

Clarifying Values & Priorities For Birth: Pregnant Parent

This is a starting point for discussion between pregnant parents and support people. It offers a chance to explore underlying expectations about birth. These form a foundation for informed decision-making.

1) What are your beliefs about the importance/impact of the birth experience (choose one, or write your own)

<input type="checkbox"/>	The birth experience is extremely important, with lifelong effects on mom, baby, and the whole family. Everything should be done to make it a positive experience.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The birth experience is a special time for the family, but it's OK if things don't go as you hoped. Moms and babies are resilient, and will bounce back just fine.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The birth experience is just a means to an end... just one day in your life. Babies don't remember it, moms just need to get through it and move on to parenting.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:

2) Where do you stand on the natural process vs. medical procedures continuum?

<input type="checkbox"/>	I am totally fine with whatever medical interventions make childbirth quicker, easier, and less painful for me.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I believe that birth is a natural process, but that some medical procedures may help it to go more smoothly.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I want to have as natural an experience as possible with as few medical procedures as possible.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:

3) Which one of these statements comes closest to your beliefs about labor pain medication?

<input type="checkbox"/>	I believe everyone in labor should use pain medication; it is foolish for women to suffer when we have safe drugs to alleviate pain.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I believe pain medication should be available to anyone with no guilt trip about taking it. It should be the mother's choice to experience birth however she wishes.
<input type="checkbox"/>	It's good that pain medications are available for women with long, difficult labors; however, unmedicated birth is healthier and better for most women and babies.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Birth is a peak life experience not to be missed. Pain medication should be avoided because it carries potential risks, and can interfere with hormones and bonding.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:

4) Top priorities: In thinking about the care you receive during your labor, birth, and your first few days with baby, what issues are *most important* to you? What are the key factors in whether this birth feels satisfying to you or feels disappointing or upsetting? (You'll include these in your birth plan.)

5) Think about the other people who will be at your birth (your partner, doula or other support people, doctor or midwife, nurses, anesthesiologist) and the policies at your birthplace. Do they share / support your values? How might they differ? What will help you have the birth you're hoping for?

Informed Decision-Making

During pregnancy and labor, you will have many tests and procedures recommended to you. Sometimes your caregiver will ask you whether you want to have that test or procedure, but often it's just assumed that you will follow the standard procedures. However, it is always your right – and responsibility – to ask questions to be sure you understand the recommendation, and to make an informed decision about it in partnership with your caregiver.

What's your Decision-Making Style?

How much info do you need? Some people are information gatherers, who need all the details before they make a decision. Others want just the key facts and get overwhelmed by too much data.

How much time do you need? Some people make decisions quickly, while others need quiet time alone to reflect before making a decision.

Do you want to make the decisions? Some people prefer not to make a lot of decisions – they choose a caregiver they can trust, and then follow their recommendation. Others always question things – not because they don't trust their caregiver, but because they want to make decisions themselves.

How do you make decisions? Describe your style here.

During labor, when you're focusing on contractions, your support person may be the one who needs to talk to the medical staff about your birth plan and your choices. How do you want him/her to act?

<input type="checkbox"/>	I don't feel like we have to ask many questions: If my doctor says something is necessary, I just want my partner to agree for me.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I want my partner to feel comfortable asking questions and finding out information for me, so we have a clear understanding of the recommendations.
<input type="checkbox"/>	It's important to me to have as much choice as possible. I want my support person to be assertive with staff, to advocate for me, and help me to avoid unnecessary interventions.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:

Key Questions to Ask Your Caregiver

Whenever a test or procedure is offered, first ask how urgent / severe the situation is and whether you have time to ask questions, discuss options, and consider the information you've learned. Then, ask:

Benefits: What's the problem we're trying to identify, prevent, or fix? How is the test or procedure done? Will it work?

Risks: What are the possible tradeoffs, side effects, or risks for my baby or me? How are they handled?

Alternatives: What other options are available? What if I wait? Or do nothing?

Next steps: If the procedure doesn't identify or solve the problem, what will we need to do next?

Making Decisions: Key Questions to Ask Yourself

Although your caregivers can provide expert information about the benefits and risks, and loved ones can offer opinions on what you should do, only you can decide whether a test or procedure is right for you and your baby. Ask yourself these questions:

Information: Do you have all the information you need to make this decision?

Values: Does this procedure align with your values? (Some are listed on the other side of this paper...)

Satisfaction or Regrets: In the future, when you look back on this decision, will you feel satisfied that what you chose was the best answer available to you at that time? (Even if it was something you had hoped wouldn't have to happen.) Or will you regret the way you made the choice?

Clarifying Values & Priorities for Birth: Partner

1) What are your beliefs about the importance/impact of the birth experience (choose one, or write your own)

<input type="checkbox"/>	The birth experience is extremely important, with lifelong effects on mom, baby, and the whole family. Everything should be done to make it a positive experience.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The birth experience is a special time for the family, but it's OK if things don't go as you hoped. Moms and babies are resilient, and will bounce back just fine.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The birth experience is just a means to an end... just one day in your life. Babies don't remember it, moms just need to get through it and move on to parenting.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:

2) Where do you stand on the natural process vs. medical procedures continuum?

<input type="checkbox"/>	I am totally fine with whatever medical interventions make childbirth quicker, easier, and less painful for her.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I believe that birth is a natural process, but that some medical procedures may help it to go more smoothly.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I want her to have as natural an experience as possible with as few medical procedures as possible.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:

3) Which one of these statements comes closest to your beliefs about labor pain medication?

<input type="checkbox"/>	I believe everyone in labor should use pain medication; it is foolish for women to suffer when we have safe drugs to alleviate pain.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I believe pain medication should be available to anyone with no guilt trip about taking it. It should be the mother's choice to experience birth however she wishes.
<input type="checkbox"/>	It's good that pain medications are available for women with long, difficult labors; however, unmedicated birth is healthier and better for most women and babies.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Birth is a peak life experience not to be missed. Pain medication should be avoided because it carries potential risks, and can interfere with hormones and bonding.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:

4) Top priorities: In thinking about labor, birth, and early days with baby, what issues are *most important* to you? What are key factors in whether this birth feels satisfying or feels unsatisfying?

5) The values of the laboring mother are the most important to consider in preparing for a birth, and in making decisions during labor. How do you your values differ from hers? How will you resolve that?

6) Think about the other people who will be at the birth (doula, other supporters, doctor or midwife, nurses, anesthesiologist) and policies of the birthplace. Do they share your values and your partners?

Informed Decision-Making

During pregnancy and labor, an expectant parent will have many tests and procedures recommended. She has the right to ask questions to be sure she understands the recommendation, and to make an informed decision about it in partnership with her caregiver.

During labor, when she is busy coping, you may need to be the one to ask questions and make decisions. Think about your decision-making style and hers – what will she need you to do for her?

What's your Decision-Making Style?

How much info do you need? Some people are information gatherers, who need all the details before they make a decision. Others want just the key facts and get overwhelmed by too much data.

How much time do you need? Some people make decisions quickly, while others need quiet time alone to reflect before making a decision.

Do you want to make all the decisions? Some people prefer not to make decisions – they choose a caregiver they can trust, and then follow their recommendation. Others always question things –not because they don't trust their caregiver, but because they want to make decisions themselves.

How do you make decisions? How does she? Describe your styles here.

During labor, she may need to focus on her contractions, and may rely on you as her support person to interact with the medical staff and help her get the information to make the best decisions. Which of these styles best describes your way of relating to medical professionals?

<input type="checkbox"/>	I tend to feel intimidated around doctors. It is hard to ask questions, tell my preferences, or advocate for my wishes or my partner's wishes. I just do what they tell me to do.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I feel comfortable around health care professionals, and am comfortable asking questions. I enjoy my interactions, I trust and rely on their opinion. I generally follow their advice.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I choose to be assertive with health professionals. I do my own research, ask lots of questions, get some second opinions. Having some control and choice empowers me.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:

Note: after you and your partner finish this form, compare answers on what you feel comfortable with versus her answers on how she'd like you to act. Do they line up? If not, what could you do differently?

Key Questions to Ask Your Caregiver

Whenever a test or procedure is offered, first ask how urgent / severe the situation is and whether you have time to ask questions, discuss options, and consider the information you've learned. Then, ask:
Benefits: What's the problem we're trying to identify, prevent, or fix? How is the test or procedure done? Will it work?

Risks: What are the possible tradeoffs, side effects, or risks for my baby or me? How are they handled?

Alternatives: What other options are available? What if I wait? Or do nothing?

Next steps: If the procedure doesn't identify or solve the problem, what will we need to do next?

Making Decisions: Key Questions to Ask Yourself

Information: Do you have all the information you need to make this decision?

Values: Does this procedure align with your values? (Some are listed on the other side of this paper...)

Satisfaction or Regrets: In the future, when you look back on this decision, will you feel satisfied that what you chose was the best answer available to you at that time? (Even if it was something you had hoped wouldn't have to happen.) Or will you regret the way you made the choice?