

The 5 Phases and the Bell-Shaped Curve: Time and Behavior

The Rhythms of Childbirth

We tend to see childbirth as an event that happens in a single chunk of time, instead of as an activity that we do over time and that has specific rhythms. Not only will you participate in this activity, but you will also have to participate at every moment until it culminates in “the birth.”

In order to accomplish your birth, you will go through a macro-timeframe, an overall rhythm that includes:

- the transitional time from being pregnant to knowing you are in labor
- the dilation of your cervix
- the birth of your baby
- the delivery of the placenta

You will also go through mini-macro-timeframes:

- one contraction that follows another

Although most birth books or classes don't speak about birth as a “timeframe” or “rhythm” (Big Picture) or contractions as small timeframes/rhythms (Small Picture), that is what happens. At the same time, most Birth Stories focus on these two timeframes.

Macro-Timeframe, or Big Picture

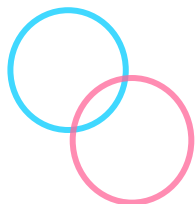
“Started labor at 6pm. Had the baby at 10am the next morning.”

“My labor was short.”

“My labor went on and on for days.”

Mini-Macro-Timeframe, or Small Picture

“My contractions were bearable.”



"I had terrible back labor even between contractions."

'My contractions came every 20 seconds.'

When the focus is on the Big Picture or even the Small Picture, we actually aren't saying much, nor are you learning much. It's sort of like saying, "I climbed Mt. Everest. The weather sucked and it was hard." For a person wanting to climb Mt. Everest, there must be another, more refined story: what do you do at every single step. Giving birth is your Mt. Everest. You need to know how to move through the Small Picture to get to the Big Picture by what you do at every moment. Whether it's mountain climbing, singing, building a house, or giving birth, it's the "how to" that is important and sorely lacking in childbirth preparation today.

Birthing Better with The Pink Kit Method® wants to introduce you to the timeframe where your work is *really* done: the micro-timeframe, composed of the discrete 5 Phases of every contraction. These 5 Phases are your guide for working through this incredible experience, helping you feel in control, and enabling you to work with your baby's efforts to be born, personally, as a family, and with your birth providers.

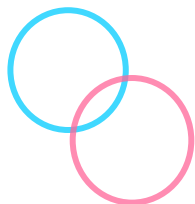
This Birthing Better Pink Kit resource will help both of you to understand

- the rhythm of childbirth as experienced through the macro, mini-macro, and micro timeframes.
- how you will see yourself and others during the timeframes of giving birth.
- how to work within the micro-timeframe of the 5 Phases and shape of each contraction.

Three Types of Birth, One Type of Time

You will give birth one day, and you will have one of these three birth types:

- You will labor, then have a vaginal delivery.
- You will labor and have a surgical delivery.
- You will not labor and have a surgical delivery.



The 5 Phases of Every Contraction

Now is the time to focus on the micro-timeframe of contractions: the 5 Phases. The reasons the Birthing Better Pink Kit skills are so valid for all births is that every woman who labors will have contractions, and **all contractions have the same five parts, distinctive from one another, each providing an opportunity to use skills.**

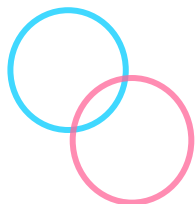
In reality, there is yet a mini-micro timeframe, each inhalation and every exhalation. As one woman said (see page 11), “I had a choice at every moment—how I inhaled and how I exhaled.” Fortunately, this woman had the Birthing Better Pink Kit skills, so she chose to open her pelvis with each inhalation and soften inside her pelvis with each exhalation. She still rated the pain of contractions to be 13 out of 10, but she knew if she let the pain get the best of her that her inhalations and exhalations would have become stressed. This timeframe is included in the 5 Phases, listed here.

1. Just before the contraction starts and the start—this lasts for a very few seconds.
2. Buildup; pain becomes more intense.
3. Peak; pain is the most intense.
4. Easing off; pain decreases with an attempt to “let go of this one” before the rest period is effective.
5. Rest period between contractions. Usually, the pain is gone entirely, unless you have back labor or other localized pain.

During early labor, when your baby is beginning to open your body, only Phases 1, 4, and 5 may be obvious. If this period is gentle and not painful, thank your baby. Regardless, this is the time to begin to use your Birthing Better Pink Kit skills. It is during these early contractions that you can condition yourself to work with what is happening in your body and get your teamwork going. Together, your job is to begin to open, relax, and soften what is no longer a pregnant body, but a birthing body.

Practice leads to skillful adaptation

Keep in mind that you must practice your skills regularly and with intent. It’s difficult to practice something you’re not able to experience, so different from when



you learned to drive a car. In some ways, you just have to trust that the skills you are learning will work for you when you need them. And they will work, if you've practiced sufficiently and you choose to use them.

Even though you can't literally practice, use your imagination, or watch a number of birth videos and notice how the women behave. Plan how you can improve on that behavior with the use of your skills.

If you've already gone through labor, you can practice to the memories of your last birth. You want to practice these skills until they are so ingrained into your body and mind that they are your automatic behaviors when labor starts.

Typically, when contractions start, most women experience them as described in #1 on the list above (see page 4). But even #2 and #3 are normal, and so are dozens of variations. The early, relatively pain-free period can last 7-24 hours, the more painful part 2-7 hours, the very most painful part 30 minutes to 2 hours. Even pushing isn't definite: it can last 5 minutes, or it can last 2 hours or more.

The important thing to remember is that, whether your contractions last for 3 days or 3 hours, whether you are lying in bed hooked up to every machine available or walking outdoors, contractions will always follow the same rhythm: one contraction following another, with a space in between. Each contraction will have 5 Phases, and each contraction will have a number of inhalations and exhalations. You have ample opportunity to use your breathing skills. In every contraction, your body is in some position. This means you can also use some relaxation skill. You and your partner, friend, or other will be together, so you can always use some form of communication (verbal and non-verbal) and some form of touch.

Variations all stay within the same theme of contractions. No woman anywhere in the world has some wave start in her big toe, sweep up her body to her head that opens and a baby pops out. We are not THAT different from each other. The reason you must take time to learn all these skills is so you can adapt them to your particular set of variations.