

BIRTH PLAN

Workbook



Individual & trauma-sensitive

Mgr. Zuzana Laubmann, MA

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Dear parents,

Getting ready for the arrival of a little one is a unique journey for each of us. We all carry our own life stories, filled with experiences that have shaped who we are. It's like no two people have traveled the same path to this moment.

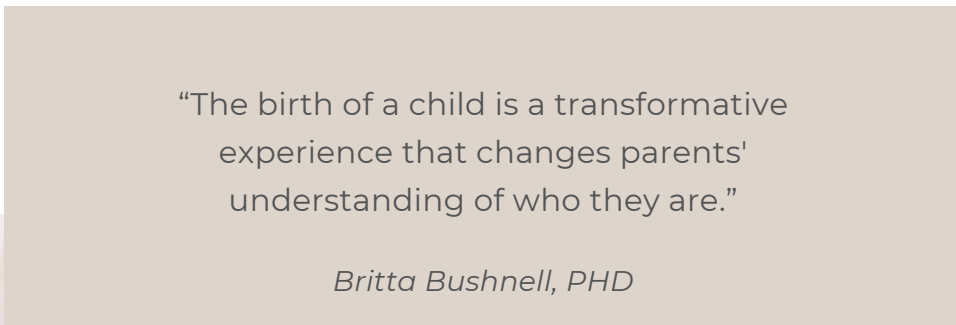
I encourage you to take a moment to recognise where you are right now and whatever lies ahead on your journey. Everything that shapes us into who we were and are often comes to the surface with pregnancy and becoming a parent. Each of these challenges is also a great opportunity for a deep, personal journey of discovery leading you towards the beautiful journey of "becoming a parent." I have chosen to use the word "you" so that everyone feels directly addressed.

I genuinely hope this guide feels like a friendly partner on your journey, offering insights and discoveries/knowledge that will be valuable and useful.

From the bottom of my heart. Zuzana Laubmann.

"The birth of a child is a transformative experience that changes parents' understanding of who they are."

Britta Bushnell, PHD



Where are you

RIGHT NOW?

All beginnings are difficult. Especially when the field of experience is as large as in the case of pregnancy, birth, and becoming a parent.

How has your journey been so far?

What have you learned about yourself so far?

Are you dedicating the right focus and care to your pregnancy?

Are you open to new ideas about birth?

What are you most curious about?
And how does your curiosity express itself?

How did you find your pregnancy?

How have you dealt with major changes in your life so far?

Do you prefer familiar routines, people, and ideas?

Can you embrace different viewpoints as you prepare for the birth?

What images and thoughts influence how you perceive the process of birth?

TIPP

Use the questions as an opportunity to talk to your partner, doula, midwife, or friend. When you express your position, what kind of picture comes to mind?



IN GENERAL

We normally create birth plans with our logical and cognitive minds. We inform ourselves about the birth process and what we can influence. We then make a list of our informed choices. Most recognized birth plans primarily consider the available medical choices. Therefore, there is often an emphasis on medical measures and interventions, overlooking our needs, our sense of safety, and the potential for the hospital staff to support us in creating an atmosphere of trust*.

However, birth is a body-centered process rather than a logical or cognitive one. It is therefore recommended to consider the unique needs and responses of our bodies and incorporate them into the decision-making process. For example, the need for safety is anchored in our body, which speaks through the autonomic nervous system (ANS). In other words, it cannot be accessed with our logic or knowledge*.

During labor, the autonomic nervous system dominates. Therefore, the inner needs and sensations are one of the keys to a successful and positively effective birth plan.*

But birth is not only a natural and biological/physiological process; it is also a social one. It also always takes place in the presence of other people. Studies show that communication and relationships with midwives and doctors not only have an influence on the birth but also on how the woman giving birth perceives the birth situation.

This is where this guide to your birth plan comes in and steps in, with the goal of helping you create a supportive and mindful framework.

*Zuzana Laubmann, DHZ,9-2023

This birth plan has the following

ASPIRATIONS

01

OPENNESS

Openness increases our receptivity to new ideas and new experiences. This holds extra significance for those who may not have had positive experiences in medical or personal environments.

02

MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness of the body and our needs helps us categorize our personal feelings. Being aware of what we need allows us to fine-tune our own strategies, and formulate our requests.

03

COMMUNICATION

The aim of this birth plan is to foster positive communication between parents and healthcare professionals (i.e., midwives and doctors), and to create openness for everyone involved.

04

APPRECIATION

Everyone wants to be seen and treated with respect. This plan aims to support you in creating an encounter at eye level and in mutual appreciation within your support network.

T h e

BODY

Getting your body involved in your birth preparation and plan is a great way to discover fresh insights about yourself and your unique needs. I would like to encourage you to adopt a welcoming attitude, be mindful of yourself and stay in the present*.

Take a moment to relax, and notice the sensations when you turn your attention inwards.

Are there specific spots in your body that could use some extra care?

Perhaps there is a part of your body experiencing pain, tension, or an injury?

Maybe you have the feeling that this area of your body needs something specific to feel more balanced? If so, what could that be?

What crosses your mind when you connect with this part of the body?

What parts of your body feel flexible, and where might you notice a bit less flexibility? Where does space open up in your body and around you when you change your attention?

How do you make sure that you are fully in the present, which means steering clear of thoughts about the past or future events, and staying tuned into your feelings and body sensations—even if the topic involves something from the past or future?

If your mind tends to wander back to the past or leap ahead to the future, you might ask yourself: "How am I feeling right now? What am I experiencing right now?" It may help you remember that you are a good listener and what that really involves.

What do you bring as

PARENTS

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

As described at the beginning, we all carry our own set of unique experiences with us.. Everyone brings their own birth stories and experiences from those early weeks of life.

All this and much more often comes to the surface with pregnancy and becoming a parent.

The following questions can guide you in exploring a single area or multiple ones. These are questions about a general view of the world or yourself in relation to the body, interpersonal relationships, birth, and the medical environment, as well as your own sources of strength, the resources you rely on, and coping strategies.

Take your time to answer the questions. Feel free to hit pause if you sense any discomfort, feel stuck, or your thoughts are on a loop.

Having a safe framework for answering these questions can be particularly comforting for some, especially if certain questions make them feel uncomfortable. It is also possible to answer them together with your partner, a good friend, a doula, or a professional. Some midwives and doulas specialized in psychological counselling, psychotherapy, non-violent communication, or Somatic Experiencing can support you in this.

In particular, people who have been hospitalized at a very young age, or those with other relevant or stressful experiences are more likely to express concerns, fears, or discomfort with situations or interpersonal relationships. In this case, you can benefit greatly from mindful support.

Keep in mind that your clinic visits or gynecologist appointments can give you a good sense of how you feel in a certain situation. Asking the specialist questions in advance can show you what reaction you get, how accepted you feel and your body's reaction to it. You can find a few sample questions on page 13.

After getting your answers, the next move is to recognize the needs behind them, just in case they have not yet been explicitly addressed.

For example, if you have identified a lack of trust in medical staff, there may be an underlying need for protection or acceptance. I describe how feelings are related to needs and can be identified in the "Needs" section on page 11.

QUESTIONS

What beliefs do you have about the world and about yourself?

Thinking about your day-to-day experiences, do you tend to look at the bright sides (celebrating successes and achievements, etc.), or do you find your focus more on the negative sides (mistakes, pain, and problems)?

Are there specific areas where you just want to fit into a norm and go along with what others typically do?

How do you react when others cross your boundaries?

How much does staying in control matter to you?

QUESTIONS

on interpersonal relationships

What stands out to you
and what characteristics
do you seek in people
when you want to find
something valuable?

When meeting new
people, what brings you
comfort, and what has the
opposite effect?

What can make you feel
infinitely pampered?

How do you realize that
other people believe in
you, that you can do
anything, and that you are
"invincible" in crises?

Especially when working
towards a common goal,
what specific needs do
you seek in your
relationships with others?

In resolving past issues,
what specific form of
reparation from a person
would help you move
forward today?

QUESTIONS

about the body

Is your body your home?

Do you often go beyond
your physical limits?

How do you invest in your
body and overall well-
being, and how do you see
those efforts rewarded?

Do you give your body the
time it needs to complete
its processes (e.g. during
times of illness?)

Are there instances where others, such as a doctor or osteopath, may have more knowledge about your body than you do?

QUESTIONS

about the birth

Are you hoping for, or already have, a definite plan or vision for the course of the birth?

Have you considered any potential deviations from your initial plans?

Do you want to avoid something, e.g., an intervention or a certain situation?

When you talk about the birth, do you tend to speak in sentences: "I can", "I can't" or "I have to"?

Are you actively preparing your body for the birth (e.g., through practices like stretching or nipple massage)? What drives this sense of urgency?

Concerning the length of the birth or selecting a birthplace, are you looking to conform to a norm, or is it more about going against it?

QUESTIONS

about the medical environment

How do you generally view the medical profession and medical interventions? What contributes to your sense of safety during medical treatment?

Do you hold trust in the medical staff, assuming they will offer the support you wish for?

Do you have any specific expectations of the medical staff?

Do you mainly trust what a doctor tells you and then behave accordingly?

Are there particular things in the hospital environment that tend to cause anxiety or discomfort for you?

How do you deal with doctors or other professionals overstepping boundaries when you are feeling ill and hoping for their help?

Do you tend to over-prepare for the birth, such as reading more than 2-3 books and seeking information extensively?

QUESTIONS

about resources and sources of strength

Is there a specific challenge in your life that played a crucial role in nurturing your inner strengths?

What is your personal recipe for overcoming difficult situations?

What do you think is the deepest promise between you and your baby?

What advice would you share with others to better prepare for life's challenging and changing situations?

What keeps you moving forward in a crisis?

QUESTIONS

about coping strategies

When you feel stressed or in a crisis, what strategy do you usually use? Fight or flight? Do you tend to act, or do you prefer not to take action?

When you are stressed and/or overwhelmed, do you still feel connected to other people, or do you feel alone and abandoned by everyone?

How do you usually deal with pain?

Can you ask for support?

What strategies typically assist you in navigating through challenging times?

Is self-disappointment a common experience for you? If not, what helps you avoid such feelings? If yes, are there particular strategies that assist you in putting the disappointment back into perspective?

Is there something you have mastered in your life that serves as a constant reminder that you can achieve anything?

When you believe that someone is not acting in your best interests, how do you react? Are you miffed and disappointed with them, or do you try to address or resolve the issue?

If you were required to collaborate with someone fundamentally different from you, how would you approach the situation? What behavior would you adopt to maximize the achievement of your personal goals?

The inner

NEEDS

Typically, when drafting a traditional birth plan, it is not usually checked whether these expectations and wishes are really sensible and realistic in view of the unpredictability of a birth. Very frequently, these wishes echo deeper, unfulfilled needs and emotional wounds from the past.

Often, the tendency for unconscious avoidance behaviors may offer a sense of protection, yet it simultaneously acts as a barrier to new experiences. Such barriers can impede our ability to optimally navigate the “birth” situation, potentially preventing the development of a positive coping strategy and experience.

Feelings are the key to our needs. Which feeling shows up? It is important to distinguish between feelings such as “I am sad” and pseudo-feelings such as “I don’t feel supported”. Our thoughts are also closely linked to our feelings, at times, thoughts magnify emotions, while in other instances, they downplay them.

Consider the value of maintaining a sense of curiosity and openness, and staying receptive not only to this new experience but also to new ideas.

Try out an affirmation first, for example.

What do you perceive as you say it? Do you notice an expansiveness and lightness? Does heaviness or tightness arise in your body?

When you think of something or a situation relating to pregnancy and birth that you would like to avoid or wish for, what feeling comes up?

You can try out whether you feel carefree or anxious, for example.

Ask yourself, "Do I feel now?"

Does it evoke a sense of lightness, expansiveness, and harmony, or does it feel heavy and tight?

Find out the need behind the

FEELING

VULNERABILITY Need for protection and strength

HELPLESSNESS Need for clarity, support

CURIOSITY Need for discovery, information

POWERLESSNESS,
HELPLESSNESS Need for agency, self-determination

DISAPPOINTMENT,
DISCOURAGEMENT Need for trust, security and reliance

FEAR Need for protection, security

LONELINESS Need for contact, connection

What needs stand out for you in relation to pregnancy and birth?

When you look at the specific issue or situation together with your feelings and needs, what do you perceive?

Sometimes it may be advisable to seek the support of a professional who is familiar with non-violent communication.

Would you like more input and suggestions for feelings?

Source of the overview of feelings and needs: The Feelings and Needs Navigator by Gerlinde Ruth Fritsch or any other Nonviolent Communication resource can be a good help.

STRATEGIES

Every need calls for a concrete strategy to satisfy it.

What strategies do you use to fulfill your needs?

Which needs are within your proactive control, and which involve interpersonal relationships and engagements with others?

How do you picture yourself approaching these people for support?

If something is causing you major problems, it is not only helpful to communicate it. Thinking ahead about a strategy can be immensely beneficial for the midwife as well. You know your body and its reactions well and can incorporate this knowledge into the alternative strategy. Sharing your suggestion with the midwife could be beneficial in overcoming this particular challenge. Considering your situation from an outside view, it can be hard for the other person to grasp what would truly aid you.

Your concrete suggestion to the midwife allows her to either put it into practice or discuss potential alternative options with you.

EXAMPLE

Vaginal examinations are unpleasant, painful, or associated with a stressful experience from the past. But still, in many cases, the birth process involves a vital step of performing a vaginal examination to identify the position of the baby's head.

Perhaps it is possible for you to have the vaginal examination carried out in a different position, e.g., on your side?

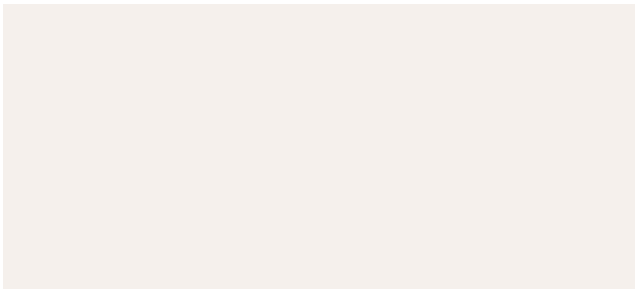
You might find it beneficial to hold the examining hand in yours, thus gain the "upper hand" during the examination.

You are also welcome to talk to your midwife about any other ideas she might have.

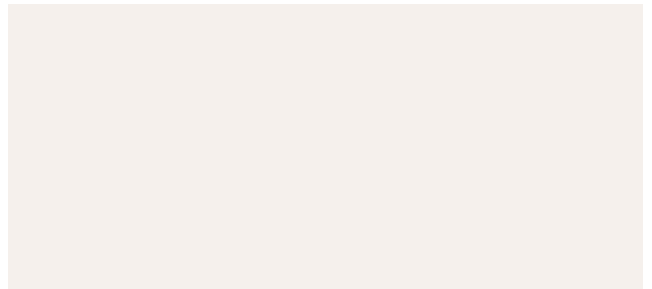
Your needs and your

STRATEGIES

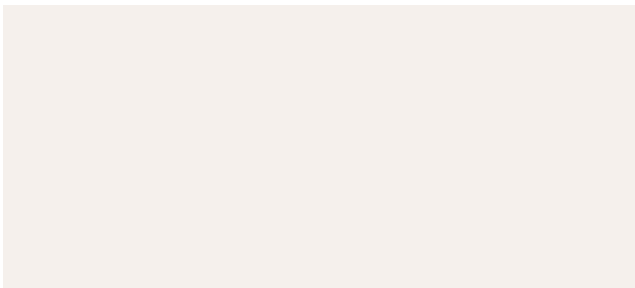
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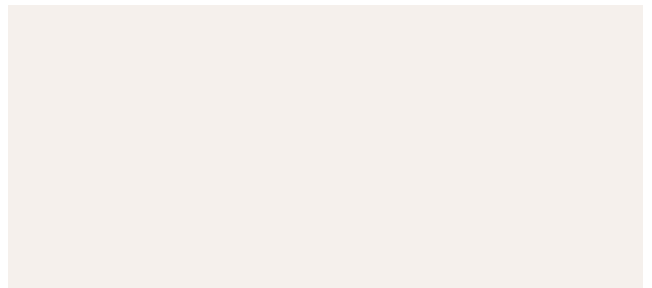
STRATEGY



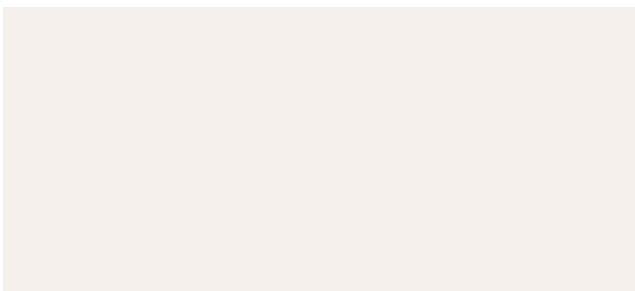
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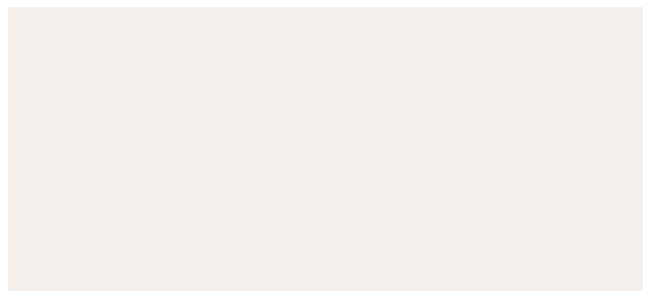
STRATEGY



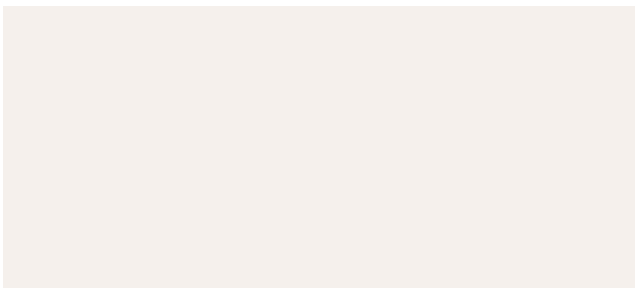
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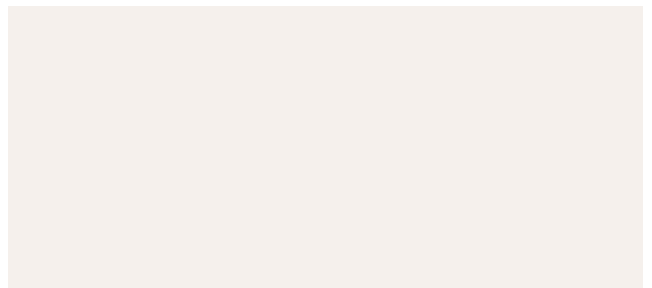
STRATEGY



NEED



STRATEGY



Sample questions for a

CLINIC VISIT

Visits to hospitals and birthing centers or even the preliminary talks at the maternity clinic offer a good opportunity to talk to the specialists there and gain a deeper insight based on their answers to your questions.

How do they respond to you?

How much time is typically allocated to you during sessions with specialists?

How do you feel about the counseling and the interpersonal dynamics of your interactions?

Consider the following questions as potential sources of inspiration:

QUESTIONS:

- What equipment do you use to monitor the baby's heart rate? Can I move around while being monitored?
- What non-drug methods of pain relief do you encourage?
- Who can be with me during the birth? Who can accompany me to the operating room/recovery room in the event of a caesarean birth?
- In the case of a caesarean birth, I would also like a local anesthetic in the area of the incision. Is this possible?

TIPP

Fragen die mehr auf Deine/Eure Autonomie als Eltern abzielen wie z.B. Bewegungsfreiheit oder das Beisein im Kreissaal oder OP-Raum können von Bedeutung sein, wenn es für Dich/Euch wichtig ist, das Bedürfnis danach auch an das Klinikpersonal zu kommunizieren.

Frage nach dem Wunsch einer lokalen Betäubung könnte Dir/Euch die Bereitschaft des Fachpersonals zeigen, auf Wünsche die ausserhalb des Standards liegen, einzugehen.

A planned or unplanned

CAESAREAN BIRTH

For some babies, a caesarean birth is their way into life - regardless of whether it is a primary or secondary caesarean section. Planning an abdominal birth isn't always within control, but taking steps to prepare for it can be a reassuring form of support. In the end, how you felt is often shaped by the events and the people by your side, rather than the mode of birth. Even in the case of a cesarean birth, reflecting on your needs and effectively communicating them can be beneficial.

TIPS

- Attend a preparation course specifically designed for caesarean sections ...to familiarize yourself with the procedure, options available to you, and insights into the recovery process.
- Talk to the doctors about the possibility of additional pre-emptive analgesia (local anesthetic) to help your tissues recover more quickly after the operation.
- Talk to your unborn child about what to expect during a caesarean birth.
- If you are dependent on visual aids, it's important to clarify beforehand which option is better suited for a caesarean birth (usually contact lenses).
- Take some time to go through the suggestions provided for both pre- and post-operative events in the resource list, page 21.
- The fewer pain signals that reach the brain, the smoother the recovery. This is doubly true in the case of an abdominal birth. Keep this in mind when exploring pain relief options and making plans for the postpartum period.
- Many autonomic reactions in the baby's and mother's body are interrupted by the anesthetics and the birth mode - this sometimes causes regulatory difficulties (specifically with bonding, crying, restlessness, a child's prolonged periods, etc.). Look for a broad network of specialized osteopaths, craniosacral therapists, and providers of Integrative Baby Therapy or Emotional First Aid in case you need support.

FORMULATIONS

The way you communicate your needs and wishes increases the chance of being understood and empathically accepted by the other person. Using language that is inviting and open, and asking for support while respecting the recipient's ability to make their own decision can be very helpful in building a trusting relationship, even if you are seeing the midwife for the first time. It fosters a connection with the midwife, who is kindly asked to support you in your needs. For this reason, if you already have coping strategies, feel free to share them with the midwife. This enables her to receive crucial information and stay connected with you throughout the birth.

Focus on expressing the essentials and asking for her loving support. This will work wonders, and the midwives and doctors will be delighted to listen to your preferences, as opposed to a list of DOS and DON'TS, which may come across as less inviting.



”

If something is causing you problems, such as smelling like a hospital or having blood taken, mention it up front and ask for help and care, as you will need more time and encouragement.

DO'S & DONT'S

This does not suggest the omission of anything vital. In fact, it is quite the opposite.

But it is often possible to find a common denominator for some topics. The midwife can understand and respond to your intentions and reasons more easily with positive wording. A list of >>please don't do XY<< can represent a demand that no one could fulfill in advance.

A small example?

INSTEAD OF SPECIFYING RESTRICTIONS SUCH AS



no induction



no CTG



no episiotomy



no vaginal examinations

EXPRESS YOUR PREFERENCES



I aim for a natural birth as far as possible. Would you be prepared to support me on this path with your expertise? Would you be prepared to assist me in ways that align with this preference?

FORMULATIONS

Here are some of the examples that I have developed together with my clients. I hope they will inspire you to formulate your own sentences. Feel free to use or modify them as needed.

EXAMPLES::

It is very important to me to form a team with you and with my birth partner(s). Feeling harmonious atmosphere around really lifts me up and boosts my confidence.

My goal is to go for a natural birth as much as I can. Would you be prepared to support me on this path with your expertise? Would you be open to supporting choices that favor this path?

I appreciate your insights and suggestions, whether it's a natural course or if there are any shifts in the plan. Are you willing to share these with me and my birth partner? They help me and him understand how you feel about the progress of the birth and the motivations behind your suggestions.

I feel comfortable and safe when I can actively participate in the birth. When a situation arises and a decision needs to be made, I want to be involved in the decision-making process. Are you willing to share your assessments and recommendations with me? They help me understand how you feel in this situation, what you suggest, and why.

I feel [e.g., not safe, in danger, scared] while being examined lying down {optional: because I have had very scary experiences in the past}. I can do this either lying on my side or sitting up. Would you be willing to help me deal with this difficult situation?

Confidence is very important to me. I feel more secure when there's a sense of trust, and when I can place my trust in others. Would you be willing to work with me to create an atmosphere of trust that we can all benefit from?

In my pregnancy, I have some fears about {e.g., needles, a caesarean section, pain, etc.}. Would you be willing to help me deal with any fears that may arise? The strategies I've tried and tested include (e.g., visualization, moving around, keeping eye contact, holding something in my hand, etc.).

I have problems with some narcotics e.g. ... because I am afraid of losing control and possible side effects. Would you be willing to assist me by sharing information, making suggestions, and staying with me to see when the effects kick in?

In the case of a caesarean birth / even if we have opted for a caesarean birth, it is important for me/us to be able to see this as the start of my/our child's life. Is it possible for you to celebrate this moment with us and welcome our baby?

I hope these offers and suggestions guide you in writing a wonderful birth plan, fostering a trusting relationship with both the midwife and the support staff.

THE POSTPARTUM

period is also a crucial period to consider

Even if some people sense the role of parents before the child's birth, the true essence of parenthood hits all parents when the baby is born.

After the birth, both the baby and the mother are in a recovery phase, and for some, a healing process might begin. Everyone is allowed to arrive and get to know each other in this world.

A new everyday life can be created, and new challenges can be tackled. There is no single plan for the majority of these new things. But as is often the case, having someone there to listen and being surrounded by supportive company can make coping easier when needed.

I would like to give you the opportunity to get involved with the "postpartum plan" before the birth. Forming a network of professionals and friends ahead of time can greatly contribute to a sense of security post-birth.



POSTPARTUM PLAN

WHO AND WHAT SUPPORTS ME ON MY JOURNEY?

Compile a list of all the people, whether or not you initially believe they are supportive.

Does this person seem trustworthy to you?

Can you ask this person to do you a favor?

Can you talk to this person about a problem?

Mark the people who support you.

Cross out the names that don't support you - people who, for example, devalue your feelings, trivialize your experiences, and regularly demean you.

Now go back to the names that have not been crossed out.

What characteristics do they have? And what makes them good supporters for you?

Who among your family or friend circle never fails to make you laugh over and over again?

Who stands out as your "favourite cheerleader" within your social circle or family? Add this trait to their name.

Complete the names on your list by including the positive attitudes associated with each person's name.

Then look at this list: How do you feel when you see it? What do you become aware of? What do you want?

TIP

If you've moved or you're not sure who could support you the way you want, find a doula or maternity nurse nearby and talk to her about how she could support you based on your wishes and preferences.

List of

SUPPORT TEAM

Midwife

Name:
Phone:

Doula

Name:
Phone:

Postpartum-
Doula

Name:
Phone:

Breastfeeding
Consulting

Name:
Phone:

Babywearing
Consultant

Name:
Phone:

Osteopath /
Integrative Baby
Therapy

Name:
Phone:

Home help

Name:
Phone:

Emotion Aid

Name:
Phone:

Postnatal
depression
Support

Name:
Phone:

Psychotherapist

Name:
Phone:

My

POSTPARTUM PLAN

My dear network of supporters,

Special Features

My individual

BIRTH PLAN

Dear Midwives, dear Obstetricians,

Special Features

List of important

ADDRESSES AND RESOURCES

WHERE TO FIND A DOULA

HELPLINE FOR NEW MOTHERS

NEIGHBORHOOD
SUPPORT

FAMILY SUPPORT

HOME HELP

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRE-
AND POST-OPERATIVE
EVENTS

[Homepage](#)

Points of contact for psychological crises around childbirth

EMOTION AID [Homepage](#)

SOMATIC EXPERIENCING [Homepage](#)

POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION
SUPPORT [Homepage](#)

OTHERS

DO YOU NEED SUPPORT?

PARENTS

If you are looking for support, please feel free to contact me by phone or email. I'm based in Erlangen. I also offer online consultations.

On the website of Somatic Experiencing e.V. Germany or Somatic Experiencing International, you will find support worldwide.

PROFESSIONALS

For professionals, I offer further training on the "Trauma Sensitive and Individual Birth Plan". For the most up-to-date offerings, visit my [homepage](#).

Contact



Mgr. Zuzana Laubmann, MA

- Educator, Sociologist, Author, Lecturer
- Body-oriented Trauma Therapy
- Somatic Experiencing
- Trauma-sensitive Yoga
- Doula Birth Support
- Languages: English, German, Czech



LEGAL DISCLAIMER

The suggestions contained in the document are intended to support or supplement the midwife's support or treatment plan agreed by your doctor or medical team and are not intended to replace it.

Please note that the information contained in this document is provided as a service and that Zuzana Laubmann, the author of this document, makes no express or implied warranty as to the correctness, completeness, reliability, or suitability of the information contained herein.

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This guide was developed in 2023 to help expectant parents develop positive and effective birth plans.

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Zuzana Laubmann

