

A case study for Natal Hypnotherapy

D was very anxious during her second pregnancy, following her previous long and traumatic birth.

My husband and I attended two full day Natal Hypnotherapy workshops in November/December 2013. Our second child was due in January 2014 and following the recommendation of our consultant midwife, we investigated Natal Hypnotherapy.

Our first child, H, was born in November 2009. I had a good pregnancy and labour started naturally when my waters broke a week before my due date. The labour was long and painful. I fainted early on and was put on a heart monitor. I had pethidine, entonox and an epidural and after 52 hours I got to the pushing stage. During this stage my heart rate went up to 210bpm for 15 minutes and H's heart rate was very erratic. H moved into a bad position and after a failed ventouse and forceps it became obvious she wasn't going to come naturally. I was rushed through to theatre for an emergency c-section. I passed out during the operation and suffered a high blood loss.

It took a long time to recover physically after the c-section but it wasn't until I became pregnant with our second child that I realised I was still suffering mentally from the experience. I started having nightmares and flashbacks and became more and more anxious as the pregnancy progressed. Following an appointment with our consultant midwife I investigated Natal Hypnotherapy.

I admit I was sceptical about hypnotherapy and as a committed Christian I questioned how it would fit with my beliefs and faith. I made contact with our local Natal Hypnotherapy team and booked two full day sessions. We completed detailed questionnaires before the workshops. Our first workshop was with Barbara Wyant in our home. We found it very helpful and were impressed with how Barbara tailored the programme to our needs and how sensitive she was towards our fears and anxieties. The workshop included three hypnotherapy sessions and I was surprised how easy I found it to become relaxed and calm.

The programme included a VBAC hypnosis CD and I then started to listen to this daily. In the final month of my pregnancy I was able to feel relaxed and calm about the prospect of giving birth and was able to approach the thought of labour positively. We also attended a group session led by Zana Parker and found the massage and relaxation techniques taught in this session very helpful.

I went into labour naturally on my due date. I used the hypnosis CD in early labour and also the relaxation music. I was able to remain at home for four hours before the contractions came closer and stronger and I felt it was time to go to hospital. I found early labour to still be very painful but I was able to deal with the pain much better than in my first labour and I was quite calm at home.

On getting to hospital, the change in environment and the lack of control and communication meant I did not find the techniques so helpful and I don't feel I coped very well. Unfortunately as with the previous labour our baby moved into a bad position and I was unable to give birth vaginally and had a c-section.

I found the Natal Hypnotherapy invaluable for combatting stress and anxiety in late pregnancy. It also helped me cope during early labour. However once the pain became too much I did not find I was able to use the techniques so well.

I feel I have learnt skills in relaxing and staying calm that will be useful in everyday life not just labour. I am pleased we did the Natal Hypnotherapy and would definitely recommend it for dealing with anxiety and stress in pregnancy. I can see how it would be very effective for some people in labour and particularly home births where a change of environment is not needed. I feel the nature of the hospital environment was not very conducive to using the techniques effectively.

We are very grateful to Sally Burton (Consultant midwife), Barbara Wyant (NH Practitioner) and Zana Parker (NH Practitioner) for their support and care in the safe delivery of our son George Thomas Lailey.

