

Our Birth Story

The day after my due date labour began in the evening, following a brisk walk, some raspberry tea and a curry. My surges (or contractions) came roughly every 60-90 minutes. Out came the rainbow relaxation CD and I practiced surge breathing and sleep breathing throughout the night. I was unclear if labour was beginning or if I was experiencing practice uterine surges. I felt relaxed and slept well, despite waking every hour. Later the next day, feeling apprehensive and excited, I had a birth show and my waters broke around seven pm. I was pleased to know I was definitely in labour!

Shortly afterwards there was a rapid increase in frequency or contractions to every four minutes. Somewhat taken aback at this sudden progression we phoned the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, only to be informed they were full and to be re-directed to Livingston Hospital which would take 40min in a car. I started to panic and decided we were having the baby at home. Not too convinced by this plan, John stayed very calm and managed to get me into the car for the journey to Livingston Hospital!

I listened to the hypnobirthing rainbow relaxation in the car on my ipod and became very focused on relaxing as a way to manage the intensity of the contractions. On arrival at hospital we were met with a very friendly and calm midwife who undertook the required medical checks. It was 9pm and I was 9cm dilated. I became anxious again, mostly due to the unfamiliarity of the surroundings, the feeling of the unknown, and the feeling that my body was behaving in ways that were strange and unfamiliar. I threw up and became extremely uncomfortable as we waited for a birthing pool. It felt difficult to cope and unpleasant. I was not offered any pain relief and it did not come into my mind. John had explained to midwife that we were hypnobirthing.

At around 10pm I entered the birthing pool, 10cm dilated, and felt instant relief. The midwife thought labour was progressing fast and that our baby would emerge in a couple of pushes. I expected every next contraction to be the final one. In reality I was in the birthing pool for an hour and forty-five minutes. The midwife was positive and encouraging but being directed to push made me feel under pressure and became anxious that I was doing something wrong because it was taking longer than expected. At times I felt shocked with the intensity of the experience and felt scared of being torn apart. I coped best when I focused on relaxing, on birth breathing and trusting my body to know what to do. Luckily lots of positive, gentle reassuring from the midwife and John kept me on track. The hypnobirthing practice became very important to fall back on.

At 11.45pm Iris was born to music from our marriage ceremony. I felt intense relief and excitement as I held Iris for the first time. I felt so proud to be fully alert and able to focus on the first moments. John cut the umbilical cord and Iris just gazed at him for about 10 minutes. She was extremely alert, taking in the world around her. It was calm and gentle, and there was minimal intervention from the midwives. It was a really special time for us all.

The Hypnobirthing course gave John and I excellent preparation and strategies for navigating the mystery of childbirth. I am in no doubt the course, and particularly the expertise and coaching from Jane helped us to have a wonderful birth experience.