

My first labour was not ideal and I was quite anxious about giving birth for the second time. After reading about hypnobirthing, hearing great stories about how it had helped others and attending the pregnancy relaxation class at the NFBC, we signed up for the 2 day natal hypnotherapy course with Zana.

At 7 days overdue I decided to phone the hospital to book in for an induction, which was booked in for 12 days past our due date. Although this was not part of our original birth plan, it felt like the right decision for us and the midwives had confirmed that provided everything went to plan, other than not being able to be at NFBC, I could still use the birthing pool and do everything else in our birth plan.

The baby had other plans and decided to arrive the day before the induction was booked!

I had been having a few contractions, on and off, for two weeks so when I woke up to a very mild contraction I thought nothing of it and went back to sleep. This happened a few times overnight until around 5am when I decided this was definitely the real thing! We dropped our 4 year old off at preschool at 8am and I had some breakfast and listened to our hypnobirthing tracks.

After a few hours (10am) we made our way to the birth centre and were told it was probably best we went away and came back later. They said they wouldn't want to check me again until 2pm. We decided to go for a walk in the forest but by the time we parked up I was having intense pain in my upper thighs with every contraction. I changed my mind and rather than going for a walk, I wanted to be in my 'baobab tree' - my bed!

I got comfy in the dark and quiet, listening to our tracks some more. As the contractions got longer and closer together, I wanted to get to the Birth Centre to settle myself, rather than get too settled at home and then have to move. By the time we got there it was 1pm and we were 4cm.

As well as the tracks and my controlled breathing really helping my relaxation and calming my nerves, it was really helping my husband as well and I was amazed how well he could tell what I wanted/needed without me saying. As I got comfy on the birthing ball, he sat behind me and rubbed my thighs with every contraction to ease the pain. He was very attentive and I definitely think our course with Zana gave him the confidence to know what he was doing.

I quite quickly got into the birthing pool and we played the track (with no words) on repeat.

During each contraction I really concentrated on my breathing and was 'in the zone'. I couldn't even really hear what was going on around me, other than the music, I was just envisioning each contraction bringing my baby further down and closer to being born.

I'm not sure how long it was in reality but it seemed like I quite quickly needed to push. I was expecting the midwife to ask me to get out of the pool so she could check how dilated I was (with my first labour, I got stuck at 9cm and they broke my waters before they'd let me push) but she said to trust my body and if I felt like I needed to push, I should. I felt empowered.

On the first push, the midwife said my waters had gone. I was sure they hadn't, but by this point I didn't want to talk so I didn't say anything to her.



I found being on all fours most comfortable in between contractions, gently rocking backwards and forwards in the water, but I didn't feel like the position was helping while I was pushing.

After a few pushes, I turned around and found myself kind of sat up, with my head resting on one side of the pool and my feet against the opposite side of the pool. This felt like the best position for me to push in and I found I could push stronger, with my legs braced in this position.

Again, after what seemed like not very long, my daughter was born en-caul (with the sac still in tact). The midwife quickly ripped it open and passed her to me. I wish we'd got a picture of her before the sac was opened because it really was an amazing experience. She had a lot of hair!

We had a while just sat together in

the water and the midwife took some lovely pictures for us.

We delayed the cord clamping for a while and then my husband had skin-on-skin with her while I delivered the placenta and got out of the pool.

It really was a phenomenal experience and I 100% believe that it wouldn't have been that way without everything we learnt on the 2-day course and practised leading up to the birth.