

Long read. Point of the story, and I loved my birth!

I had 3 due dates because of a confusing ovulation cycle. When I changed to group midwifery care instead of seeing an obstetrician the midwife noticed this and offered to make the later date my official date to allow me a better chance of going into labour naturally. Despite this, I worked right up to 39 weeks (based on my later due date) thinking there is no way I will go on time! I had hoped that I would get a few days to nest and rest before bub arrived.

My impatient little lady had other plans though.

I finished up work on 28/10 which put me at 38+6 based on my 'official' date, or 39+5 based on the original date

That night I started having regular contractions. I dismissed them as Braxton hicks at first but they continued to come on regularly at 7 minute intervals.

Following instructions from our birth classes, I did my best to ignore the contractions but I had a sneaky feeling this was it. As the contractions became stronger through the night I made myself a little nest next to the bed with my dog and slept on the floor with my dog.

The next day continued much the same, with the contractions coming about 7-8 minutes apart and still very mild so I strapped on my tens machine and we headed to the shops for some last minute necessities.

During lunch they became much stronger so we made a quick exit and headed back home where they settled down once again and I became very emotional thinking that it was false labour, and I had gotten myself mentally prepared for nothing.

8pm : my partner sent me back to my nest next to the bed so I listened to some Hypnobirthing tracks to try and calm me down and ended up falling asleep. I woke up to stronger pains in my lower back and found I could no longer get through a contraction without vocalizing so I called the hospital to let them know and hopped in the bath

9:30pm : contractions were coming at 3 minute intervals at the start of the bath but quickly became more intense and roughly 2 mins apart. I noticed the change in them and told my partner I would get out after 3 more of those 'good' contractions which really felt like things were moving.

10:30pm: out of the bath and back on the tens machine, we called the hospital to let them know we were on our way. We arrived at the hospital and as our midwife Hannah met us in the corridor I let myself collapse onto the wall and started crying through my next contraction

We got settled into the birth suite (we had taken some battery operated candles and a diffuser with frankincense and ylang ylang oils) and I was observed for some time as I had refused an internal exam. The midwife told me after observing for a while that my contractions seemed quite erratic and it might be best for me to return home. I couldn't see how I could possibly make it back to the car, let alone endure the drive so I consented to an internal and learnt that I was 7 cm dilated!

The next few hours were a blur but as the contractions became stronger I was able to cope without drugs. The Tens machine stayed on for much of the night, and my partner kept moving me to different positions, applying pressure to my sacrum and hips (that was heavenly!) and hosing me down in the shower.

The midwives kept requesting to strap me to the ctg machine to keep an eye on bubs

heart rate but I refused. They continued to monitor using the Doppler and occasionally used the ctg machine as a Doppler since it was stronger.

My waters broke naturally during a strong contraction at 2:30am while I was on my back as they had requested to do another internal to check my progress. My pushing urges began quickly after that and I got on the happy gas which soon became my best friend. I remember being on my knees leaning over the head of the bed when the urge hit for the first time. I asked the midwife if I was 'allowed' to push yet and she encouraged me to follow my body's natural cues. I moved from the bed, to the toilet, to the floor, back to the bed. I changed positions as it felt natural and really thought I would give birth in a squatted position but her head wasn't staying down in that position so I moved back onto my back.

I found I didn't need the gas for every single contraction as it was better to engage with the power of the contraction and 'get angry' to push.

Some time during this stage the midwives asked to begin scalp monitoring as they believed the baby was in distress. I refused again and simply trusted that she was fine and would be out soon. When I got to the 'ring of fire' moment, I had midwives stretching me and asking to perform an episiotomy.

The stretching was so intense at this point, and I figured that midwives tend to avoid cutting unless they think it's really necessary so I agreed.

A few more pushes and her head was out! After this I asked the midwives if her daddy could grab her yet, and as soon as her head was born my stomach deflated enough for me to finally see what was going on and as he put his hands on her I laughed her shoulders out and she was here!

They put her onto my chest straight away and I learnt that we had a daughter! We stayed like this for a while, encouraging her to take the breast as I pushed the placenta out (I was able to have a natural third stage) but due to a pre-existing blood issue I required further medical attention so her dad took off his top and had his own skin to skin contact while I was attended to.

It's now been 4 weeks at home with our little miss and we couldn't be happier. I am so thankful that I was able to have the birth that I wanted (despite the episiotomy, but I believe I would have torn badly without it- we were both too impatient to get her out here so I don't think I would have had time to stretch naturally)

Breastfeeding has been an ongoing struggle but we are improving and seeing a new team of lactation consultants to get a second opinion on a lip tie which I believe is causing latch issues. Who would have thought that the birth would be the 'easy' part!!?

At the end of the day, I know that I am very lucky to have been able to have a birth where nothing went wrong that required further medical intervention, but I am also sure that I wouldn't have had the birth that I did if I hadn't prepared myself mentally. The birth classes completely changed the way I perceived pain and encouraged me to embrace the power and the primal nature of the whole process. They changed my partners expectations of being at the birth even more so than my own - before the classes he always said that he never wants to be down the 'business end' but after the second session with Di he began to consider the idea of helping to deliver his baby and just went above and beyond all my expectations of how he would react in the situation.

Thankyou to Di, Rhea and your team for all your wisdom and encouragement. We probably wouldn't have loved the experience without your guidance!

Good luck to all the expectant couples reading this.

To the mums, be confident and trust your instincts. You are designed for this and you can achieve a beautiful natural birth with the most wonderful gift at the end.

Throughout the whole thing I just kept telling myself that this is the easy part (I've continued that mantra through the last 4 weeks when I've had to wake up at 3am, breastfeed, feed expressed milk and then express for the next feed! I'll be wishing for these moments when I have a screaming toddler on my hands)

Partners (if you've made it this far in my post) please don't think for a moment that you will be useless in this situation. I had 2 midwives, a student midwife and my mum in the room and the only person I was focused on and who knew exactly how to handle me was my amazing partner. Keep her as calm as you can, and keep yourself calm. Take rests and look after yourself and most importantly, try to enjoy it! We had plenty of little moments throughout the labour where we reflect on now and laugh about, and it really was the most wonderful experience for us to share as a couple.

You got this!

Melanie & Shane