likelihood of their mothers birthing them is very low, and does not go up much in the last weeks of pregnancy. In addition, she cites evidence that the care provider's "expectation" of the baby's large size is more of a factor of negative outcomes than the actual size of the baby confirmed after birth. As she explains, "...the inability to birth larger babies largely originates in doctors' heads, not women's bodies."

In conclusion, the policies and practices applied to the birth practice are themselves factors in successful birthing. Technological tethers like IV's, epidurals, any other restrictions of movement all interfere with birth outcomes, regardless of the size of babies.

## Questions for Consideration:

- How do you react to the author's statement that, "...the inability to birth larger babies largely originates in doctors' heads, not women's bodies."
- Would you feel comfortable contradicting your doctor's recommendations/requirement regarding a "large baby"? What would you do if they would not honor your choice?
- Why do you think hospitals and practitioners limit movement in birthing mothers despite evidence that it leads to higher intervention rates?

## Chiropractic Connection:

Chiropractic's greatest support is helping with optimal fetal positioning which can be facilitated by balancing the mother's pelvis. This takes pressure off the uterine space, and aligns the mother and her baby for an easier, safer birth. Large babies are not uncommon, and the impetus to utilize induction as a way to soften the birth process has been shown to have the opposite effect, making birth more difficult. Preparing normal physiology for a safe and effective birth is much more appropriate than rushing to induction, in most cases.

*Midwives*

By Jeanne Ohm, DC

In this article, birthing mentor and chiropractor Jeanne Ohm explains common themes among chiropractors, midwives, and doulas in their approaches to birth. These include, “Knowledge of and trust in the body’s inner wisdom, skills and objectives focusing on working with the body’s normal function and natural healing abilities, and support and commitment toward non-traumatic, non-invasive birthing procedures.

The author continues by suggesting that birthing mothers seek a team of supportive providers who view birth as an intimate life experience rather than a medical procedure. She concludes by encouraging pregnant women to proactively take the steps necessary to align with a birth care provider who match with their core values, and to consider switching providers to ensure her needs and priorities are met.

Questions to consider:

- If you are a parent, do you feel that the care providers you hired were a match for your birthing priorities? Would you return to these providers for another birth?
- What would your priorities be in choosing? Have they changed at all?
- Have you ever changed care providers during pregnancy? What do you see as the benefits? What might the challenges look like?

Chiropractic Connection:

Chiropractors and midwives work together in supporting the mother through pregnancy, birth, and beyond. Many midwives recommend chiropractic for a safer, more natural, and easier birth for the mom and baby just as chiropractors recommend choosing a midwife they can trust throughout the process. Both understand and trust the innate intelligence of the body and work with mom to support her body through this life changing experience.

*A Way of Blessing*  
By GeorGina Kelly

In this article, the author describes the history of the Blessingway ceremony as experienced in America. “The blessingway ceremony has its roots in the traditions of the Navajo hoshooji ceremony in North America.” Expecting mothers experienced this rite of passage for nine days, and it included chanting, the use of herbs, and a celebration of her carrying life within her. While many traditional cultures did and still do practice ceremonies to honor and bless the woman as she transitions to motherhood, our culture in the US largely lacks any such practices. For this reason, people have drawn inspiration from these traditional ceremonies as a way of honoring mothers.

Blessingway ceremonies, or simply “Blessingways” are mother-focused rather than baby-focused. Rather than bringing items to be used by the baby, participants (generally female friends and relatives) bring stories of strength and power for the birthing mother. The experience builds confidence and can hone our instincts and intuition. In addition, it weaves together the supportive community that she will need as a new parent in all the years that follow. The presence of these many supportive women remind her that they are there for her and will carry her through all experiences to come.

Questions to consider:

- Have you experienced a blessingsway, either as an expecting mother or participant? If so, what are your reactions?
- How do you see this as being different from a typical baby shower?
- Are there traditions through your faith or other community that specifically surround expecting mothers? Have you experienced them? Did you find them to be helpful?

Chiropractic Connection:

A blessingway ceremony focuses on the woman becoming a mother while honoring the importance of communal support. Through your chiropractor, you may find many like-minded parents who understand your values and desires. Often times parents build there tribe with the people they meet at their chiropractor’s offices. With a community comes support. It is these individuals who very well may be part of a ceremony to bless your journey into motherhood.