



Directing Your Choices

Mothers- and fathers-to-be, you are one of the lucky few if you have a Birth Center at your hospital, and even more fortunate if a freestanding Birth Center is available. The more families who birth successfully in a Birth Center, the more these services will become available.

A Birth Center is very much like the “birth hut” that some traditional cultures still use. Sometimes, these are temporary places, and sometimes they are also the menstrual hut. There are many, many cultural groups where a woman is secluded during and after birth because of the risk to her and her baby. In fact, many babies aren’t named until that period of seclusion is completed. Until after that time, they are not yet considered to be of this world or a person.

By contrast, in most modern countries, Birth Centers are a home away from home for the whole family. The biggest difference between living in a modern culture where a Birth Center is rarely available and living in a traditional culture where all women of that culture go to a birth hut is that you actually have to be accepted into yours.

Birth Center births are considered to be “alternatives” within modern maternity care, and potential clients often fall under stringent assessments: how old is the mother, did she develop health concerns during the pregnancy, have her previous births been low-risk, how is the baby positioned, is the baby healthy, etc. And you know that, even if you’ve been accepted to birth in your Birth Center, the situation in your pregnancy or birth can change and require you to be transferred to a hospital.

So do you really have a “choice”?

Well, yes, but chances are you’re focusing your choices on the wrong thing. Think about the difference between choosing the style of your wedding dress and learning how to have a good marriage. Some people don’t understand this difference between making choices and having skills. Choice is based on want and wish. Skills are based