

Mothering the Mother

Creating a positive birth experience. *How a Doula Can Help*

Informing and Educating

At each stage of labor, the birth-giver is kept abreast of what is occurring. She is given updates every step along the way, briefed about any new developments and the thinking of the staff and their recommendations, potential decisions to be made, etc.

Comfort and Sensitivity

The mother's body should be treated in a gentle, sensitive and careful manner. She feels secure that her body won't be injured, that an epidural will be administered in a way to not hurt her joints, and will not be given any unnecessary invasive procedures, such as episiotomy, etc. She is helped to work with her body and to manage the pain with a variety of methods

Above all, a birth-giver is never to feel left alone or abandoned

The doula is always available and near at hand

During first-stage labor, if the mother is comfortable, stable, and doing well, she may specifically request an interval of privacy. For example, parents with past childbirth under their belt may want some time to themselves. The doula can step back into an unobtrusive role; sit quietly in the room, or in the next room, to be called when needed. She should remain alert.

Running interference

The doula provides a “firewall” against stressful encounters, undue pressure, and distractions. She makes sure that the woman's privacy is respected—that she is not intruded upon. Doulas can model appropriately respectful behavior for others on the birth team. She makes sure that everyone speaks calmly and gently and does not convey anxiety to birth-giver. No one walks in or out of the birth-giver's room without explaining what she or he is doing, checking, learning, and the reasons for it (except during states of absorption, when she is not to be disturbed).

Nurturing and Doting

The birth-giver feels cared about, totally supported, and valued, her wishes known and respected. She feels accepted and should never feel judged or be seen as inadequate. The doula conveys to the birth-giver how honored she is to be invited to participate during this transformative time. The doula consistently reassures and comforts mother, and allows her to utterly relax and be “cared for.” The doula is unconditionally accepting and sensitive to changing states of mind and moods—she is comfortable with any bodily responses: messiness, awkwardness, fluids, etc.

Autonomy

The birth-giver is free to change her mind or her choices. She is regularly asked if a method, an action, or a technique is still working for her.