

ROLE OF PARTNER OR SUPPORT PERSON (OVERVIEW)

The place of the spouse, partner or person chosen by the mother plays a crucial role during childbirth. Here are some ways to help the mother. Of course, every woman is different as well as the kind of support that will suit her, but here you have an overview.

- If labour starts at night and is still light, encourage her to doze or rest between contractions by helping her settle comfortably and gently massaging her, especially her lower back.
- If labour is long, ask the tired, drained people to leave the room. Send them for a little sleep or rest and call someone whose new energy will recharge your batteries. Better alternate sources of support than to run out.
- If it starts during the day, go to a place where you both feel good and intimate and work together to get used to the contractions
- Remind her that all this work is to birth your baby. Help her stay connected with the baby, in thoughts, in words, or touching him when you start to see the top of his head
- Help her stay active and eat as long as possible and prepare her food she would like to eat
- Organize the physical space for her, find her places to lean, hang, kneel, squat
- Stay in close physical contact with her
- Make sure that everyone in contact with her respects the atmosphere she needs
- Breathe with her
- Apply warm compresses as needed
- Help her relax during contractions by gently touching the parts of her body that have the most difficulty relaxing
- Take your attention off the fetal monitor, if you are in a hospital setting where it is permanently connected. Keep your attention on your companion: she is labouring, not the monitor
- Encourage her to make the sounds that suit her, to let go with her contractions
- If she is tired or discouraged, give her an invigorating massage all over her body or give her a vigorous massage of the soles of her feet
- Look at her, make sure she can always find your gaze when she needs it
- If you need to rest for a while, find someone she likes to replace you
- Help her to relax completely between contractions, to think of nothing else
- Take her in your arms and rock her during or between contractions
- Point out what an extraordinary job she is doing by recognizing her efforts and generosity, rather than focusing on her performance
- Keep lighting to a minimum and always indirect. Ask the staff to work with a minimum of light, if you are in a hospital setting
- Encourage her to move, change position, get up to go to the bathroom



ROLE OF PARTNER OR SUPPORT PERSON

BEGINNING OF LABOUR

At night:

- suggest staying in bed with a heating pad or hot water bottle
- experience relaxation by breathing
- sleep between contractions

During the day:

- encourage the mother to keep up her daily activities, avoid falling into waiting mode, encourage rest when she is tired
- eat and drink regularly and encourage the mother to do the same
- later, the contractions will require more concentration
- be creative! It's a birthday celebration!
- be confident: you will find the way to your opening. Encourage the mother to open too
- establish a light and calm ambience, each step teaches us to cross the next
- establish a relationship with the mother through massage and / or eye contact
- express your needs, take your place
- count the frequency and duration of contractions
- allow yourselves to do some of the labour at home
- take care of the logistics (manage communications with relatives, organize the care of other children and pets, finalize the preparation of the suitcase and the infant car seat, etc.)

ACTIVE LABOUR (3 to 6 cm)

- more intense contractions, closer together and more regular; adaptation period
- learn to flow with this new energy
- deep conscious breathing becomes even more important
- the sound of breathing becomes the song of childbirth. Be creative and let it change according to how it feels
- if making sounds helps you, make deep (low pitched) sounds that favor opening;
- suggest moving, walking, changing position, es-



- pecially if the baby is high. Adopt an attitude of openness
- vary the positions (vertical, lying down ...)
- if all the muscles around the mouth are relaxed, the cervix will be as well. Encourage the woman to leave her mouth soft during contractions
- a little rule if labour is going well: do what you dread most (ex: walk even if you do not always feel like it)
- as the intensity increases, repeat this key phrase: «The best way out of the pain is to enter it»
- continue to eat and drink to avoid hypoglycemia, and regularly provide the laboring woman with water and snacks between contractions
- If food does not go down well, suggest herbal tea with honey, juice or Gatorade, or simply ice cubes
- support the mother during the midwife's interventions (cervical checks, listening to baby's heart, intravenous insertion, etc.), and if the presence of medical personnel is required, be a source of comfort and familiarity facing the unknown and the unexpected

- suggest taking hot baths or apply warm compresses (face cloth with warm water) to the lower abdomen and back
- be attentive: she will need to express things that do not necessarily require solutions: that it is difficult, that it hurts, that she is afraid. Listening with calm and tenderness will help her a lot.
- the midwife can suggest massage techniques or pressure points
- «endorphin» hormones have a softening effect on pain, so encourage her to take advantage of the breaks between contractions

TRANSITION (7 to 10 cm)

** This is often the most turbulent phase of the delivery. At this stage, it is particularly important to serve as a beacon for the mother. Keep calm, speak words of love and reassurance. **

- there are sometimes plateaus (periods of stalled labour) in this phase; do not be discouraged. Offer words of confidence
- the mother sometimes needs to change her mental state, attitude (ex: to transform the perfectionism, the niceness, the docility) to truly embody her power
- the contractions are longer and closer together (some blood loss may occur)
- massage, touch, heat, warm compresses
- sometimes women do not want to be touched; be attentive
- the mother may vomit, shake: reassure her that everything is normal
- visualize the baby: she makes her rotation and comes down. Encourage the mother to visualize it too. If it helps her, remind her that the baby and herself are working as a team
- release the emotional knots by encouraging her to express her fears and her thoughts
- locking eyes will unite you to your strength
- if the labour is long, make sure you give yourself some space. Do not forget to eat and rest

PUSHING

- sometimes there may be a period without contractions or pushing efforts. Do not worry; it's often a time to rest before the expulsion
- pushing is a spontaneous reflex, by which the uterus will seek the assistance of the mother to give birth to the baby
- the first push serves as adaptation to the strong pressure on the vagina and the rectum
- sometimes, there are women who feel that the body is pushing on its own (the pushing action is then involuntary). We can guide so that the expulsion is not too abrupt. This prevents tears of the perineum
- when the woman does not feel this pushing sensation, she must make greater efforts
- each push makes the baby go down; for a first baby, the pushing stage is sometimes very slow, that is to say, that the molding of the head is done slowly. It can last between 5 minutes and 3 hours
- change position if the baby does not come down (semi-sitting, kneeling, squatting, standing, lying on the side). Support the mother physically in certain positions
- support the mother positively. Respect this phase of childbirth
- let the baby pass through, open up
- welcome the baby, take the time to touch her, place her on her mother's belly
- if the mother is not available, encourage skin to skin with partner or support person
- let out your fears, your emotions, your joys. Savour these unique moments in your life

