

Being Born Together

Undisturbed Birth
Through Skillful Midwifery within the Culture of the
Family

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The time of arrival

- Primal Condition – What does that mean?
 - Humans are designed for reproduction and birth
 - Birth is an essential normal bodily function
 - The act of birthing is a process carried out by two people
 - Newborn arrives complete, instinctual, undaunted, open to “imprint” from mother and environment, ready to participate.
 - Mother has, through birth process, also become open to “imprint” condition – just like her baby.



Birth is a highly refined design

- Assistance is rarely necessary
- Support is important (different from assistance)
- Encouragement is helpful (different from assistance and different from support)
- Freedom, profound respect and acceptance are essential
- “Imprint” condition occurs at this birth time for both the baby and mother providing them with the channel for perfect nonverbal communication and human connection.



We come newborn with...

- Fully functioning natural instincts and abilities
 - For seeking familiar smells, sounds, voices, touch, etc.
 - For rooting for our perfect food (which is mother's milk)
 - For elimination of waste and overload
 - For appropriate sleep
 - For forming deep connection with our mother, family, community
 - For curious discovery of our new world
 - For seeking comfort and safety
 - For adaptation to our new life situation

Primal State of Being...

- Fully vulnerable
- Completely trusting
- Willing, cooperative and interactive
- Loving and expecting love, seeking attachment
- Aware and seeking input from our surroundings
- Needing and actively seeking appropriate care
- Communicative, expressive and responsive
- Curious, “reading” and sensing incoming sensations
- Sentient

As we Grow and Experience Life

- We begin to receive those things that nurture us and help us to grow and learn:
 - love, care, support, needs met
 - food, loving touch, sleep
 - peace, safety & a sense of belonging
 - Conversation, learning, responsiveness
 - Laughter , fun, entertainment
 - Companionship, appreciative mirroring
 - Culture, ritual, common practice and acceptance within our special family and community



We also become familiar with odd unexpected and confusing parts of life.

- We may begin to experience and suffer many of those things that people have come to call ‘the real world’.
 - Embarrassment, humiliation, emotional abuse, being mocked
 - Rejection, isolation, being ignored, feeling unloved
 - Being exposed as “wrong”
 - Being unfairly treated
 - Being fooled or tricked
 - Neglect, marginalization
 - Threat of harm, danger
 - Physical Abuse, hostility
 - Molestation, sexual misuse and trickery



The “First Cut is the Deepest”

- In our original “primal” “imprint” state, we are totally open and do not expect these offenses and assaults.
- This state of being does not give us any kind of defense or cushion against these first assaults or insults, rendering us unsuspecting and unprepared.
- These first experiences of harm hit us deeply, and leave us feeling unsafe and wary of our world.
- These are “primal hurts”.
- We carry the memory or effects of them forever, somewhere within ourselves.
- Upon these circumstances, we develop wariness and develop a guardedness that I call “protective shields”.



We begin to develop “Protective Shields” to deflect future events

- Some of these “shields” may be displayed as:
 - Being “tough”, aggressive, dominant, hyper-assertive
 - Being a comedian, avoidance using humor
 - Being a quite, shy person, un-noticeable
 - Being overly compliant, no self-will
 - Being a subversive saboteur (lying, stealing, deceiving, hiding, denying)
 - Being a “fixer”, overly, inappropriately responsible for keeping things smooth
 - Promiscuity
 - Frigidity
 - Being loud & raucous
 - Being untrusting, suspicious
 - Hyper-vigilant, on constant guard



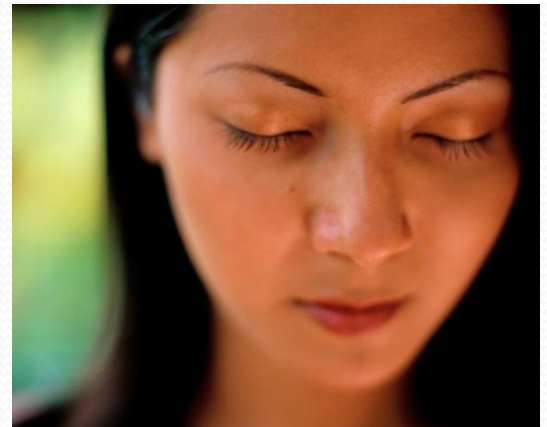
By the time we are women, giving birth, we have many “shields”

- The natural process of giving birth requires that we open ourselves in acquiescence.
 - We ‘give in’ to the process
 - We open our legs
 - Our cervix opens
 - Our hip bones soften and yield
 - Our birth ‘canal’ expands
 - Our mouth, arms, throat and lungs all open and move in pace with the labor rhythm
 - We also drop open our protective “shields”



As we open our “shields” ...

- We become again unguarded & primal, like our baby.
- It is in this state that we can communicate on that non-verbal level and “imprint” with our babies.
- We can give, receive and understand messages that are unspoken, felt and sensed.
- We can sense more deeply and more certainly what we must do and how we must do it.



This is a magical time.

- This takes place in a short few moments, often lasting less than an hour, sometimes not more than ten minutes.
- It is a clearly visible, identifiable phenomenon which occurs during undisturbed birth.
- It is revealed in the demeanor of the mother as she focuses in deeply on her baby. She appears rapt with intensity of attention toward her baby. She seems different; other-worldly.



During this time, bonding (deep, connected love) begins to occur...

- Between the mother and the baby
- Between the mother/baby couple and the family
- Between the mother and all the trusted people in the room



Soon after the birth, the mother begins to 'get herself together' ...

- And the moment is over.
- She subconsciously 'pulls herself together', and the "shields" move back into place.
- It is now that the baby is enclosed deeply within the mother-circle, underneath her protective shields.
- The baby is 'part of the mother'.
- The same is true of all of the other people in the room.
- The father, the brothers and sisters, grandmas, grandpas, aunties, uncles, the extended family and circle of friends and caregivers.

This is the way that human life was meant to begin, connected and within the context of family and community.



- The baby and the mother are both exactly where they should be. They are with each other, giving love and exchanging communications, mysterious and undecipherable to the rest of the world.

Our Native families, in very specific ways, have been broken apart by many outside forces, historically.

- By intrusion from peoples who dismissed the very existence of original inhabitants, thus beginning a downward spiral of dehumanization.
- By deliberate destruction of foods and access to original foods, and outlawing traditional hunting, fishing, agricultural and gathering practices
- By ethnic cleansing through intentional toxification of the Native environment, i.e. war, disease, poison, etc.

This is both historical and current because the onslaught continues...

- By physical, forced and coerced removal from homelands and relocation to unfamiliar and difficult new bio-regions.
- By the stated, systematic and institutionalized intention of the immigrant colonizers toward the indigenous peoples to “drive the Indian out of the man”.
- By the removal of children from their families for their entire childhoods, depriving them of the natural process of learning parenting skills from modeling of their parents, grandparents and extended families.

And still today, we are only beginning to emerge from...

- The discrediting of our Traditional Midwives by medical professionals, effectively severing any ties to healthy tradition that the midwife would provide.
- The legacy of witch-burning.
- Being framed with false accusations of 'quackery', unscrupulousness and incompetence.

The recent, but remembered history of ...

- Deliberately and falsely instilling fear into the hearts and minds of women about the nature of birth and implying danger and inadequacy of breastfeeding.
- Forced, coerced and covert sterilization of Native women
- Removal of children from parents to boarding schools, foster homes, adoption.

Our families have been broken apart by these outside forces, yet...

- We have an opportunity at the moment of birthing our babies to repair some of that damage that has been done to us.
- We are given that special birth-time gift of a new beginning point – free of the harms that lurk within us from our pasts.

Women persisted...

- Every woman is a midwife and every women needs midwives to support and encourage her. That has never changed. The women in native communities have upheld the midwifery tradition in surreptitious ways.
- Our communities have continued the tradition of supporting and protecting birthing women in a midwife-like way by the aunties, grandmas, mothers, sisters & friends attending births in un-named advocacy roles.

And...

- Another way that the tradition has continued has been by the birthing women's refusal to transport to birthing institutions, or by refusal to face that labor was occurring or dismissing signs of impending birth until the baby is being born.

Unnecessary hardship is imposed...

- Relatives and friends persist in attending each other's births as mothers, sisters, aunties and grandmas, even in the face of disapproving hospital staff.
- Birthing women have had to navigate through (possibly) well-meant-but-inappropriate "help" or deliberate iatrogenic interference.

Socially enforced protocol...

- The imposition of laws, criminalizing midwifery, have severely curtailed, nearly eliminated the open practice of Traditional Midwifery.
- Development of small birth chambers in the hospital institution, sized to discourage the accompaniment of family and friends, isolates the birthing mother.
- Visiting hour policies isolates the newborn couple from family.

And perhaps, most obstructively...

- Immediate separation of mother and baby at time of birth.
- Rough, invasive handling of the newborn to meet 'necessary' imperatives such as deep suctioning, HR counts, temp, APGAR scoring, etc.
- Removal of the newborn to the 'nursery' isolates both mother and baby from each other at the most critical, unrecoverable bonding time.

Home Birth is a Native Tradition...

- Pregnant and birthing women still seek the comfort and support and wisdom of trusted women to help them.
- Women do answer that call even at the risk of public or institutional disapproval, or legal prosecution.
- Midwifery which occurs naturally within women persists... and survives.
- Midwifery is a female birthright, and it lives in each of us.
- When you feel drawn to the stories that women tell of their births, and when you feel intrigued by the stories of the midwives you know, you are experiencing the reality of the midwife that lives within you.