

## **Why take childbirth classes?**

**Education-** To learn about the birth process, the choices you have, and the questions to ask.

**Practice-** To make time to practice techniques that will help you have a safer, quicker, and more comfortable birth.

**Communication-** To learn the different ways to communicate your needs, concerns and questions with all the people who are caring for you.

**Support-** Having an educated and experienced instructor answer your specific questions. Meet other expectant couples, many people find lifetime friends in these classes!

**Empower-** Knowing more about what to expect and how to help yourself reduces stress and anxiety. Helps to develop confidence and trust in the process.

**Resources-** Learning the resources that are available to you for pregnancy, birth, postpartum and parenting.

## **How do I choose which class is best for me?**

Doing research on the organization offering the class, instructors, and class philosophies can make a huge difference in the experience and information you receive.

When choosing a class, determine whether the class is consumer oriented or provider oriented. Consumer oriented classes tend to encourage you, the consumer, to take an active role in choosing the options you desire for your birth. Provider oriented classes tend to inform you as to the care and procedures you can expect from the hospital and your doctor during childbirth, with little emphasis on alternatives.<sup>1</sup>

Asking yourself these questions may help you in finding the right class for you.

### **What do I want to know?**

What topics are covered in the class?

Classes that last 9+ tend to be more thorough. These classes offer more time to ask questions, absorb information, practice techniques, and learn more than just the basics.

Classes that are intensive in nature usually cover the full range of labor and birth, but often only skim the top or have little or no time for practice.

A person who feels that they have learned all they need from a book, class or experience may want to take an active birth workshop that focuses and practices just on the techniques that help you cope with labor.

### **What is my learning style?**

Am I an auditory learner and don't like to participate in a class- so prefer college like lecture format? Do I learn by reading and doing homework? Do I prefer interactive discussions and/or hands on activities? Do I want to watch some videos and/or play games? Do I already practice yoga or meditation and want that type of focus? Do I prefer a class taught from a medical perspective, more holistic, or maybe with both? Do I prefer a combination of these styles? Do I prefer large groups, small groups, or private lessons?

### **Who is the instructor?**

What is the instructor's background, training, and certifications? What experiences do they have with pregnancy, labor and birth? Is the teacher certified by a national organization? What is the birth philosophy of the organization? Is the instructor's training completely from a medical perspective or more broad? Is the teacher employed by a hospital, clinic, or private practice or does she practice independently? Is the instructor limited in what she is allowed to say, which often occurs with provider oriented classes. What is the instructor's philosophy on birth; can you talk to the instructor before signing up for the class or visit their website? What is her teaching style and does it match your learning style?

## **Birth Theories/ Philosophies/ Methods**

Not all inclusive...

All techniques offer education on the stages of labor, pain medications, interventions, breathing and relaxation techniques. All theories support that birth is a natural normal event and informed consent. Courses named Childbirth Preparation are typically a multi-theoried class.

### **Birth Within**

[www.birthingfromwithin.com](http://www.birthingfromwithin.com)

Book- *Birth From Within* by Pam England

What makes these classes unique?

- Parent's individual needs and differences determine class content, not a set curriculum.
- Holistic and spiritual education- the essence of childbirth education is self-discovery, not assimilating obstetric information.
- A balance of practical, useful information and creative, experiential exercises.
- Stimulating, lively discussions and interesting exercises; learning not just about birth but also about yourselves.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Bradley Method**

[www.bradleybirth.com](http://www.bradleybirth.com)

Book- *Natural Childbirth the Bradley Way* by Susan McCutcheon-Rosegg, Erick Ingraham, Robert Bradley

What makes these classes unique?

- Teaches and motivates the coach specific techniques to guide and support the laboring woman. The woman's coach/ partner is given the skills to be her main support.
- Simple techniques that focus on having a natural unmedicated birth.
- Increases self awareness; teaching a woman how to deal with the stress of labor by tuning into her own body. Relaxation is taught as the key to childbirth.
- Includes a workbook.<sup>3</sup>

### **HypnoBirthing**

[www.hypnobirthing.com](http://www.hypnobirthing.com)

Book- *HypnoBirthing: The Mongan Method* by Marie Mongan

What makes these classes unique?

- Through a very simple program of self-hypnosis and education, women learn techniques of deep relaxation to help eliminate the fear and tension that cause pain.
- Women learn to call upon the body's own natural relaxant and natural birthing instincts.
- Includes a self-hypnosis CD.<sup>4</sup>

### **Lamaze International**

[www.lamaze.org](http://www.lamaze.org)

Book- *The Official Lamaze Guide- Giving Birth with Confidence* by Judith Lothian, Charlotte DeVries

What makes these classes unique?

- Focuses on the fact that labor is a normal, natural life event.
- Stresses the importance of education, asking questions, informed consent.
- Your choice of where and who you give birth with will either enhance or diminish your experience.
- Breathing techniques as a focus for relaxation.<sup>5</sup>

### **WaterBirth International**

[www.waterbirth.org](http://www.waterbirth.org)

Not a class, but a philosophy that giving birth in water reduces the discomfort of labor therefore helping it flow. Giving birth in water as a gentle and kind welcome to the world for baby.<sup>6</sup>

<b>One or Two Day Seminar 6-8 hours</b>	<b>Short Series 3 – 5 weeks 9-12 hours</b>	<b>Longer series, 6 – 10 weeks 12+ hours</b>
Few chances to interact with classmates.	You may get to know a few other couples in class.	You'll have lots of chances to interact with others and build friendships.
Very little time for questions.	More time for questions and for discussion.	Lots of discussions and personalized answers to your questions.
Because of limited time, instructor may need to do a lot of lecture, which is the quickest way to convey information, but may not be as good at helping students understand or retain the information.	The more class time there is, the more the instructor can use teaching techniques which enhance understanding and memory of the material: videos, visual aids, demos, practice, homework, discussions, quizzes, Q&A, etc.	
Can be an overwhelming amount of information to absorb in a short time. You may only "get" a small portion of it.	More time between classes to think things through, practice, discuss, find answers to questions that arise.	
Less focus on practicing skills, and on getting the knowledge into your body, not just your head.	More time to practice massage, relaxation techniques, breathing techniques, etc.	
Easier to fit into a busy schedule.	More of a time commitment.	
Best for people planning a birth with pain medication, and people who are less concerned with possible interventions.	Best for people planning a birth without pain medication and hoping to minimize possible interventions.	
For one day seminars: May be uncomfortable for a pregnant woman to sit for that many hours straight.	For evening class series: May be hard for a pregnant woman to stay awake for an evening class each week.	

this material was *excerpted* from an article by Janelle Durham and edited by Heather Ward.

#### References:

1. **Childbirth Connection** <http://www.childbirthconnection.org/>
2. **Birthing Within** [www.birthingfromwithin.com](http://www.birthingfromwithin.com)
3. **The Bradley Method** [www.bradleybirth.com](http://www.bradleybirth.com)
4. **HypnoBirthing** [www.hypnobirthing.com](http://www.hypnobirthing.com)
5. **Lamaze International** [www.lamaze.org](http://www.lamaze.org)
6. **WaterBirth International** [www.waterbirth.org](http://www.waterbirth.org)
7. **Janelle Durham** <http://transitiontoparenthood.com>