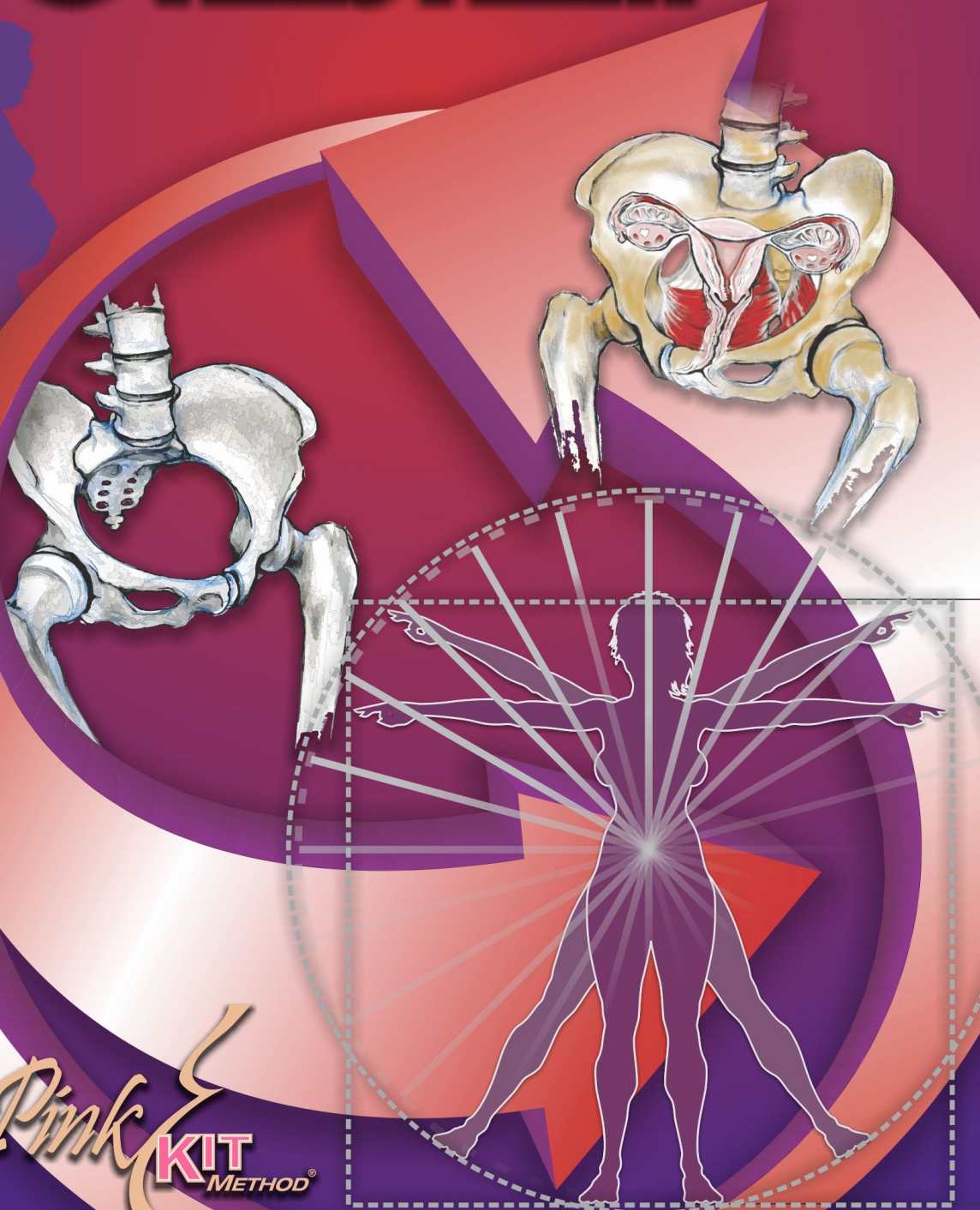


BODY SKILLS

# OVERVIEW



*Pink* **KIT**  
METHOD®

## Body Skills Overview

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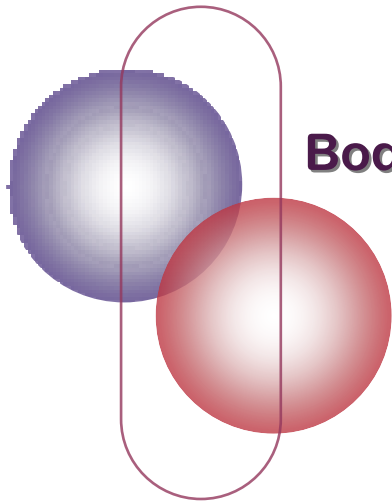
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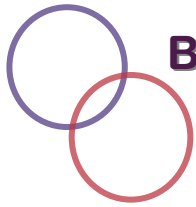


## Body Skills Overview

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# Body Skills Overview

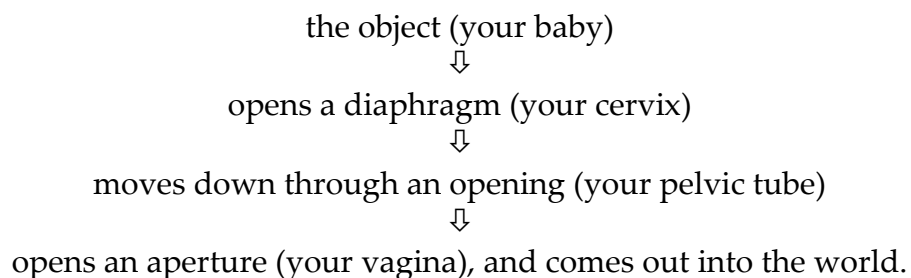
## Preparing Your Body

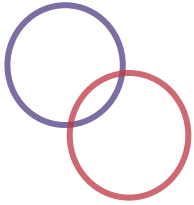
You are about to step into a series of Birthing Better Pink Kit *Body Skills* resources that will help you prepare your pregnant body for childbirth. Once you become familiar with your pelvis, it will seem like common knowledge, something everyone should know about themselves. Because you are pregnant, you are especially meant to learn about your human body and how you can prepare your bony pelvis and soft pelvis for your baby's birth. Your pregnant body will transform into a birthing body, so now is the time to prepare. Everything aspect of your Pink Kit Package is designed to give you the tools to do that.

Giving birth or being born is a very primal experience; however, humans have an incredibly unique mind, and we love being skilled. Although your baby's efforts to be born will not be under your control, you can work with those efforts by using skills. The role of your partner, as birth coach, is equally important.

## The Mechanics of Childbirth

During pregnancy, an object (your baby) grows inside a container (woman's body). Birth is the activity during which the object moves down, through and out of the container to be born. In order to do that,





If the object can move easily through the container, the activity of birth will happen over a reasonable amount of time. Always keep this mechanical model in mind.

The overarching goals of your individual and combined roles are

1. to help the container let the object out and
2. to help the object come out.

### **Shyness**

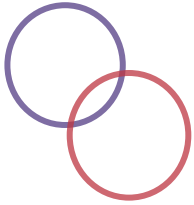
Both of you may be a bit shy about pregnancy and physical birth preparation. This is not uncommon. Even if you have a comfortable sexual relationship, certain bodily functions may still be quite private, such as voiding or menstrual periods.

In reality, many, many things happen “down there” in a woman’s body. But they shouldn’t be confused with one another. A woman who has been sexually abused usually doesn’t panic when she urinates. A woman with severe menstrual cramps may have easy bowel movements. A woman with constant yeast or bladder infections may have quick, easy, and relatively painless births.

Childbirth is an entirely different experience of “down there” than anything else. The more you can focus on giving birth (from a woman’s viewpoint) and being born (from a baby’s point of view) as unique from anything else, the more likely you’ll just totally enjoy preparing for the experience. You have to touch and be touched in all the *Body Skills* resources, so you’ll have lots of chances to get used to it gradually.

### **Woman**

Most likely, you will go through the activity of childbirth in a hospital with staff midwives/obstetrical nurses, none of whom you know or have been naked in front of. All women birth with their lower body naked so that the birth provide can see, and that thought can immediately trigger fear or anxiety.



Childbirth requires you to let go of your inhibitions. It is your job to overcome your shyness. As you go through these **Body Skills** resources, you will gain a type of body confidence so you can set aside this shyness. You don't want inhibitions to interfere with your ability to help your baby come out of its present home. Just keep in mind that, once your baby is born, you will clean its private parts frequently without shyness. Birth can be the experience that enables us to let go of our shyness so we aren't shy with our children.

If you have a Caesarean, your body will be more covered because of the surgery; however, you can still have a sense of naked vulnerability. Because you are numb from the waist down, it is easy to detach from the whole process to avoid the vulnerability. However, when you use your Birthing Better Pink Kit skills, you'll focus more on what you can do rather than on what is happening to you.

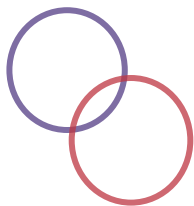
### **Overcoming privacy issues**

*"I was such a shy woman. I never was naked, even in front of my husband, and I would never permit him to see me use the toilet. Our baby was IVF conceived, but my obstetrician treated my pregnancy as any 'normal' woman. I had an unbelievably quick birth...too quick, really. Contractions came ten seconds apart for about three hours. Right at the end, when I could feel our son rapidly move down through my vagina, my privacy issues sprang up: 'I can't do this with everyone looking at my bottom.' But the urge to push was so overwhelming, I really didn't have much choice. After the birth, the first thing I said was, 'I'm so proud of myself; I peed and pooped all over the place.' That got a laugh."*

### **Coach**

Now that fathers-to-be are expected to be at the birth of their child, you must be willing to accept all the fluids, colors, odors, and by-products of childbirth.

Your baby lives inside water surrounded by a tissue bag, which either leaks or breaks at some point during labor. Sometimes, the water has an odor and a certain color, which can determine whether your birth professional becomes concerned about your baby's wellbeing. Investigate the presence of meconium (baby poo) in books, classes, or with your birth provider.



If your partner gives birth vaginally, she might move her bowels as the baby moves down through her vagina and out. If a big object pressed on your bowel tube, this would happen to you, as well. Yuck is not the appropriate response. If you're "down there" as your baby is being born, take some tissue, wipe it away, and reassure your partner it's okay. There may be some blood and mucus that comes out, as well.

As your baby's head or bottom (in a breech birth) can be seen at the vaginal opening, the colors of the tissues are layered in pinks, whites, purples, reds, blues, and sometimes yellows. When your baby then begins to breathe, the colors all over its body change. It's quite amazing. In one young father's words, "Wow, the colors, the colors, the colors. I never thought there would be so many different colors."

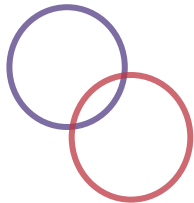
If your partner has a Caesarean, you probably won't see the surgery, because there will be a drape between both of you and what your obstetrician does. If, however, you do see the process, you must be prepared to watch major abdominal surgery. Either way, you will have to deal with the post-surgical scar and recovery.

The *Body Skills* give both of you the comprehensive knowledge and skills to work directly with the physical aspects of the container and with how the object works through the container in order to be born, whether your baby is born vaginally or through the efforts of surgery. In doing so, you will have confidence that overcomes your inhibitions.

### **Knowledge and Skills Have Layers**

You are learning to think and process childbirth information and knowledge in a whole new way and to accept the responsibility for learning a complex set of birth and coaching skills in detail. Keep in mind this quote from Thomas Averill: "Life is in the details because they add up. Details are the map of thought." *Secrets of the Tsil Café*

Let's take a driving analogy to explain layers of details.

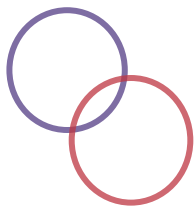


- **Add:** There are numerous yet very different skills that compose any complex task. Make a list of all the assorted skills you must learn to drive safely. In fact, there is quite a long list of discrete skills you must learn so as not to harm yourself and others.
- **Refine:** You must learn each skill sufficiently for it to become natural, almost second-nature. You become proficient. For example, you must learn to have a rather delicate touch on the brake so you don't suffer whiplash every time you stop.
- **Integrate:** You must develop the capacity to put a number of skills together at once. You multi-task. For example, the skill combinations you need to parallel park are very different from those you need to drive on icy roads.
- **Adapt:** Usually, you will never use all of your skills at the same time. You must be able to choose which skills are best at any moment, then adapt and adjust those complex skills to the situation. You become creative. For example, if you approach a sharp turn going 60 mph, you consider which skills you must put into place to navigate the curve and how the skills must adapt if an oncoming vehicle coming suddenly veers into your lane.

Each Birthing Better Pink Kit resource gives you the diverse skills you need in a specific area of childbirth. Each resource guides you through the best method for learning each set of skills so you become proficient. Each resource offers ways to combine different skills from the diverse areas and suggestions of how to adapt those skills based on how your birth unfolds. And this is done in your two primary and equally important roles.

When a very skilled woman uses her skills in depth, she can appear to birth intuitively or instinctively. When a very skilled coach knows just what to do and how to help, he can appear to read the woman's mind. But no one can actually see inside the mind of another. It is a result of your practice and your teamwork.





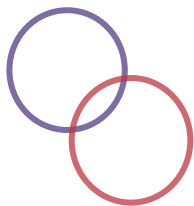
## Make Your Team Strong

Always remember birth is always an activity. This activity moves the object through the container, opens the container, and is something a baby and its mother does together. As the mother-to-be and father-to-be or other, you also have to come together as teammates. The purpose of your team IS to work with your baby's efforts to be born. This means your team has three members, doesn't it? One team member is trying to be born, and the other team members are doing their best to help this effort.

Your baby transforms your pregnant container into a birthing container by stimulating great changes—this is called labor. The messages from your baby are conveyed to the two of you through contractions the baby produces. When you learn to read the language of these contractions, you can effectively work with your baby's efforts to be born.

Your baby does not produce the “pain” of labor, however. Your baby stimulates your body to open to permit its own departure. As explained in “The Whys and Hows of Pain,” the primary cause of the pain of contractions is the stretching of cervical tissue.

In any birth with a labor, the main purpose of your team is to use skills to cope with the naturally occurring pain. You recognize that the pain is an unpleasant side effect of your baby's efforts that can be managed. It is not your baby's aim to hurt you. As you manage this unpleasant side effect, you are, in fact, giving a message back to your baby. Were you to tense up in reaction to the pain, you would make it more difficult for your baby to come out. Instead, your message to your baby is that you are helping. And your ability to help does not have to cross over into sacrifice from suffering. Instead, you feel empowered and capable to manage the pain, even while you both acknowledge how very difficult this activity is. These *Body Skills* will teach you how to create the open and relaxed container your baby needs to make its journey safer and faster.



### **Caesarean**

During a surgical delivery, the main purpose of the team composed of the mother-to-be and father-to-be or other is to keep you involved in the process of your baby's birth rather than to become passive and risk alienation. Although your baby, as a team member, is not active in a surgical birth, there is absolutely no reason for you to disconnect from your baby's birthing process. An added benefit is for you to have skills for any post-surgical pain or discomfort.

### **Who's Who**

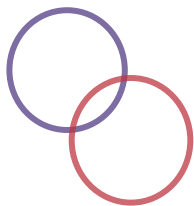
Your teamwork will, of course, grow more deeply as you work through these exercises. You both have the same body. When you go through these exercises, one of you will be the Recipient. You will have the exercises done on you. The other person will be the Doer; you will do the exercise on the other person. Exchange those roles! Because men and women share the same body, it's important for each of you to experience the "doing" and "receiving."

No longer is there just a "birth role" and "coach role." Sharing the experience of body knowledge from both viewpoints will expand your communication and teamwork. Besides, these exercises are FUN to learn and often produce a WOW response!

Also, you'll learn to overlap your birth and coach roles and see birth from each other's viewpoints. When you see or experience anything from another person's viewpoint, this is called "empathy."

### **Coach**

Your development of empathy is incredibly important in your role as a birth coach. If your partner labors, you want to have "compassionate empathy," which will enable you to keep helping her to use skills even though she is experiencing childbirth pains, rather than get lost in the pain as though it is a problem. If your partner gives birth through a surgical procedure, she will face weeks of healing from this major surgery, and your empathy will keep her remain connected to you and your baby.



These are some other reasons to take the role of Recipient as you learn these skills:

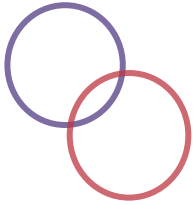
- When you feel how relaxation and tension changes your own ability to create space and mobility in your own pelvis, you are more likely to easily learn about your wife/partner's three-dimensional body. If you feel tension in your own body and can identify where it is, then you can help your partner find tension in her body.
- You will be able to develop an ability to touch your partner effectively to help her relax, rather than just "do" the exercises on her. You will progress from intellectualizing the skills to using a body identification model of working together.
- In being the Recipient, you will improve your aptitude for the empathy required to be the Doer in your role as birth coach. Women crave body identification (empathy) during pregnancy and birth. They'd prefer you to be the person providing it. An effective Doer harnesses and uses his "male energy," since men are ruled by their heart, which expresses itself in their desire to provide and protect.

As you work through each exercise, ask your woman, "Am I doing this right?" or "How would you like me to do this?" This requires your partner to think about what she wants, not just say "It's okay" or "I don't know." Answers like those aren't helpful in labor and frustrate everyone. As you become proficient with these skills, expect specificity of your birthing partner, yet remain empathetic to the reality of the naturally occurring pain. Giving birth is a monumentally big activity – her Mt. Everest.

Also, as you fill your Birthing Better Pink Tool Kit with skills, you'll always be able to try something new rather than throw up your hands in helplessness.

### **Woman**

When you practice being the Doer rather than the Recipient, you'll feel what it is like to create space in another person's body. This will help you to explain to your coach how his/her touch can be most effective with your own body. If your coach is a man,



he will never give birth, so the best he can do is to practice as the Recipient and then extrapolate through empathetic compassion.

### Housekeeping rules: Doer and Recipient

#### Doer

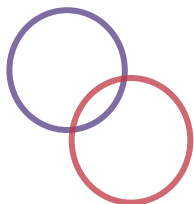
- The pelvic exercises are very mechanical, **but don't use force**. It is better to be gentle and coax the body, rather than yank it around.
- Often, you will be asked to use only your awareness (a form of Mindfulness; see "Staying in The Now") to "feel" how hidden areas can store tension and then relax with your touch.
- Learning together should be relaxed, non-competitive, and enjoyable. It should lead to fascination, conversation, and the development of your primary teamwork.
- The instructions are as specific as possible; however, you don't need to do everything verbatim. Get the gist, and find the language both of you share.
- Once you're familiar and comfortable with the exercises and skills, adapt them into ways that work best for you. Be creative!

#### Recipient

- You must guide the Doer; don't make them guess.
- Some instructions require the Doer to put their hand on a specific part of your body. You might need to take their hand and place it ("Here's my sit bone").
- When pressure is applied, let them know how much or how little you need ("Please be more firm/softer with your pressure").
- Let the Doer know what you feel when the exercise is being done ("I feel more open on my left side when you do the *Hip Lift*.")

## Using Your Body Skills

Our human body is shared by both women and men, so learning Birthing Better Pink Kit skills is simple for both of you to understand and experience. By doing so, you will learn a common language.



Let's first redefine some words commonly found in pregnancy and childbirth resources. Once you get clear about the meaning of the below words, you'll use the right word at the right time in your family.

### **Information, Knowledge, Preparation, Education, and Skills**

We tend to interchange the words information, knowledge, education, and preparation when we talk about childbirth. You'll notice few people mention childbirth "skills." Sometimes, breathing and relaxation "techniques" are taught, but only superficially, keeping with the birth trend since the 1980s that birth is an intuitive process and women don't need to be taught how to birth. Think about the differences between these words.

**Information:** "The collected facts and data about a particular subject" (Encarta®).

**Knowledge:** "Familiarity or understanding gained through experience or study" (Encarta®).

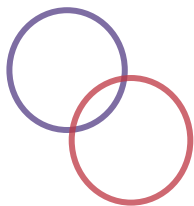
**Preparation:** "A state of readiness" (Encarta®).

**Education:** "Acquiring of knowledge through learning." (Encarta®).

**Skills:** "The ability to do something well, usually gained through experience and training" (Encarta®).

In your Birthing Better Pink Kit, there's not a lot of "information." You can find childbirth information in most childbirth books. When you attend your childbirth class, often called childbirth education or childbirth preparation, you will be given a great deal of information, education, and knowledge which is vitally important in order to make your Birth Plans, exercise your choices, and learn about the process of labor, Caesarean delivery, pain relief, and newborn care.

But there is little specific childbirth preparation except making a Birth Plan. Where are the skills? You've invested in them by purchasing the Pink Kit. We are FULL of childbirth skills.



So make certain you choose your words well when you speak with others. For example, most people make a conventional Birth Plan that sets out what you want or don't want. However, you now need to make a skills-based Birth Plan that explains to your birth professionals what skills you are learning and what ones they will see you use.

### **Exercise**

Usually, the word "exercise" is more commonly connected to jogging or a work-out. In your Birthing Better Pink Kit resources, "exercise" will mean "An action, activity, or undertaking intended to achieve a particular purpose" (Encarta®). In order to gain proficiency with your pelvic zone skills, you have to go through the exercise of learning them.

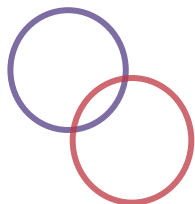
### **Practice**

There are two types of "practice," and you need to do both in order to build your expertise.

1. "To do something as an established custom or habit" (Encarta®). Together, you should set aside sufficient and regular learning time. For example, go through each section of the DVD and learn each skill. A few days later go through another section or work through one of your other resources.
2. "A habit, custom or usual way of doing something" (Encarta®). This is very different. This type of practice incorporates the skills into your daily life. For example, you're about to learn how to keep the bones you sit on far apart when you sit down, so, in your office or at the dinner table, remind yourself to open the space between these bones. Throughout the day, you need to periodically check in with something you've learned. You can review it mentally or try it right then and there, no matter what else you're doing.

### **Think, redo, and include**

*"As a man, I couldn't even imagine that birth skills would be something I loved to learn and constantly found moments in life to think about them, redo them, and include them in our*



*life. But I guess seeing my wife's belly grow bigger every week just aligned me to the reality that, one day in the near future, our baby would be born. I absolutely loved daydreaming about the birth and how I could really help. I developed a knight-in-shining-armor viewpoint. When labor started, we were already comfortable with our skills, and they just came naturally."*

As you work through the **Body Skills** resources, you'll be pleased to see that laymen's terminology is used, rather than medical terms. Both of you will

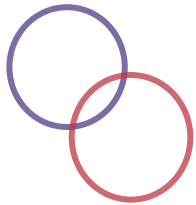
- gain knowledge of your "birthing" body during your pregnancy. This is called your pelvic zone knowledge.
- learn how to prepare your bony and soft pelvises for birth through pelvic zone exercises and skills.
- discover which body positions are conducive to your personal birth experience.

Throughout these resources, there are notes about how to apply the knowledge in a planned Caesarean, emergency Caesarean, or VBAC. Childbirth knowledge and skills should be a natural part of every pregnancy, not directed to one type of birth. You didn't get pregnant to "have" a birth but to "have" a baby. Using skills should not be determined by the type of birth your baby has. Using skills should be part of your relationship to helping your baby be born.

You'll also learn how to use common body language. For more on both verbal and non-verbal language skills, see the "Communication" resource. Last, you'll be directed to "Must Do" or "Might Do" exercises, for two reasons:

1. Life is time-consuming, and some of you can only dip into your Pink Kit. Make certain you do the "Must Do". For those who want to dive deeper and get the most out of the resources, do the "Might Do" as well.
2. As you'll discover, some skills just won't apply to your body.

The use of your Birthing Better Pink Kit skills will never be linear in your birth. Birth is dynamic and changeable. You'll use some skills for a while and then switch to



others. While you are training your mind to see childbirth as a three-dimensional activity and a pretty mechanical plumbing process, you also need to prepare yourself to use which skills make sense at the time.

Here are two stories about the skills when used before and after birth.

### **I can sleep now!**

*"I'm already taking advantage of any pains or aches I get to use Directed Breathing, tensing then relaxing, and it does work! My greatest success to date is using Directed Breathing and the Pelvic Clock to sometimes overcome shocking sleep problems. Now, instead of waking up, lying awake for hours on end (no special anxiety, but just sheer wakefulness and a total non-desire to sleep), when I even START to breathe with intent, or do the Pelvic Clock, I often go straight back to sleep. This is an amazing victory for me!"*

### **Why did I wait?**

*"I wanted a natural birth, but my baby was always breech, and my husband and I won't risk him to have a natural birth. With great disappointment, I agreed to a Caesarean. I stopped wanting to do anything with the Pink Kit, but my husband made me reluctantly go through all the exercises again and again so he could learn. He didn't know I had just lost interest. My husband was terrific during surgery, encouraging me to use the skills. I did to please him but didn't really get much out of it. I was so disappointed.*

*"After the birth, I had trouble breastfeeding. We are Asian, and talking about body functions isn't always easy. Because we had done the Pink Kit during pregnancy, I could freely share with my husband the problems I was having with my nipples. The Pink Kit kicked in for me at that point. No matter what happens with our next birth, I will get into using the skills."*

As you go through all the Pink Kit resources, there will be knowledge to gain, exercises to do, and skills to perfect. You can choose what you want or what suits you. Birthing Better with the Pink Kit Method® suits all births and situations, which means that some things might not apply to you. Skip around if you want. Some of you are learning the Pink Kit skills for the first time, while others are having your fourth or so Pink Kit baby. The layers and depth of skills and application will continue to grow each time.