

Support During Labor

The body can display an endless range of release behaviors

Women may use several styles of coping with pain in labor, sometimes switching between them. Usually these spontaneous rituals include rhythm in some form.

An experienced doula witnesses every variation of coping mechanism:

Sounds or verbalization

If left to uninhibited expression, many women will make some sound during labor: Deep sighs, groans, moans, grunts, laughing, growling, nonsense syllables

Movements

Contortions, clenching, quivering, shaking, pounding bed with fist, grimaces

Somatic and kinesthetic

Other may squeeze a pillow or the partner's hand or want to move around as a way to "meet" the contraction.

Touch

During labor, some women need extra quiet, gentler touch, or more physical space to move around. For some, touch can feel invasive. Others need to be constantly held.

Visualization or imagery

During labor, some mothers may prefer to use internal or external visual images for moving through the contraction.

Emotional expression

Calling for her mother, crying, sobbing, heaving, keening, angry outbursts, cursing. In some cases, the woman may get angry, yell, call for help, etc.

The doula must remember that she is not the target of the woman's distress and should not take these expressions personally