



HELLO *Beautiful* BIRTH

.....

The Birth Plan Booklet

Learn your "Labor Language", make informed decisions, and keep your rhythm



*"Here's to feeling heard,
valued, and empowered.
Here's to a beautiful birth."*

SHANTELE MCBRIDE CD(DONA)

Welcome! I'm so excited to be on this journey with you. Parenthood is an indescribable gift, and being pregnant is a wonderful time to slow down, grow intellectually, and transcend into an enlightened bliss while your beautiful baby flourishes inside of you. This is a time to think deeply about the kind of birth you want. What does it look like to you? Maybe you're in a birthing tub in your home, surrounded by flickering candles, breathing deeply, and surrendering your body- opening up to allow your baby to emerge gently from your womb. Maybe you're in a hospital room, peacefully resting in bed while the medication permeates your body so you can alleviate the worst of the pains associated with labor. Whatever your birth looks like to you is what matters. There is no shame in having the birth you want, whatever that looks like! This is a time of decision-making. The best ways to make the most informed decision are to: 1) research, research, research 2) take notes and 3) create a straightforward birth plan. The good news is, I've done a lot of the research for you. In this booklet, you'll find a streamlined rendition of all the approaches to birth, how each one might impact your body and your baby, and why it's important to study and educate yourself on each one. In my own research for this guide, I explored and examined the most up-to-date, evidence-based information there is on childbirth and breastfeeding today.

When I had my first baby eighteen years ago, there was not nearly as much information out there then as there is today. With each of my next three births, I learned just a little bit more each time. But even after my fourth birth in 2012, I didn't have a clear grasp on why certain things in birth were done and not done, what physical responses happened in my body (and my baby's body) during childbirth, and why my birth team had rejected my birth plan when all I wanted was to have a non-medicalized birth. I didn't realize until I went through my DONA doula training just how undereducated I actually was in specific areas (like self-advocacy, informed consent, hormones, and the Breast Crawl!).

Even though all of my birth plans were extremely detailed, lengthy, and eloquent, I felt like they were brushed off by my providers and not taken seriously. They were also very inflexible, unbalanced, and likely outdated- despite feeling prepared and equipped at the time to handle birth. In reality, because my wishes weren't validated, affirmed, or clearly valued, the opposite was true: when it came time to labor and give birth, I felt incredibly unempowered as a woman, as a mom, and- honestly- as a human.

For these reasons and more, I've designed this birth plan guide! I want you to have all the information at your fingertips so you can make the best, most informed choice for you, your partner, your family, and your baby. I am inspired by all you beautiful birthing people and my passion continues to grow every single day. When you get a chance, stop by my website and say hello; www.hellobeautifulbirth.com. I'd love to hear all about your pregnancies and births, and to see your tiny humans.

With All My Love,

Shantelle

Did you know....

- The average length of an OB appointment is 6 minutes?
- A doula can help you write a birth plan that your birth team will take seriously?
- Having a midwife is like having a compassionate family member deliver your baby?
- Doctors will use the non-medical term "failure to progress" to convince you that you need to have a cesarean?
- Your choice of provider and location of birth drastically determines whether or not you will end up with a cesarean - whether needed or not?
- A doula can help you win early labor?
- Your body will birth each baby differently?
- Your partner can help with skin-to-skin contact for the baby by removing their shirt?
- A doula will not only support you, but your partner as well?
- Writing appreciative letters to amazing caregivers during your birth will make their day?
- A doula doesn't replace your partner?
- delayed cord clamping allows warm, oxygen-rich blood to flood into your baby from the placenta?
- A doula will help you process your fears, answer your questions, and facilitate communication?
- Some doctors refer to VBAC as TOLAC - trial of labor after cesarean?
- Most cord blood is transferred by 30 seconds, maxing out around 3-5 minutes?
- The first hour of life (golden hour) is the most important for you and baby?
- Newborn care can be delayed for 2 hours and can be done on your chest?

Things to say and ask....

1. Why is this being suggested now? What has changed?
2. May we have some time to think about it?
3. We need to pray on this.
4. We need more information.
5. What can I expect my body to feel like postpartum?
6. How long will my recovery take?
7. What are the risks and benefits of this intervention/procedure?
8. Will my doula stay or go if I choose to get an epidural?
9. How do I feel about episiotomy?
10. Will I need help breastfeeding?
11. What are my expectations for life-after-baby?
12. What is my doula's role before, during, and after birth?
13. Will my doula stay or go if I have to get an emergency cesarean?
14. Do I trust my birth team?
15. Do I feel heard, validated, and honored?
16. What are the advantages to having a doula at my birth?
17. How do I want to remember this birth?
18. What are the four stages of labor?
19. How am I feeling about my upcoming birth?
20. Do I feel ready for parenthood?
21. Do I know the signs of active labor?
22. What is most important for me during labor?
23. How involved in the birth will my partner be?
24. Where will I give birth?

Things to remember....

- ★ You are strong, capable, and beautiful.
- ★ The strongest threads of a torn and tattered birth plan will always be informed choices.
- ★ Oxytocin makes the waves come and go, gives you the urge to push, lets your milk flow, and helps you connect with your baby.
- ★ One intervention will likely lead to another... and then another...
- ★ Birth is a great surrendering.
- ★ If plugs are not being ripped from the wall and I'm not being wheeled down the hallway, there is no medical emergency, and I have time to get all the information to make an informed decision.
- ★ The 3 most important coping methods in birth are rhythm, ritual and relaxation.
- ★ The decision is not the goal. It is the choice, the informed choice, that matters.
- ★ Oxytocin is known as the hormone of "calm and connection" or the "love" hormone.
- ★ Endorphins create that "high" feeling during labor and after birth.
- ★ Labor is very hard, but you're doing it!
- ★ Let your doula help you.
- ★ Release and open up for the baby.
- ★ Take one contraction (or wave) at a time.
- ★ Focus on your breath.
- ★ Your pain is your power. It's telling you what you need to do.
- ★ Ride your contractions like a wave and you won't go under.
- ★ Vocalize- moan, sigh, groan. Express yourself freely.
- ★ My doula will join me when waves are 5 min apart, lasting 1 min, for 1 hr (5-1-1).

Create a birth plan that...

- Gets read by your birth team
- Is respected and honored by all
- Addresses the most important things to me

Your choice of provider and location of birth will drastically determine the outcome of your birth!

- Example 1: A homebirth birth plan won't focus on having access to a bath/shower, food, a quiet environment, the ability to move around, etc. You will have complete access to all your personal belongings, create a serene atmosphere, and labor in any position.
- Example 2: A birth center birth plan will not need to focus on having a lot of those things as well, since they are standard at most birth centers (bath, shower, snacks, walking during labor, etc.)
- Example 3: A hospital birth plan will look much different. You may have to include having access to the hallway to take a walk, or for your partner to be able to bring you food. It really depends on your preferences and what is most important to you!

You want your birth plan to be direct and to the point so everyone involved won't dismiss it or just glance at it (if it's a 5-page essay). Use bullet points, headings, and a larger font for easier readability. Here are some options to consider when designing your birth plan:

Options to Consider...

- Birth Affirmations to remind you of your body's amazing power
- Deep belly breathing to get you through hard contractions
- A heating pack or bag of rice to use on your lower back for back labor
- Access to a shower/bath for soothing comfort during labor
- Soft music to play in the background that sets the mood for a peaceful birth
- Foot and hand rubs, back massage, and essential oils for relaxation
- Guided visualization for moments when labor is very intense
- Having a doula or other support person in the room with you, besides your partner
- Birthing ball to sway and spiral on during tough waves (or contractions)
- Food and water to sustain you during a long labor
- Heprin lock instead of an IV so you can move around to get labor flowing
- An epidural for when labor becomes too much and you are suffering
- A code word to alert your birth team that you really do want pain medication
- Intermittent monitoring instead of continuous monitoring so you can move more
- Dimmed lights and electric candles for a more conducive atmosphere for birthing
- Minimal vaginal exams to reduce the likelihood of infection
- Not to be offered pain meds unless you specifically ask for them
- Guided pushing in the position that feels most comfortable to you
- Waterbirth at home or birth center for a more gentle birth
- No episiotomy unless there is a medical reason to do so
- Waiting 1-5 minutes before clamping and cutting the cord
- Spontaneous delivery of the placenta without Pitocin
- Immediate skin-to-skin contact with the baby after delivery
- The Breast Crawl where baby finds its way to the breast on its own
- Newborn testing put off for 2 hours so you and baby can bond
- Newborn testing to be done on your chest
- Vaccinations and circumcision

Sample Birth Plan

Birth Person's Name: Jane Doe

Partner's Name: John Doe Doula's Name: Shantelle McBride

We understand that birth is unpredictable and cannot be planned in all cases; however here are the components that are *most important* to us. We appreciate you being aware of our choices and honoring them to the best of your ability. If things arise and changes need to be made during labor and delivery, we just ask for a few minutes to consider all the options to make an informed decision. Thank you for your time.

Stage 1 (Active Labor):

- ★ Access to shower and/or bath, birthing ball, and ice chips
- ★ Eat, drink, and change positions as needed
- ★ Dimmed lights and electric candles
- ★ Intermittent monitoring, minimal vaginal exams, and Heprin lock if IV becomes necessary

Stage 2 (Pushing & Birth):

- ★ Guided pushing in position that feels most comfortable to me
- ★ Not be offered pain meds unless I specifically ask for them
- ★ No episiotomy unless there is a medical reason to do so
- ★ My partner to catch the baby and my doula to take pictures

Stage 3 (The Placenta):

- ★ Spontaneous delivery without Pitocin
- ★ Nobody to pull on the cord for faster delivery
- ★ Save for encapsulation
- ★ If does not come out within 20 min, consider options

Stage 4 (Early Postpartum):

- ★ Immediate skin-to-skin contact with baby
- ★ Wait 1-5 minutes before clamping and cutting the cord
- ★ The Breast Crawl
- ★ Newborn testing put off for 2 hours

Cesarean Birth (If a medical emergency arises):

- ★ Partner/Doula to be in the OR with me for emotional support
- ★ Skin-to-skin contact with baby as soon as possible after delivery
- ★ Breastfeeding as soon as possible after delivery

Thank you for your support and for being a part of this incredible birth experience!

Birth Plan Template

Birthing Person's Name: _____

Partner's Name: _____ Doula's Name: _____

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Stage 1 (Active Labor):

- ★
- ★
- ★
- ★

Stage 2 (Pushing & Birth):

- ★
- ★
- ★
- ★

Stage 3 (The Placenta):

- ★
- ★
- ★
- ★

Stage 4 (Early Postpartum):

- ★
- ★
- ★
- ★

Cesarean Birth (If a medical emergency arises):

- ★
- ★
- ★

Thank you for your support and for being a part of this incredible birth experience!

I wish you the best of luck in your birth journey and am sending you all my well wishes for a peaceful and undisturbed birth!

If you have any questions, please send me an email at

shantelle@hellobeautifulbirth.com



Hello Beautiful
B I R T H

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