

## Ways to cope with labour pain

contributed by Jo Davis

*Pain in labour is unavoidable, but it can be controlled. It is always difficult to cope seeing someone in pain. The pain of childbirth is unique to each woman, allow her to cope in her own way. There is no doubt that strong emotional and practical support in labour enhances the woman's confidence levels when dealing with the pain of contractions and duration of labour.*

### 10 tips for your birthing support person

1. *Create a positive atmosphere.* Nobody can relax when there is tension in the air, so however apprehensive you may feel, try to appear calm and in control. If need be, have your best friend available for you the whole time, just in case you need to call them.

2. *Be a willing slave.* Take care of her needs whilst she is in labour. Help her change position, keep her cool, get her a drink of water. Give her your undivided attention, even if you are feeling distracted, anxious or bored.

3. *Keep up her moral.* Enthusiasm flags when labour is long, but good moral makes it much easier to cope. Remind her how wonderful she is and that she is doing well. Be positive, be strong.

4. *Help her to relax.* Watch for tension in her face muscles or teeth. Encourage her to relax. Some women can't bare to be touched in labour; others enjoy having a massage, some just want you to be there and do nothing.

5. *Help her to concentrate on her breathing.* Remind her to keep breathing gently throughout the contractions with the emphasis on the "out" rather than "in" breath.

6. *Act as a physical support.* She may need you to put your arm around her or support her when she squats or stands.

7. *Attend to your own physical needs.* Make sure you have a break for food. Drink throughout. Have some "time out" when you need to. Organise support and cover in advance for when you are not there.


8. *Give her a relaxing hand or foot massage.* Practice this whilst she is pregnant.

9. *Act as her spokesperson.* Interpret her wishes to the LMC. She may rely on you while the contractions are very strong and may appear not to hear anyone else.

10. *Praise her efforts.* Encouragement is more important than sympathy, especially when a woman is trying hard to cope without pain-relieving drugs. Don't underestimate the valuable part that you can play in helping her through labour.



*Benefits Of Relaxation In Labor*



*Interrupts the fear - tension - pain cycle*

*Decreases discomfort*

*May shorten labor*

*Gives more energy for second and third stages*

*Helps avoid tearing*

*Reduces fatigue during and after birth*