



Chiropractic Newsletter

Well-Being

The Four Components of a Better Birth

In the 1980s and 1990s, the concept of “active management of labor” became more prominent, which involved the use of medical interventions to speed up labor and reduce its duration. This included practices like inducing labor and setting time limits on labor progression. This trend, which some would argue “advancement,” continued in the 21st century and the overall medicalization of childbirth continued to increase with a higher prevalence of interventions such as labor induction, episiotomies, and assisted deliveries such as forceps or vacuum extraction. The focus on medical control of birth has led to a decline in the prevalence of natural childbirth even today.

I am sure that those working on these advances in medical science are doing so with the intention of making birth “safer” and “better.” I fear the added intention to control birth medically and technologically has often taken a primary role and may in many instances in fact have the opposite intended effect. Creating a holistic practiced “skills” approach to childbirth that respects a woman’s autonomy and preferences while balancing medical support with natural processes may actually be a better approach...

First, let’s talk about the term “Natural Birth.” I have learned that different people define this term differently and really no one definition is accepted as the norm. We are all just looking at it from a different perspective. Some may define this as simply vaginal no matter the method, some define it as a vaginal birth in the absence of any medical intervention be that by hands, medication, assistive tools, and/or surgery, and still some see natural birth as just simply doing nothing and letting your body intuitively do its thing. I would suggest we all ideally want an experience that is positive, safe, and best for us and our baby during the process of birthing the amazing little



human that our brilliant bodies have created. Many of us also find we have a goal of a safe, vaginal, positive birth with as little complication as possible, but we are not sure which of the above “natural births” we will push for and most women do not know how to get there. Let’s talk about birthing from a more holistic approach.

Conscious Birthing

“Conscious Birthing” is the preparation and practice that we can be fully present with and engaged in the experience of giving birth, both physically and emotionally. This is the practice of mindfulness, connection to our baby, and listening to our body’s instincts, cues, and intuition. This can involve:

- Deep preparation of mindfulness
- Relaxation techniques
- Reducing fear and anxiety
- Learning how to connect and listen to your body
- Being intimately aware and connected to your baby, your pelvis, and its positioning
- Partner protection of space
- Accepting variability in birthing outcomes

In a conscious birth, we can learn to intentionally work with the process so that we can be active participants and

directors of our experience. While usually having a goal of a birth with no intervention, it prepares the birthing woman for flowing with variability.

Empowered Birthing

In empowered birthing, the birthing person feels in control, respected, and supported throughout the birthing process. This approach promotes a sense of strength, self-confidence, and emotional well-being, regardless of the specific details or outcomes of the birth. It often involves:

- Being confident in your birth and entering without fear
- Knowing in depth about the marathon you are about to “run”
- Knowing how to be in control throughout the process
- Being confident to make informed birth choices along the way
- Learning how to control your environment
- Partner involvement, respect, and advocacy

To take things a step further, being conscious, empowered, and learning hard skills combined with practice can allow you as the birthing couple to be the directors of your experience, often improving birth outcomes. It requires careful planning and practicing of learned birth skills.

Skills and Practice- Based Birthing

Incorporating a set of essential “skills” into the conscious and empowered birthing approach allows us to understand and work with our birth better. Skills such as:

- Gaining a comprehensive understanding of both your anatomy and your baby’s anatomy
- Developing proficiency skills in how to work harmoniously with the physiological aspects of childbirth
- Exploring your own pelvic structure
- Learning different techniques to open your pelvis and

when to use such techniques

- Preparing your soft tissues for the birthing process
- Acquiring competence in both hands-on and hands-off support skills for birthing partners
- Knowing when to apply certain skills throughout the birthing journey
- Practicing those skills in advance

These skills, when integrated with meditative practices, heightened awareness, thoughtful decision making, fear reduction, and the cultivation of unity between you, your partner, and your baby, collectively contribute to a better birthing experience, regardless of your envisioned outcome.

By adopting a salutogenic approach like the Four Components of a Better Birth (Consciousness, Empowerment, Skills, and Practice), you will be able to actively listen to, harmonize with, and acquire and hone the skills necessary to enhance your body’s innate processes. This will equip you to embark on your birthing journey with unwavering confidence, resilience, and a profound connection to both your own body and the precious life you are ushering into the world.

To learn more about Dr. Cheryl van der Mark’s approach to birthing your baby, email birth@cvwellnessgroup.com.

—Cheryl van der Mark, DC

This article continues in Pathways to Family

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