

PREPARATION

Two Birth Plans



*From
Conventional
To Skills-Based*



Pink **KIT**
METHOD[®]

Two Birth Plans: From Conventional to Skills-Based

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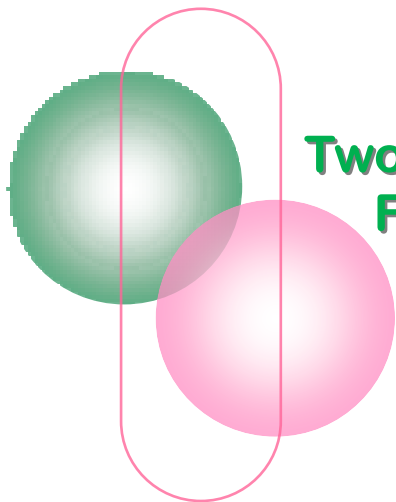
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Birth Plans as They Are Now

The idea of Birth Plans probably didn't exist when your grandmother gave birth to your mom. In fact, if you are in your thirties right now, Birth Plans may not have existed even when *you* were born. Prior to the 1970s/80s, there was not a lot of personal choice. When you had your baby, you did what your doctor said and followed hospital policy. Most people took it for granted that this was how you had a baby in modern societies.

We can be thankful that things have changed, but there are still some unintended negative sides to Birth Plans that add to the confusion surrounding childbirth.

How Did Birth Plans Start?

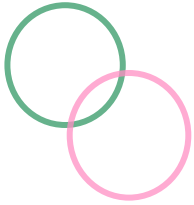
There is no doubt that the concept of the Birth Plan came from families who wanted more of a natural birth and less of a medical birth and who wanted more control. Rather than just follow standard medical practice, families wanted to create an individual birth plan and try to eliminate unnecessary medical interventions.

Originally, Birth Plans were developed

- to give families a way to express the type of birth they would like.
- to indicate what type of medical care they wanted and when.
- to show that families were giving informed consent based on informed choices.
- to stimulate political change in childbirth.

Unintended Shortcomings

Birth Plans have now become an integral part of preparing for birth. Making a Birth Plan is often touted as the pinnacle of taking responsibility for expectant parents. But here are some realities that people often overlook:



- Too many Birth Plans fail or go awry.
- Many of them are based on ideals about childbirth rather than the capacity of the family to achieve the birth they would like. No one has defined “natural birth” or “medical birth,” which has left people experiencing too many disappointments and frustrations over small deviations in their Birth Plan.
- They’ve become a wish list or “items on a menu” rather than a goal.
- They are frequently about what expectant parents want or don’t want rather than what skills they will bring to the birth. This sets up expectations for “delivery of service” that time and again put too much pressure on the professionals/ institution and not enough responsibility on the family.

Sometimes, going armed with the Birth Plan is what gives you a sense of control over your birth. But what happens if your desires or choices change from what you’ve listed on your Birth Plan? What happens to you mentally and emotionally when what you preferred doesn’t happen?

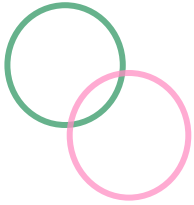
The immediate feelings can range from disappointment to outrage, from gratefulness to shame, from nonchalance to acceptance. Even deeper emotions might wait to show up until months after the birth, after you’ve had time to think about the events that brought about the change.

What happens when the highest form of responsibility expected of you turns out to be somewhat useless in the real world? What can you do?

The question is really this: What kind of Birth Plan should you make to give yourself every advantage even in the event that your conventional Birth Plan does go awry?

Birth Plans Can Be More Effective

Even with all the problems associated with conventional Birth Plans, you should still make one.



You should also find out what your hospital's policies are about routine things such as dim lights, walking around, using showers, cutting the cord, and rooming in. These are important things for sure, but if your hospital already includes them in its services, don't bother to put them in your Birth Plan. That's just reminding the hospital staff and birth provider about what they already know is their job (not a good idea).

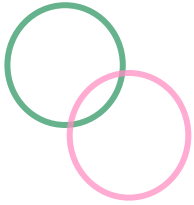
Don't stop at making one of those standard Birth Plans that are like asking for money without being willing to do any work. If you do not specify what you will do for yourself, you can hardly expect other people to just give you what you want. That's selfish and unrealistic, and you set yourself and others up for failure, blame, and guilt.

Changing the Intention of Your Birth Plan

Obviously, you have invested in orchestrating the birth of your baby in the same way that you arranged your wedding or a very special birthday celebration or surprise. Birth Plans are important and mean something—and just because they might have changed doesn't mean they have failed. They simply must be more flexible and informed than they have been in the past, and you need to give your skills a significant place in them.

For starters, if you put refined details on your conventional Birth Plan and prematurely refuse to do anything but follow it to the letter, it can become a confusing document for family members and birth professionals if your needs/ desires change once the birth actually begins.

Many Birth Plans mention “dim lights,” but, in the birthing moment, a woman barely notices the lights at all. She might have planned to have music but hates what they brought. She might have thought water would be great, but now feels irritated in the bath. She might have wanted rooming in, yet finds herself more tired than she imagined and thankful someone else will take the baby. Your conventional Birth Plan



does not accommodate changes such as these, but it shouldn't get hung up on them anyway. They are only minor deviations.

Birth Plan #2

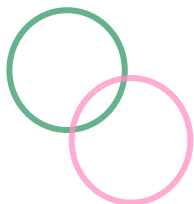
This means you have to create a Birth Plan that tells your birth professionals what *you* are going to do, alongside the Plan you expect of them. This second Birth Plan is your plan, not theirs. It explains to them how they will see you behave, act, cope, manage, and deal with your birth. This is called a skills-based Birth Plan.

The Difference Between a Plan and Actions/Skills

In reality, a “plan” is really a passive set of organizational details in list form. However, childbirth is an activity, which means you have to take actions. Skills are how you do the actions.

Your strength, your sense of control, during the whole birthing process will always lie in your ability to use your skills to create actions and respond to your baby's actions and other factors. Actions based on a good foundation of skills can be adapted in the moment to suit any situation. This means you can feel great about your management abilities even if the events are less than perfect or if you don't like a single minute of the experience.

Remember, “The best laid schemes of mice and men oft go awry,” and remember no one can plan the future; we can only plan *for* the future. The purpose and whole intention of giving birth is to work with your baby's efforts to come out of your body as it's happening. That's the only thing that's important on the day of, no matter what happens to your conventional Birth Plan. By acting out your skills-based Birth Plan, your birth becomes your reality rather than a mere plan that can fail.



Any skills-based Birth Plan you make needs to include statements such as the following:

PREGNANT WOMEN

- I commit to using good breathing skills as a way to cope with labor pain.
- I will continue to use internal relaxation skills even when I don't like the pain.
- I will communicate clearly either verbally or non-verbally with my birth coach so they know how best to help me.

EXPECTANT FATHERS

- I will learn the appropriate set of skills so I can work with my partner as she gives birth.
- I will use my skills in any birth situation alongside my birth providers.

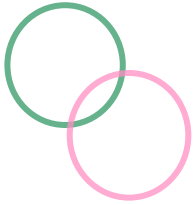
TOGETHER

- We will work with our baby's efforts to be born.
- We will continuously work together alongside our birth provider and in whatever birth situation we have.
- We will continue to use our skills even if our birth requires greatly increased medical intervention, including a surgical birth.

Nowhere in any standard Birth Plan are you required to figure out what you're going to do for yourself to prepare before and to act while the birthing process is occurring. Once you have filled that gap, you have succeeded in changing the intention of the Birth Plan.

Pain Relief and Birth Plan #2

Often, a pregnant woman will put on her Birth Plan something like this about pain relief: "I don't want pain relief unless there's a reason or need". Obviously, if you need a Caesarean, you will use pain relief without question. But, beyond that, we don't really have a clear definition for the words "reason" or "need." The major reason pain relief is used is because a woman isn't coping. If the reason or need is



your lack of coping, then we have a skill problem, not a medical one.

This is why you need to create a separate and distinct skills-based Birth Plan explaining to your birth professionals how you will use your skills if you don't want pain relief. Even if you think you might not be able to manage the pain well enough with your Birthing Better Pink Kit skills, plan to continue using both your birth and coaching skills together with the pain relief.

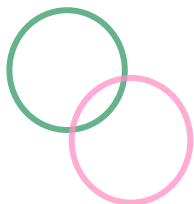
To drive the point home, if you don't want pain relief, learn to manage the pain yourself. If you are coping well and your birth partner is really skillfully helping you, you will be better-equipped to say "No" to pain relief if a birth professional encourages you to accept it. Remember, they see very few women cope well and do not want to see you suffer.

Interventions and Birth Plan #2

When addressing interventions on your conventional Birth Plan, it's also very important that you fully comprehend what you're talking about. Castor oil, vaginal hormones, and augmentations are all interventions. Perhaps you think there's a difference between hormone supplements and a Caesarean, and, in the larger statistical viewpoint, there is. But for your birth, there isn't. A baby can have a bad reaction to induction by castor oil, and so can a mother. It can cause a baby to defecate and a mother to vomit and have fast, furious contractions that put stress on the baby.

Anything you do is an intervention. Trying without success for weeks to turn your posterior baby, which puts stress on yourself, is an intervention; so is the pain relief used to cope with back labor. And before you scribble "No interventions," "Some interventions are okay," or "Open to any necessary interventions" on your Birth Plan, make sure you are well-informed about all the options implied by the term "intervention."

Your skills-based Birth Plan will remind you and tell your birth professional what



skills you'll use no matter what types of interventions occur or don't occur. Your baby's birth will go on no matter what is happening.

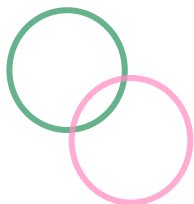
Here's a good example of the difference between your conventional Birth Plan and your skills-based one. Let's say you don't want a vaginal exam and choose not to have one, then end up pushing for hours with an anterior lip, which causes your baby to become stressed, which then requires more intervention. If you're only working off your conventional Birth Plan, you have just set yourself up for failure.

A Birthing Better Pink Kit skills-based Birth Plan would guarantee that you've spent eight weeks preparing your baby's birth passage. You would also have investigated which positions keep you open and relaxed. If you still choose not to have a professional vaginal exam, you will be equipped with the skills to keep your contractions progressive, notice if they plateau resolve that "stuck" feeling, and check yourself.

Birth Professionals and Birth Plan #2

You want to have empathy for the staff and your birth provider. They attend hundreds of births each year. You are just one in many. Your birth is important to you, but you are sort of like a child in a classroom full of other kids. Just like teachers, staff and birth providers do not have the time or resources to give you the highly particularized care you may believe you deserve. They've seen every single kind of birth there is, and they've seen every type of conventional Birth Plan with lists of specific Dos and Don'ts that almost cry out to be checked off. The fact is, a lot of those lists get chucked out the window when push comes to shove.

Birth professionals are also the ones who see how women and men behave in all sorts of situations. They see every pregnant woman give birth in one way or another, but that doesn't mean they see women know how-to birth or fathers know how-to help. Mostly they see families who just get through the experience, waiting for the ideals on their conventional Birth Plan to unfold.



Few things are more frustrating for birth professionals than families who come in with aggressive and defensive Birth Plans and then can't handle change during the experience. Equally bad is a Birth Plan that says "I want my husband and these people with me" – that tells staff absolutely nothing! What are these people going to do while they are "with" you for hours? Requiring the presence of people who don't know how to help you if you can't cope just causes birth professionals to doubt the importance of your Birth Plan. To them, it's not a "plan"; it's a demand on them to provide for you what you could, but are not, providing yourself.

Staff and your birth provider want you to have a good experience. Still, they must work within the guidelines of the institution, AND they count on you to cope well and handle your own experience with skills—and the way to do that is to ignore the lack of societal expectation that families like yours have birthing skills. You need to step outside the conventional way things are done and create a whole new dimension. With a skills-based Birth Plan, you will *do* the activity, not just get through it.

Implementing Birth Plan #2

Once you learn how to birth and be a great coach, you'll pay more attention to what you are doing and less attention to the environment in which you are doing it. How incredibly freeing and empowering it is to know that you can have the confidence and skills to create the birth moment by moment! Having birth skills takes huge pressure off your conventional Birth Plans and the people who are there to help you get what you want. Having skills puts the focus on you and what you are doing.

When you couple your conventional Birth Plan with your skills-based one, you'll develop a sense of your own capability and how you will work through the process of giving birth, whether in a Birth Center or hospital environment or even in your home. You will have less anxiety about details that might have no real significance and be able to focus on creating your birth as it unfolds.