

## 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**

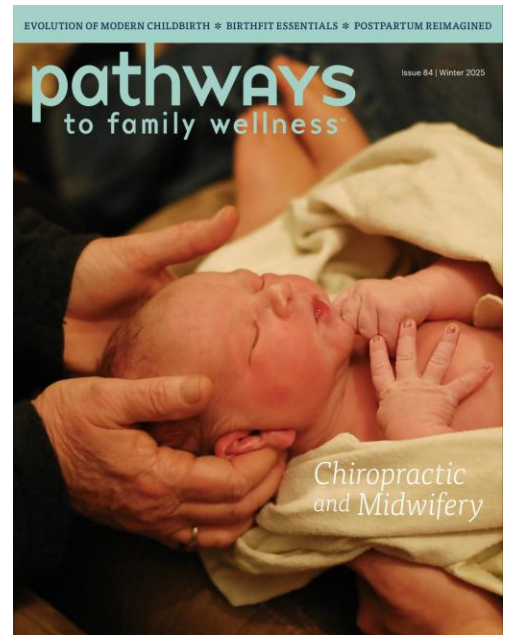
Share with the group your topic and why you chose it, why it interests you, and the importance you see in it. Summarize the article (some article summaries are provided below). You can read the entire article or article summary out loud to your group and share your thoughts at this time.

**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 benefiting your office growth and the health of your community!



## **PW Issue #84 Introduction: Chiropractic and Midwifery**

Childbirth is one of those profound mysteries that defy full definition. It straddles the physical and the metaphysical, the ordinary and the extraordinary. Its depth is its power, and that power should belong to the family embarking on their journey together. Yet, for generations, modern culture has distanced families from the intrinsic empowerment of birth. Through fear—much of it unnecessarily “induced” by cultural and institutional forces—birth has been reframed as something to be “delivered” by professionals who will “do” the necessary work for us.

Much of our fear-susceptibility around birth stems from the uncertainty of birth itself. It is, after all, wild, mysterious, and unpredictable. But birth is also deeply grounded in normal physiology, offering us an invitation to physically and actively integrate with it, not just philosophically, but pragmatically. For decades, families have been encouraged to trust that birth is “natural.” Now, we are being called to go further, to build our trust through conscious preparation and the integration of pragmatic, body-centered skills. These skills are not only tools for labor but pathways to confidence, coherence, and empowerment for the new family.

After every birth, there are stories. Stories about what happened, who was there, and how we felt. Questions like, “Was there pain?” or “What was the outcome?” shape how we reflect on these life-changing moments. Now, a new set of questions are being revealed that could define the next generation of birthing families: What did you do to prepare? What skills did you learn? How did you use those skills, and where did you find a greater need to adapt? Did you discover new techniques or methods that worked for you? Can you teach me what you learned?”

These questions represent a profound shift in the way we view birth. It’s not just an event that happens, it is an experience to actively engage with, one where skills, preparation, and adaptability create a new narrative. Birth becomes a collaborative process, one where each family finds their rhythm and power, contributing their unique wisdom to a collective legacy of empowered birthing.

This issue celebrates the principles of this emerging movement—one rooted in preparation, connection, and physiological integration. We owe much of this movement to chiropractic and midwifery, which have long championed a family-centered approach to birth. Together, they have shown us what is possible when we honor the natural wisdom of the body while empowering families with the tools and knowledge to embrace the journey of childbirth.

Now it’s time for families to carry on the torch. Then, new horizons will unfold for us all.

We are excited to bring you this issue and invite you to explore how this new vision of childbirth can inspire your family’s early start to life.

## **PW #84 Talking Points, Group Questions, and the Chiropractic Connection**

### **Taking the Step**

### ***The Evolution of Modern Childbirth***

By The Pathways Team

**The Evolution of Modern Childbirth** explores how childbirth has changed throughout history, reflecting shifts in human culture. It moves from the intuitive, body-led births of indigenous cultures, to the highly managed, medicalized systems of modern industrialized societies, and now to a family-centered, skills-based movement focused on individual autonomy. The article highlights the key concept that birth is an activity, regardless of the setting or outcome, which means there are skills we can learn to do this activity with a greater sense of coherence.

In indigenous cultures, women trusted their bodies and communities, viewing birth as a natural, intuitive, and physiological process. Daily activities kept women's bodies balanced and attuned to nature. **The Rise of Medicalized Birth.** Here, the article discusses how modern, industrialized societies have shifted birth towards a highly managed, medicalized system, where the focus of control centers on external “providers” guiding outcomes, instead of on women’s “innate” ability to birth. **The Emerging Skills-Based Approach** resolves the focus on the fundamental fact (easily overlooked in modern culture) that every labor is *an activity*, emphasizing the mother’s preparation and skillful engagement with the physiological wisdom of the birth process. This emerging movement aims to bridge the gap left by modern lifestyles—such as sedentary living and dependence on external “authorities” to guide outcomes—by encouraging body-awareness practices, movements, and conscious skills that allow each of us (including partners) to work with and attune to the wisdom of labor.

**The Webster Technique.** Developed by chiropractor Larry Webster, this technique prepares the body and nervous system for the physiological activity of birth, addressing imbalances that can hinder pregnancy and labor. It aligns with the organic, skills-based movement occurring today, by emphasizing the body's ability to birth when supported through *practical preparation*. **The H.A. Brant Study.** Here we learn of a study demonstrating the benefits of women self-learning birth skills. It shows improved maternal coping, higher Apgar scores, and positive feedback from healthcare providers when women are encouraged to learn skills for birth. Currently, the ICPA is working to conduct research to explore the effectiveness of birth skills and the Webster Technique, tracking variables such as labor duration and maternal satisfaction. The research aims to validate the complementary roles of chiropractic care and family-centered, self-learned birth skills.

**Balancing Partnerships.** Here the article calls for a renewed responsibility for families and practitioners to explore the emerging conversation around birth. It encourages families to become active participants in their birth experiences, and for practitioners (midwives, obstetricians, and doulas) to encourage families to become skilled for birth, not just mentally, but physically. Skills-based preparation includes learning how to breathe through contractions, understanding body positioning and movement affects labor, and learning how to soften and balance tissues to actively open and facilitate the baby's efforts to be born. **Coherence and Empowerment.** When parents use

skills during birth, they can experience a sense of coherence that extend into any birth setting, regardless of the circumstances of their unique birth.

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### Questions for Consideration

1. How does your cultural background influence your views on childbirth?
2. How do you perceive the balance between trusting your body's innate ability to birth and the use of medical interventions?
3. What are some ways that modern lifestyles may interfere with the natural processes of pregnancy and birth?
4. Do you think that a skills-based approach to birth is beneficial? Why or why not?
5. What are some practical skills that you can implement to prepare for birth?
6. How can fathers become more active and skilled participants in the birth process?
7. In what ways do you see your skills helping you stay in control during unexpected experiences like a medical birth?
8. How can we balance the partnership between parents and practitioners in the birth process?

### Chiropractic Connection:

Chiropractors, particularly those trained in the Webster Technique, play a key role in supporting a skills-based approach to birth. By aligning the pelvis and reducing physiological and mechanical stressors, chiropractic care supports the body's preparation for a skills-based birth. This creates a foundation of balance and ease, enabling birthing parents to apply their skills more effectively. **Chiropractic care enhances the body's own ability to allow the brain and body to function in harmony.** It is an ideal complement to all birth settings, choices, and plans because it supports the body's physiology and adaptability, which are essential for every activity of birth. By receiving chiropractic care, families can unlearn the fear and medicalization of birth, and begin to trust the wisdom of the mother's body and the birth process. Chiropractors also provide education to help fathers understand the biomechanics of birth, and to provide hands-on support for their partners during labor.

## Taking the Step Natural Pregnancy Natural Birth

By Katy Bowman M.S.

In this article, Katy Bowman emphasizes the importance of aligning physical health and natural movement with the processes of pregnancy and childbirth. She draws parallels between training for physical challenges, such as running a marathon, and preparing for a natural delivery. Bowman contends that while childbirth is inherently natural, modern lifestyles have made women less attuned to their bodies, resulting in physical imbalances that complicate pregnancy and birth.

Bowman explains that the human body is naturally equipped for successful childbirth, with features like a movable sacrum, a robust transverse muscular system, and strong thigh muscles. However, poor posture, such as forward-thrusting hips, and sedentary habits can weaken these natural advantages. She underscores that pregnancy discomforts like diastasis recti or pelvic pain are not inevitable but are instead exacerbated by poor alignment and lack of preparation. Bowman asserts that “training” for birth through natural movement—such as walking frequently, squatting, and maintaining proper alignment—can enhance the body's natural capabilities.

The article also critiques cultural myths surrounding pregnancy, such as the belief in a pregnancy “waddle,” which Bowman identifies as a symptom of poor strength and alignment rather than an unavoidable aspect of pregnancy. She advocates for disseminating knowledge about correct birthing mechanics to healthcare professionals and expectant mothers to make natural childbirth more accessible and less challenging.

Ultimately, Bowman champions a return to natural movement patterns and intentional preparation as a means to restore confidence and ease to the process of childbirth. Her insights challenge modern prenatal fitness practices, encouraging a more specific focus on movements directly beneficial to labor and delivery.

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### Questions for Consideration

1. How does Katy Bowman’s comparison between running a marathon and preparing for childbirth influence your perspective on prenatal preparation?
2. What habits or modern conveniences might be contributing to physical imbalances during pregnancy?
3. Have you experienced or observed the effects of posture and movement on pregnancy and childbirth?
4. In what ways can intentional movement and alignment practices be incorporated into daily life to prepare for a natural birth?

5. What are some cultural myths about pregnancy and childbirth that may ignore the importance of “preparing” for the physical nature of birth?
6. What role do birth practitioners play in promoting natural movement and alignment during pregnancy?

### **Chiropractic Connection**

Chiropractors play a pivotal role in supporting the physical alignment and biomechanics emphasized in this article. By addressing misalignments, particularly in the pelvis and spine, chiropractic care enhances the body's readiness for labor and delivery. Chiropractic techniques help alleviate tension and restore balance, supporting the natural movements Bowman advocates for. Chiropractic care also complements movement-based preparations by creating a stable foundation, enabling pregnant individuals to fully engage in natural, effective birth. Furthermore, chiropractors can educate expectant parents about the impact of alignment and offer guidance on exercises to prepare the body for the dance of childbirth. This partnership fosters a harmonious, family-centered pregnancy and birthing experience.

## Taking the Step Hold On, Don't Push!

By Pamela Stone, D.C., DACCP

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This article recounts the transformative experiences of Gretchen, a mother whose journey through multiple births highlights the importance of trusting one's body and instincts over external directives. During her first labor, Gretchen was encouraged to push simply because she was 10 centimeters dilated, despite her body not signaling readiness. This resulted in hours of unproductive effort, exhaustion, and ultimately a cesarean birth. Reflecting on this experience, she realized that her body's intuition had been overshadowed by medical protocol.

Determined to regain autonomy, Gretchen pursued a VBAC (vaginal birth after cesarean) for her second child. This time, with a supportive midwife, she was allowed to push only when she felt ready, leading to a natural and empowering birth experience. With each subsequent pregnancy, including a twin birth, Gretchen became increasingly confident in her ability to listen to her body. Her intuitive approach allowed her to avoid unnecessary interventions, rest when needed, and labor at her own pace, fostering a sense of empowerment and control.

Pamela Stone emphasizes that intuition—a primal sense of knowing—should guide childbirth, rather than adherence to medical schedules or protocols. She critiques the conventional hospital practice of managing labor based on timing or convenience, which can create stress and hinder the natural progression of birth. Stone advocates for families to reclaim autonomy in childbirth by honoring their instincts and making decisions aligned with their body's signals.

Gretchen's story serves as a testament to the power of intuition and the benefits of a more organic, personalized approach to birth. By trusting her body, she transformed fear and uncertainty into confidence and strength, a lesson applicable not only to childbirth but also to broader aspects of health and decision-making.

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### Questions for Consideration

1. How has your intuition guided you in making decisions about health, childbirth, or parenting?
2. In what ways do conventional medical practices support or hinder a mother's ability to trust her instincts during labor?
3. How can families advocate for more intuitive, personalized care in hospital settings?
4. What are the potential psychological and physical benefits of allowing the body to signal readiness for pushing during labor?
5. How can birth practitioners foster an environment that respects and prioritizes a birthing mother's instincts?

6. In what ways does Gretchen's story challenge conventional ideas about how childbirth should be managed?

### **Chiropractic Connection**

Chiropractic care is based on the concept that there is an innate intelligence in the body that knows what's needed in any given moment. It works to enhance our connection to this intelligence, which can be diminished over time in cultures that don't recognize or prioritize it. Mental fears through education can also diminish our connection. Chiropractic care is particularly valuable in supporting the natural birthing process by offering a stronger, physiological connection to Nature's innate wisdom. Additionally, techniques like the Webster Technique ensure that the pelvis is balanced, allowing the body to facilitate the birth process. This dovetails seamlessly with the "skills-based" movement in childbirth occurring today, focusing on the birthing family's ability to align with the wisdom of birth through conscious knowledge and practical skills. By combining chiropractic adjustments with a philosophy of intuition-centered actions, families can approach childbirth with greater confidence and coherence. This alignment of body and intuition, built on practical knowledge and support, fosters a birth experience that establishes the very basis of health and well-being for the early family moving forward.



## Taking the Step

### *It's Time to Change the Narrative*

By Cheryl van der Mark, D.C.

In this article, Cheryl van der Mark discusses the transformative potential of skills-based birthing, emphasizing the need to move beyond fear-driven and passive approaches to childbirth. She challenges the assumption that natural and empowered births happen automatically as long as “interventions” are avoided, arguing instead for intentional preparation and the cultivation of skills that align with the physiological and emotional demands of labor.

Van der Mark highlights how fear inhibits the birthing process and how skills and supportive measures—aligned with the parent’s autonomy—reduce fear and create a sense of coherence. Her work focuses on equipping women and their partners with the knowledge and practical tools needed to counteract fear and build confidence. She draws parallels between childbirth and athletic preparation, advocating for a mindset and skill set that empower parents to actively engage in the birthing process.

The Skillful Birthing program, developed by van der Mark, provides a structured, hands-on approach to birthing preparation. This program goes beyond conventional prenatal education by teaching techniques that address each stage of labor and delivery, including handling painful sensations, understanding pelvic alignment, and fostering effective communication between birthing parents. By focusing on both physical and mental readiness, the approach enables families to navigate birth as an intentional, harmonious experience.

Van der Mark’s vision extends to changing the cultural narrative around birth. She asserts that birthing does not have to be a fearful or passive event dependent on providers, but can instead be an empowering journey that celebrates the collaboration between mother, baby, and father (if he is involved). This shift requires families to embrace preparation and practice as pathways to reclaim autonomy in the birthing process.

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### Questions for Consideration

1. How does the narrative around childbirth in your culture influence your perception of labor and delivery?
2. In what ways can fear impact the physiological and emotional aspects of childbirth, and what do you recommend for alleviating fear?
3. How can preparing for childbirth be likened to training for an athletic event?
4. What role do birth partners play in creating a positive and empowering birth experience?
5. How might skills-based birthing preparation reduce the fear of birth?
6. What are the benefits of focusing on both mental and physical preparation for labor?

7. How can healthcare professionals support the shift toward skills-based birthing practices?
8. Why have I never heard of “birth skills”?

### Chiropractic Connection

Cheryl van der Marc, a Chiropractor and ICPA member practicing the Webster technique since 2001, has observed the gap that exists in modern approaches to childbirth that lack emphasis on a mother’s and father’s “active” participation. There’s a lot of discussion of making better “choices” but few are able to explain what they “did” after birth. For many, birth just “happens.” Chiropractors are uniquely positioned to support the principles of this skills-based approach by promoting optimal physical alignment and nervous system function, so families can begin their journey from an established baseline of physiological connection and a knowledgeable framework of how the body works in labor.

Enabling smoother, more efficient labor doesn’t end with chiropractic care! Rather, chiropractic represents an important stepping stone for families to **equip themselves** with pragmatic knowledge and preparations for the activity of childbirth.

**Taking the Step**  
***The Impact of Body Balancing During Labor***

By Gail Tully

This article offers a vivid and personal account of the transformative power of Spinning Babies® techniques during labor. The author, a first-time mother and experienced doula, recounts how her own labor journey tested her physical and emotional resilience while showcasing the impact of body balancing on childbirth outcomes.

Throughout labor, the mother used techniques she had practiced during pregnancy, such as the Three Balances (including the Jiggle, Forward-Leaning Inversion, and Side-Lying Release), to address her baby's high position and create space for descent. Despite back-to-back contractions and the physical and mental demands of labor, these methods proved instrumental in repositioning her baby, helping it navigate the birth canal and facilitating a smoother delivery.

The narrative highlights the physiological wisdom of the body and the value of non-invasive tools that work with, rather than against, this natural process. For example, the Forward-Leaning Inversion during a contraction helped align the pelvis, while side-lying techniques relaxed the sacral ligaments and hip muscles, further encouraging baby's movement. These practices (effective because they were learned and integrated into the mother's instinctual movements) turned a prolonged labor into a far more manageable process, reinforcing the power of preparation and informed, active participation during birth.

Ultimately, the story underscores the importance of equipping expectant parents with tools that reduce fear and enhance confidence and their birthing ability. The author's testimony illustrates how simple body-balancing methods that any mother can learn, combined with trust in the body's capabilities, can profoundly improve labor experiences. This account serves as a compelling case for integrating birth skills into prenatal preparation and birth support.

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### Questions for Consideration

1. How does the concept of body balancing change your perception of labor and delivery preparation?
2. Are there any times in your experience of childbirth where you wished you could have "done something" to effect a more positive experience for yourself?
3. How might tools like Spinning Babies® empower expectant parents to take an active role in childbirth?
4. How much time do you think it takes to learn at least a few "birth skills" and is time and effort the main obstacle to actually doing so?
5. What is the relationship between physical alignment and birthing ability? Does this contradict any previous ideas you had about birth being "natural"?

6. Do you think birth practitioners are intimidated, relieved, excited, or neutral about women (and partners) learning skills to give birth?

### **Chiropractic Connection**

Chiropractic care and body balancing share a foundational focus on alignment and nervous system function, making them complementary approaches to supporting labor and delivery. Many chiropractors have integrated the Spinning Babies protocols into their own births and birth work. Chiropractors trained in techniques such as the Webster Technique can help enhance the efficacy of body-balancing techniques that families do for themselves, which creates a powerful alliance between the family-led birth movement and chiropractic care.