

PAIN & TENSION

Working with
PAIN

Pink **KIT**
METHOD[®]

Working with Pain

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Birthing Better with The Pink Kit Method®
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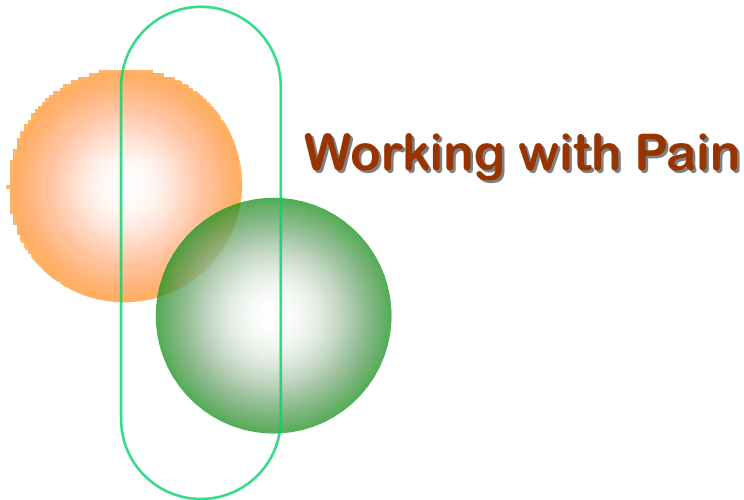
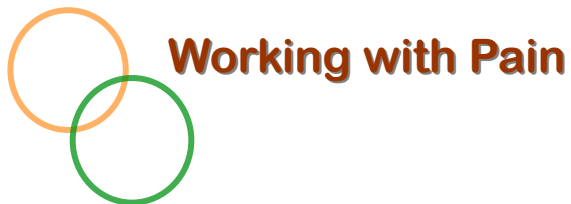


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Instinct and Pain

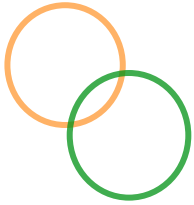
When you stub your toe or prick your finger, what do you do? You immediately tense up. Often, you hold on to the painful place and remain tense until the pain subsides! Why would anyone assume that women will instinctively do something other than that during childbirth? Yet somehow, that is the simplistic message given to women in the present approach to childbirth: “Just don’t be afraid of the pain”... and then what? Does “fear” of pain cause more pain? Actually, no. But tensing up can cause more pain, and it’s just plain intuitive for humans to tense up when they experience pain.

Even though tensing up is counter-productive during labor, that’s what many women do. They tense up with the pain of contractions and barely relax in between, often holding on to the tension and steeling themselves for the next contraction.

Why is this so common? Because birthing women haven’t been taught the appropriate skills to manage the pain and learn how to instruct their body to soften even during the pain of contractions.

YOU NEED SKILLS SO YOU CAN COPE with the pain as contractions become longer, more intense, and closer together. Tensing up only hinders your baby’s efforts to open your body so he/she can come down, through, and out. And sometimes, this internal tension prolongs either or both the dilation of 1st Stage and pushing of 2nd Stage!

One of your first truly committed actions of being a parent is to learn to let go of tension during painful contractions. That difficult, yet uncomplicated, act shifts the birth from something that happens to you to something you do with and for your child.



With your newfound understanding of the “Whys and Hows” of pain during labor, you now have less reason to panic and more reason to pick up your skills and use them. You may still experience pain, and not necessarily enjoy the labor, but you can approach each step of the labor with more confidence and an acceptance of the job at hand.

This Birthing Better Pink Kit resource provides exercises for building your teamwork to cope with pain in childbirth, as well as briefly outlines which Birthing Better Pink Kit skills work best for specific kinds of pain. To find the full explanations of the skills, follow the links throughout this text.

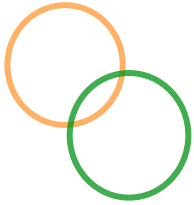
Pain and Teamwork

Woman

In traditional cultures birthing women are surrounded by family who help. In modern societies, before women started demanding their husbands/partners come in to help, women were left alone to cope as best as they could. But that’s not how things are today. Women now want more. Childbirth is an **ACTIVITY**, whether you have a labor with a vaginal delivery or an emergency Caesarean or have a planned Caesarean delivery. The pain associated with this activity is best overcome by a skilled team. No doubt women started demanding their husbands/partners be present: they wanted this teamwork on a deep, subconscious level. But without comprehensive skills for each of you, it’s so difficult to develop that birthing teamwork. This course gives you the means to make that subconscious and conscious desire a reality!

Coach

Helping a woman cope with labor pains is not about holding her hand, wiping her brow, offering ice chips, trying to rub her back (and being told to “STOP IT”), or being hung on. While you can’t take the pain away, you can make it manageable if you and she share a set of skills that you’ve perfected during pregnancy.



Fortunately, in the middle of intense situations, men have an ability to hold a strong, objective awareness without being cold or uncaring. Men are doers, so the practical and applicable Birthing Better Pink Kit skills are loved by fathers.

You must be a strong pillar of support and help. Your wife/partner will rely on you to help her navigate through her experience, sometimes one inhale and one exhale at a time. Childbirth is much like a marathon or climbing Mt. Everest: a physical task that lasts for hours, giving you plenty of time and opportunity to coach, encourage, and support her.

How much practice time do you both need to learn the skills for your equal but different jobs and then be able to work successfully as teammates?

- Until your skills feel like second nature.
- Until you have confidence in your ability.
- Until you know you'll use your skills wherever you birth, whoever is your birth provider, and whatever medical care happens.
- Until you absolutely know you will continue to work with your baby's efforts to be born until he/she is.

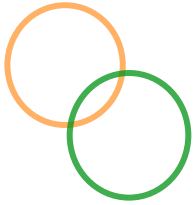
If you think that's a lot of time and all this is just too much effort, remember that, once your baby is born, you will put much more time and effort into the next 20 years as a parent. Think of this as practice for parenting!

EXERCISE: INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION

Ask yourselves these questions.

Woman: When you're in pain

- Are you stoic?
- Do you whine?
- Do you need a lot of attention?
- Do you like to be left alone?



Coach

- How have you previously dealt with seeing her pain?
- Did you want to help?
- Did you prefer to leave her alone?
- When you help, does she thank you or push you away?

EXERCISE: WHAT DOES “PAIN” MEAN TO YOU?

When you think about pain, what do you think of?

Discuss this with each other. If you have very different viewpoints, you want to acknowledge that and flesh out how exactly they differ. Talking about your perceptions of pain develops the skill of common knowledge. It’s hard to work as a team if you’re on different pages. And in labor, it would be inappropriate to say to a woman, “Oh, it can’t be THAT bad!”

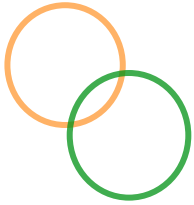
Men, to understand why labor pains are intense, please consider this blunt and straightforward analogy. You know the hole in your penis? If it had to stretch large enough to fit a baby’s head through (the size of a grapefruit), would it hurt? Heck yes! A baby is not like a deflated balloon that squeezes out, then suddenly inflates once it’s born. Labor hurts, because the woman’s tissue has to stretch to accommodate a large object.

Next, talk about the answers you gave yourselves to the above questions. This will further develop your common knowledge of each other.

EXERCISE: HOW DO WE COPE WITH PAIN?

Discuss how you both normally cope with pain, but don’t make your normal reactions the expectation. Birth is not a “normal” situation. The woman might behave similarly or surprise herself and her coach, either pleasantly or unpleasantly. Use the below examples as a framework for your discussion:

- Injury: car accident, twisted ankle, sports injury. Make a list of all the painful injuries you’ve ever had, and think about how you managed the pain and whether you used any skills to cope.



- Illness: sore throat, appendicitis, heart attack. Make your list of painful illnesses and how you coped and the skills you used.
- Death: most people fear that our own death will be painful.
- Dental appointments, surgery: oh, those speak for themselves.
- Other painful experiences: getting a tattoo, painful menstrual periods. Go ahead; make your list and skills used.

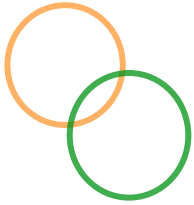
If the skill you primarily used in other scenarios was to take pain relief, you understand how easy it seems to do the same in labor. There is no right or wrong. That will be your choice. Work with your Birthing Better Pink Kit skills as best you can. Use your skills to manage pain as long as you can, and even if you use pain relief.

In fact, many men and women find their Birthing Better Pink Kit skills complement other painful situations that have nothing to do with childbirth. These skills become Life Skills and can be taught to your children.

Pain and Skills

First and foremost, awareness is an essential skill. Many women say that a lack of knowledge about “what was going on” or “where they were in labor” made their birth experience more difficult. Women, if you can become aware of exactly where you are feeling pain, you can act appropriately to deal with the pain in that place. The exercises and experiences in the Pink Kit will develop your ability to “look inside” to these parts, “see” your area of discomfort, and use skills to manage any discomforts. The more you practice this while you are pregnant, the more instinctive it will become, so that by the time you are in labor, you will find yourself naturally looking within to see what is happening and using skills to cope.

Coaches, if you practice along with the birthing woman, you will be able to help identify the problem areas. Then, together, you can both use your Birthing Better Pink Kit skills to relieve the pain and help move labor along.



Prior to Labor

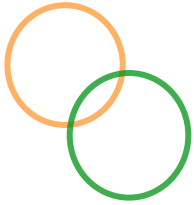
In order to cope with labor pain, you need to prepare during pregnancy. Here are a few of the Birthing Better Pink Kit skills you need to learn and practice:

- √ **Body care preparation:** While you are pregnant, do cardio-vascular exercises to ensure a good supply of blood to the uterus.
- √ **Bony Structure:** Do *Mapping Your Pelvis* so that you're aware of what shape your baby is negotiating.
- √ **Soft Pelvis:** Learn *Thai Massage* to release the abdominal tension that prevents the baby from moving into the pelvic inlet. Learn the *Pelvic Clock* to soften in specific places inside your pelvis to hasten the dilation of your cervix. In the last few weeks of pregnancy, pay special attention to practicing *Cervical Relaxation* and *Breathing into the Perineum*. *Internal Work* is essential in the last eight weeks of pregnancy. It helps you to identify and relax the muscles that control the soft tissue that surrounds the birth canal, both inside and outside.
- √ **Body Positions:** Learn *Position Your Body* to keep your pelvis open and soft tissue relaxed.
- √ **Breathing:** Learn *Directed Breathing* to use each inhalation to open and expand inside your pelvis and each exhalation to soften and relax inside your pelvis.
- √ **Touch:** Learn *Deep Touch Relaxation* to release abdominal tension. Learn the best touch technique that cues the woman where to soften, is easy to use for long periods, and almost never stimulates "Don't touch me!"
- √ **5 Phases:** Learn how to work with each separate phase of every contraction.
- √ **Teamwork:** Learn effective teamwork skills.
- √ **Communication:** Nurture your non-verbal and verbal communication skills.

Skills for 1st-Stage Pain

Labor Pain

Labor pain during a contraction is felt by the majority of women somewhere in their belly, or inside where the cervix is being tugged open.



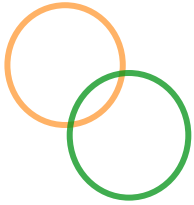
- √ **Bony Structure:** *Sacral Maneuver* for a pinched cervix (anterior lip).
- √ **Soft Pelvis:** *Pelvic Clock* during and in between contractions, to relax the entire pelvic floor and make each contraction effective. *Uterine Lift* if labor is not progressing or if the cervix is opening very slowly.
- √ **Body Positions:** *Position Your Body* to stay focused on opening and softening in spite of the pain.
- √ **5 Phases:** *Directed Breathing, Language, and Deep Touch Relaxation* skills to manage labor one contraction at a time.
- √ **Communication:** Self-discipline over your Positive Voice that wants to focus on the pain.

Back Labor

A smaller group of women primarily experience back labor. The most painful spot will move down as the largest part of your baby moves through the tightest part of the bones. This is exciting news, because you can track this change. Women will say, “The pain used to be here, but it’s now here.” You might feel the back pain more on one side, because babies come into the pelvis on a diagonal, rather than straight up and down.

The birth process is like a plumbing situation—think in terms of an object moving through the container, and think about which part of your body the baby is struggling to move through. Pain related to your body structure often indicates that the baby needs more space, which will be achieved by movement of your bones—and this requires the release of tension through relaxation.

- √ **Bony Structure:** *Sacral Rock, Sacral Maneuver, Hip Lift, Kate’s Cat, and Sit Bone Spread* to mobilize your sacrum and give your baby the space it needs.
- √ **Soft Pelvis:** *Pelvic Clock* together with *Directed Breathing*, using either the inhalation or the exhalation to relax the area of tension.
- √ **Communication:** Self-discipline over your Positive Voice that wants to focus on the pain.



“Stuck” Pain

Some women experience pain in either the hips or pubic bone, whether they have belly pain or back labor. “Bone pain” results from the pressure of the baby, like back labor, and it makes things feel stuck. Your baby is a BIG object! In the case of pubic bone pain, think plumbing again: your baby is pressing against the pubic bone, so make room in your sacrum so your baby can move slightly backward. Hip pain can also be experienced as your baby moves through the pelvis. If the pain is in one hip, try making room in the other hip. But also try opening up the painful hip.

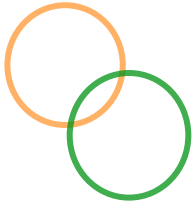
If the baby feels stuck, you might be told that your baby is too big, or your labor is too slow—but you can get things moving again!

- √ **Bony Structure:** *Hip Lift* and *Sacral Maneuver* together, if necessary. Work with the bony structure to make more space for your baby. You might have to do this for several hours, as the baby slowly moves through the pelvis. *Sit Bone Spread* is particularly good for bringing a baby down through the soft tissue of the birth canal (vagina).
- √ **Soft Pelvis:** Think about the baby’s position and what you know about structural tension. *Letting Down Reflex Relaxation* and the *Sacral Maneuver*, either singly or together, to let the baby move back slightly—this will prevent the cervix from getting pinched between the baby’s head and your bony pelvis. Use your *Relaxation* skills.
- √ **Communication:** Coaches, don’t be afraid to work (gently) with the laboring woman, watching and listening to her responses to the pain and the issue.

Skills for 2nd-Stage Pain

Ring of Fire

During 2nd Stage, pain is experienced as a specific stinging and burning (the unfamiliar stretching of muscles and soft tissue) as your baby pushes through the



vaginal opening. Any tension held in this area will make it very difficult for your baby to expand the birth canal and move on down through it.

- √ **Bony Structure:** *Moving the Tailbone* to create space and avoid holding tension here, *Sit Bone Spread* to create space in the “Pouch of Ms. Douglas” and relax the muscles of the perineum.
- √ **Soft Pelvis:** *Breathing into the Perineum* to focus on relaxing all of this area during 2nd Stage. *Internal Work* to identify and relax which inner and outer muscles are tensing the vagina.

Rectum Pressure

- √ **Soft Pelvis:** *Letting Down Reflex Relaxation* to allow spontaneous bearing down and to counter your instinct to tighten your rectum.

Learning the Skills

The approaches suggested above are all things that have worked for women who were working with their bodies and dealing with pain or discomfort during labor. As you work with these skills, you will probably find other ways to work with your body that might prove helpful in your own birthing situation. We encourage you to experiment and to trust yourself.

Now that you have a concise list of which skills work best for which kinds of pain, we hope you will learn and practice the skills so you can become skilled birthing parents. Practice, practice, practice, then use, use, use!