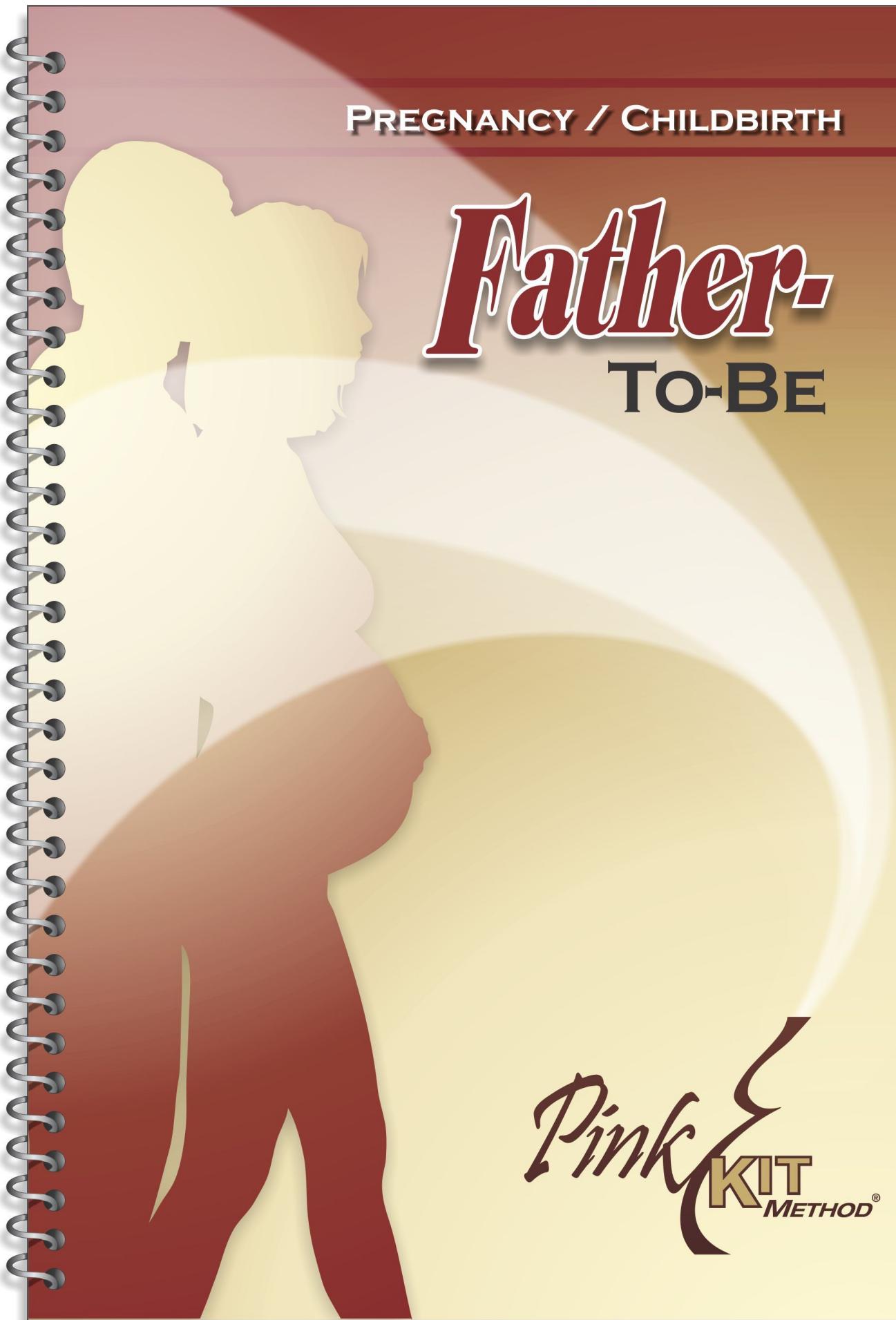


PREGNANCY / CHILDBIRTH

# Father- To-Be

Pink  
**KIT**  
METHOD®



## Father-To-Be

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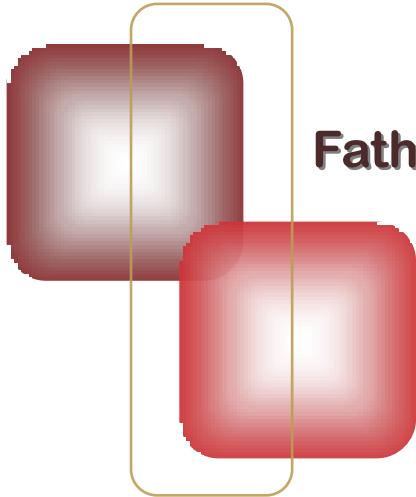
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## Father-To-Be

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## How Important Are You?

OH SO VERY! If you haven't found a childbirth preparation class or book that *really* includes you, look no further! You are as important as your pregnant partner to this system. Although your woman will be the person actually "doing" the birth, you have a role that is just as active: to help her do the activity of giving birth to your son or daughter, regardless of what variety of birth you have.

Your Birthing Better Pink Kit skills are practical, simple to learn, useable in absolutely every birth, and will catapult you into becoming the birth support/coach you and your partner want you to be! And you can be that coach even in the presence of your birth professional, even if you have rarely or never ever met him or her before.

### Birth and Men

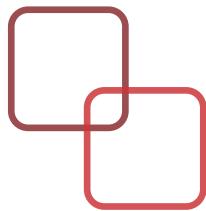
Until quite recently, men in modern societies were not allowed to be present for labor or delivery. They sat in the waiting room, pub, or at home. Since the late 1960s or early 1970s, fathers have been welcomed, encouraged, and fully expected to participate during labor and the birth.

Today, doctors and staff would like you to know how to help your birthing partner cope with labor pains, but they really don't care if you just stand around. However, your partner will care big time.

Men essentially feel two ways about birth:

1. "I'm glad it's not me!" (or "Birth is women's business.")
2. "I wish I could be pregnant and give birth."

Whichever group you fall into, your woman won't want you to just watch and be useless.



### **The “Glad it’s not me” group of men**

If you think birth is women’s business and women automatically know how to “do” it, you’re sorely mistaken.

If you think you’ll automatically know how to help her, you’re sorely mistaken.

If you think you don’t really need to help her—once more, you’re sorely mistaken.

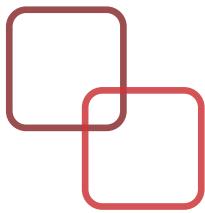
If you think you’ll most likely end up irritating her—okay, you’re probably correct on that assumption, but only if you don’t know how to *properly* help her.

Your partner wants and needs you to be capable of helping her cope with labor pains, whether you want to be there or not.

### **The “wish I could be pregnant” group of men**

If you privately wish you could experience pregnancy and childbirth, wish no more—your Birthing Better Pink Kit skills will give you the intimate experience you long for with both your pregnant partner and your unborn baby. They will teach you how to see your body in an entirely new way, as far more similar to a birthing woman’s body than you have probably ever imagined. It’s not unusual for Pink Kit fathers to experience something like Couvade symptoms, described below.

Whether you want to be involved in “the birth” or not, your partner is pregnant and will give birth to your child, and you are about to become a father. Thus, the pregnancy is affecting you as well as your partner, and you need to be honored and helped to know how to participate in a way that grows your abilities and awareness as a man who is becoming a father and will be a father. You are becoming as your pregnant partner is becoming. The birth is the activity you do to move from becoming to being.



## Traditional Cultures and Fathers-To-Be

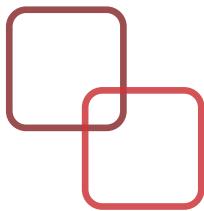
All traditional cultures honor men who are about to become fathers. Many also acknowledge that fathers-to-be may experience pregnancy through proxy birth symptoms. In anthropological terms, these are called Couvade symptoms. This fact is acknowledged, respected, honored, accepted, and even expected. In many cultures, there are ceremonies and behaviors required of expectant fathers, including being actively involved in the birth.

While most traditional cultures recognize that pregnancy has a huge impact on the man as well as the pregnant woman, some still regard birth as “women’s business,” and it is attended exclusively by female relatives, either in their home or a separate space such as a birth hut. In some cultures, skilled birthing attendants are present during the birth, while in other cultures, whoever happens to be around at the time of birth is expected to help, be they man or woman. In yet other traditional cultures, women go off alone by themselves with no one at all to help.

While there are “traditional birth attendants,” most of these people are family members or people known in the village. It is only in modern cultures where there are professionally trained individuals whose occupation is being a “midwife.” (Contrary to popular belief, midwifery is NOT the second-oldest profession after prostitution.)

Traditional birth attendants come a few times during the pregnancy, for some of the labor, and then usually handle the delivery and provide some after-birth care. They give women extensive, regular massages for weeks or months during pregnancy, in labor, and after birth. Sometimes, members of the woman’s family perform the massages.

In most traditional cultures, regardless of whether there is a special “birth attendant,” the family (usually the woman’s immediate family or her in-laws) plays a role of great importance. They prepare the woman for birth and are her birth coach. This is not normally the role of the father. However, this is NOT true for you. You do



not live in a traditional community, although you may have strong ties to your ethnic background or belong to a close religious community. You must take the place of the extended family, which is not often intact in modern societies. Preparing for your coming birth is *your* responsibility as a father-to-be.

## The Modern Maternity System and You

During pregnancy, almost the entire focus of the modern maternity system is on the woman and, eventually, the baby. If you attend any of the doctor or midwife appointments, you're one guy out of a hundred.

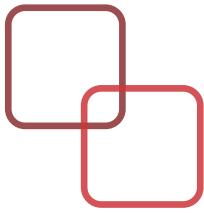
During the birth, birth professionals look to whether the woman is coping with labor pains while they monitor the health and wellbeing of her and her baby. If your partner is coping well, they'll feel relaxed and encourage her. If she is not coping with labor pains, they won't want her to suffer and will encourage her to use pain relief. If *you're* not coping with your partner's labor pains, the birth professionals would rather you just leave. They're not going to cater to your distress in the least.

Curiously, while birth providers rarely pay attention to most fathers, they absolutely love seeing fathers who really know how to help their partner cope well with labor pains. Said a different way, they *want* to see fathers know how to help, but it's just not their role to teach you how.

It's very common for fathers to:

- Not know how to fit into the birth.
- Not know how to behave.
- Not participate when birth professionals are around.

The reason most men don't know how to really help is that no one has taught them. The few breathing or relaxation techniques that may be taught in childbirth classes are not sufficient for you to actually know how to help and to have any confidence that you can make a difference. No wonder men often feel sidelined and confused!



## **Obstetricians**

Commonly, a father will say or think “Isn’t our birth professional supposed to take care of things?” He might even go so far as to assume that the woman doesn’t need to do anything because their obstetrician’s skills will cover all the bases. It’s obvious that obstetricians are medical experts and able to perform procedures that require a high level of skill. On the other hand, most fathers don’t actually think the obstetrician is going to teach their partner how to birth. The two assumptions beg the question, if a birth doesn’t require a complicated procedure, who is actually going to carry the basic know-how of birthing?

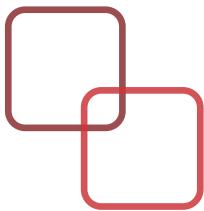
The question is not about the birth professional’s role; it’s about how you and your birthing partner fill your time. Are you sitting around, or are you using skills to stay connected to the journey you’re taking with your baby?

## **Midwives**

If you plan a home birth, your midwifery service will be available as “continuity of care.” This will allow you and your pregnant partner to have the same midwife or team throughout pregnancy, at birth, and for a short time afterwards. But if you plan to be at a Birth Center, you will most likely go through a rotating staff, seeing a different midwife at each ante-natal appointment and different ones on shift in the hospital during the birth.

If you have any confusion about your obstetrician, you probably have much more confusion about what midwives do. Most people believe midwifery training includes “how-to” birth skills, the missing link between an obstetrician’s skills and what a woman needs in order to birth better. But that’s not accurate.

Midwives support and value normal or natural births, and they will support your choices via your Birth Plan. They are trained to monitor and assess whether the birth needs to be referred to more highly skilled professionals or if it’s stable and under control. But they are not taught how to birth, and many women who work as



midwives don't necessarily have "better births." Many of them can only teach you about the mechanics of how the baby travels through your partner's body. Thus, if you are bewildered about how exactly to help beyond holding a hand, wiping a brow, or massaging a back, you will not get the skills from your midwife.

By and large, the contemporary midwifery profession firmly believes that childbirth is a natural occurrence, that women don't need to be taught how to birth, and that your role should only be to support her. Your Birthing Better Pink Kit argues otherwise, and it passes on to you the skills that ARE essential to your role as a partner and father-to-be, wherever your baby is born and whoever your birth professional is. Being with your baby while he/she is being born is a remarkable experience that is enhanced by the efforts you put in to help.

## Are You a Birth Coach or Birth Support?

The general expectation nowadays is that you "support" your partner in some way. "Support" doesn't exactly lay down your job description, though. Childbirth is fraught with politically correct terminology that assumes everyone understands the same thing. But that's inaccurate, and words are important.

The term "coach" was used in the late 1960s/70s when fathers were first permitted and then subsequently encouraged to "be there" and "do something." The rationale behind changing the word from "coach" to "support" was that "coaching" means "telling a woman what to do." People thought it sounded too much like an aggressive sports coach. But you know that not all coaches are like that.

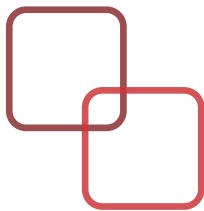
Taken from a business model of Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership, consider the simple meanings of these four terms:

**Direct:** tell others what to do but with little encouragement

**Delegate:** give no encouragement or help

**Support:** give lots of encouragement but little help

**Coach:** give lots of support *and* help when necessary



You should use whatever word best suits the two of you, but make certain it's one that inspires you to actually help and not just hang around. **Your job is to help your partner.** And you will do that best if you've taken the time during pregnancy to learn the skills and practice teamwork. With your Pink Kit, you'll learn to work with your partner like in the model above: as a coach. This moves beyond any word. You learn to work together as a team. You learn to work together as parents and as partners.

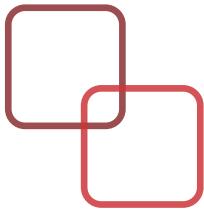
Each birth professional has their job, whether an obstetrician, midwife, or obstetrical nurse, but these jobs are not yours. And neither will your obstetrician, nurse, or midwife teach you the skills suited to your job as support/helper.

You may look for those skills in childbirth classes or books. Rarely will you ask your male friends what skills they used, and it's unlikely your father or mother will teach you what to do. Men have traditionally not pursued coaching skills because birth has focused so heavily on the woman and is now focused on a minimalist role for fathers: supporting only. Childbirth skills for fathers are hard to find. You'll find lots of information, but skills? Nah, and that's why Birthing Better with The Pink Kit Method® is so unique. Dads wanted skills, and hundreds of them helped to develop these skills.

Birth professionals see very, very few fathers who really know how to properly coach a woman through the intensity of labor contractions, but when they do see such a man, they praise him frequently and talk about how they wish more men would do this. That's what you want.

In fact, birth providers see only one in ten women really know how to birth, three or so who really struggle, and the rest just "get through" the birth. That's why the use of pain relief medicine is SO high. Yes, labor pains can be very painful, but they are also very manageable when you have the skills to help your birthing partner relax, breathe well, and stay open, rather than feel overwhelmed by the experience.

So your role is to be a great birth coach: someone who can help her work with the baby's efforts to come down, through, and out of her body. You also provide love,



encouragement, and strength. Your emotional support is as crucial as all the other skills. But just as a woman will often choose that you do the laundry instead of only say “I love you,” in birth, she will want your help to really stay on top of the experience. Do you want her to be the one in ten women who really knows how to birth, or would you rather she be one who merely gets through, or one who completely freaks out? In a big way, the outcome is in your hands.

## **The Pink Kit: Your Tool Kit for Practical Skills**

These skills will work—you can use them in whatever birth you have! This is really one of your first jobs as a father. It will earn you value as a man and father-to-be. And the more you and your partner practice your Birthing Better Pink Kit skills together, the more she will have confidence in herself, because she has more confidence in YOU. Do not underestimate this statement!

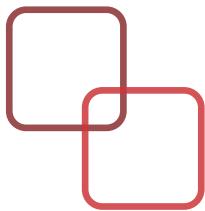
Usually, your birth professionals will not know you are using Birthing Better Pink Kit skills, because they will most likely not have heard of them. What they will see is:

- your ability to help your partner.
- good communication between the two of you.
- her appreciation of your help.

That's great. That's your goal, and your partner's goal, too. She wants you, more than anyone else, to help her.

Your partner knows there is a difference between the role of her birth professional and what she wants from you. She wants and needs an intimate and close relationship with you, the father of her child, while letting the birth professionals take care of her and her baby's health care.

It's hard to imagine how to be intimate with your partner during the birth when you are in the presence of strangers or professional people and probably in a hospital atmosphere. The path to that intimacy is in the Pink Kit skills you use together. She



just doesn't know it, because she's not familiar with these skills, either. But rest assured, these skills come from men and women just like you. Women wanted to have the skills to give birth no matter what was happening, even in a non-laboring surgical birth, AND they wanted their men to know how to be truly involved ("involved" being another term for "intimate").

One way to build your skills and teamwork is to compare your capability to what you see other fathers/couples doing. Since you won't be at many births, the only way to do this is by watching birthing videos. They are all over the Web.

## **Learning from Birth Videos**

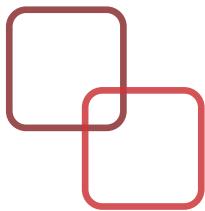
In watching birth videos, your eyes will be opened to how useless men feel. Watch what they are doing most of the time: very little or nothing. Sometimes, you'll see a man rub the woman's back, offer her water or ice chips, or wipe her brow. These are acts of "being there," but certainly both you and your partner can do more.

How connected do the fathers feel to their partners, and how connected do the women feel to them? Usually, there is a huge separation between these two people. This does not need to be you.

Observe whether the woman is skillful in how she handles labor contractions or is just getting through them without any guidance. If what you see on these videos is that women can get through it, this doesn't mean that's all they want.

You'll also notice that almost all birth videos focus exclusively on "the birth." It's as though labor is very short and the main event is the birth. In reality, your biggest job is to help during the most painful part, the dilation of the cervix, which can take many, many hours.

And don't forget that most videos that make it onto the Internet are the less-difficult births. Rarely can you actually see the full range of births, but you'll still learn heaps.



## On the Big Day

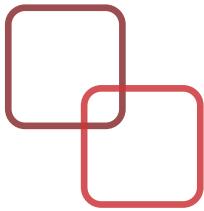
Your hospital or Birth Center won't want you to come until your labor is in full swing. Before you get there, you might have hours of early labor at home with your partner. This is the time to truly begin working together, even if the contractions are not too intense. It is the time to get your teamwork going, start using your Birthing Better Pink Kit skills, and learn about the rhythm of birth.

If this is the day of your elective Caesarean, start using your Pink Kit skills as you pack and continue on the way to the hospital. This is your baby's birth. Come together, use skills, work with each other, and you will feel more involved.

When you arrive at the hospital or Birth Center, every type of birth professional (staff midwife, obstetrical nurse, independent midwife, GP, or obstetrician) will be doing his or her best to prevent or reduce any perceived "suffering" and certainly any "problems" that may arise. They know all pregnant women will give birth, so they have learned to accept that the birth will happen whether the woman copes or not. This doesn't mean they like to see women feeling out of control, but aside from pain relief, there isn't much they can do.

These birth professionals also do not remain in the room with you full-time. Midwives and nurses come and go to do assessments, monitoring, and procedures (during which time you can continue to work with your partner on her breathing and relaxation). Your obstetrician usually visits shortly after your arrival and then returns during the delivery.

This means you and your partner are left on your own for hours, giving the two of you all the time you need to tighten your teamwork and work with labor as it gets more intense. Do not get lost in a perception of "suffering." Your partner is not suffering; she is giving birth to a very large object, and it hurts like the dickens. But there is a saying in childbirth: "The more the pain, the sooner it's over." If you wonder if the pain is actually a problem, ask. If your doctor or midwife tells you it's normal, just keep working with your birthing partner so she can feel in control.



Even if you are having an elective Caesarean, you will be left in your room until you are immediately prepped for surgery. You'll be excited and anxious, so help your partner use the breathing and relaxation skills. Treat a surgical birth in the same manner that you treat a birth with labor: it's still an activity that results in the birth of your child.

If you have a continuity of care midwife who will remain with you throughout the birth, do not give in to the temptation to sit back and assume she will "do" the birth with your partner. Your partner wants YOU to be her primary support and coach, because you are her lover and the father of her child!

No matter who your birth professional is or where you birth, DO YOUR JOB.

## **Don't Let Yourself Be Left Out**

Some people in the birth field are now talking about omitting fathers. Why don't they think about skills before they toss the guys out the door? Both mothers- and fathers-to-be should be skilled and work together. That's simple. But many people really are stuck in the belief that, because there is no way to know what your birth will be like, there is nothing you can do to prepare for it. This is nonsense.

Women who prepare good birth skills can cope well with the pain of childbirth. They are even more able to do so when their partners prepare with them. You can change the image you see in other fathers. With your skills, you'll be able to totally assist your woman at every step of the way as she works with your baby's efforts to be born, without becoming exhausted or overwhelmed yourself.

The whole experience of giving birth, whether this includes labor and the delivery or a trip to the hospital for a surgical birth, is REALLY a significant time in your life. The birth of your child is one of life's rites of passage. Whether you shy away from pregnancy and birth or wish you could experience it yourself, help your pregnant partner prepare for the birth of your baby, and then help her take this incredible journey with your baby. Do it because you are a man, partner, and father-to-be.