



Writing a Birth Plan?

In the birthing community, there is a lot of buzz about writing birth plans. It may be useful to take some time to think about your hopes and dreams for your birth, and discuss your intentions with your partner and / or labor support team members (doulas, relatives, etc.). Some people find it helpful to make a list of preferences to share with their midwives.

However, it is important to keep in mind that birth is unpredictable, and it is often difficult to stick to a plan. Rather than devising a detailed blueprint, try thinking broadly about some basic issues:

- Who is going to be present? What roles will they play during early labor, preparation for coming to the birthing center, active labor, delivery, and postpartum? If you have older children, who will care for them (this should be someone other than your primary labor support person(s), whether or not the children are present during your birth).
- Do you want to bring music? Photographs? An image to focus on? Other props or tools to bolster your spirits?
- Are there natural relaxation and pain relief techniques you want to try? If so, is there someone on your labor support team who can assist you with these (or provide helpful reminders)? Consider: positions, massage, hot / cold therapy, water, breathing techniques / distraction, etc.
- How much coaching do you want / need during early labor, active labor, and pushing? How will you communicate your need for more support versus more space?
- What are your most important needs in the event of a transfer, surgery, or other unplanned interventions? Your safety and the baby's safety come first, and the birthing center or hospital may have to observe certain protocols. However, you can still communicate your preferences to the midwife and other personnel.
- Once your baby arrives, how can your labor support team facilitate bonding? Do you have any specific hopes for the immediate postpartum period?