

Pain Relief During Labor

Techniques and Suggestions

- ◆ **Mindfulness Meditation**

Gentle observation of rising layers of sensations, breath, and internal states, can enhance “interoception” (bodily and emotional awareness), and bring a new perspective toward pain.

Follow your breath. Scan your body. Watch the pain. Watch the feelings about the pain. Step back and notice all these strange new sensations. The body is complex. Acknowledge the pain, etc.

- ◆ **Hypnosis**

Guided induction can create state of alert focus, shift and redirect attention, help activate natural opiates.

- ◆ **Progressive Relaxation**

Classical stress relief technique is a guided sequence of deepening relaxation, focusing on each area of the body. Helpful in early stages of labor.

- ◆ **Breathing**

All pain-management should include breathing awareness. During the first stage of labor, help the mother find the natural rhythm of her breath with several well-known techniques.

Avoid hyperventilation by maintaining proper balance of oxygen and carbon dioxide

Holding of breath for too long can lead to panic sensations. The doula should watch to make sure that each breath is released: slow exhales with full emptying of lungs and relaxed diaphragm, or deep sighing.

- ◆ **Rocking Movements**

Rhythmic movement has a calming effect on the mind. It can create a trance-state where time seems to stand still and allows access to the nervous system, in the same way that a mother rocks her baby to sleep. These primal motions may be a key to opening the breath and promoting a natural body freedom. Rocking stimulates the cerebellum, which is the part of the brain that governs the smooth coordination of muscles and is also linked to primal emotional responses in the limbic system. The importance of body movement (vestibular-cerebellar stimulation) in mother-infant bonding has also been well documented.

- ◆ **Somatic Support**

Acupressure and shiatsu points, yoga and Pilates positions, stretching, back support and cushioning, etc.

- ◆ **Appropriate Distractions**

Distractions may be useful during early, less intense stages of labor, including: music, touch, massage, favorite movie, humor, sitting in tub or jacuzzi, storytelling, prayer, freedom of movement, and comfort food, etc.

- ◆ **Props and Tools**

Hot and cold compresses, stretching ball, TENS (Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation) a small machine that emits electrical pulses, rubber squeeze toys, acupuncture needles, etc.