

To capture the anthropological perspective I have chosen to quote Anderson's poetic reflection on her experiences of physiological birth:

If you are privileged enough to have witnessed a woman giving birth unaided in a place she has chosen, what will you have seen? You will first be in awe of her strength. Her thighs stand strong and mighty like those of a warrior as she stands, sways and squats to find the best position to ease her baby out. Then you will hear the deep primal cries she makes as she does her work, sounds that come not from her throat but from her belly as she grunts and moans with her exertion: sounds seldom heard except in the most uninhibited of love-making. Maybe you will notice the glistening river of mucous tinged with blood and waters that run down her thighs unheeded: she is beyond noticing such things, moved as she has done into another plane of existence. And then finally you will be struck by her beauty: her face softened with the flow of oxytocin, her eyes wide and shining, her pupils dark, deep and open. And you will think — for how could you not? — what a phenomenal creature is a woman. But you will only have seen this astonishing sight if you understand that if you disturb her in her work, she will be thrown off course. Like a zoologist, you must first learn how to behave; how to sit quietly and patiently, almost invisible, breathing with her, not disturbing her mighty eternal rhythm. And you will see that she pain of her labours seldom overwhelms her. Nature would not have organised labour to be intolerable.

Leap and Anderson 2004: 28
from WALSH, Denis,
*Evidence-based Care for Normal Labour and Birth:
A Guide for Midwives*, 2007, p.48