

Mind Over Body: Hypnosis During Childbirth

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After two years of infertility, I was a very nervous first-time pregnant woman. My delivery was not what I had planned. I had been induced after finding out that I didn't have enough amniotic fluid, and my labor took three days, ending with a vacuum-assisted delivery. I vowed that I would be in charge if I ever decided to go through pregnancy again.

My aunts told me how great their experiences with hypnosis had been. They used it for childbirth in the 1970s, and one aunt, who had a severe reaction to anesthesia, was able to tolerate a hernia repair using only self-hypnosis. They had access to hypnosis training because my childhood family doctor had been trained in hypnosis early in his career. Because he had seen all of us—my immediate family, aunts, uncles, and 21 first cousins—he seemed like part of the family. I felt there was no one better to assist me with hypnosis. I met with Dr. Fox for several sessions, and then I listened to our recorded sessions every day for two months. As my due date neared, there was some worry it might not work, but I was pretty confident it would—I just didn't know how well. When my labor started, I used hypnosis at home until my doctor said to come to the hospital. I was 7 cm dilated when I arrived and felt great.

I remember my daughter's delivery as calm and quiet. My husband and I listened to music and talked. When a contraction started, I put myself in a trance, and when it ended, I came out of the trance. I was fully aware, completely pain free, and in control of my mind and body. I even had much less tension between contractions, because I didn't fear the next one. My delivery was calm, and my recovery was easy as well.

I am a huge advocate for hypnosis in all forms—for childbirth, smoking cessation, and weight loss. I tell my friends they should at least try it. It can't hurt, and in my case it didn't hurt at all! —K.G.



COMMENTARY

Having attended both of K.G.'s deliveries, I noticed a marked contrast between the two, and the second was inspiring. Being in control of her labor and body was very important to K.G. This control is a tenet of many childbirth hypnosis programs that focus on replacing fear and anxiety about pain with self-confidence and deep relaxation. Dr. Fox's collaboration also was informative. It exposed many of us to a different model of family-centered maternity care.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The benefits of hypnosis learned prior to and practiced during childbirth have been supported by a meta-analysis¹ and several qualitative and case-control studies.^{2,3} Findings consistently indicate that prenatal hypnosis reduces the need for intrapartum analgesics, increases Apgar scores one minute after birth, and improves confidence and satisfaction during labor.

RESOURCES

American Society of Clinical Hypnosis
Web site: <http://www.asch.net>

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3. Abbasi M, Ghazi F, Barlow-Harrison A, Sheikhatan M, Mohammadyari F. The effect of hypnosis on pain relief during labor and childbirth in Iranian pregnant women. *Int J Clin Exp Hypn*. 2009;57(2):174-183. ■