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Birth Preparation  
Inspirations from a  
Doula and  
Reflexologist

## **A Doula's place in your birth story**

### **Birth Preparation Inspirations from a Doula and Reflexologist, written by Marthie Beumer**

These inspirations will help you focus on birth preparation and personal growth in the weeks prior to the birth of your baby.

The birthing experience is as unique as you are and deserves to be respected with joy and enthusiasm. Although many medical procedures may become necessary, it is important to maintain focus on the wondrous experience this pregnancy and birthing may also be. A doula listens to and helps birthing moms to actively define the positive focus points and trust elements required for the birthing process:

- Trust in yourself, your ability and your commitment to birth;
- Trust in the care-givers you have selected as part of your birth team and then trust that the circumstances and your birthing environment will be supportive;
- Trust the realisation that each birthing experience is different;
- Trust that you acknowledge the full realization of your current circumstances but also realise that there is the other side of the coin and that you may still choose what you would like to make of this pregnancy and birth experience and enjoy it with the enthusiasm, respect and passion it deserves.

How does reflexology support the mom-to-be and also the father-to-be? Reflexology is a complementary therapy where fingers and hands are used to massage and apply pressure mainly on the feet and on some other parts of the body. Reflexology is based on the principle that the body is mapped on the feet and that each part of the foot that is massaged or stimulated reflects a certain organ or portion of the body. The body then responds with whatever is required at that moment, i.e. improved circulation, supporting hormonal balance, stimulating bodily functions and it also aids in deeply relaxing the mom-to-be. Reflexology helps to create an awareness of what is happening in your body, of how you can relax during and after a treatment while we chat about preparing your body for the birth. As your body is conditioned into deep relaxation, your mind feels calmer and more focused and it is this body-mind integration that is so beneficial for labour and birth. The body's innate healing potential is harnessed, so that you may mindfully also attain objectivity and clarity of your current circumstances and enjoy good lifestyle, health and well-being.

For birth preparation, it is important to realise that you need to build a framework for yourself where you acknowledge natural birth together with medical procedures and interventions that might be required, e.g. induction, C-sections, the use of forceps and so forth. By acknowledging all

of these interventions, you allow your mind to be aware of the possibilities of these outcomes, but then you **choose** what you want to focus on. In this way, you develop objectivity with the 'best of both worlds' approach. You can fully enjoy your commitment to and preparation for the natural process, while realising that possible risk can be less frightening as you have actively worked towards creating a calm, confident, focused and relaxed body and mind. If a medical intervention becomes necessary at some stage, you can rest in knowing that these processes are meant to be supportive for a healthy mom and baby.

What is your intent and focus when interventions during pregnancy and birth are considered? You need to clarify that you are not being 'pushed' into any specific course of action, and that your birthing story remains your decision. The Doula, together with a birth team will support you in your decisions. Every team member is acutely aware that there is no guaranteed outcome, and likewise every team member is confident that when interventions are suggested, these are presented because the benefits outweigh the risks, thereby reinforcing the positive intentions of the birthing experience.

As a Doula, I encourage you to remain fully committed to do what you can to achieve a natural outcome. More importantly, I urge you to fully accept and surrender to the realisation of "what will be, will be". It is vital to remember that destiny is not in our hands; and that wonderful things can continue to happen at the destined time. You need to remain hopeful and work hard to accept what you cannot change, and to facilitate what you are able to do.

Why do we as birth support professionals motivate mothers to be empowered during birth? Empowerment enables the mom-to-be to make beneficial choices to learn and to grow, to resolve difficult challenges and to develop on many different levels. It creates an opportunity to discuss typical patterns of dealing with challenging situations. It also allows us to reflect on the wonderful, inspiring moments that shine through, even during tough times. During these incredibly difficult moments, it is valuable to celebrate our strength within those moments, and to realise that we are able to connect with others on a much deeper level during these intense time periods, even when a good outcome is not guaranteed. As the birth approaches, we can agree that the true motivation and realisation is to remind ourselves that we need to open our minds and fully accept that wonderful things may always happen; that we may allow ourselves to go beyond the mindset of 'at least there is a silver lining to a dark cloud', and to fully embrace the wonderful realisation that 'luckily' all is not within our control. God is in control and we may fully ask and accept that He has destined the birth experience, and we are equipped to manage any outcome.