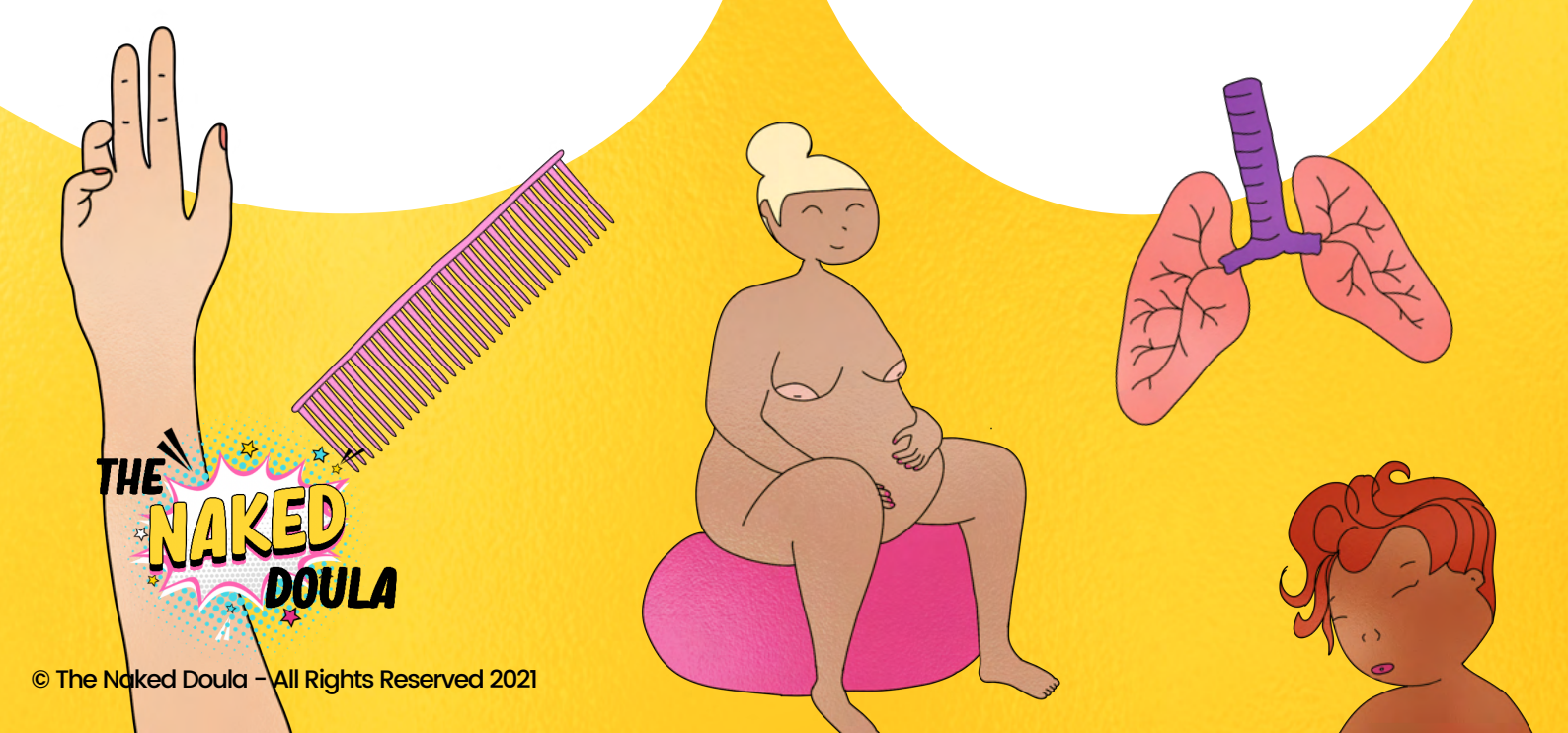


PAIN RELIEF METHODS FOR CHILDBIRTH



**THE
NAKED
DOULA**

INTRO

Hey!

Welcome to this wonderful guide to 50 pain relief methods for childbirth. Whilst I have you, thank you for your support and I hope you find something here which resonates with you! BUT... remember, this is not medical advice and the information given, although evidence based is not guaranteed to work for you.

"We are our choices, so lets make sure we know EVERY option and choice we have"

THE
NAKED
DOULA



Now, go find yourself some juicy info!

Much Love
Emma
xoxo

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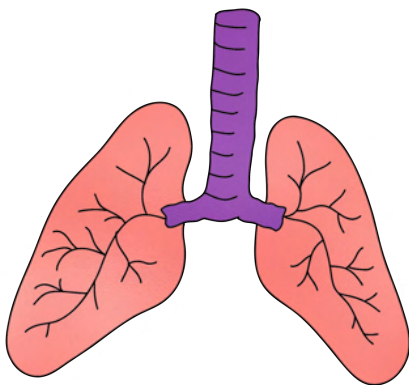


DEEP BREATHING

DEEP BREATHING

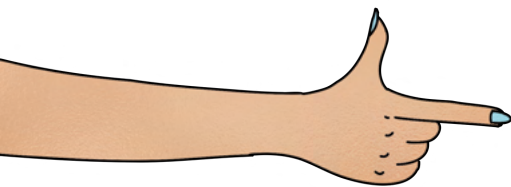
The Lowdown

Breathing techniques are the focuses of "psychoprophylaxis", which refers to teaching parents how to respond to contractions with relaxation and breathing exercises. They are a body-mind training mechanism used by people around the world for stress relief.



The Pros

Studies show that even just a few minutes of using this type of breathing alters your brainwaves in a positive way, increases your relaxation response, decreases your stress hormones, decreases your blood pressure, and increases your oxygen levels.



The How

As the contraction starts to rise take a nice big breath in through your nose, your abdomen goes out, and on your out breath out through your mouth in a slow and controlled way, as your abdomen goes back in. Keep your face and jaw relaxed and soft. Breathing should be controlled, not automatic.

01

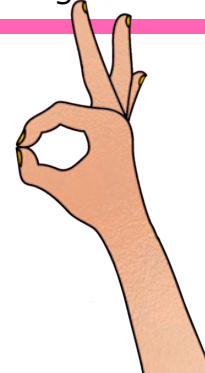


02

The Research

Focused breathing interrupts the transmission of pain signals to your brain by stimulating the release of endorphins, which are natural pain relieving hormones, and by helping you reframe your thinking about labor so that you view it as positive, productive and manageable.

03

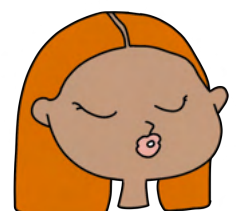
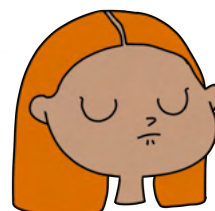


The Cons

Breathing techniques alone are not likely to be effective, but when combined with other methods (natural or medical) they appear more beneficial. For example: guided imagery, visualisation, hypnosis, continuous labour support, progressive muscle relaxation or other comfort measures..

04

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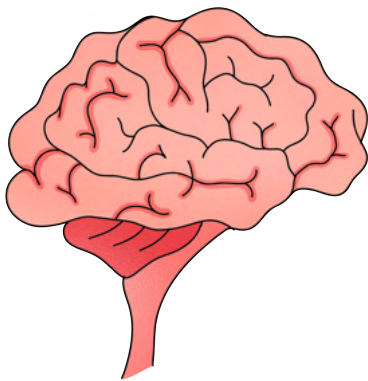


THE COMB

THE COMB

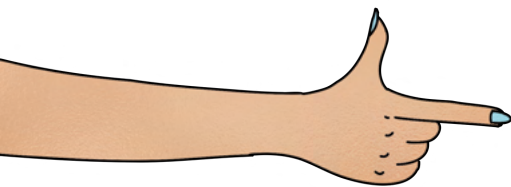
The Lowdown

When gripped tightly, a comb can help hit acupuncture points in your hands. It plays into the "gate control" pain theory, stating that the brain can only focus on a select number of sensations. Because the nerve endings are closer on your hands they reach your brain faster.



The Pros

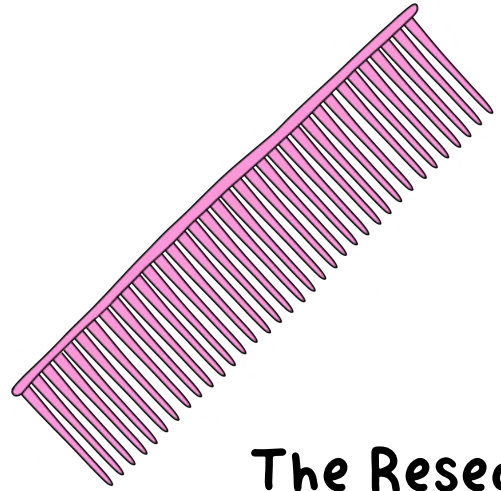
This method can make a huge impact to pain management within contractions, especially in the early stages. The comb and the sensation of it on your hand, can act as a strong focal point during labour, something to concentrate on.



The How

Hold a comb with the teeth pointing just below where your fingers meet your palm. When a contraction comes on, squeeze the comb into your palm, making sure to relax between contractions and repeat.

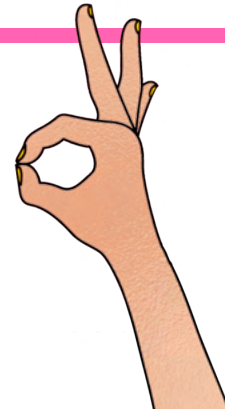
01



02

The Research

The gate control theory says if you activate your nerves in a non-painful way at the same time you're experiencing pain, it'll block the pain signals from reaching your brain, because there's a limited amount of information that can go to the brain at once.



03

The Cons

Isn't guaranteed to work for everyone. It can be seen as more of a distraction technique, as this method focuses more on pain management than pain relief. Again, this works better alongside other method (natural or medical).

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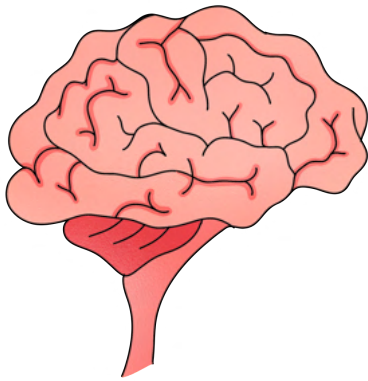


MUSIC

MUSIC

The Lowdown

Music acts through the higher centres of the central nervous system to relieve pain. Listening to music during labour, stimulates the pituitary gland inside your brain to release endorphins and increase serotonin, this promotes pain relief.



01



The Research

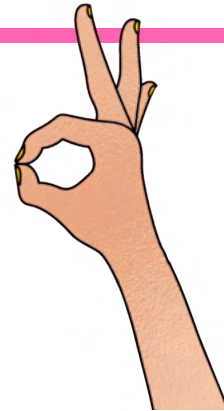
Using music therapy during labour decreases postpartum anxiety and pain, increases childbirth satisfaction and reduces early postpartum depression rates.

02

The Pros

Listening to music during labour may promote pain relief by helping you relax, reducing anxiety and providing a positive source of distraction. Can lead to lower pain intensity in early labour and lower anxiety levels during transitioning.

03



The Cons

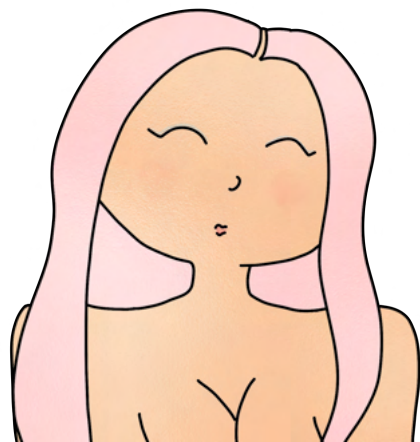
No clear benefit to music during the active phase of labour, and unless headphones are worn, there is the possibility music can be drowned out by other ongoing distractions, thus removing the positive and beneficial impacts.

04

The How

It's best recommended to wear headphones to silence out surrounding noises, if this isn't possible be sure to have speaker on loud and as close to you as possible. Either make a playlist yourself, with positive, memory stimulating music, or select one based on a style that best suits you i.e., opera, worship, relaxation etc.

05

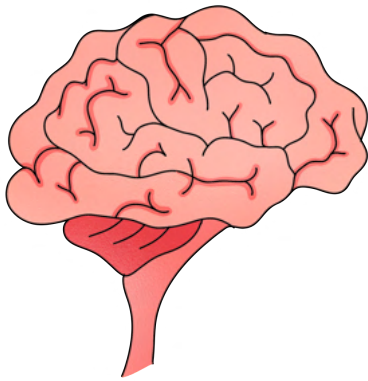


GAS 3 AIR

GAS & AIR

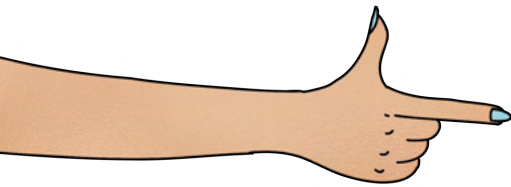
The Lowdown

Gas & Air (aka Entonox) is a mixture of half nitrous oxide and half oxygen, it is used, by breathing through a mask or mouthpiece. It alters your sense of the pain, making it easier to manage. It's simple, quick to act and wears off in minutes.



The Pros

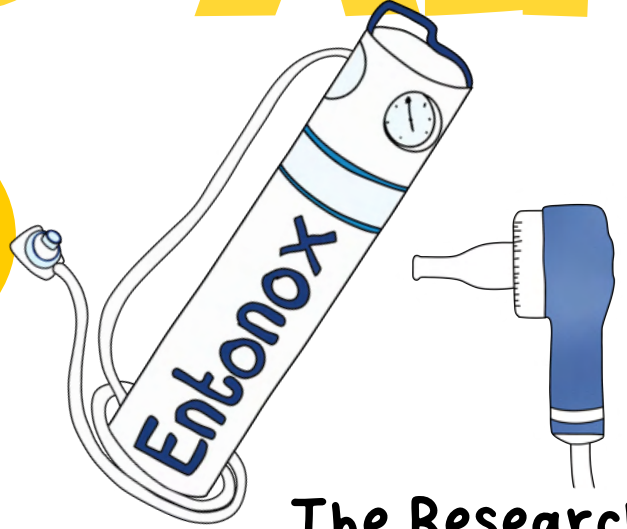
It is a very effective and quick acting pain relief method, It can be used at any time during labour, and you are in control of how much you have. Provides extra oxygen, which may help your muscles work effectively and help your baby's well-being through labour.



The How

Starts working in 15-20 seconds, timing is important in the use of Gas & Air. You breathe the gas through a mouthpiece and to get the full benefit you should start breathing as soon as the contraction begins and stop as soon as it ends. Make sure to take deep, slow breaths!

01

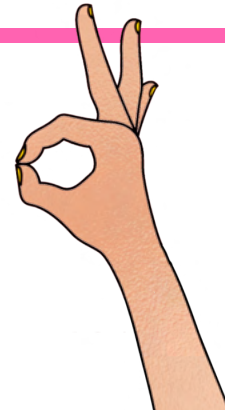


02

The Research

Nearly 80% of women use Entonox in labour because they find it the best option from a range of pain killers. It's said to be of 'moderate' help with pain and is, surprisingly, more effective at easing pain than opioids.

03

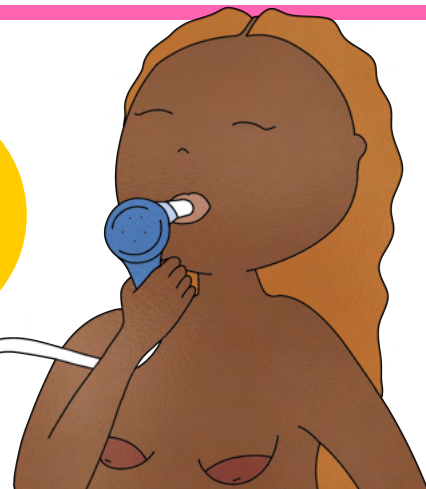


04

The Cons

It won't take the pain away completely and makes some women feel drowsy, nauseous and even disorientated or detached from the birth experience. If used for a long time it can deplete the body's stores of vitamin B12.

05

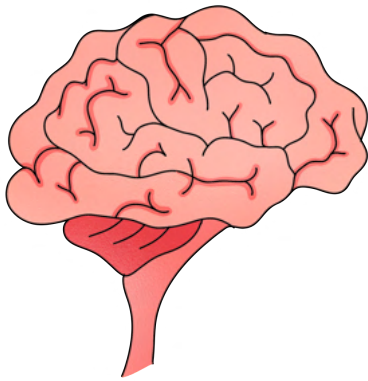


STERILE WATER INJECTIONS

WATER INJECTIONS

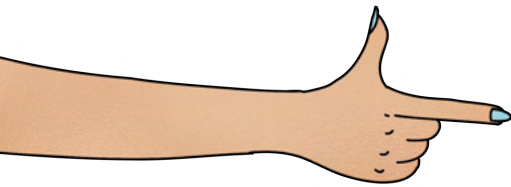
The Lowdown

Sterile water injections (SWI) is a very simple, safe procedure where tiny amounts of sterile water are injected under the skin at four points on the lower back (sacrum) to relieve pain in labour. Midwives can give SWI so this method could be ideal for use in midwife-led units or other settings with less medical support.



The Pros

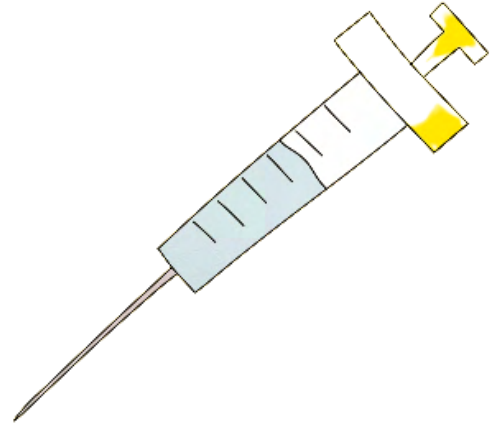
It is a simple, quick procedure that can be given by trained midwives, and can be repeated as needed. It appears to give rapid relief, and whilst pain from the injection lasts about 30 seconds, the injections might reduce pain of contractions for 2-3 hours.



The How

Injections are usually given by two midwives at the same time, in two to four injection points. 0.1ml to 0.5ml of water are given per injection, preferably during a contraction. This will leave small blisters at each site which will sting, like a wasp sting, for 20-30 seconds.

01

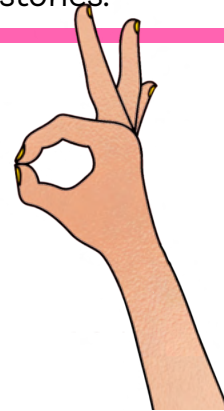


02

The Research

SWI works because of the 'gate control' theory, where the perception of deep pain is blocked by the pain receptors in the skin being irritated by the injections. SWI has been used in other countries for whiplash and kidney stones.

03

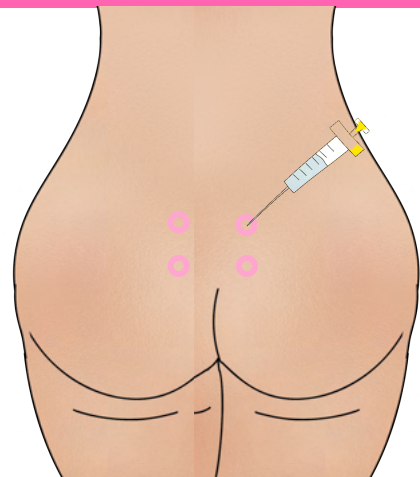


04

The Cons

Can get a burning pain at injection site, but this wears off within minutes. SWI are not widely available, as not a lot of research has been done. Cannot use TENS machine with this method, as working on the same body part.

05





HYPNOBIRTHING

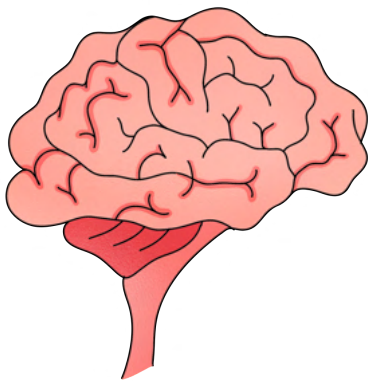
HYPNOBIRTHING



The Lowdown

Hypnobirthing is a method of pain management that can be used during labour and birth. It involves using a mixture of visualisations, relaxation and deep breathing techniques. The aim is a shorter, more comfortable, easier labour, with less need for intervention or pain relief.

01



The Research

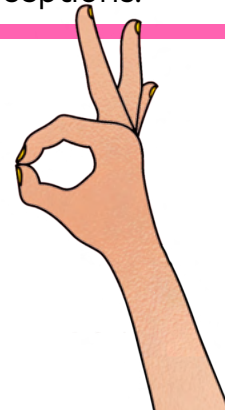
The idea behind hypnobirthing is that pain in labour is a fear response and that you can avoid it by learning the right techniques. Women who use this method are fully in control and aware of what's going on, despite common misconceptions.

02

The Pros

Helps to have a calm and positive birth experience, whilst reducing the need for pain relief and encouraging a shorter labour. Focusing on relaxation reduces the overall pain for mum during labour and birth.

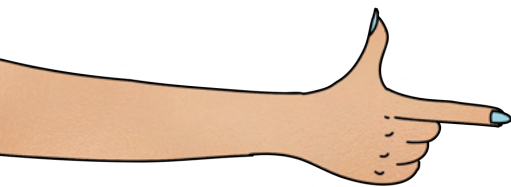
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The Cons

Takes time to learn about hypnobirthing, practice it and master the breathing, visualisation and self-hypnosis techniques. There can be a difference between what you expect to or hope will happen during labour and the reality of your birth experience.

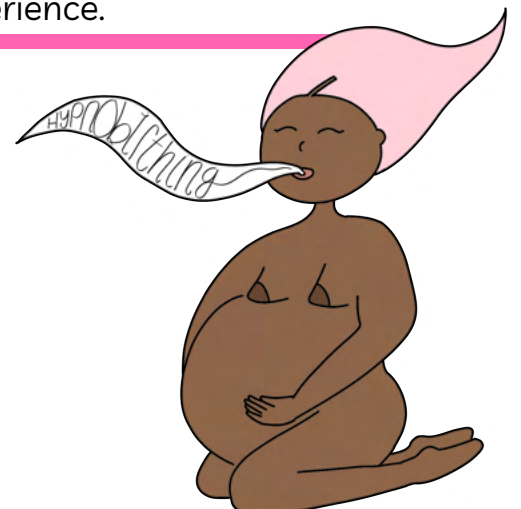
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The How

Hypnobirthing involves learning and practicing techniques that you can use in labour like: visualisations, affirmations, relaxation, deep breathing, self-hypnosis, mindfulness etc. Why not join my hypnobirth brain train group class.

05

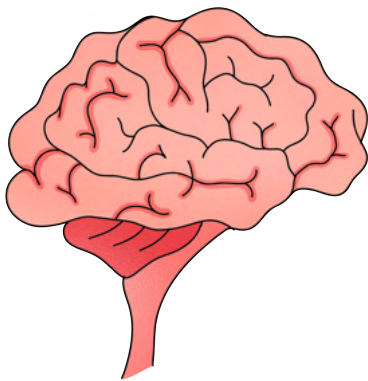


PRESSURE POINTS

PRESSURE POINTS

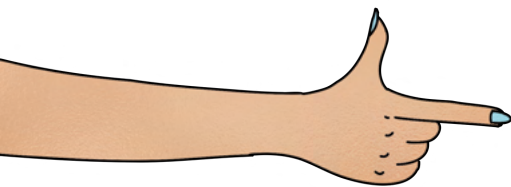
The Lowdown

Acupressure is based on the same theory as acupuncture, but instead of using needles, acupressure is delivered in a noninvasive way using, fingers, thumbs, knuckles etc. Unlike acupuncture, which must be delivered by a licensed provider, acupressure could be used by anyone.



The Pros

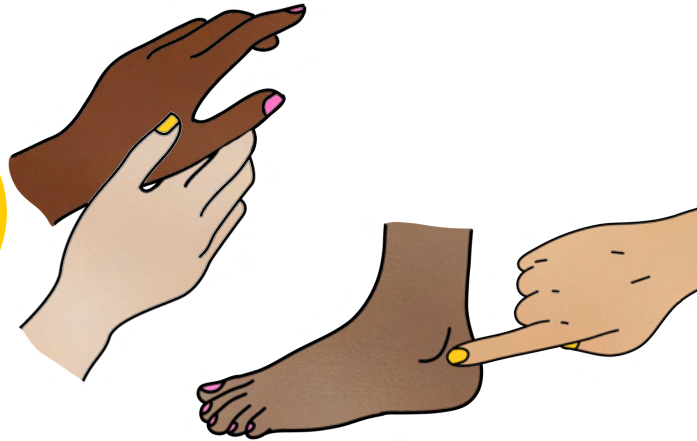
Acupressure is an effective, noninvasive and easily applicable technique to reduce pain in labour - especially the first stage. Also shown to decrease anxiety and overall length of labour, whilst increasing overall childbirth satisfaction,



The How

Acupressure is typically provided by a birth partner or carer, during a contraction. Some common points are LI4 (back of hand) and SP6 (on legs). Pressure is applied to these areas with either finger, thumb, knuckles or other means to gently add pressure.

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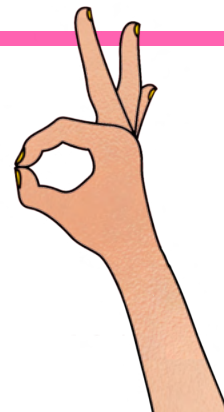


02

The Research

Acupressure works by leading the body to produce endorphins - natural pain-relieving hormones. Studies found women were less likely to have Caesareans when acupressure was used.

03

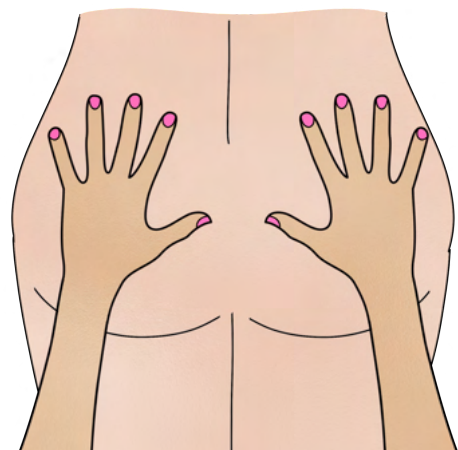


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The Cons

Not shown to be as effective during the active stage of labour, especially in comparison to other nonintrusive methods. Can be a time consuming method to learn and practice, will need to ensure birthing partner or equivalent has been educated too.

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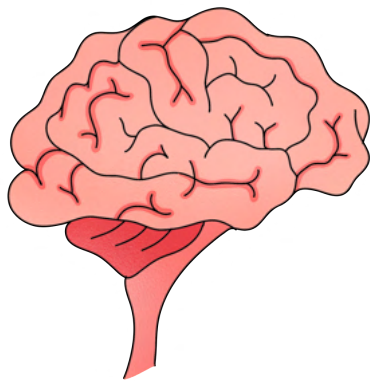
The image features a large, white, stylized letter 'O' centered on a bright yellow background. Inside the 'O' is a smaller, solid yellow circle. The word 'TAPPING' is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font across the middle of the 'O'.

TAPPING

TAPPING

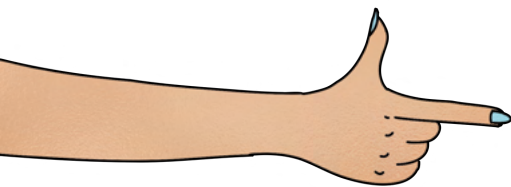
The Lowdown

Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) also known as tapping or psychological acupuncture. It involves tapping with our fingertips on acupuncture/acupressure points whilst focusing on a problem or issue we wish to resolve.



The Pros

Quick, effective and easy to use. Great at identifying triggers, behaviours etc., quickly in order to reframe them. Able to regulate emotions, remain in control and ultimately reduces stress and anxiety, and in some instances acts as pain relief.



The How

EFT uses fingertip tapping to apply pressure. Whilst tapping the ascending points, recite a reminder phrase to maintain focus on your pain i.e. "even though these contractions feel painful, my body accepts and works with them". Keep repeating.

01

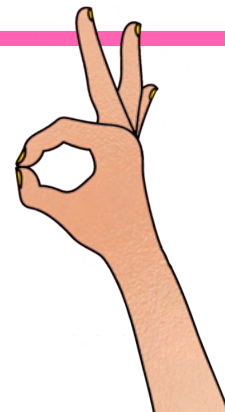


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The Research

Though still being researched, EFT tapping has been used to treat people with anxiety and PTSD, it has shown to significantly reduce psychological stress.

03

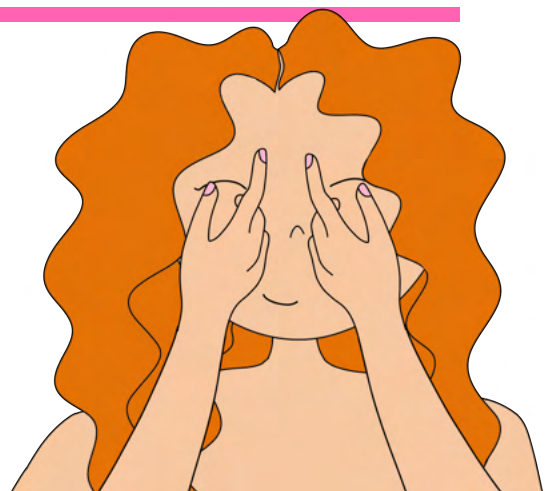


04

The Cons

Can be quite time consuming having to learn about all the steps and acupuncture/acupressure points, as well as practicing. Not shown to be as affective as other nonintrusive methods.

05



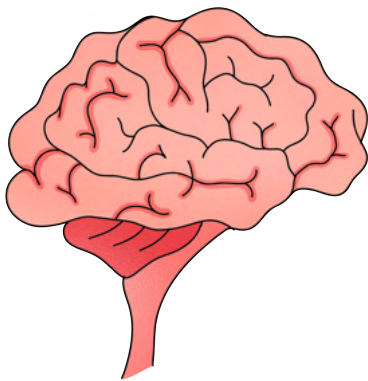


COUNTING

COUNTING

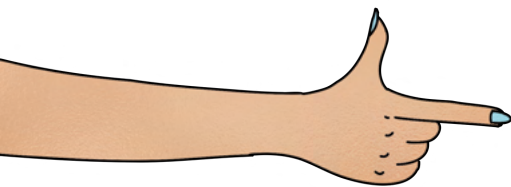
The Lowdown

Similar to other visual methods, this method of counting backwards is a great way to distract the mind. Reducing the intensity of pain and helping to create a more positive birthing environment.



The Pros

Extremely effective and easy for anyone to use. Great distraction technique, as a lot of concentration and attention is required, this it may decrease the intensity of pain and anxiety.



The How

Starting from 10 or 7, count backwards to 1 - either verbally or nonverbally, but making sure to focus on your breathing, softening your jaw and hands, making sure to be intentional and deeply relaxed. Repeat this through every contraction, and until the contraction stops!

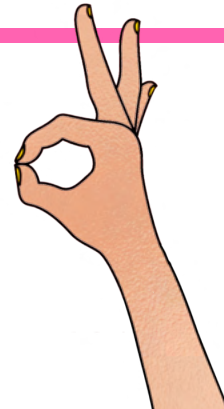
01



The Research

Studies show that counting backwards from 1,000 in increments of seven is the most impacting and successful method, and made the most noticeable difference in regards to pain relief.

02



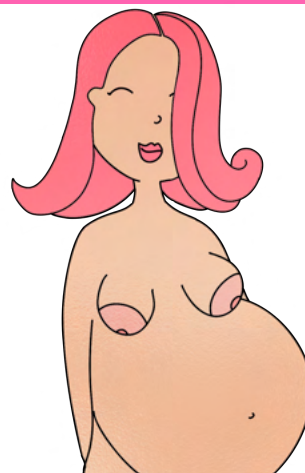
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The Cons

Despite being easy to implement, it is recommended to practice this method several time before going into labour, to ensure you are familiar and confident with it. This can be quite time consuming, and hard to fully understand when not in "pain".

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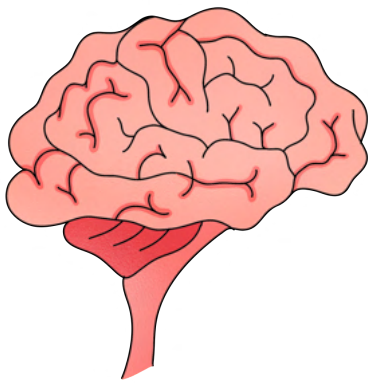


10 BLOWING BUBBLES

BLOWING BUBBLES

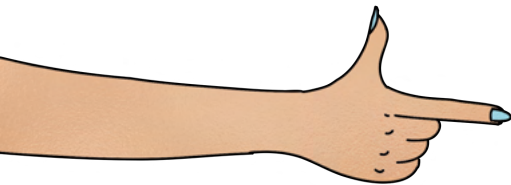
The Lowdown

Blowing Bubbles is another breathing technique. It's important to have control over your breathing in labour, as it helps with relaxation and pain management, reduces anxiety, and prevents hyperventilation. This method is particularly helpful for the second stage of labour.



The Pros

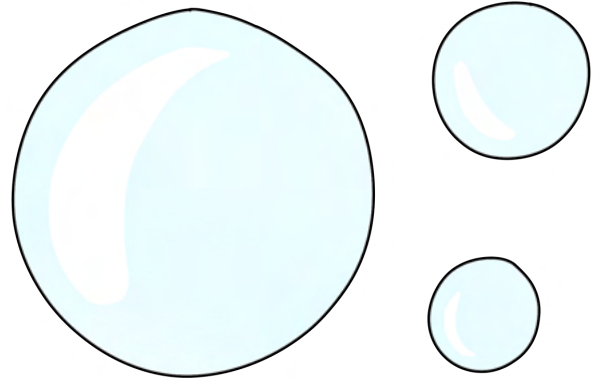
Just a few minutes of intentional breathing increase your relaxation response, decrease your blood pressure and increase oxygen levels. This technique is especially helpful in managing pain in the second stage of labour.



The How

Toward the end of the late first stage of labour, contractions will become stronger, longer and more frequent. As they become more intense, focus on shallow, gentle, upper chest breathing. Breathe in and out through an open mouth, just like you are blowing bubbles through a bubble wand. Repeat during the peak of contractions.

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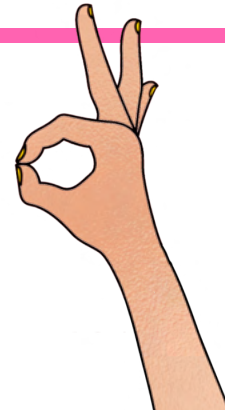


02

The Research

Intentional and focused breathing interrupts the transmission of pain signals to your brain by stimulating the release of endorphins - natural pain relieving hormones.

03



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The Cons

This method - like other breathing techniques are more effective and beneficial when used alongside another method (natural or medical).

05

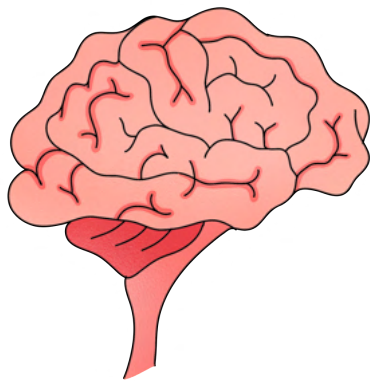


TR **MINDFULNESS**

MINDFULNESS

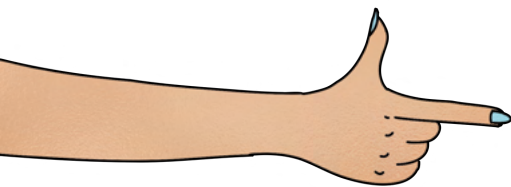
The Lowdown

Mindfulness teaches how to skilfully work with pain, fear and uncertainty, and to shift perspectives by optimising the mind/body connection. It focuses on the woman being present in the moment, being fully aware and fully accepting her labour and birth experience.



The Pros

Mindfulness completely changes your mindset in labour, from negative to positive. Can help conserve your energy, increase your pain threshold, encourages labour contractions, resulting in an increased chance of a quicker, smoother and more enjoyable labour.



The How

It's never too early to implement and practice mindfulness techniques. Focus on using positive and empowering language only, pay attention to your breath, ensuring your breathing is slow, deep and intentional. Make sure to acknowledge the pain for what it is, but don't focus on the pain, use affirmations and visualisations to help.

01



02

The Research

Much of our mindset about labour is socially constructed. Studies show the way a woman thinks about labour pain impacts her experience of the physical sensations of labour. Mindfulness helps combat this. The realisation of choice can be incredibly empowering.

03



The Cons

Can be considered as a time consuming method to learn, practice and master. If birthing partners and other support partners aren't on board or aware of your preferences then it can be considerably hard to remain mindful, and implement the techniques learnt.

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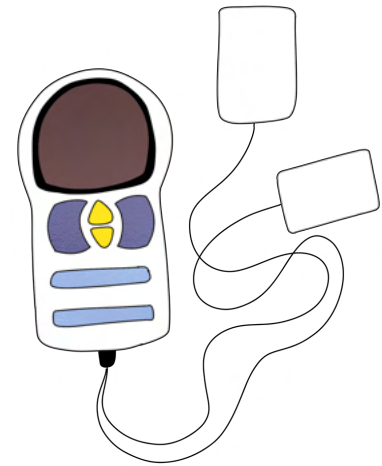


TOP TENS MACHINE

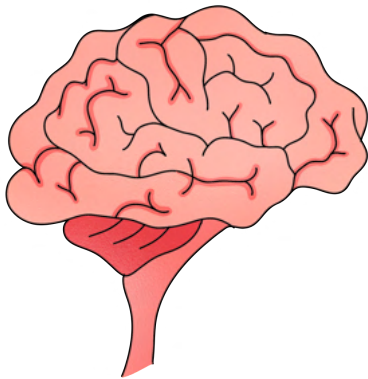
TENS MACHINE

The Lowdown

Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) this involves passing a gentle electrical current through four flat pads placed on your back. The current creates a tingling feeling and encourages your body to produce its' own pain relief, called endorphins.



01



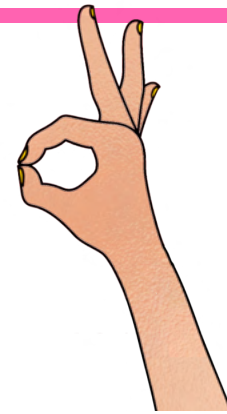
The Research

TENS works in two ways, the electrical impulses affect the nervous system reducing its' ability to transmit pain signals to the spinal cord and brain. But the electrical impulses also stimulate the body to produce endorphins, which help relieve pain.

02

The Pros

You can control the strength of the machine yourself and it can be put on by a birth partner or midwife. Known to massively reduce your pain intensity levels, especially in the first stages of labour.

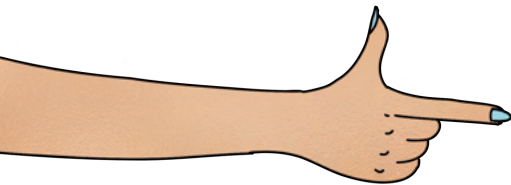


03

The Cons

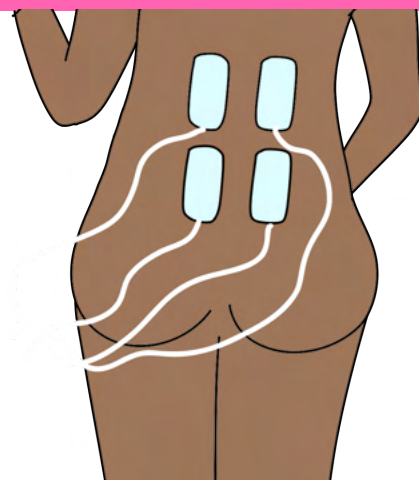
Needs to be started in the early stages of labour, as its' less useful in the latter stages. Cannot be used in the pool, bath or shower. Will not completely remove your pain and takes about 40 minutes to build up your body's natural pain relief.

04



The How

Your birth partner can put the TENS machine on you at home when you need some form of pain relief. It can be started during any stage of labour, but is thought to work better if started early, to feel the full effects.



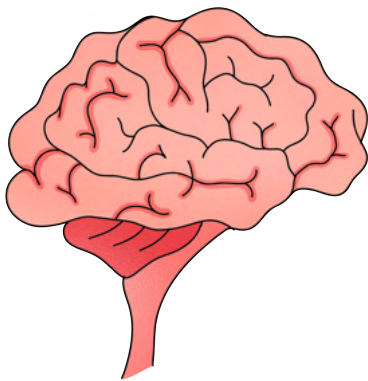
05

13 ORGASM

ORGASM

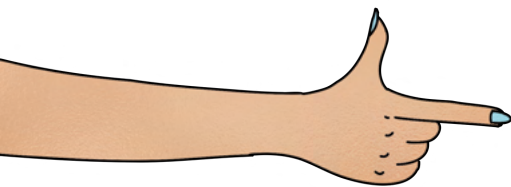
The Lowdown

Orgasmic birth, alternatively referred to as 'ecstatic' birth, refers to the range of sensation and emotional release within the birthing process when experienced as pleasurable by women. Less about climaxing and more about how you approach the process of labour and delivery.



The Pros

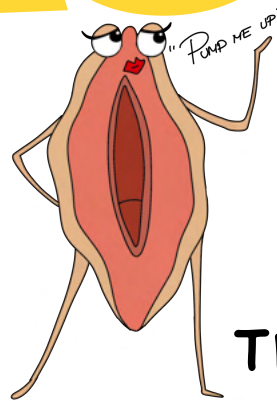
Quick, effective and enjoyable pain relief method. Increases oxytocin and endorphins, also reducing anxiety and fears, making whole experience more positive. More beneficial during the earlier stages of labour.



The How

Focus on the following: 1) Environment: darkness, minimal noise, calm, undisturbed and private. 2) Mindset: talk out fears, reframe brain and hypnobirthing. 3) Love and support: safety, trust and surrender. 4) Floppy face, floppy fanny. 5) Sexuality: kissing, nipple stimulation, masturbation, vibrators, sex, flick the bean.

01

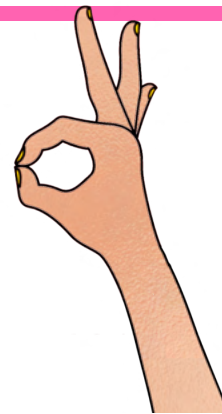


The Research

Orgasms are known to be 22 times as relaxing, than your average tranquilliser. Studies show the importance of the relationship between oxytocin, endorphins, adrenaline and prolactin. When these synchronise with an undisturbed birth, women are able to experience the ecstatic feeling, synonymous with pleasure in a woman's sexual life.

02

03

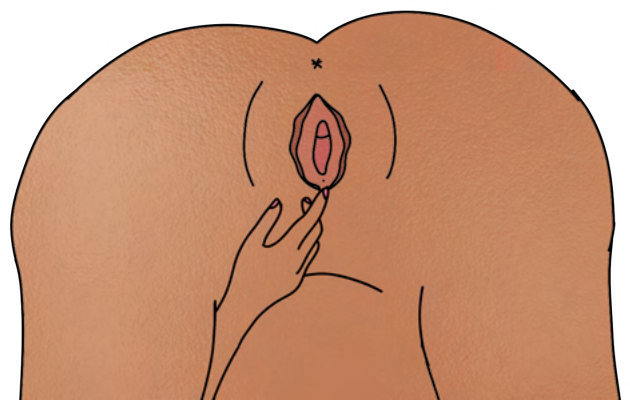


The Cons

Somewhat limited to the techniques you can use and implement, especially if in a hospital or midwife-led unit. Best place for this method is in the comfort of your own home. Sex isn't recommended once your waters break.

04

05



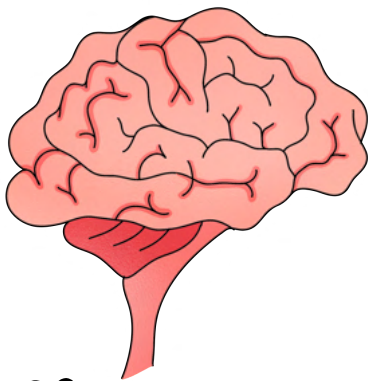
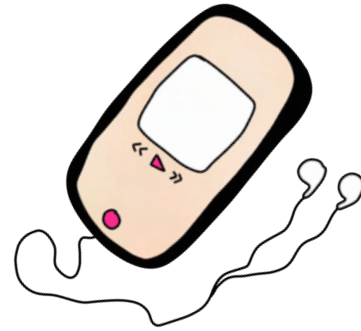
14 DANCING

DANCING

The Lowdown

This technique focuses on using low-impact dance to encourage the combination of both upright positioning and movement during labour - especially the first stages of labour.

01



02

The Research

Evidence suggests that dancing during the first stage of labour can decrease the duration and intensity of pain and increase patient satisfaction. This method is widely used and supported by midwives and other carers.

The Pros

Upright positioning and mobility, may shorten the duration of labour, decrease likelihood of operative birth and admission to the neonatal intensive care unit. Less likely to have an epidural and overall lower pain intensity. Can help speed up dilation and helps change attitude and emotional state.

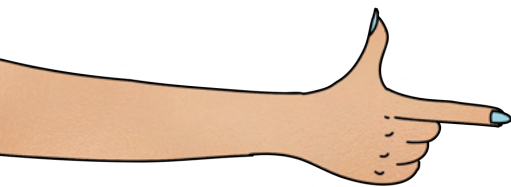
03



The Cons

This method is somewhat harder to achieve - but not impossible - if you are strapped up to wires and monitors, or if you've had an epidural. You may just need to adapt the style of dance and music you work with, or maybe use support like a birthing ball to help.

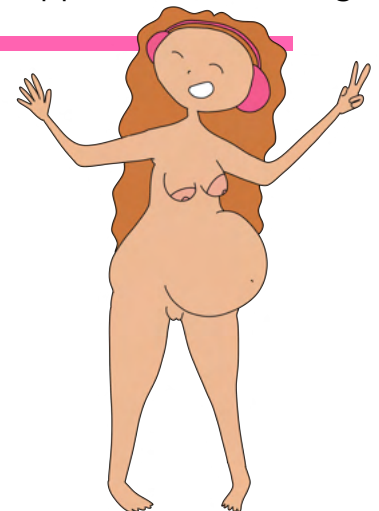
04



The How

Choose a style of dance and music that best suits you, aiming for something not too high in speed or tempo, and something that encourages upright positioning and movement. Get your birth partner to join in and support you, have a laugh and enjoy yourself. Best recommended to use during the first stage of labour.

05

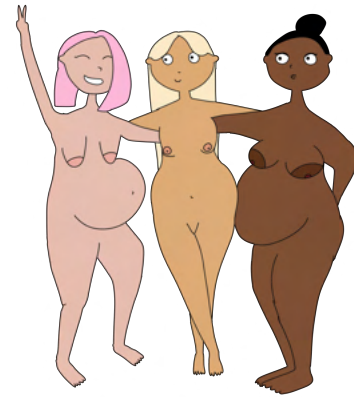


THE DOULA AFFECT

THE DOULA

The Lowdown

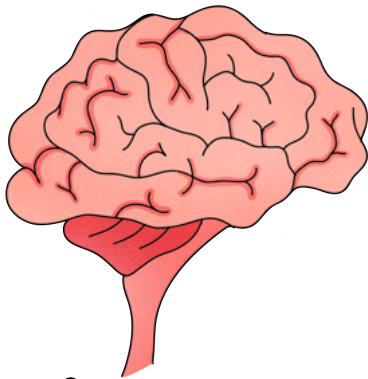
A birth Doula is a companion who supports a birthing person during labour and birth. Birth doulas are trained to provide continuous, 1-to-1 care, as well as information, physical support and emotional support to birthing persons and their partners. They empower women to communicate their needs!



01

The Research

Studies show a significant reduction in caesarean births, instrumental vaginal births, decrease in the need for pain relief, need for oxytocin augmentation and shortened durations of labour. Also, a higher newborn Apgar score and overall satisfaction of birthing process.



02

The Pros

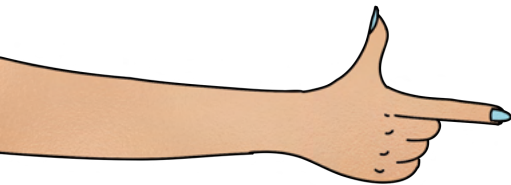
Well where do we start? The pros of having a doula are endless. From that emotional and physical support to being an advocate for you and your family. A doula can completely change your birthing experience by helping you prepare for the birth you've always wanted. They support all births and all decisions and are there for you.



03

The Cons

Cons? What cons? There really isn't anything bad to say about Doula's only that you are needing to pay for the service - saying this, many Doula's offer arrangements and service swaps too! It's also important to note that prams don't last forever - but your birth experience definitely does.



04

The How

Doulas nurture and support you throughout pregnancy labour, birth & postpartum. Aspects of this may include: physical support (massages, creating environment, feeding), emotional support (reassurance and encouragement), informational support (suggesting techniques, explaining procedures) and acting as an advocate (communicating needs and wants on their behalf).

05

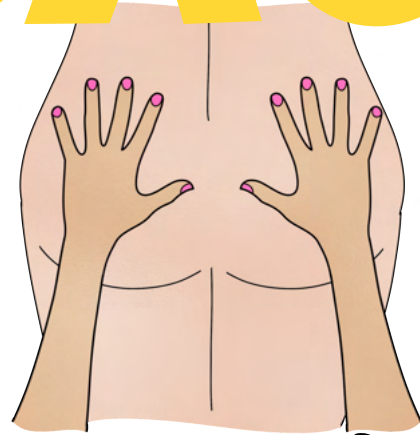


16 **MESSAGE**

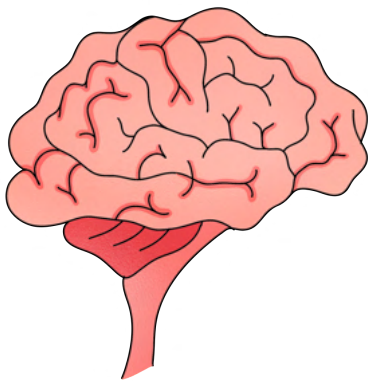
MASSAGE

The Lowdown

Massage involves manipulating the body's soft tissues. It's used to help relax tense muscles and to help calm people. Different massage techniques may benefit different people, but using this through labour and contractions can be hugely beneficial.



01



02

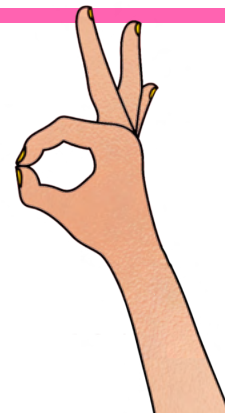
The Research

There are two ways this method works, the first if through the "gate control" theory, as massages flood the body with pleasant sensations so the brains doesn't perceive the painful ones as much. This method also decreases cortisol/stress hormone and increases serotonin and dopamine.

The Pros

This method is easily accesible, can be done anywhere and can also be used alongside other forms of pain reief. Studies show this technique decreases the overall intensity of pain, decreases anxiety and increases birth satisfaction.

03



04

The Cons

Like other non-medical techniques this method is more beneficial if practiced antenatally (before labour) So it can be considered time consuming to learn, practice and master. Also this method is for pain management not pain relief.

The How

Basic massage techniques can be learned during antenatal classes, however midwives should be able to advise on some helpful massage techniques if needed. There are different massage types to use i.e., lower back massage, smooth strokes (effleurage) and counter pressure. Find what works best for you and get birth partner to keep practicing!

05



TF HYDROTHERAPY

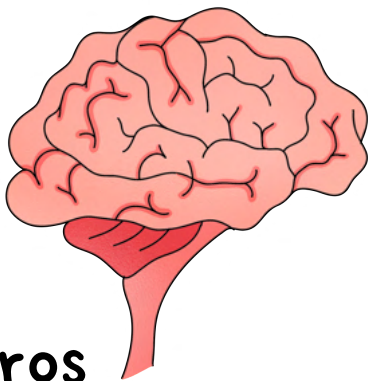
HYDROTHERAPY

The Lowdown

Hydrotherapy/birthing pool is useful for managing pain in labour. It encourages you to relax and can make contractions seem less painful. The use of water for pain relief, is accessible at any point in your labour as long as there are no contraindications (factors meaning a birthing pool should not be used).



01



The Pros

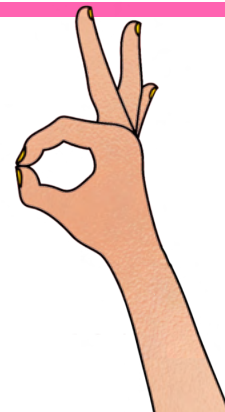
Increases relaxation, decreases pressure on your abdominal (tummy) muscles, relaxes perineal tissues (less likely to tear), lowers blood pressure, relaxes and reduces stress allowing your body to release more oxytocin, which results in a shorter duration of labour. Reduced need for an epidural and less intervention required.

02

The Research

The use of water for relieving pain in labour has been found to be hugely advantageous. Studies have found that 72.3% of people who had water-births would certainly choose this method of giving birth again, whereas only 8.7% of those who had land births would choose that method again!

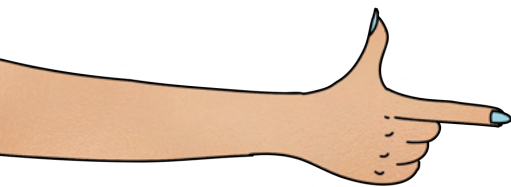
03



The Cons

Again like all pain management methods, this may not take away the pain completely. Some hospitals and midwife-led units may have limited supplies of birthing pools so in these cases baths or showers are a next best alternative.

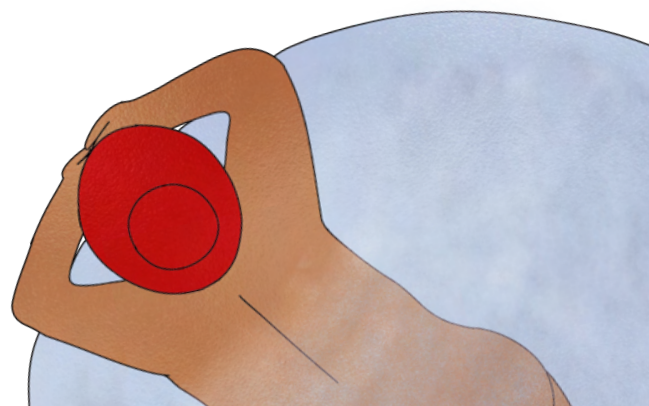
04



The How

During water immersion in labour, a person gets into tub/pool of warm water (37°C /98.6°F) before the baby is born. In a water-birth, a person remains in the water during the pushing phase and actual birth of the baby. Baby is brought to surface of water, and birthing of the placenta can be in or out of water.

05



18

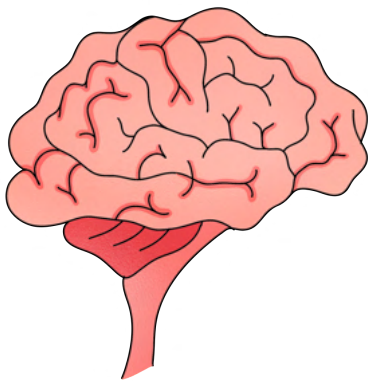
VOCALISATION

VOCALISATION

The Lowdown

Vocalisation in labour is the practice of making low, vibratory sounds as breath is slowly released. Most women naturally start to moan and vocalise in labour naturally but by actively vocalising, you can help manage your pain levels.

01



02

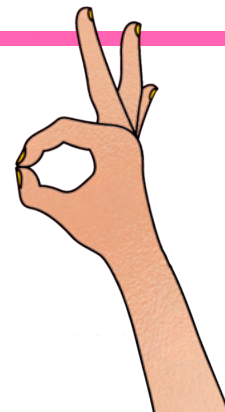
The Research

Almost all women use some kind of noise as a way to cope with contractions during labour and birth. Allowing yourself to let go and make the noise your body naturally wants to make during labour is so important.

The Pros

Helps to relax and open up the muscle fibres in the pelvic bowl, allowing the pelvic floor to open with more ease and help you birth your baby more quickly. Helps create the optimum level of hormones, which ultimately distracts you and enhances your birthing experience.

03



04

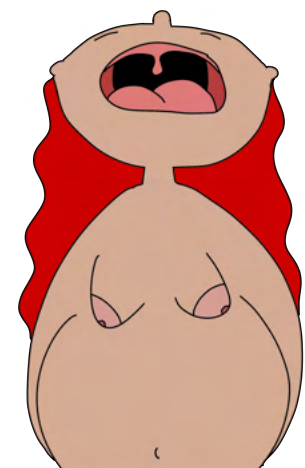
The Cons

Similarly to other pain management methods, this technique is most beneficial when practiced antenatally (before labour) but also when used alongside other methods (medical or non-medical).

The How

Take a breathe and on the exhale release your jaw and let out an "ahhhh". The more pain you are experiencing the louder the sound should be. Vocalisation types: moaning, loud, long breaths and panting, wincing, grunting, growling/roaring, word repeating i.e., "I can, I can, I can".

05

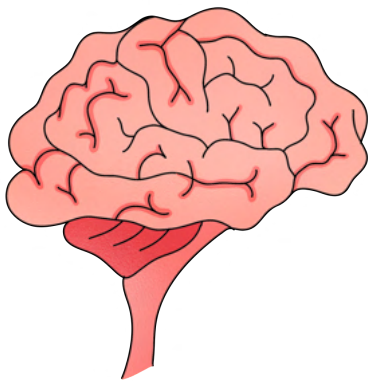


TOP ACUPUNCTURE

ACUPUNCTURE

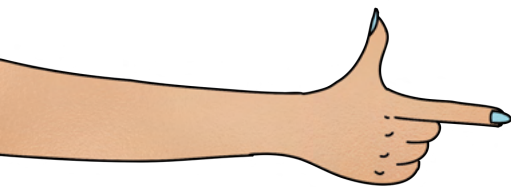
The Lowdown

Acupuncture is a traditional Chinese form of medicine based on balancing the body's 'vital energy' or 'qi' (ci). Theory is that qi travels along specific routes up and down the body and is concentrated in certain key body surface areas (acupuncture points).



The Pros

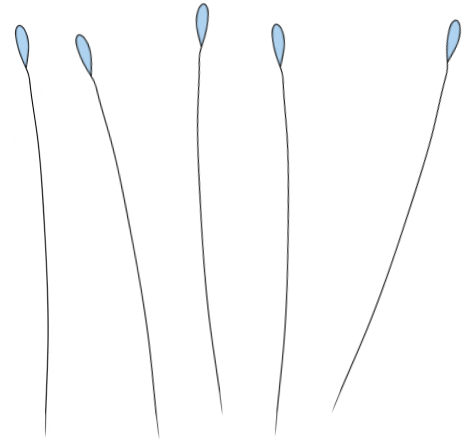
Works externally, so does not affect either baby or mother. Allows you to be mobile, and remain in control. Can be used in conjunction with other pain relief methods. May increase overall childbirth satisfaction, as it can reduce need for pain relief and pain intensity.



The How

Acupuncture involves stimulating the points that represent whatever internal organ, muscle etc., requires treatments, in order to rebalance the body's qi. An area to be treated may be represented in several acupuncture points. This stimulation is most commonly applied with very fine needles.

01

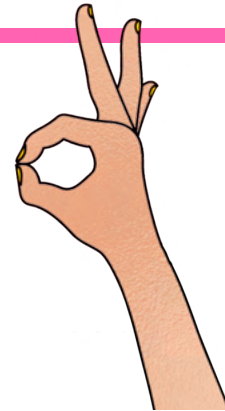


02

The Research

Acupuncture has been around for over 2,500 years. It's becoming widely recognised as an effective method of pain relief and is being increasingly integrated within the NHS particularly for: tension-type headaches, migraines and lower back pains.

03

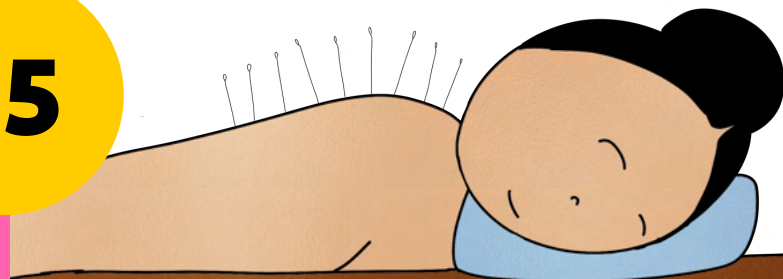


04

The Cons

To have acupuncture, you need to have a fully qualified acupuncturist on board. This will need to be organised before you go into labour. Whilst being able to use other methods alongside this, you cannot use electro-stimulus with acupuncture in a birthing pool.

05

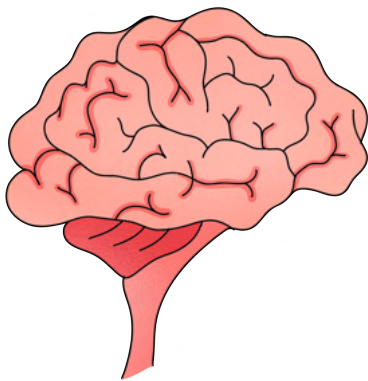


20 THE DIAL

THE DIAL

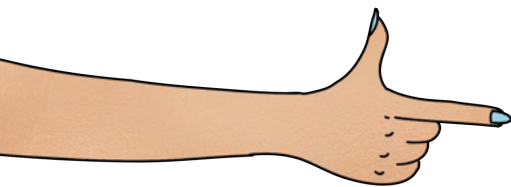
The Lowdown

We have the ability to change the way something feels just by using our brain! The Dial, is a great visualising technique for anyone, and can be used in any situation or environment, and can be individualised to the person.



The Pros

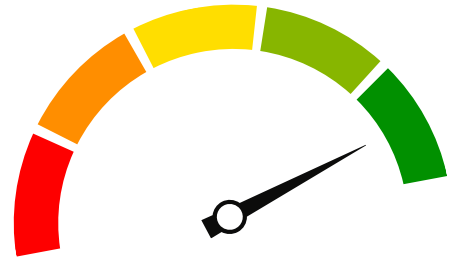
This technique is best used in preparation and during labour. Coupled with breathing techniques, this method can reduce pain intensity, reduce fears and anxiety and help relax the body, making birth more positive.



The How

Take a deep breath. Focus on the pain point. Imagine your dial. Maybe it's colours, or maybe it's numbers. Slowly turn down your dial! Focusing on controlling the pain as you do. Repeat throughout your contractions and for as long as you need.

01

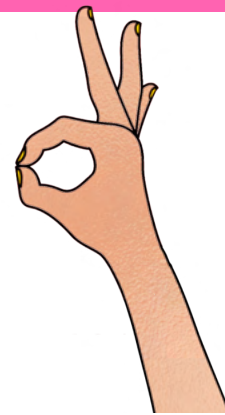


02

The Research

By using visualisation over and over again you're preparing your mind to give your body better instructions. You're relaxing your body, so that it works more effectively. When your body is limp and relaxed, the uterus has no resistance or tension from surrounding muscles, making contractions more comfortable.

03

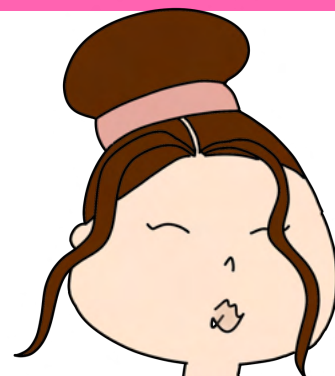


The Cons

This method, is a form of pain management not relief, so it will not remove all pain. Visualisation techniques might not come easy to some people, so practicing in advance is very important.

04

05



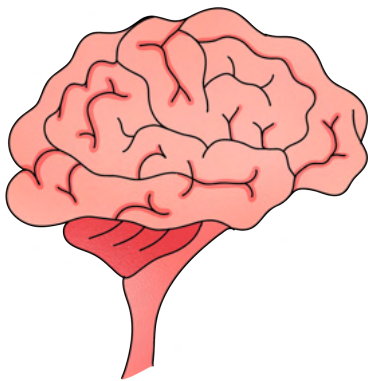
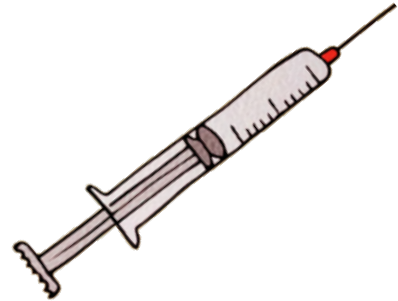
21 NARCOTICS

NARCOTICS

The Lowdown

Narcotic pain medications, such as Morphine, Fentanyl and Opioid drugs are strong, effective pain killers. They can be given wherever you are giving birth, but because of the side affects are less likely to be given with home births.

01



The Research

Due to the effect on the baby at birth, narcotics are usually given before the transition phase of first-stage labour in order to wear off before baby is born.

02

The Pros

Time frames may vary depending on medication, but they generally work within 20-30 minutes and last 2-4 hours when given Intramuscularly, and works within 2-3 minutes, lasting 1-2 hours when given intravenously. In general, this methos makes most women feel sleepy and relaxed.

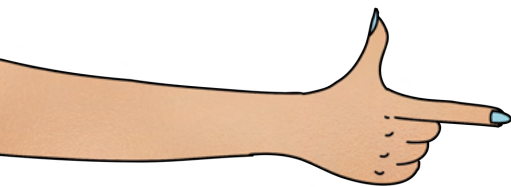
03



The Cons

May make baby sleepy, and might even affect babies' ability to breastfeed. Due to these, narcotics tend to be given before the transition phase and no later, to give them time to wear off. Makes some women feel drowsy, dizzy or nauseated. Dulls pain, but doesn't eliminate it.

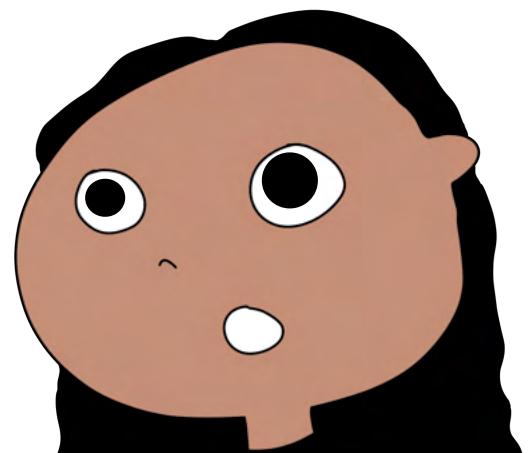
04



The How

Morphine and opioid drugs are usually given as an injection into a big muscle such as your buttock or the top of you leg (Intramuscularly) but can also be injected directly into a view (intravenously). Narcotics more often that not are given before the transition phase.

05

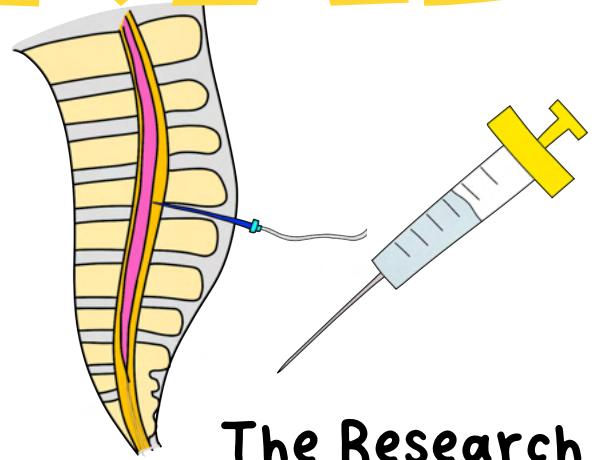


22 **EPIDURAL**

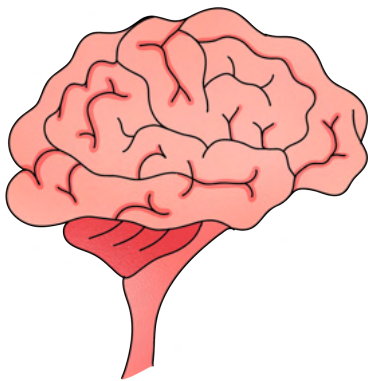
EPIDURAL

The Lowdown

An Epidural is a procedure that injects a local anaesthetic into the space around the spinal nerves in your lower back. This usually blocks the pain from labour contractions and during birth very effectively. An epidural is usually done by an anaesthetist.



01



02

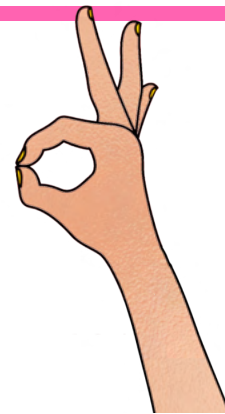
The Research

Epidurals are becoming increasingly common, with over 31% of (UK) women opting for them in 2019, a rise from 30% in 2018. Epidurals don't always work however do hold a 88% - 91% success rate.

The Pros

An Epidural can be administered at any point, and is better at relieving pain than opioids. It is a pain relief method, so is guaranteed to remove some element and intensity of labour pains. Can continuously topped up if needs be.

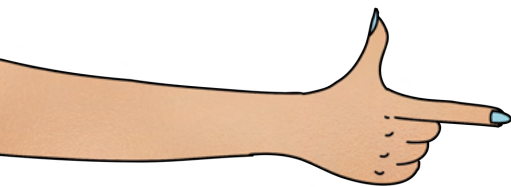
03



The Cons

You are more likely to have a longer first and second stage of labour and are more likely to have intervention such as synthetic oxytocin to speed things up. You are also more likely to experience forceps/vacuum to help your baby out.

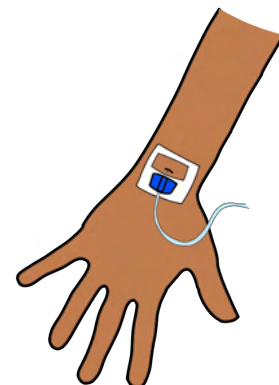
04



The How

It involves injecting a small amount of anaesthetic into the epidural space of the spine (spinal cord). That space is filled with fluid. It is topped up when needed and will take 10-15 minutes to kick in. You will need to be monitored more closely, and depending on the volume administered may be restricted to movement.

05

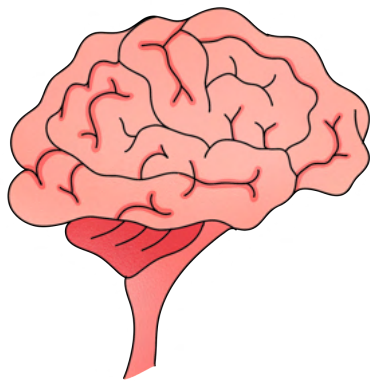


MOVEMENT

MOVEMENT

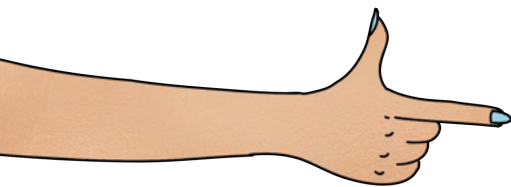
The Lowdown

Moving about and remaining active during labour, helps it to progress quicker and smoother. Whereas lying on your back can make your contractions slower and more painful.



The Pros

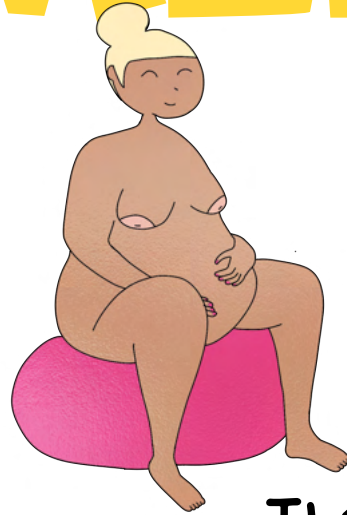
Moving around, staying upright and changing position will maximise your body's ability to give birth. It can ease pain, make you feel in more control, increase your chances of a shorter labour and ultimately help you create a more positive mindset ready for birth.



The How

There are lots of different positions and movements to try, such as: rocking, swaying and leaning forwards. Sitting, leaning on a table. Rocking back and fourth on, sitting on, or gently bouncing on a birth ball.

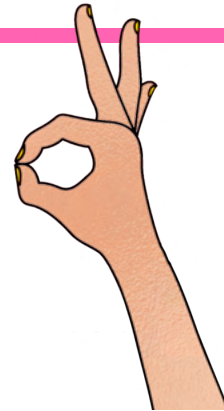
01



The Research

Moving around increases pressure on the cervix, by encouraging the baby's head down. This promotes the release of oxytocin and endorphins - the body's natural pain relievers.

02



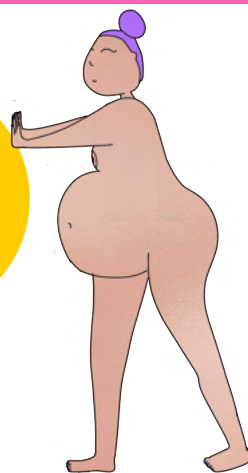
03

The Cons

Try not to overdo it, as saving energy is also important. Lying on your side for a while or sitting up supported by lots of pillows or a birthing ball, can help your body to work well and conserve energy. Remember this will not remove all pain, it'll just help!

04

05



UFO
Upright,
Forward & Open

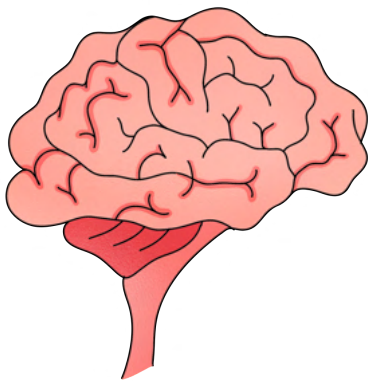
24 ANIMALS

ANIMALS

The Lowdown

Animals distract us from pain in a positive way. Having a dog, cat or pet in your life changes the focus from pain to something that brings joy and happiness. They need attention and are hard to ignore.

01



02

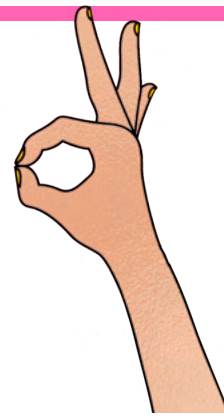
The Research

Research shows that being in the presence of a dog and petting them can help to distract from pain, provide comfort and reduce any fears, anxieties or feelings of isolation. They've been shown to improve quality of life for many patients living with chronic pain.

The Pros

Having an animal can make you feel less stressed, can make you more active which in turn may reduce pain intensity. Studies have also shown interacting with animals helps lower blood pressure, reduce anxiety and decrease depression.

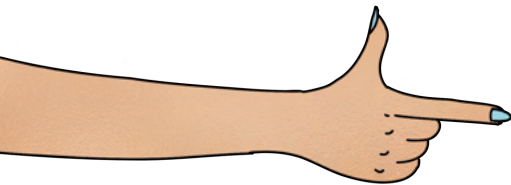
03



The Cons

Not the easiest method to implement if you don't have any animals. And you probably won't be allowed your dog in hospital. Again, this is solely a pain management method, not a pain relief one. So it won't completely remove pain.

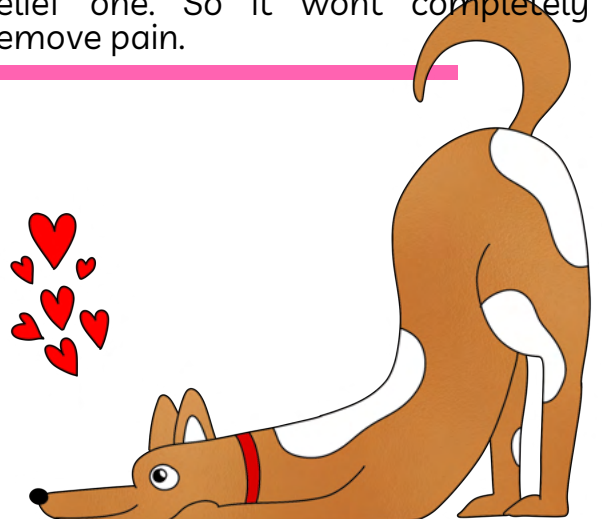
04



The How

If you have your own pet, make sure to spend lots of time with them, taking them for walks, enjoying cuddles etc. If you don't have your own pet, consider arranging with a family member or friend who own a dog to have regular visits with their pets.

05



A large, stylized white number '25' is centered on a bright yellow background. The number is composed of thick, rounded strokes. The '2' has a curved top and a rounded bottom, while the '5' has a flat top and a rounded bottom. The number is partially obscured by the text below it.

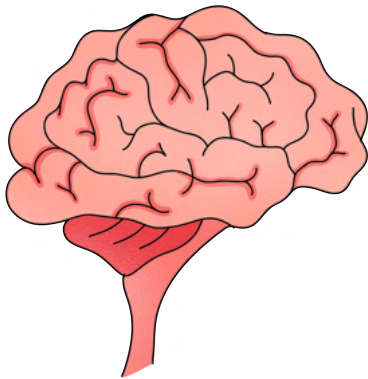
LAVENDER ESSENTIAL OIL

LAVENDER OIL

The Lowdown

Aromatherapy is a complementary therapy which uses highly concentrated essential oils that have been extracted from various parts of different plants. Essential oils are used for their therapeutic properties.

01



02

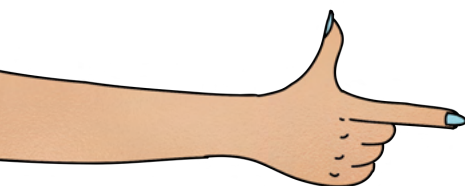
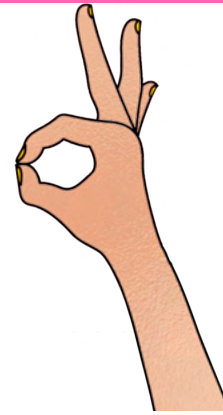
The Research

Aromatherapy is the art and science of using naturally extracted aromatic essences (essential oils) from plants to balance and harmonise the body, mind, and spirit every day or during stressful experiences. Lavender used to alleviate anxiety, to aid relaxation and to prevent headaches.

The Pros

Increases relaxation and reduces anxiety, great distraction technique and shown to reduce pain intensity, and enhance overall birthing experience.

03



04

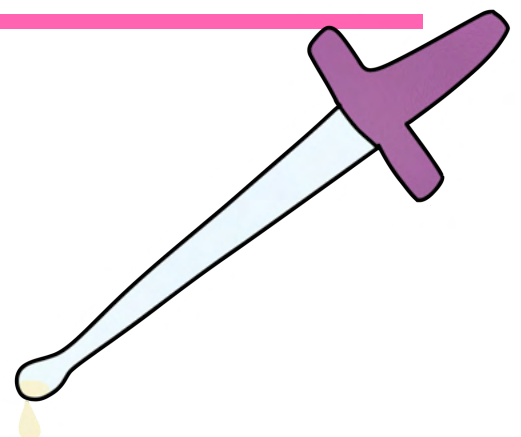
The Cons

Women with asthma or other allergies/ sensitivities may not be able to use all of the oils on offer as they are not recommended for use with some medical or obstetric conditions

The How

Aromatherapy can be used in massage, in the bath (but not the birthing pool), by the application of hot or cold compresses, on a tissue or taper, by inhalation or vaporiser/diffuser. Recommended to use in early or established phases of labour.

05



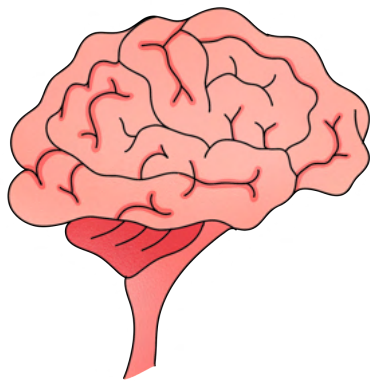
The background is a solid, bright yellow. Overlaid on this are two large, white, stylized numbers: a '2' on the left and a '6' on the right. The numbers are thick and have rounded, friendly-looking shapes. In the center, overlapping both numbers, is the text 'GUIDED IMAGERY' in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The text is arranged in two lines: 'GUIDED' on top and 'IMAGERY' below it.

GUIDED IMAGERY

GUIDED IMAGERY

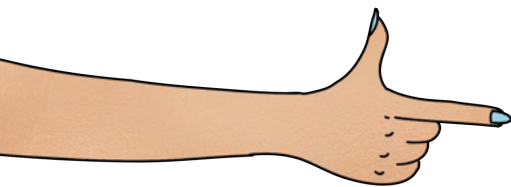
The Lowdown

Guided imagery is a relaxation technique that focuses on creating harmony between your mind and body in order to ease stress and enhance well-being. Using this method in childbirth helps you to feel relaxed, comfortable and able to handle labour and delivery.



The Pros

Using this method will decrease your stress hormones, blood pressure, time in labour and risk of complications dramatically. It will also improve oxygenation throughout your body (and your baby's body).



The How

Find a quiet, comfortable place without distractions. Breathe deeply and slowly, relaxing all the muscles in your body. Think of a place/experience you love – one that helps you relax and feel peaceful, i.e., a beach or spa. Picture this place - sounds, feelings, smells. Now stay in that moment, for as long as you can!

01

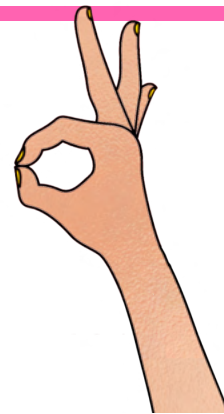


02

The Research

Being afraid of labor pains increases stress hormones in your body. Your natural reaction to pain is fear, leading to increased tension. Leading to an increased chance of intervention, c-section or epidural. Mastering a relaxation technique is critical for coping skills during any sort of stress, let alone childbirth.

03

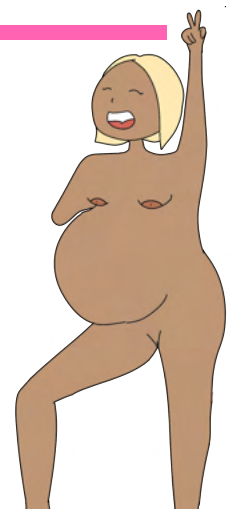


04

The Cons

In order to have a successful experience through your labour pains, the relaxation process needs to be mastered. So this requires a lot of practice.

05

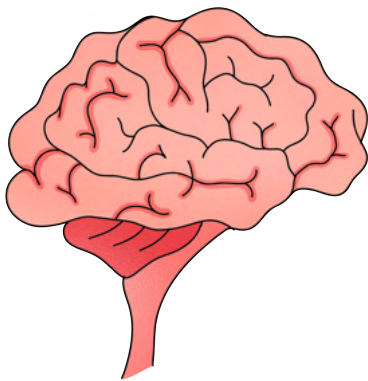


27 **LAUGHING**

LAUGHING

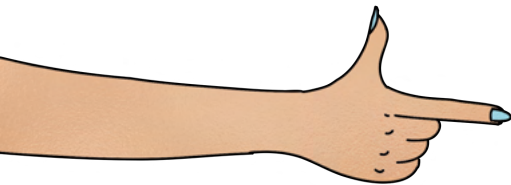
The Lowdown

Laughter triggers the release of endorphins, the body's natural pain relievers, and decreases the number of bad stress hormones, causing your body to relax. Super important aspects for a positive and enjoyable birth experience.



The Pros

Laughter increases endorphins, eases tensions and helps your body relax which may lead to less pain and a smoother, quicker labour. It lowers your blood pressure, and relieves stress and anxiety, making your birthing experience more enjoyable and comfortable.



The How

Surround yourself with people who make you happy and laugh. Find resources and tools that match your sense of humour, i.e., movies, pictures, jokes etc., and have these prepared for labour. Encourage your birthing partner to crack some jokes, and keep the birthing environment light-hearted and joy-filled.

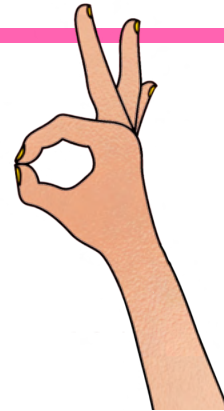
01



02

The Research

The mental and physical benefits of laughter are never-ending it helps, release tension in your body, increase your oxygen intake and helps you get the full benefit of your endorphins - nature's painkillers. Encouraged widely to help with mental health issues.



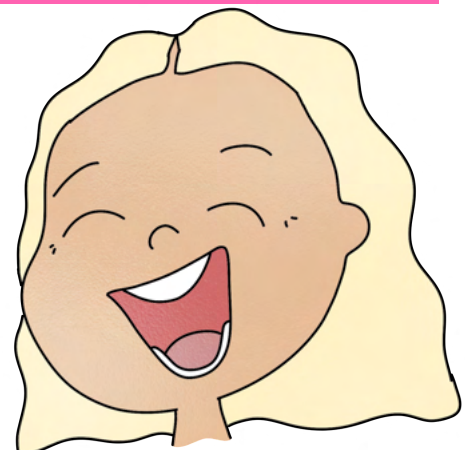
03

The Cons

Some element of practice is required, find out the things that make you laugh. Also some reliance upon birthing partner to ensure laughter is encouraged. Like other natural methods of pain management, this one works best when used alongside other methods (natural or medical).

04

05



28 PARACETAMOL

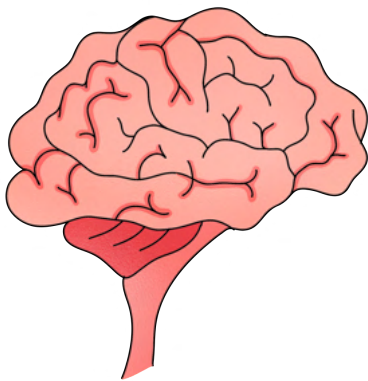
PARACETAMOL

The Lowdown

Paracetamol is a painkiller, which can safely be used in early labour and during postnatal care. It's common and available from all pharmacies, in tablets, capsules and liquid form, without need for prescription.



01



02

The Research

Paracetamol is used to relieve mild to moderate pain and is also helpful for lowering a raised temperature/fever. Another version is co-codamol, which contains paracetamol and codeine, this is stronger for when paracetamol alone is not sufficient.

The Pros

Paracetamol offers pain relief for 2-3 hours. It is a pain relief method, so is likely to minimise some intensity of labour/contraction pain. These can be taken at home and are accessible to everyone.

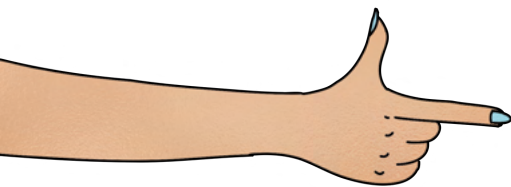
03



The Cons

Although rare, some women may experience side effects i.e., constipation, drowsiness, nausea and vomiting, It may be ineffective as your labour progresses. If you intend to breastfeed, it is advisable not to take codeine, as this may make your baby sleepy and affect feeding.

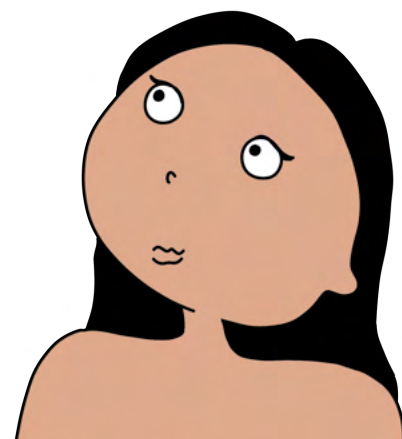
04



The How

May be taken orally, following packaging guidelines. These are particularly useful in early labour, to help you rest and conserve your energy. They can be taken at home, but you must not exceed the recommended dosage during a 24 hour period.

05



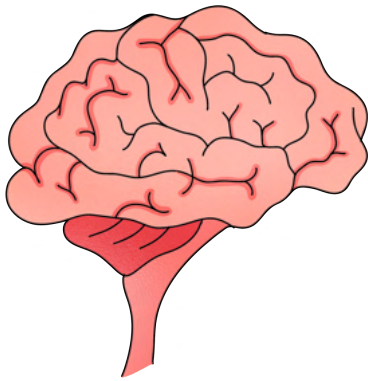


HOT & COLD

The Lowdown

Hot & cold therapy focuses on the application of hot and/or cold instruments during different stages of labour to sooth and relieve pain, by decreasing the sensations felt.

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02

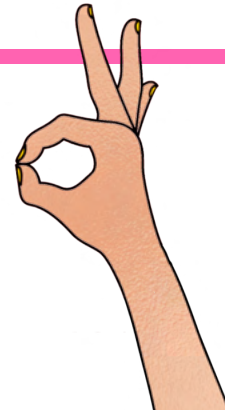
The Research

This method is a tried and tested way of relaxing aching, tense muscles and is used all over the world for everyday aches and pains, to more severe chronic pains.

The Pros

Certain methods within this technique can reduce your risk of having a severe tear, can make you more comfortable during labour and can relieve pain through all stages of childbirth.

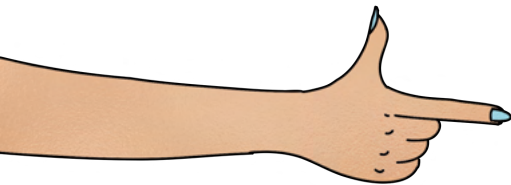
03



The Cons

Not all resources and tools will be allowed or accessible in a hospital or midwife-led unit, so it is advised to work out which options will work for you and get prepared. This method cannot be used for long period of time, as 20 minutes is the recommended duration for both hot and cold therapies.

04

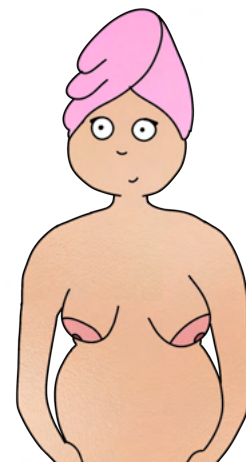


The How

Hot therapy options: store-bought heating pads, gel packs, wash clothes, warm water bottles, wheat bags, warm baths and/or showers.

Cold therapy options: store-bought cold packs, ice in a plastic bag wrapped with a towel, a wash cloth cooled with cold water.

05



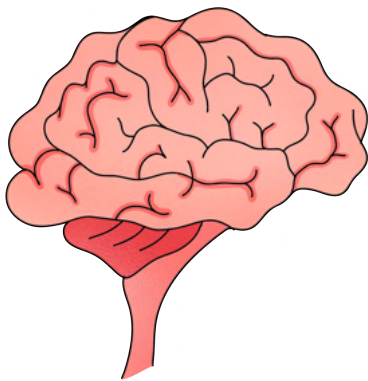
CANNABIS

CANNABIS

The Lowdown

CBD oil is a plant compound extracted from the hemp or cannabis plant. Not to be confused with THC, which has hallucinatory effects, CBD oil is mostly a muscle relaxant.

01



02

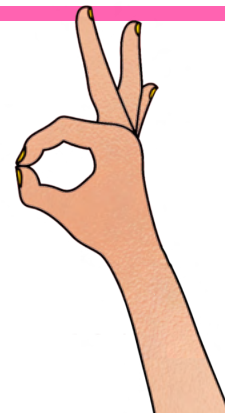
The Research

Whilst it is widely recommended that pregnant women should not smoke cannabis, some pregnant women take small amounts of CBD oil. Hemp products have been used for centuries in Middle Eastern and Chinese cultures to help women through labour.

The Pros

CBD is mostly a muscle relaxant so can be really useful during the early stages of labour, by easing contractions and speeding up labouring process. Can also help with severe vomiting, cramps, anxiety and depression.

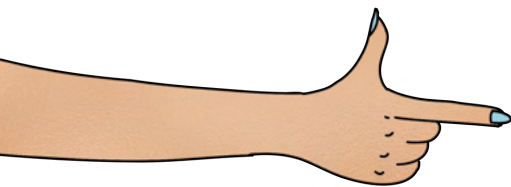
03



The Cons

Current FDA regulations do not advocate CBD oil during pregnancy or for labour pains. Concerns of overdosing leading to potential foetal developmental problems, but there is little conclusive evidence.

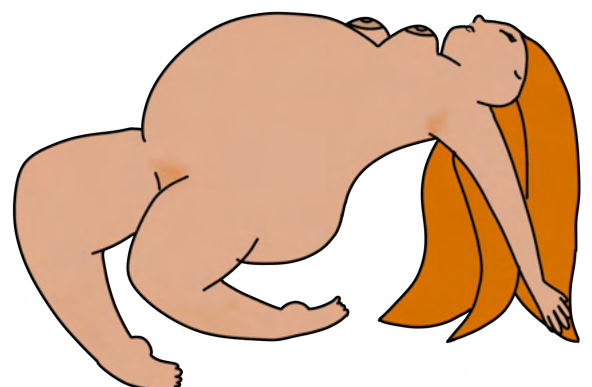
04



The How

CBD products can include: topical oils and creams, bath bombs/shower bombs and candles. When selecting CBD products online, ensure you choose a reputable source and do not take products that contain THC. Always consult your doctor or midwife!

05



The image features a bright yellow background with a subtle, fine-grained texture. In the center, there are two large, white, stylized letters: a 'S' on the left and a 'T' on the right. The 'S' is a simple, rounded shape, while the 'T' is a vertical bar with a horizontal top bar. Overlaid on the intersection of these two letters is the text 'TAI CHI' in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The letters are slightly offset, with 'TAI' positioned more towards the 'S' and 'CHI' more towards the 'T'.

TAI CHI

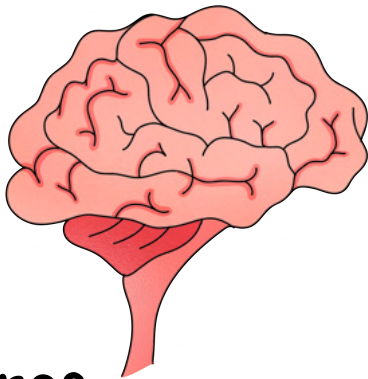
TAI CHI



The Lowdown

Tai Chi- an ancient Chinese exercise characterised by a series of graceful movements, focusing on relaxing and strengthening the body and mind. For a pregnant woman, this can support all the changes during pregnancy and prepare you for labour and delivery.

01



The Pros

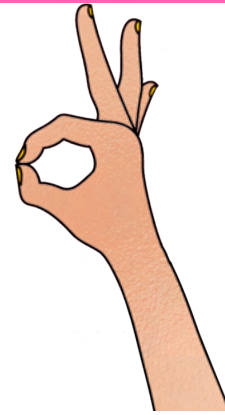
This method reduces prenatal depression, anxiety and sleep disturbances. It requires no special skill, clothing or equipment and its' simple, gentle steps are easy to learn, even for women who haven't exercised before. May help reduce: back pain, swelling and blood pressure.

02

The Research

Tai Chi's goal is to improve overall health, integrating fluid movements and mental concentration to create harmony of the inner and outer self. Whilst practicing Tai Chi, you learn deep breathing methods and focus on the flow of chi, or internal energy, throughout the body.

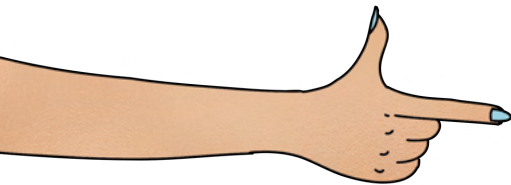
03



The Cons

Balance and the potential risk of falling is a great concern during pregnancy, especially as women's balance is often off during this time. This method is more beneficial antenatally (before labour) so is best to learn, practice and master then.

04



The How

Find a beginners class or even an online class/youtube video, and get learning. Have a laugh, grab your birthing partner and get them to join alongside you and learn some basic moves and techniques. Make sure you learn in plenty of time before your labour starts.

05

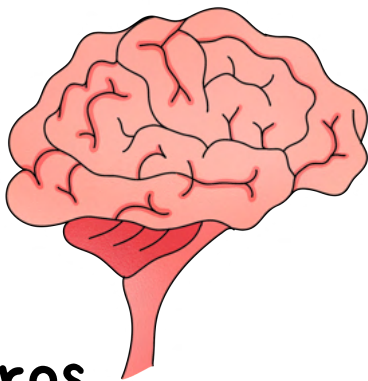


32 POSITIONS

POSITIONS

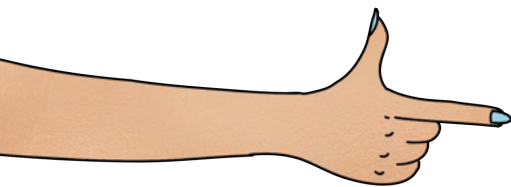
The Lowdown

It is strongly encouraged that you move around during labour, as this will help your baby move down the pelvis and divert attention away from the pain. There are different positions to try i.e., using a birth ball, mats, beanbag, birthing stool, wall bars etc.



The Pros

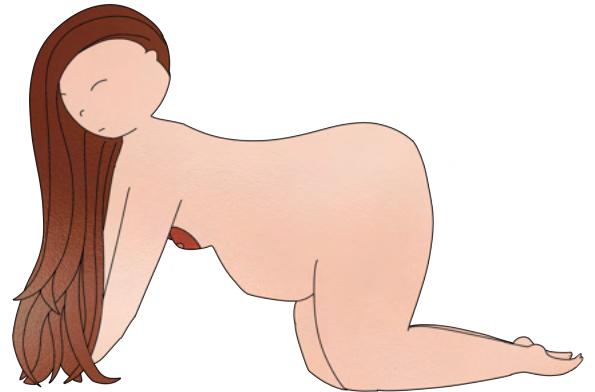
This method is easily accessible, can be done anywhere and in any birthing environment. It can help to shorten the length of your labour, ease labour and contraction pains, give you a better sense of control, as well as creating a more positive childbirth experience and limiting the possibility of birth trauma's.



The How

Make sure to look into all possible birthing position examples, maybe even get some visuals to use as a reminder when in labour. Some examples includes: KICO (Knees in calves out),, squatting, hands and knees on floor, straddling a chair or toilet facing backwards. Avoid laying on your back.

01

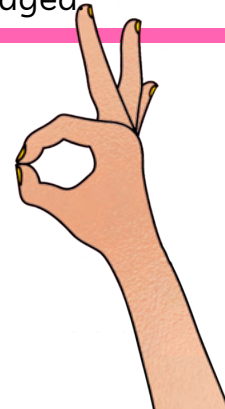


02

The Research

Lying on your back with a full-term baby inside your uterus can put pressure on important blood vessels, possibly compromising blood flow to the body. This is why trialling different positions and movements is encouraged.

03

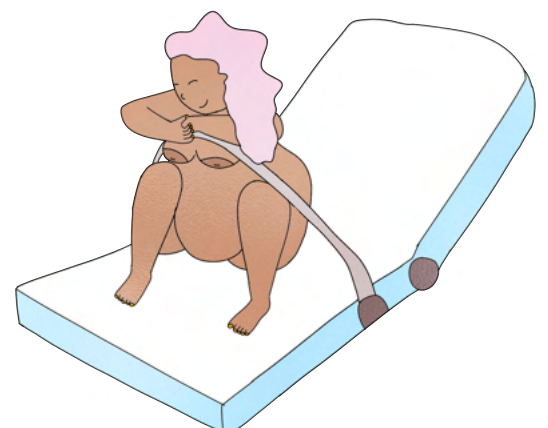


04

The Cons

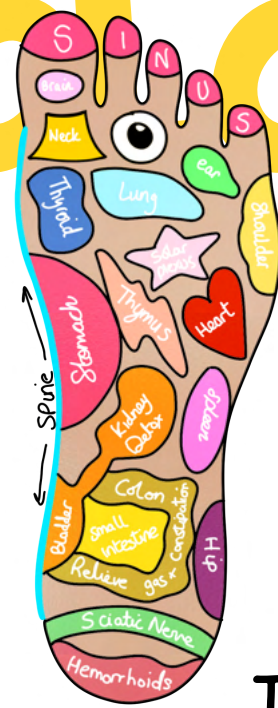
Similarly to most natural methods, this technique will not get rid of your pain completely. It can become quite tiring if your labour lasts a while, as you will still want to conserve some energy. You will need to ensure good support from your birth partner.

05



23 **REFLEXOLOGY**

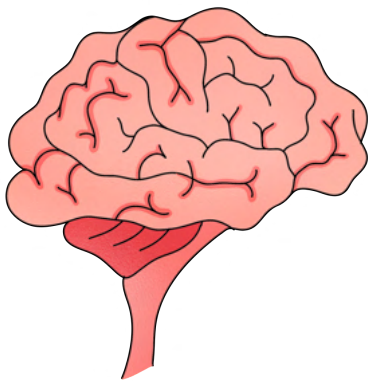
REFLEXOLOGY



The Lowdown

Reflexology is an alternative medicine practice which involves applying pressure using your thumbs, finger and hands to the feet - in order to stimulate different parts of the body. Each part of the foot represents a different part of the body, like the heart, the lungs and kidneys.

01



02

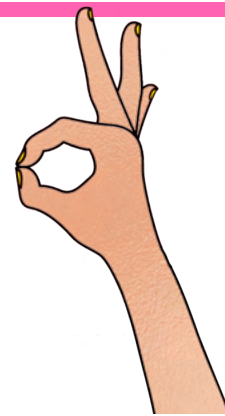
The Research

It is a popular complementary therapy to other forms of pain relief in labour. It is an ancient, mild and non-invasive technique, used widely as one of the non-pharmacological methods for pain relief. The parasympathetic ('rest and digest') nervous system is being positively stimulated.

The Pros

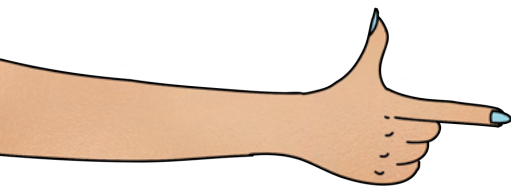
Reflexology can decrease the duration of first, second and third stages of labour as well as alleviate intensity of labour pains. It can help with headaches, constipation, backache and symphysis pubis pain. Also shown to prevent postnatal depression!

03



The Cons

This method is more beneficial if performed by a trained practitioner. Due to stimulating effects, some symptoms may include: tiredness or fatigue, increased thirst, slight headache or nausea, and heightened emotions.

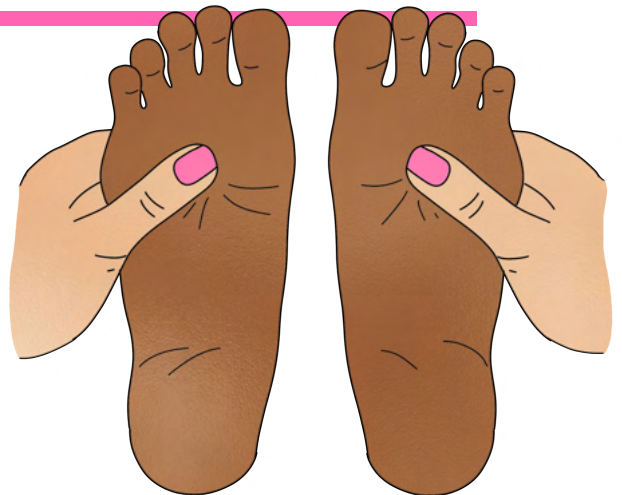


04

The How

It is best advised to look at seeking teaching from a trained professional, whether that is through a class or a private session. Take your birth partner with you, so that they can learn some tips and how to's. Also print off a visual template of the reflexology chart, to help prompt you during labour.

05



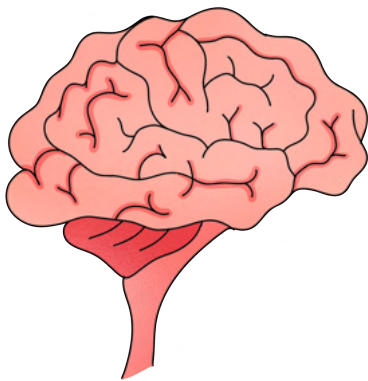
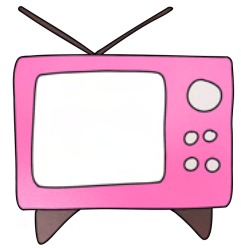
34 **ENVIRONMENT**

ENVIRONMENT

The Lowdown

The birth environment can support or hinder physiologic birth. It is one of the most important things during our labour yet so many women forget they can choose and have exactly what they want.

01



02

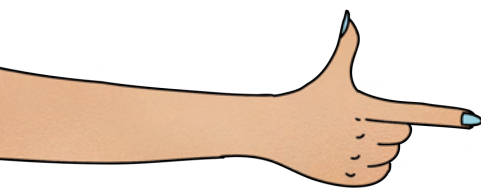
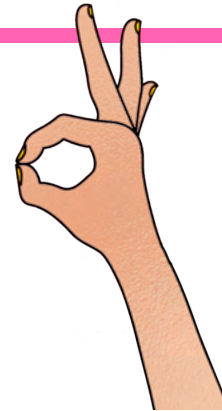
The Research

Studies show over 94% of women thought that the physical environment affects how easy or difficult it is to give birth, with 48% agreeing strongly that the birth environment makes a huge difference.

The Pros

Positive aspects of the birth environment are associated with positive outcomes, for instance fewer medical interventions and greater maternal satisfactions with care. Environment is also something that can be controlled in all birthing situations

03



The How

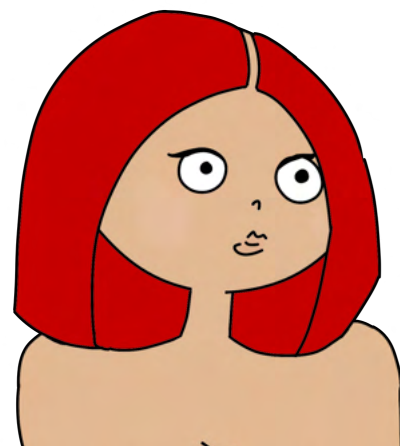
Make sure to get a full understanding of all the aspects and factors that can impact your birthing environment - take a hypnobirthing class! Prepare and plan, focusing on aiming to achieve these key elements: dark, quiet, warm, safe and private.

04

The Cons

Negative aspects of the birth environment can lead to poorer outcomes, for instance heightened stress, higher chance of interventions, longer labour etc. Also there are some situations where you have less control i.e. theatre rooms.

05



35

REBOZO

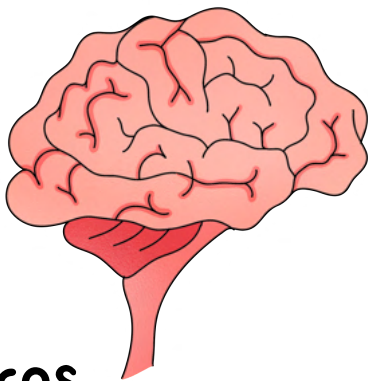
REBOZO



The Lowdown

The Rebozo is a traditional Mexican shawl or wrap that's used to support and comfort pregnant women, particularly during labour and delivery, but it can also be super helpful in the postpartum stage too.

01



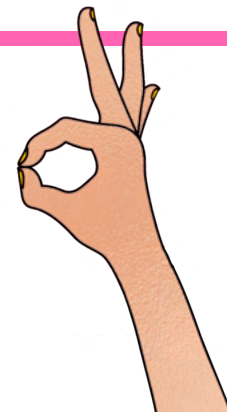
The Research

The use of the Rebozo is an ancient cultural practice in Mexico and Latin America, that's become increasingly popular around the world, especially among doulas and midwives.

02

The Pros

Aside from helping with belly support and comfort during labour, rebozos can also be used by doulas and midwives to try to move babies into a heads-down position for delivery if they're not ready. This method can be used in nearly every stage of labour to help relax pelvic muscles and ease labour pains.

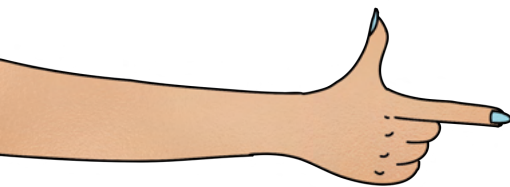


03

The Cons

Must always talk to a practitioner before trying to use a shawl, it may not be safe for some women i.e. those with complications like placenta previa or abnormal bleeding. Highly recommended that a trained practitioner uses this method on you.

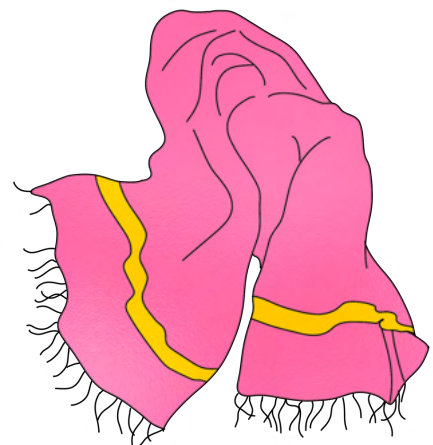
04



The How

A Rebozo goes around your stomach and hips to provide your body with extra support as your baby grows. You can wrap the shawl around your tummy yourself or ask your midwife, doula or birthing partner to help you. Make sure to look into all the different methods and techniques, so you can be sure to use the one which work best for you!

05



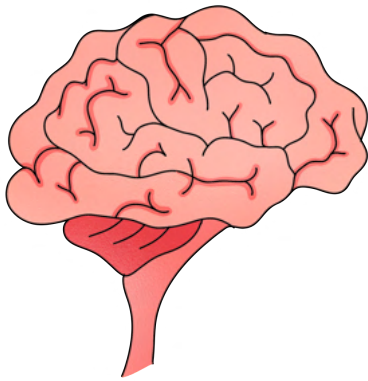


**THE SHAPE
CHANGER**

SHAPE CHANGER

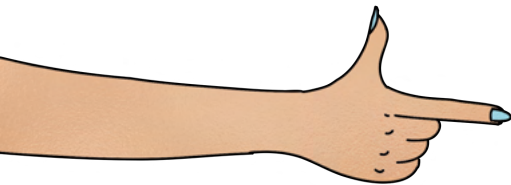
The Lowdown

Visualisation techniques are a great way of putting our mind into a state of deep relaxation, our imagination allows us to create positive, pleasant images that help distract us from labour pains. The Shape Changer is an example of this!



The Pros

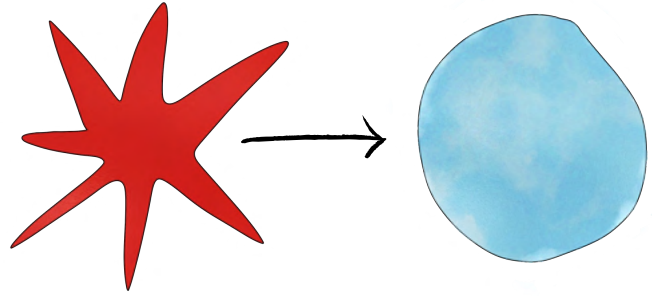
This method puts our mind into a state of deep relaxation, reduces the presence of stress hormones, decreases muscle tension and ultimately shifts our attention away from labour pains. Coupled with breathing techniques, it can reduce our fears and anxieties also.



The How

Take a deep breath. Focus on the pain point. Give the pain a shape and colour, focus on it for a few minutes. Then focus on changing the shape and colour to something that looks and feels more positive. Once you feel the sensation changing continue and open your eyes once it has subsided.

01

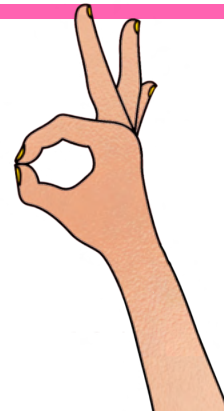


02

The Research

The more often you're able to redirect your focus away from pain, the weaker neural pathways associated with pain become. Imagine that each time you practice The Shape Changer, the more you break the labour pain cycle.

03

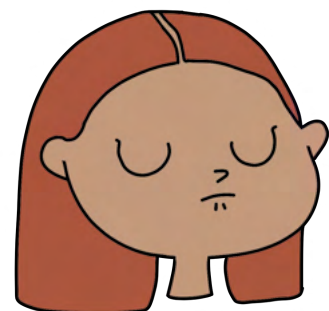


04

The Cons

Guided imagery is often most successful when combined with other methods like deep breathing and music therapy. Remember this method is a form of pain management not relief, so it will not remove all the pain.

05



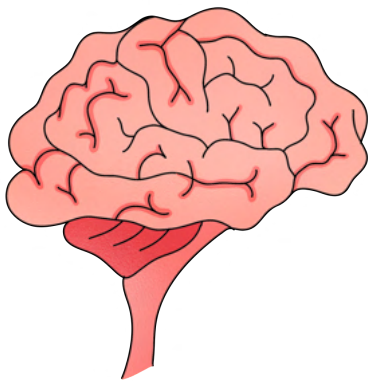
37

ANCHORS

ANCHORS

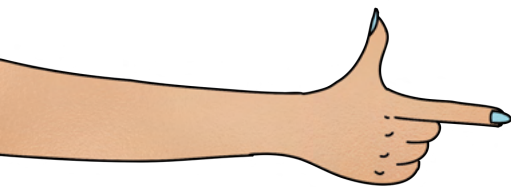
The Lowdown

Anchors are like triggers, so for example when you hear a song and it reminds you of something - that's a trigger or anchor! In labour these is a great technique for helping to distract yourself from any pains, fears and/or anxieties.



The Pros

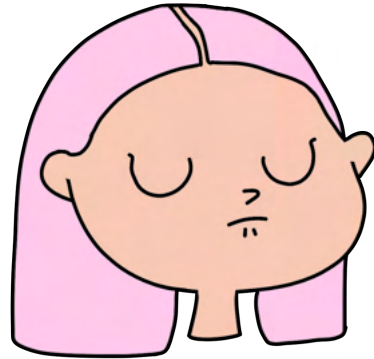
Studies show that this method like other hypnosis-based techniques, can lead to less use of pharmacological pain relief, reduced augmentation and induction of labour, reduced labour length and pain intensity, and increased maternal wellbeing and satisfaction.



The How

Go somewhere quiet, where you will not get distracted. Close your eye and focus on intentionally breathing. Think of a happy memory, write down all the words that remind you of this memory - things you see, feel, smell, hear and taste. Concentrate on every fine detail and remain there for as long as you can.

01

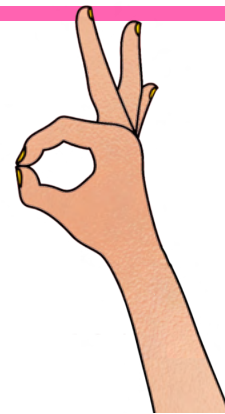


02

The Research

Triggers are a connection in the brain between a smell, sound, sight or feeling and a memory. Smell is different to the rest of the sense though, as it bypasses the normal pathway and takes a shortcut. So this is the most likely to be successful!

03

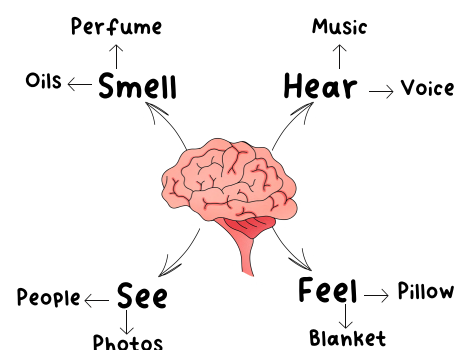


04

The Cons

Most successful when practiced and mastered, antenatally (before labour). Also, when tangible prompts are used i.e. pictures, perfumes etc. Again, this is a pain management method, so it will not remove all your pain.

05



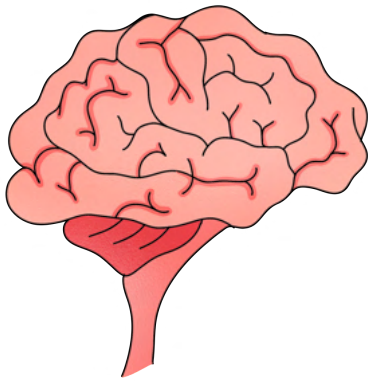


**DOWN
BREATHING**

DOWN BREATHING

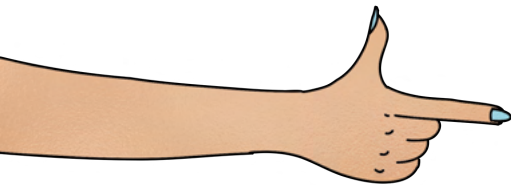
The Lowdown

Down breathing, also known as the Lamaze method. This includes conscious relaxation and controlled breathing as an alternative to drugs for the management of contraction pain during childbirth.



The Pros

This method is easy to learn and accessible to everyone. It can be used in all stages of labour and in any birthing environment. It is known to significantly reduce pain intensity, duration of labour and enhance overall birthing experience.



The How

Start with a slow deep breath as your contraction starts and then slowly breathe out, releasing all physical tension from your head to your toes. Slowly inhale through your nose and then pause. Each time you exhale, focus on relaxing the painful parts of your body.

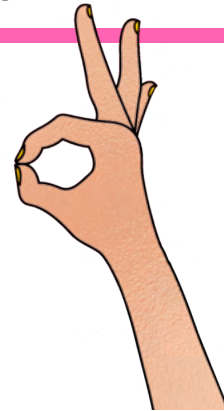
01



02

The Research

Lamaze breathing is a technique based on the idea that controlled breathing can enhance relaxation and decrease the perception of pain. It's a well-known method, that's been used globally since the 1960's.



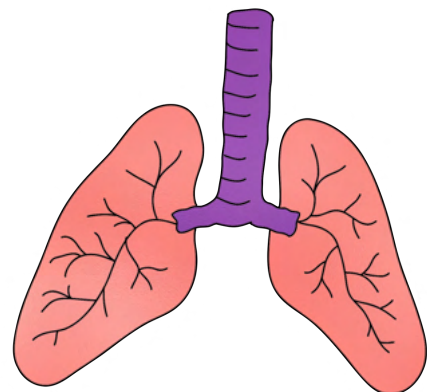
03

The Cons

Breathing techniques are more likely to be successful and therefore, mostly recommended to be used alongside other methods like: visualisation, massages, positioning etc.

04

05



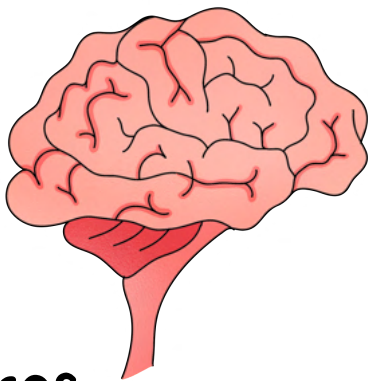
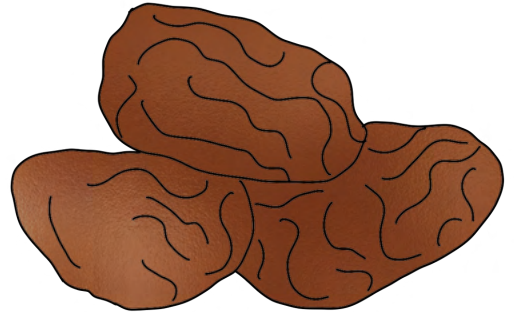
30 DATES

DATES

The Lowdown

Consumption of dates (fruit) during late pregnancy has been shown to positively affect the outcome of labour and delivery.

01



02

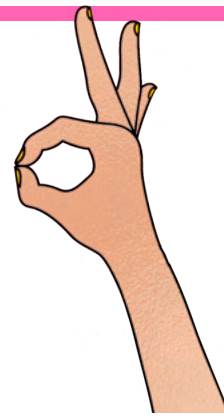
The Research

Studies show women who ate 6 dates a day for the four weeks leading up to their due date were: 74% more dilated, 21% more likely to spontaneously go into labour, 28% less likely to use oxytocin to induce labour and had a 77% shorter first stage of labour.

The Pros

Dates have an oxytocin-like effect, increasing uterus sensitivity, stimulating uterine contractions and reducing postpartum haemorrhage. They contain: fibre -lowers risk of gestational diabetes and preeclampsia. Potassium - regulate blood pressure. Vitamin K - maintains proper blood clotting, and more.

03



04

The Cons

Individuals with kidney disease should follow caution when having date, consult a doctor regarding amount to take. If you suffer with allergies/asthma just be careful as dates in some cases can trigger these.

The How

Aim to eat anywhere between 70g-100g of dates per day, from around the 37 week mark in your pregnancy. Try putting them in a smoothie if you don't quite fancy the taste!

05



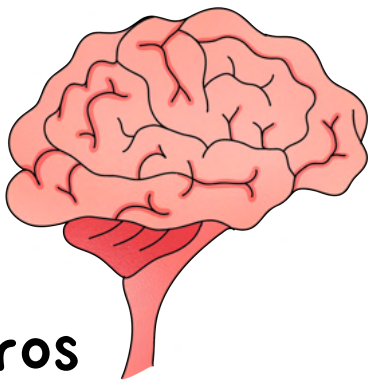
40 BIRTH PREP

BIRTH PREP

The Lowdown

Planning and preparation are the most important parts of your birth experience. Your mindset and having strong foundations, are key to giving you confidence, trust and the ability to have a more positive birth experience.

01



The Pros

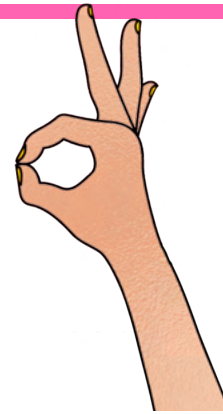
Being fully prepared for birth, is shown to result in a shortened labour, reducing the need for interventions and medical pain relief. Gives more women a greater sense of control, and is especially beneficial to those who have already suffered with traumas, as it'll help encourage overcoming them and removing the fear of repeating them.

02

The Research

Birth preparation is something that's strongly encouraged when getting involved in Hypnobirthing lessons, as it gives you a much better understanding of what is happening around you, reducing any possible fears and anxieties.

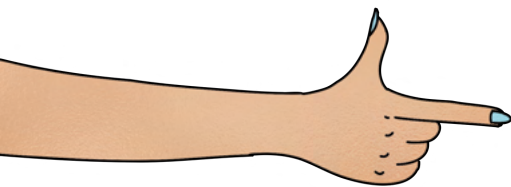
03



The Cons

Without preparation you have: no control, no understanding, no known rights, a longer labour, more chances of intervention and the need for medical pain relief, and more chances of fear and trauma.

04



The How

Look at joining a hypnobirthing class or course, do lots of research, watch/read positive birth stories - basically find out ALL the information you can for EVERYTHING! When it comes to preparation, think about: where, what, when, how and who. Think about your birth plan, environment, birth partners, plan A,B and C.

05

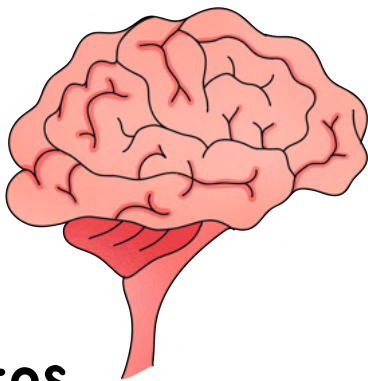


EXPRESSING FEARS

EXPRESSING FEARS

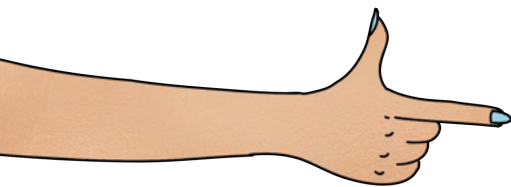
The Lowdown

There's a strong relationship between fear and birth. Fear is normal, but can very easily become consuming and interfere with the body's labour process. It is so important to work through any fears or anxieties before labour, to ensure they do not get in the way and hinder your experience.



The Pros

Every fear, no matter its size is valid and deserves to be processed. Releasing fears relaxes tension, eases pain and can result in a much more enjoyable and comfortable childbirth experience. This method can be worked on during pregnancy as well as all stages of labour and postpartum.



The How

Talk all fears through with your partner, healthcare provider, doula or a counsellor. Make a plan and be flexible with it, this might look like options A, B, C, and D. Talk through all your options for each choice, and find discover ways to effectively manage any fears during labour.

01

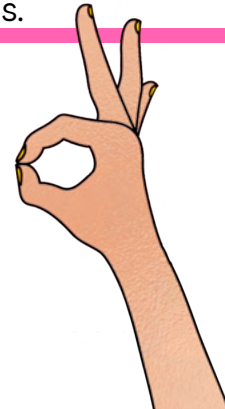


02

The Research

The more fear, tension and anxiety a woman experiences in labour, the more adrenaline she releases. This negatively impacts labour on a hormonal and physiological level. Common fears range from perineal tearing, interventions, surgery or c-sections.

03

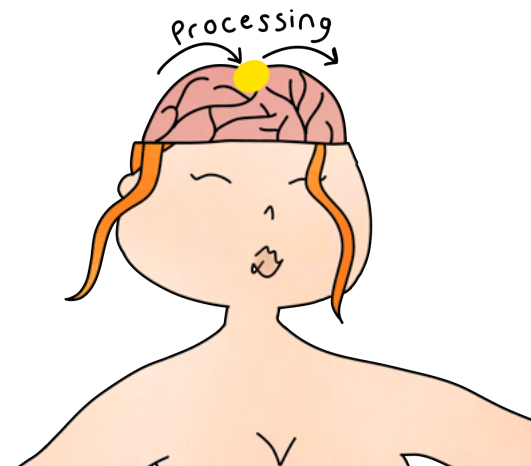


04

The Cons

The more fear brought into labour, the more tense a woman is and the more painful labour can become. For those with severe traumas and fears, this method may require a lot more work and support, i.e., seeking help from a counsellor.

05

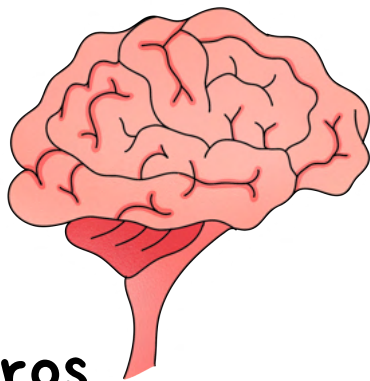


42 **POSITIVE THINKING**

POSITIVE THINKING

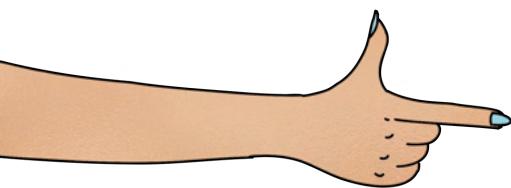
The Lowdown

It is incredibly beneficial to maintain a positive mindset during your labour. This can lower your stress levels, ensure a more positive birth experience and prevent negative emotions from impacting the health of the baby.



The Pros

This technique can reduce stress, fears and anxieties during all stages of pregnancy, labour and postpartum. It can help enhance both your's and baby's help. It can reduce the need for interventions, medical pain relief and most importantly reduces the likelihood of birth-related traumas.



The How

Look at joining a hypnobirthing class/course to learn techniques and methods that can help with positive thinking. Other techniques: meditate, be informed, slow down, converse your energy and chill, speak affirmations over yourself, don't clock watch, be weary of your choice of language i.e. sensations instead of pains, surges instead of contractions and be aware of what you're listening to and watching.

01

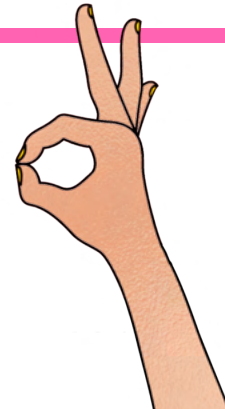


02

The Research

Positive thinking is proven to help with stress management and can even improve your health. Studies show if we are expecting to feel pain, then we are much more likely to experience it and at a worse intensity.

03

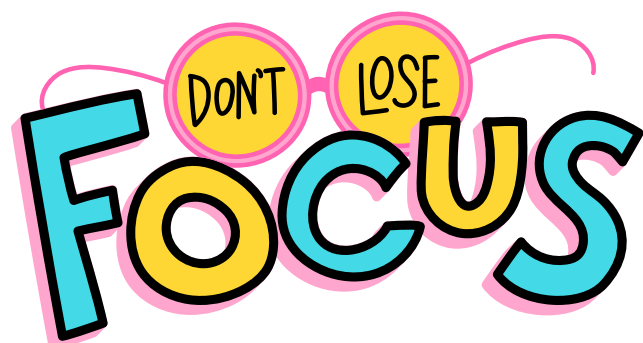


04

The Cons

Anxiety and negative thinking can create immense tension, thus increasing pain, fears and anxieties, as well as elongating the labouring process, adding more pressure to the body and heightening the chances of complications and interventions.

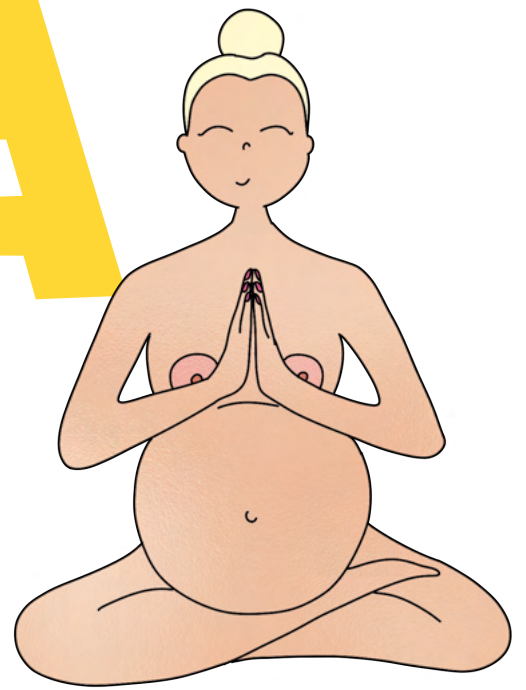
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43

YOGA

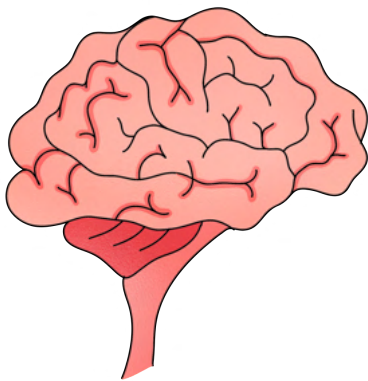
YOGA



The Lowdown

Yoga is an ancient form of exercise that focuses on strength, flexibility and breathing to boost physical and mental wellbeing. It's all about posture and breathing. It's one of the best types of pregnancy exercise, as it is low level risk!

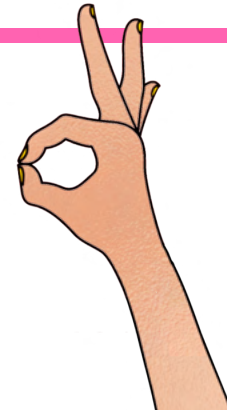
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The Research

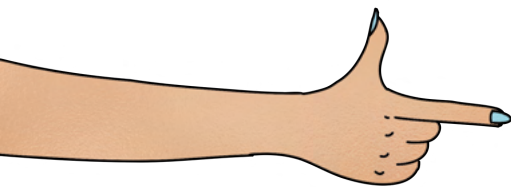
The practice originated in India about 5,000 years ago and is now commonplace in all 21st century health-based environments. Pregnancy yoga can help a mother gain community and support, as well providing coping mechanisms for birth.



The Pros

As it is not strenuous, it is great when you're feeling fatigued. It will help your strength, flexibility and balance. Promotes controlled breathing, can significantly reduce discomfort in labour and can build body confidence!

03



04

The Cons

During the more advanced stages of pregnancy, you should be cautious about which moves you attempt. Always listen to your body and don't attempt to overstretch your body beyond its' comfortable range of movement.

The How

Join a class or find some clips online, and get practicing. Find the positions that work best for you and get familiar with them. Print off visuals of these too, to help prompt you for when in labour. Some poses to get you started: squat, rocking cat, side lying, baddha konasana, wall lean/shoulder stretch.

05

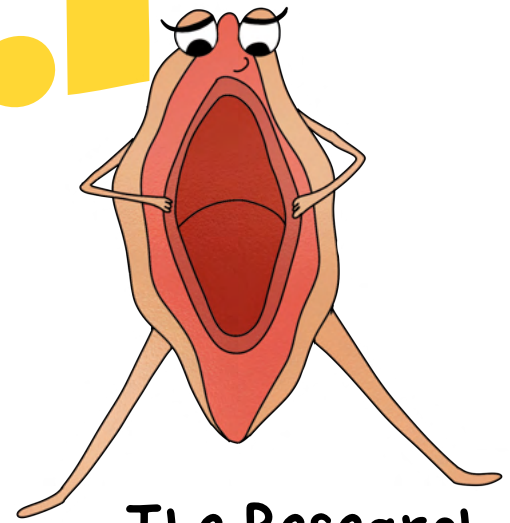


FLOPPY FACE
FLOPPY FANNY

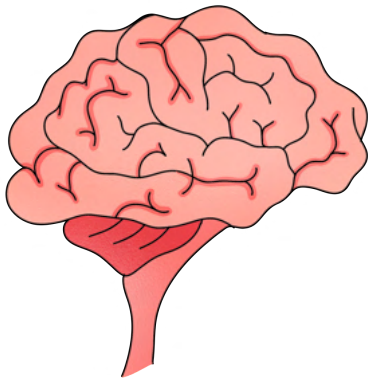
F.F.F.F.F

The Lowdown

Floppy face, floppy fanny! Is a great little mantra to remind you of the importance of relaxing your face and jaw, in order to ensure your vagina and pelvis relax too. As believe it or not, they are connected in more ways than one.



01



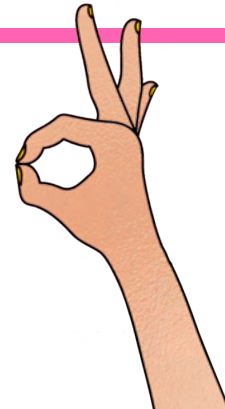
The Research

It is scientifically shown, that keeping your jaw soft and relaxed actually relaxes your pelvic floor. So sighing out, yawning, bluberring your lips etc., will all help unclench your jaw and release your pelvic floor. And did you know, your vagina can stretch 10 x its' size!

02

The Pros

This method reduces muscle tension, makes your body - especially your pelvic floor- more relaxed, and so can result in a much more positive birth experience, significantly reduced chances of tearing and thus less chances of birth-related trauma.

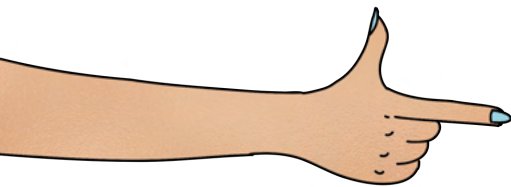


03

The Cons

Not using this method can increase your chances of tearing or needing interventions. It can also increase the likelihood of an instrumental birth and/or caesarean section.

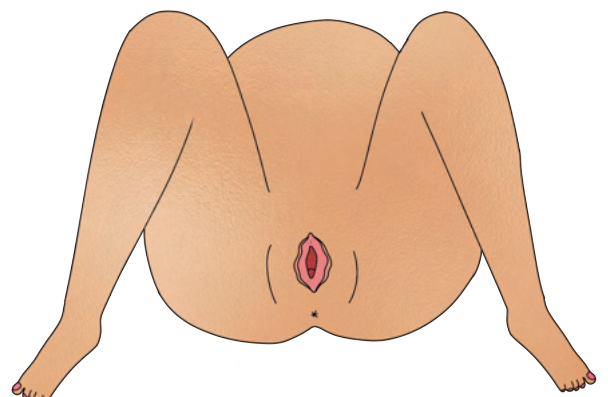
04



The How

Make sure your face is relaxed, soft, opened and calm. Practice this as often as you can before labour, so you are familiar with what works best for you. Remember hard face = hard fanny, and floppy face= floppy fanny! Get your birth partner to keep reminding you to relax your jaw during labour, and get my birth Flashcards for a great visual reminder!

05



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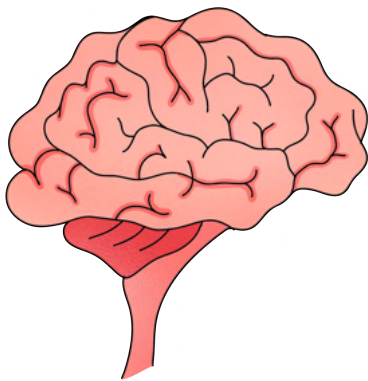
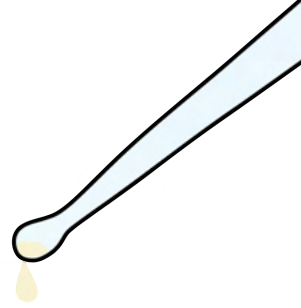
CLARY SAGE

CLARY SAGE

The Lowdown

Clary Sage essential oil is known as one of the most relaxing, soothing and balancing essential oils when used aromatically and internally. This herbaceous oil can be used for a variety of purposes both externally and internally.

01



02

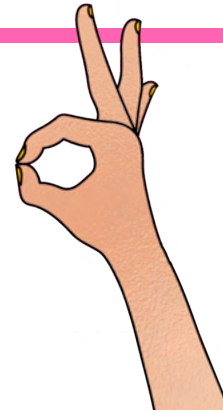
The Research

Clary Sage is commonly used for upset stomachs and other digestive disorders, kidney diseases, menstrual cramps, symptoms of menopause, anxiety, stress and many other conditions.

The Pros

This essential oil is great for promoting the labour process, it can help induce it and ease the entire process. It's a great relaxant, helps to stimulate contractions and aids oxytocin production.

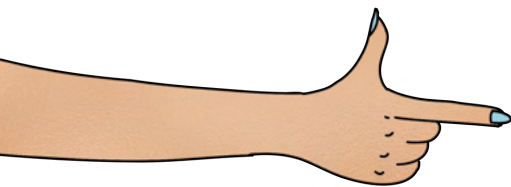
03



The Cons

Clary Sage should not be used in the first trimester, or when in preterm labour. Some studies also suggest that Clary Sage should only be used on "low risk" women.

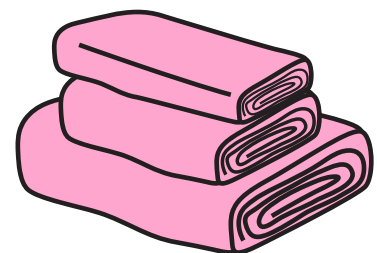
04



The How

There are several ways to use this essential oil: smell it directly from a bottle, gauze, tissue, scent stick or cloth. Application by tappers. Use a diffuser. Massage into acupressure points, or put drops into the bath. Use a compress' etc. Make sure you inform your birth partner on how best you wish to use it.

05

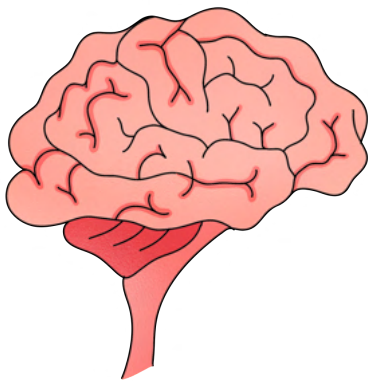


BUDDHA - UNIVERSAL ENERGY

BUDDHA

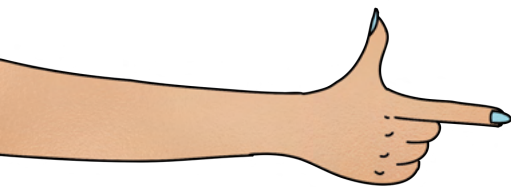
The Lowdown

Buddha also known as Chi ball, is a ball of universal energy. It is a very simple yet powerful practice, that be used as a self-healing tool or for healing another person.



The Pros

Using a Chi ball is great for relaxing your muscles, creating a positive distraction and mindset which in turn makes for a more enjoyable, controlled and comfortable birthing experience. It's also a fun process!



The How

For this technique it is recommended to find a youtube clip or trained practitioner to guide you through. Then when you are more comfortable and knowledgable you can do it yourself. Make sure to find a comfortable place and position, relax your body and mind. Breathe intentionally! Repeat!

01

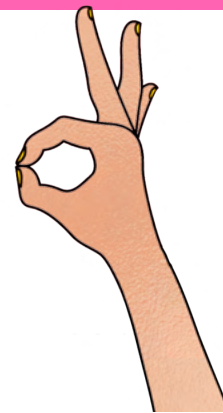


02

The Research

This method of "grounding" allows you to focus and become centered. It's a process of channeling the universal energy, releasing all the tension from your body and mind, releasing expectations and obligations put on yourself.

03



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The Cons

Whenever you create an energy ball, make sure you are not depleting yourself of energy. You must not put your personal energy out, rather you're using your body as a tool to transmit Universal energy of creation.

05

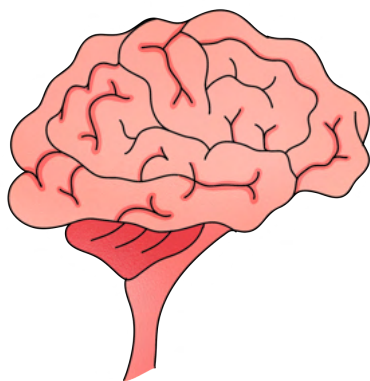


47 **ENDORPHINS**

ENDORPHINS

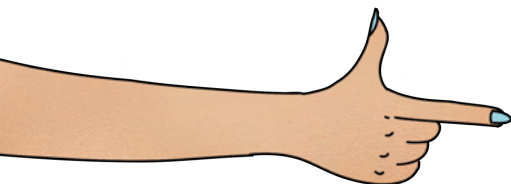
The Lowdown

Endorphins are naturally occurring opiates similar to morphine or heroin. When you are faced with stress or pain, your body produces calming and pain-relieving hormones - endorphins. They attach themselves to the end of your nerve receptors and block pain signals! Woo!



The Pros

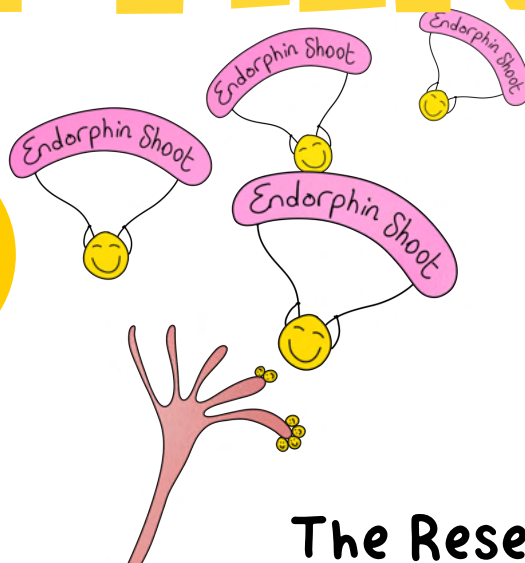
High endorphin levels can make you feel alert, attentive and even euphoric (very happy) after birth. Working with your endorphins and encouraging an increase in the release of them ultimately enables a much more enjoyable, comfortable, controlled and natural labour.



The How

You can enhance your body's production of endorphins during labour and birth by: staying calm, comfortable and confident. Avoiding disturbances, such as unwelcome people or noises and uncomfortable procedures. Delaying or avoiding epidural or opioids for pain relief.

01

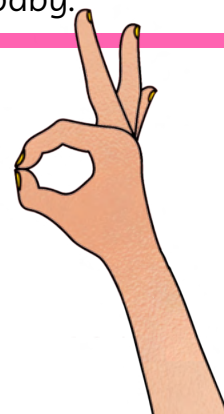


02

The Research

You may have higher levels of endorphins near the end of pregnancy and for those women who don't use pain medication during labour, the level of endorphins continues to rise steadily and steeply through the birth of the baby.

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The Cons

If you're stressed during labour, your levels of endorphins will be low resulting in an excessively painful labour which will be difficult to tolerate, and thus the need for healthcare providers to respond with interventions.

05

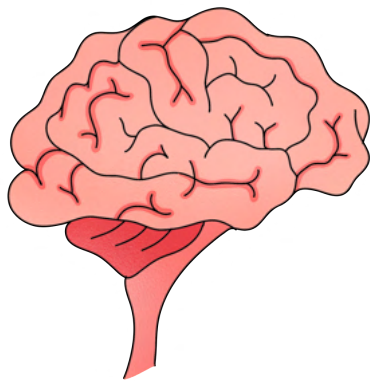


40 **AFFIRMATIONS**

AFFIRMATIONS

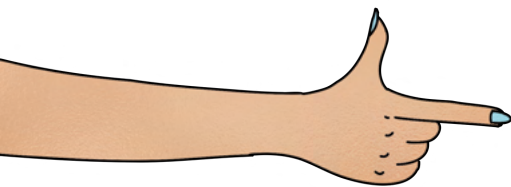
The Lowdown

Affirmations help us to challenge and defeat self-sabotaging thoughts. Affirmations are typically positive, optimistic statements we create or use those that others have created that resonate for us.



The Pros

A few minutes a day is enough to start and obtain some benefit. Self-affirmations have been shown to decrease stress, anxieties and fears. Resulting in a more enjoyable birth experience, and a greater sense of control.



The How

Research some affirmation examples, and work out what ones resonate best with you. Get visuals to prompt and aid you during labour. Some examples: "I am surrounded by those who love and respect me", "I trust my body to know exactly what to do for myself and my baby" and "birth is safe for me and my baby".

01

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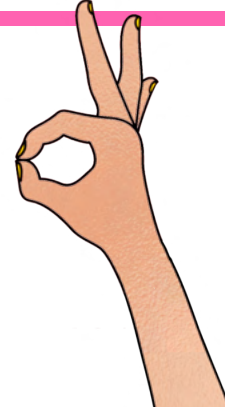
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The Research

This approach is based upon clinical experience and psychological theories. Studies suggest that we maintain our sense of self by affirming what we believe in positive ways. We protect ourselves from threats by strengthening our resilience with affirmations.



The Cons

Similarly to other natural pain management methods, this one is most successful when practiced and mastered antenatally (before labour). Studies show larger impact when hearing affirmations in your own voice, rather than pre-recorded ones.

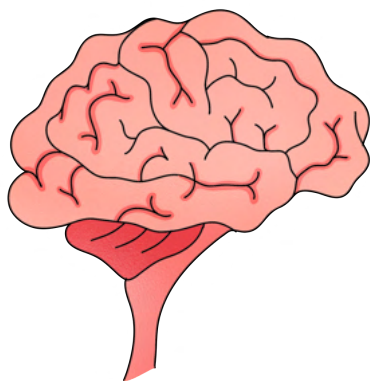
YOU CAN
DO IT!

40 REFRAME YOUR BRAIN

REFRAME YOUR BRAIN

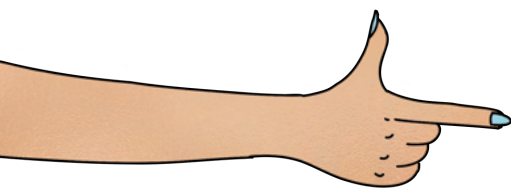
The Lowdown

Reframing or reappraising as it's otherwise known, is an extremely powerful technique used in therapy, mindfulness, hypnosis and hypnobirthing. It enables you to look at a negative situation, image or memory, in a more neutral or positive way.



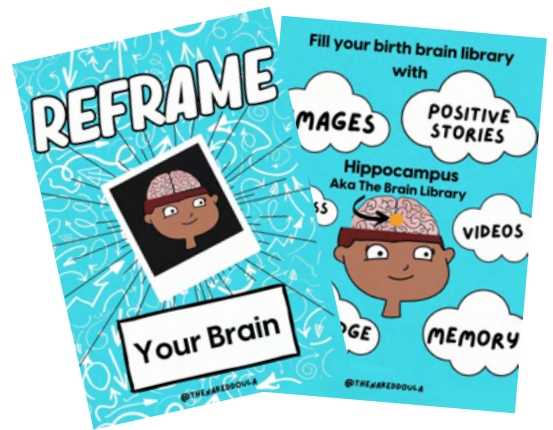
The Pros

Being able to control our brains in this way will dramatically shift your perspective and attention, lower stress, and in turn create a much more enjoyable labouring experience, and reduced chances of interventions and inductions.



The How

Firstly, think about: your fears around birth, previous traumas, mental health issues/concerns, how scared you are, thoughts around complications etc.. and work out ways you can reframe all of those thoughts to become more positive. Focus on using images/videos, 'success', memories, knowledge, facts, positive stories and more. Get my flashcards, for a great visual reminder!



01

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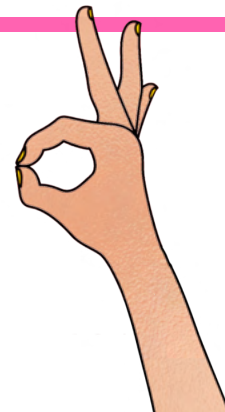
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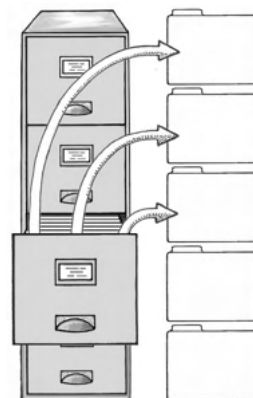
The Research

Studies show that the left prefrontal cortex of the brain (the happy place) has increased activity when we are able to reframe, which is extremely beneficial in pregnancy, birth and life in general.



The Cons

Similarly to a lot of hypnobirthing techniques and methods, reframing requires an element of learning and practicing before labour. This could potentially be quite time consuming and difficult for someone with a severely negative outlook on labour and birth.



Fill your brain with positive things for birth



BIRTHING BALL

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50 PAIN RELIEF METHODS FOR CHILDBIRTH



Fun, easy to use & SO informative! If you're pregnant & haven't got this book what are you actually doing! Genius!

Charlotte Russell - Expectant Mum to number 2



Emma Armstrong, more famously known as The Naked Doula entertains us with her explicit and fun illustrations whilst educating so many expectant parents about childbirth. 50 Pain relief methods for childbirth is easy to understand, fun and offers a range of evidence based methods to suit everyone!

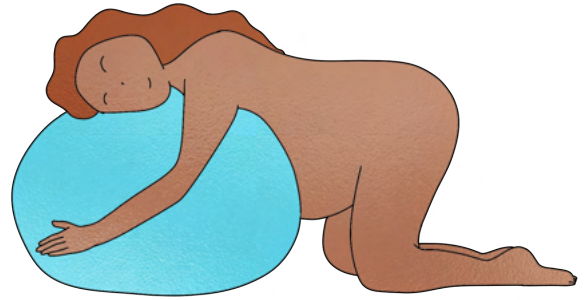


BIRTHING BALL

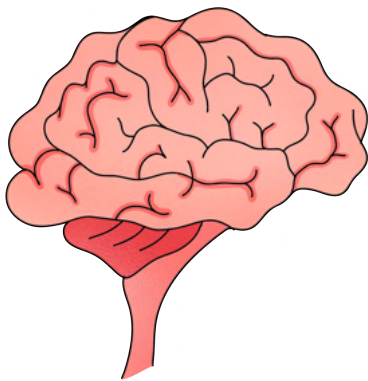
The Lowdown

The birth ball, provides a soft surface for women to sit on or lean against while carrying out simple exercises. This method is great to use during pregnancy, all stages of labour and postpartum.

01



02



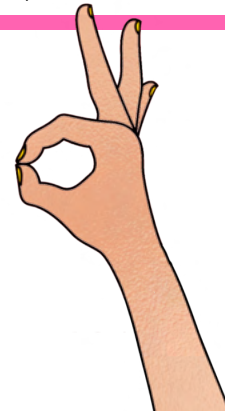
The Research

Several studies show that the use of a birthing ball, provides a statistically significant improvement to labour pains. They can directly relieve women's physical pain and psychosocial wellbeing. It can promote a sense of control over body pressure, balance and coordination.

The Pros

A birthing ball can help ease labour pains, reduce the pain of contractions, decrease anxiety and shorten the first stage of labour. For some women it can promote a sense of control.

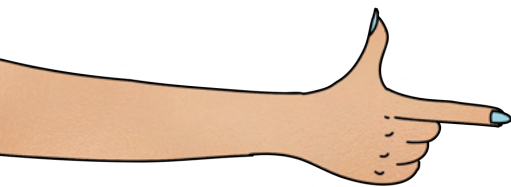
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The Cons

It is best to practice the exercises and using of a birthing ball before you go into labour - antenatally (in pregnancy). This is to make sure you feel comfortable and safe when using it. Make sure you get the right size for your body height and weight too.

04



The How

Ways to use birth ball: Sitting astride the ball and rocking pelvis from side to side or back and forth. Leaning on ball from a kneeling position on the floor. Get into a hands and knees position by hugging your birthing ball and lifting your bottom up from a kneeling position. You can then rock your pelvis from side to side.

05

