

Claire had a difficult time during and after her son, George's, birth and was wondering whether it would be best for her to plan a caesarean for her second baby's birth. In the event she made some quite different decisions, opting for an independent midwife, attending Zana's Natal Hypnotherapy hypnobirthing course and other birth preparation classes and finally planning a water birth at home. Labour took some unplanned-for turns which Claire managed brilliantly, thanks to all her preparation and practice. This is her story.

### Freya's Birth

Freya was born on her due date and big brother George's birthday on 6th January at 23.59! (Weighing in at 6lb 5oz).

Eleanor May-Johnson (our Independent Midwife from Neighbourhood Midwives) was with another client who was induced early so couldn't make the birth, but Sharon (her colleague) was here and another midwife called Jill.

As you know I planned for a home water birth. After contracting through the night on 5th Jan (I listened to the Birth Companion CD through this) I woke up on 6th Jan to a very excited 4 year old - it was George's birthday. Nature is amazing as my contractions stopped once George woke, and stayed away all morning while I sat with him on the floor in the lounge opening presents, playing with his toys and spending quality time with him. After my mum left with George to go out for the rest of the day so I could rest, I tried to sleep but my contractions started up straight away and within an hour were 4 mins apart.

We called our midwives who got to us at 3pm, and my contractions remained consistent at 3-4 mins apart.

Chris created my "baobab tree" safe place for me while the birthing pool filled up - we'd talked about what that was so he knew what I wanted (candles, no bright lights, closed doors, hypnobirthing CD playing, clary sage burning, my birth affirmations around the room, flowers).

I combined the hypnobirthing relaxation techniques with other learned positions and breathing from my pregnancy yoga and Daisy Foundation classes - the combination was very powerful for me and kept me feeling very focussed and in control - something the midwives commented on quite a few times. Even when we had to transfer to hospital in an ambulance at 11pm due to meconium in my waters I remained calm and kept my "safe place" sacred by closing my eyes and covering my head



with a blanket during the transfer until I got into the labour room so it didn't cause me to panic. I also didn't want to give birth in the ambulance so used hypnobirthing to keep in my safe place and breathing to not push during contractions. All of this was done in silence - Sharon had to check a few times that I was ok as I was laid on my side, a blanket covering my head and silent for the entire journey!

Not engaging in the hospital transfer, especially when we arrived to the bright lights, clinical corridors and noise, was very important to me given my previous birth experience and the fact that this birth experience wasn't quite going to how I'd wanted it to.

Freya was born at 1 minute to midnight via ventouse as she was in distress. She came out arm first in a super girl pose, which probably added to my struggle to birth her at home, and I managed the entire thing from start to finish with no pain relief apart from the water in the birthing pool.

We were told we'd need to stay in for observation until Sunday due to the amount of meconium in my waters, and on Saturday we transferred to the New Forest Birth Centre which was just great! We were the only ones staying there Saturday evening, and a lovely midwife there (Kara) took Freya from midnight until 6am so I could sleep - it was amazing to get some rest! I spent a lot of time Saturday evening talking to Kara and another midwife and they made me feel happy and not guilty about my decision to only breastfeed for the first 24 hours for Freya to get some colostrum and then I moved onto formula.

Whilst I didn't manage to get the entire home birth experience I was hoping for, it was so much more positive than my previous one and I haven't had any anxiety or baby blues and am feeling good about the decisions that were made and the outcomes.

I wanted to let you know how much our sessions have helped me - who would have thought I'd have gone for a home birth with no pain relief! And the hypnobirthing definitely worked for me. I felt calm and in control and having the safe place was great. My safe place was a beach village in South Africa we used to go to when I lived there on the Wild Coast that is off the beaten track and very dear to my heart called Morgan Bay. I took Chris and George there just over a year ago and we spent 10 relaxing days there. We gave Freya her middle name after this place - Morgan.

Two weeks after giving birth I feel happy and relaxed – very different from my mindset four years ago!

