

My First Birth

A Happy Birthday Story

by Sally Blyth

All my life I have dreaded the process of labor and childbirth. I thought I would have been content not to have children simply not to have to go through it. But the urge to be a mother got the better of me, and when I became pregnant with my son Sam I knew there was no turning back!

I read everything I could get my hands on, spoke to everyone I knew who had children, and my husband and I attended prenatal classes. The reading I did was beneficial in preparing me for what was to come, and the personal contact gave me a good variety of experiences to ponder. However, the prenatal classes seemed to focus on all the things that could go wrong: the pain, the horrors, the hard work. They kept saying that first babies are always late and first labors are so long. They never mentioned that birth could be a pleasant experience, which it can be.

My overall terror was based on the fact that I had never been in a hospital, never had any drugs stronger than antibiotics or been in a situation beyond my control. As my delivery date grew nearer, I was as daunted as ever. But I resigned myself to the fact that this was going to test every ounce of me. It was inevitable, so I was intent on making it the best it could be.

I approached my impending labor in a relaxed and positive way. I prepared myself for the worst but hoped for the best. My doctor was wonderful: gentle, informative and calming. We agreed that I would go with the flow, that it would be as natural as possible, but if medical technology had to step in, then so be it. I was still scared, but happy knowing that medical intervention would only happen if absolutely vital.

I concentrated on having confidence in my body, on letting things happen, and on allowing nature to take its course. Lots of positive thinking went on.

My water broke at 10:40 p.m. the night before my due date. My husband and I had just gone to bed when "ping!" I felt as if a rubber band had snapped inside my stomach. "I think my water just broke," I said, and raced to the toilet. The water gushed from me; rivers ran. I couldn't believe all that water could come from inside me. My husband was up and dressed and consulting all the books, wondering what would happen next. Everything we had learned seemed to go straight out the window!

I was shaking uncontrollably. This is it! I told myself. I phoned my doctor, who calmed me down, told me not to worry and to sit tight and wait until contractions started. If they didn't, he'd get things under way in the morning. Contractions began 20 minutes later. By this time the shaking had subsided and I began to think clearly. The contractions were mild but relatively close together. I sat in a comfy chair and let it happen. My husband's job was to note down the timing of

the contractions. When they started coming about two minutes apart, he looked at me and said, "It can't be, they're not supposed to be that close together yet!" Two hours after they began, the contractions were very close, quite long — but still not all that painful — and we decided it was time to head for the hospital.

We arrived at the hospital (the water stopped leaking at this point) and I was hooked to a monitor which showed that all was well. My doctor arrived at about 2:00 a.m. and did an internal exam which showed that I was already eight centimeters dilated. I can honestly say the pain was nothing I couldn't cope with, as I had been expecting much worse. To my glee I discovered that much of the hard work was over! I hadn't even thought about painkillers so far.

During transition, over the next hour or so, things became quite painful. But by 4:00 a.m. I was fully dilated and ready to push.

My pushing stage was quite long and simply sheer hard work. I think I would rather have gone out and run two marathons than carry on with that pushing! Nothing much was happening initially, so my doctor coaxed me onto a birthing stool. That got things going, and eventually I could see my baby's head. I got back into a sitting position on the bed to continue pushing, as I found that most comfortable. A mirror appeared at the end of the bed, which meant I could watch the proceedings. That was very motivating and I highly recommend it.

Shortly thereafter, at 5:40 a.m., my beautiful son Sam was born. He weighed in at 7 lbs., 10 ozs. and had a great mop of white hair! All in all, it was a seven-hour, trouble free, very low-tech labor and birth. I didn't have any stitches or tearing, my placenta came away easily and Sam latched onto the breast immediately. My husband cut the cord, which he said was like cutting a plastic tube. I was in awe of both my baby and the entire experience of childbirth. I had no words, only a huge grin as I looked down at my perfect little newborn son. I felt very proud of myself — I had done it!

Sam was born on his due date, he was of average size, and I had no complications. Rest assured that childbirth can be accomplished without too much trauma. Since I had Sam, friends have had babies with similar experiences to mine. Others have not had such happy tales, but the result has always been a healthy baby, and that's what matters. So have confidence in yourself and prepare by reading, talking and grabbing every bit of information that you can. Then hope for the best while preparing for all possibilities.

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About the Author: *Sally Blyth gave birth to Sam on June 30, 1993. She lives in Auckland, New Zealand.*