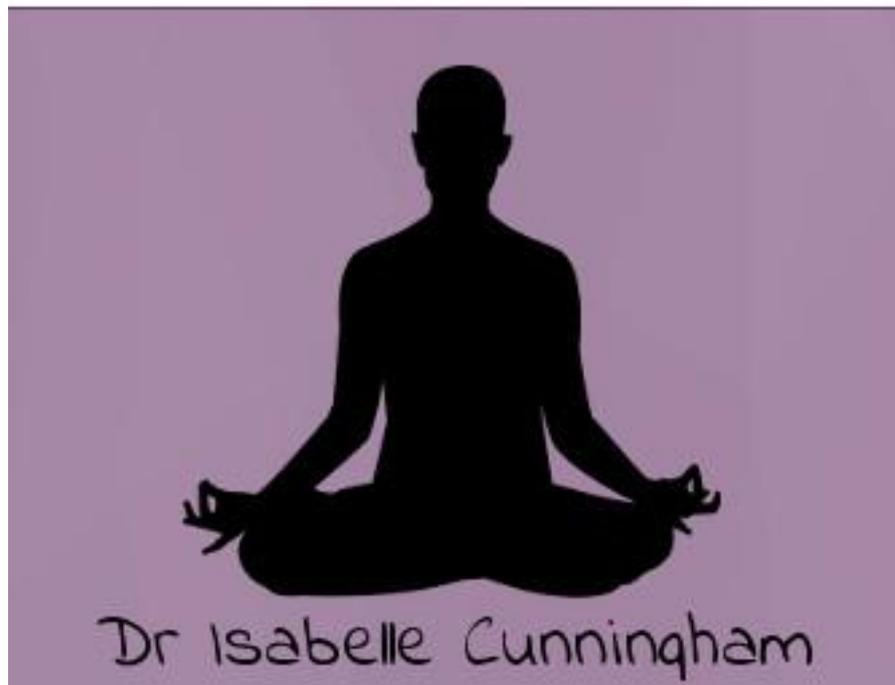


Meditation for Painfree Childbirth



Most of the information women receive about childbirth leads them to believe that childbirth is the single most painful (albeit rewarding) experience a person can ever have. For the majority of women this prediction is inevitably found to be true.

While a woman may choose to have a baby and is excited about becoming a mother and often already loves the baby before it is even born, it is natural she will have some fear and trepidation about the approaching birth.

Who would not be afraid if they were told that on a certain day (or more likely in the middle of the night) on a date somewhere about 'here', you will begin the most painful experience you could imagine and there is no telling how long it will last...it could be a couple of days. You can have some drugs to help you through it but they won't really help take away the pain very much and they might harm your baby.

Some women have died as a result of this experience (or at least from complications of the experience) and if it gets too bad or takes too long, the doctors will start using drugs or possibly even surgery (caesarean) which can cause harm to both you and your baby. I have even heard it is equal in pain units to having twenty bones broken! It sounds terrifying! It is terrifying!

So even before the birthing experiencing begins and in conjunction with the happiness they feel about having their baby, the woman is reacting to the fear and uncertainty with a Fight-or-Flight Response. Even otherwise calm, sensible, educated women experience some level of fear. Even if that is on a deep subconscious level.

The Fight-or-Flight Response is the body's natural reaction to danger. It is designed to provide us with extra strength and speed for short periods of time, in bursts... so we can fight or flee for our lives. It is not intended to stay 'turned on' and it happens whether the danger is real and life threatening or if the danger is not life threatening and just perceived by us as being threatening (a bill showing up or getting stuck in traffic can even cause us to go into the Fight-or-Flight Response.)

So it's not hard to imagine the idea of giving birth (along with all the horror stories and expectation of pain) sends a woman into the Fight-or-Flight Response.

THE FIGHT-OR-FLIGHT RESPONSE

Below is a list of some of the body's physiological and psychological reactions to the Fight-or-Flight Response. These are well researched and medically proven. Let's look at these responses in relation to childbirth.

Physiological and Psychological Reactions to the Fight or Flight	Possible Effect on the Birthing Experience
Heart rate speeds up	The mother's heart rate is already increased to supply additional oxygen to the baby. Further acceleration can be very uncomfortable, frightening and simply dangerous.
Breathing speeds up and becomes shallow	We know that hyperventilating does not cause muscles to relax. We must look at why women are encouraged to blow and puff rather than use relaxed breathing techniques during birth. Often causing vomiting during labour.
Stomach and upper-intestinal action (<i>digestion</i>) stop	We want the body to be opening up during Childbirth not slamming shut!
General effect on the sphincters of the body (<i>either opens or slams shut</i>)	May increase bleeding Filling muscles and tensing them for physical action – like running
Constriction of blood vessels in many parts of the body Dilation of blood vessels for increased blood flow to muscles (<i>blood and glucose rush to the muscles</i>) Liberation of nutrients for muscular action	Body is preparing to tense and use muscles, not relax them. So all of these things are contributing to a sense of being out of control
Inhibition of Lacrimal gland (<i>responsible for tear production and salivation</i>) Dilation of pupils	Heightened blood pressure is not helpful to the mother or the baby and often dangerous The baby is still affected by the mother's blood through the umbilical cord. Perpetuating discomfort and fear
Relaxation of bladder (<i>and sometimes evacuation of colon</i>) Acceleration of instantaneous	

reflexes Blood pressure increases and pulse rate increases Adrenal secretions flush into the blood stream Fuzzy thinking Auditory Exclusion (loss of hearing) Tunnel Vision (loss of peripheral vision)	
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Something we need to particularly consider is that while the mother is in the Fight-or-Flight Response, her muscles are tense and hard. This stops the muscles that are designed to 'push' or more accurately 'slide' the baby out, from being able to expand. So instead of the birth canal being soft, flexible and pliable it becomes like a cement tunnel with birthing muscles and Fight-or-Flight Response muscles slamming against each other; the baby trying to fight its way out and the mother being told to push it out (usually while being coached to hyperventilate and becoming more and more stressed as the pain increases and pushes her deeper into the Fight-or-Flight Response...and on it goes.

When the mother is in the Relaxed Response (which is the opposite of the Fight-or-Flight Response and a state we seldom experience these days, even when not faced with childbirth, due to the nature of our modern lives and the general lack of understanding about the Fight-or-Flight Response) her muscles are relaxed and her entire body works in synchronicity to perform the very natural task it was designed for ... Childbirth.

Eliminate the Fear of Pain in Childbirth

If delivery is to be pain-free there must be preparation in advance, ideally months in advance. Ignorance of pregnancy, labour and delivery will not guide anyone through a pain-free birth in the hospital, birth centre or at home.

Knowledge is power!

When a woman gains an understanding of her magical body, confidence can replace the inhibiting influence of fear.

By learning to use Meditation for Childbirth, women learn how to prepare for the birth of their baby in a way that enables them to relax. Without relaxation there is tension in the woman's body that causes resistance and then pain, particularly during the first stage of labour. Knowledge and confidence are two of the major requirements for eliminating fear of childbirth. Pain can be eliminated in over 90 percent of labouring women by substituting understanding for fear and tension for relaxation.

Other factors that can contribute toward a significant reduction in pain during labour include proper (relaxed) breathing, meditation, choosing the right carer, having an educated and supportive partner and eliminating any influences that trigger fear or stress.

Making Labour Painless

Replacing fear with knowledge goes a long way to reduce stress and therefore pain during childbirth, but there are many other factors that contribute toward a pain free labour and delivery.

Some of them are listed below:

- Understanding the body's Fight-or-Flight Response allows the woman to recognize her body's reaction to fear and stress.
- Having tools for overcoming the Fight-or-Flight Response and returning to the relaxed response gives the woman more control over what is happening to her body.
- Having dealt with fear and doubt prior to the onset

labour and having a fear management plan assists the woman to be calm and relaxed.

- Relaxed breathing during labour assist the woman to remain calm and relaxed (not fast, hyperventilated breathing.)
- A birthing partner or birthing coach who is familiar with relaxation techniques can assist the woman to stay focus and relaxed.
- An optimistic or positive attitude and sense of self-empowerment assist the woman to remain calm throughout the various stages of labour

A calm, relaxed woman who is confident and feels in control and supported throughout childbirth, will experience far less pain and a much shorter labour. More often than not, she will also recover faster and her new baby will be more settled and relaxed than women who are fearful, tense and feel out of control during childbirth.

Preconceived ideas about childbirth will greatly influence a woman's birthing experience. If she believes labour will be difficult and painful it will be and if she believes it is an amazing natural phenomenon that only she, as a woman, can do easily and painlessly...it will be. There is no weakness associated with having had a painful birth and some women will feel they were relaxed and prepared but still experienced a painful or long and painful labour. But the information on how the Fight-or-Flight Response works and how it effects birthing is not as readily available as it really should be and so most women are denied access to the level of information and the many very effective tools that would have set them in the best possible position to experience pain free childbirth or at least a much less painful childbirth.

I have personally experienced pain free childbirth and over the past 20 years, I have taught Blissful Birthing Meditation to countless women who have gone on to experience pain free births. I have also trained many practitioners to teach Blissful Birthing Meditation. These practitioners run classes and workshops to educate pregnant women in using the self-empowering tools, including meditation, that can significantly reduce and often completely eliminate pain during Childbirth.

Namaste
Isabelle