

## Techniques and Suggestions

*The doula has a full repertoire of techniques available to use as needed*

- ◆ **Guidance through each contraction**

Contractions may occur at different intervals, intensity and duration, but each one can be worked through rhythmically using breath, counting, rocking, etc. *“That’s right, breathe through it, like the waves to the shore.”*

- ◆ **Refocusing and Reminding**

In the throes of labor, both the woman and her partner may forget techniques they learned in class—the positions, pressure points, massage techniques, visualizations, etc. The doula can remind, suggest, demonstrate, and help the woman choose among options in the moment.

- ◆ **Regaining a rhythm**

Women in labor can feel overwhelmed and lose their rhythm at times. A partner, doula, or caregiver can help her to regain it by drawing her attention with voice or eye contact and asking her to follow rhythmic signals.

- ◆ **The “Take Charge” Routine**

A trusted person can temporarily assume a more active and directive role if the woman falters and loses her own coping style, or is frightened. After a while, this will help her return to her own rhythmic coping ritual.

- ◆ **To reassure the birth-giver: Normalize her experience**

*Be careful that your words give her a sense of progress.* For example, if it seems like a long early labor and the cervix is only at 2 centimeters, be sure that the care provider describes any small positive changes, in the cervix for example, texture, moving from posterior to anterior. Don’t say things like. “This is not a good sign.”

- ◆ **Participating directly**

The woman may invite the support person to become part of the ritual, rocking and moving with her, holding her, etc.

# Pain Relief During Labor

## Techniques and Suggestions

- ◆ **Breathe and count through each contraction with her.**  
Count down from 20 to one, three or four times. Have her imagine the numbers morphing into each other or floating in front of her.
- ◆ **Follow her rhythm**  
Match her rhythm with head nodding, hand movements, clenching and releasing.
- ◆ **Holding and swaying**  
Hold the woman in a comfortable embrace throughout the contraction, rock and sway in sync with her body, following her lead.
- ◆ **Sensitive touch**  
Stroke her gently, with sensitivity— wherever she wants —arm, hand, shoulder, etc. Watch her reactions and comfort level and make sure it is not overstimulating. Acupressure points can be used.
- ◆ **Verbal Reassurance**  
Murmur soothing reassuring words to her in a caring tone,  
*“That’s it. You’re doing great.”*
- ◆ **Make sounds together**  
Use the groan method, deep sighs, grunts.  
Guttural sounds open the throat, and can help open the birth canal by releasing muscle tension. This can also generate spontaneous laughter (in response to the “funny” noises).
- ◆ **Movement**  
Help her to walk around room, to squat, to stretch, to sit in a warm tub of water, to listen to and follow her body’s urges.
- ◆ **Check in with her regularly:**  
*“What are you noticing now?”*  
*What was going through your mind (during that last contraction)?”*
- ◆ **Make simple suggestions to help solve problems**  
Example: baby in wrong position:  
*“Perhaps if you get on all fours and try this position for about 15-20 minutes. This often helps turn a posterior baby.”*