



# Partners and Doulas

My aim as a doula is to help you feel as confident as you can be in supporting your woman during the birth of your child. Women need their partners during birth, and for them to be full of trust and confidence in their bodies and the process birth.

When it comes to pregnancy, birth and parenting, partners want to share in everything! They want to be actively involved; ease their partner's labour pain, welcome their baby at the moment of birth and help care for their newborn at home.

As a doula I help partners experience this special time with confidence.

## **“Won't a doula take over from my role as support person?”**

Having a doula at your birth should never undermine or diminish your support role. You know your partner better than anyone. You love her, and what your presence brings to the birth of this child that you made together is unique...and not able to be replicated by me!

My presence is not to compete with you, but to complement you. Supporting a birthing woman can sometimes be a very long, tiring and emotional experience, with some first births lasting 24 hours or more. Even some of the most skeptical partners are so pleased afterwards that they had someone there for them - to reassure them that what their partner is experiencing is normal, give them guidance on how to help when they weren't sure what they could do, and encourage them to keep going. A doula takes the pressure off partners to have to remember everything they've learnt in childbirth classes – if they forget that awesome massage technique, the doula is there to remind them - and help them to apply that knowledge in the heat of the moment, in real labour. A doula has attended many births, and each one is different. At each of those births she has learnt, practiced and perfected techniques to help labouring women feel comfortable and safe in a wide range of labour scenarios. She's also familiar with hospital protocol and policy, and will often be able to anticipate what the hospital may propose to do next so that you're both prepared and able to feel more in control of the birth. My experience with the practical stuff complements the emotional support that only you can provide. A doula's presence will allow you to be fully involved in your baby's birth in a deeper, more meaningful way.



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Expecting partners to provide effective birth support while remaining fully emotionally present is a big ask, during what is often your very first experience of birth. It's like asking you to coach a game that you've never seen played before!

## **“Won't the hospital think we're weird if we bring a doula?”**

I've been a doula for 6 years, and 95% of the births I support are hospital births. So even though the concept of a doula is probably quite new to you, it won't be to your caregiver or your hospital.

I encourage you to ensure the doula you choose has experience supporting hospital births and established relationships with the local hospitals. Some doulas support more homebirths than hospital births, and still others may only attend a handful of births a year. This can mean they have limited experience with the extra complexities of birth support in a hospital environment.

## **“Isn't the midwife there to do all of this?”**

Not usually. Many people are surprised to find that midwives in the hospital aren't able to stay with you constantly through labour, providing contraction-by-contraction support. You and your partner will usually be left to get on with the practical work of labour yourselves while they take responsibility for your medical care. This can come as quite a shock, and not being prepared for this is a major reason that many women run out of coping strategies quickly, and end up making choices that they didn't plan for.

## **“But I don't know if I feel very comfortable having a stranger present during our baby's birth?”**

When the time comes for your baby to be born, we'll have spent many hours together preparing for her birth. I hope that by that time, you'll know and trust me and feel that I'm an integral part of your birth team.

If your baby will be born in hospital, you'll encounter many strangers during your labour. Even if you're using a private obstetrician known to you, the majority of your labour will be spent with midwives who you won't have met before the birth. Hospital birth suites are busy - doctors, midwives, orderlies, medical and midwifery students and other personnel come and go, and every 8 hours there's a shift change...bringing more new faces. Choosing to have a doula present can provide continuity of care and a familiar presence when you and your partner need it most.