

I wanted a hands-off birth

**MUST
read!**



Free and easy

Brody's birth didn't go exactly to plan, but it certainly brought its own magic, and taught a few lessons along the way.

Four years ago I had the most wonderful, unassisted home birth with my second child so when I fell pregnant with my third I wanted the exact same experience. Thank goodness for a wise friend who told me I couldn't replicate a birth, as each one was different and brings its own magic and life lessons.

We moved house in my 22nd week and after we settled in I began the search for a midwife to take care of me for the rest of my pregnancy and the birth. As my two previous pregnancies were trouble-free, I was relaxed about everything and thought my plans would come together easily. Unfortunately, this wasn't the case – we had moved into an area where independent midwives are a rarity and the few who were around were completely booked out!

It seemed my only option was a birth centre in a small hospital around the corner from our new house. However, there were no obstetricians at this hospital so if you needed one you had to be transferred to a larger hospital, which was a 30-minute drive away. I was heartbroken. I worried I would arrive at the birth centre, tense

Planning a positive experience for her third baby, Brody, **KATE CLARK** ended up literally taking matters into her own hands

up with fear, stall my own labour and need to be transferred to the larger hospital for an emergency caesarean. I contacted every doula I could find to see if they would attend a home birth to make us more comfortable about free birthing, but insurance and liability made it too difficult.

I had no answers and eventually my friends suggested I "put it to the universe and be open to what was meant to be". I did, but it didn't stop my search for another birth support option other than going into the hospital system. I came up with nothing.

COUNTING DOWN

At 39 weeks it was crunch time and I reluctantly booked into the birth centre. The next day I lost my mucous plug. When I lost my plug with my first, she was born within 24 hours. My second was born within four hours, so I assumed the baby was on its way. But I was still waiting a few days later. At 39 weeks and three days I felt irregular contractions kick in. I knew I had to conserve my energy to get through labour so tried to get some rest, but as soon as I laid down the contractions intensified.

The next day I knew it was go time so I called my mum and asked her to look after the kids. When she arrived my husband Garrett called the birth centre to let them know we were on our way. While he was talking I overheard him say: "Oh, okay then, what are our options?" The midwife had told Garrett the birth centre was flat out, so we could go in and have our baby in the emergency room with just a curtain around us or go to the bigger hospital and birth our baby in a maternity suite. We chose the maternity suite at the bigger hospital!

HANDS IN THE AIR

The midwife called an ambulance and the paramedics took us to the larger hospital. When we arrived I was ready to push and telling everyone that would listen I wanted a hands-off birth. A suite was ready for us and I got into the warm spa bath right away. I gently and slowly pushed through the pressure and in no time I could feel the baby's head still in the sac. Soon after, the head was out and I caught his body but broke the sac in the process.

The midwife asked me to hand over my baby so I could birth the placenta but I declined as I wanted my hormone-inducing baby close to me for as long as possible. While holding him with one hand, I got to my knees and gave a little cough to release the placenta into the water. I was helped out of the bath and got onto the bed where I spent some time snuggling with baby Brody. Later, the midwives

took Brody for his checks and he measured 3.1kg and 54cm.

Garrett, Brody and I were left in the room with a student midwife, who told us he was doing

"I gently and slowly pushed through the pressure"

the midwifery component of his medical degree and planned to join the Flying Doctors. He had only observed five natural births in the hospital in the 12 months he had been there, which blew our minds!

This birth certainly brought its own magic as well as some lessons. My first two births taught me to trust my body but with my third I learned to trust the universe. Having Brody in the hospital created awareness for a medical student about natural, intervention-free childbirth and allowed me to walk out of the hospital three hours later with a healthy baby in my arms. >

'We had a meal with visitors while I laboured'



Calm birth

I was pretty low maintenance when it came to labour, so the midwives left us alone, which was just what I wanted!

KATRINA ZASLAVSKY didn't inconvenience her guests when she went into labour with baby Talia

Talia's birth began as a gradual build up of light contractions over a couple of days. During this time we had interstate visitors due to arrive and for some reason I decided we'd still go with the original plan and catch up.

They arrived and we shared a meal, and my labour, around the family dining table. It must have been a very unusual meal for them, as I often had to stop mid sentence and breathe through the waves. They kept commenting on how well I was handling

it all and couldn't believe how calm I was, considering I was in active labour!

The contractions picked up in intensity and became more regular. I continued to

breathe through them and took notes to identify patterns and how far along I was. I would never have planned it that way, but our visitors were great company and served as

a pleasant distraction!

After they left I went for a walk with my husband, Stan, but had to stop every so often to lean against him and breathe

"They arrived and we shared a meal, and my labour"

through the pain. Instinctively I knew when it was time to go to the hospital and despite staff telling us not to come in, we packed my bag and drove in.

LOW MAINTENANCE

After I was admitted Stan and I settled into a labour room where the atmosphere was quiet and intimate. I wasn't making much noise or requesting any pain relief, I was just doing a whole lot of breathing, kneeling over the bed and burying my head into Stan's chest, or a pillow, for support and resting in between.

I was pretty low maintenance, so the midwives went to attend more complicated births where there was more

for them to do. I was so happy when they left! It was exactly the private experience Stan and I had hoped for.

It was very intense at times but due to my firm resolve to go natural, the strong support from Stan and my

extensive preparation, not once did I experience anything I couldn't handle. Our daughter was in a hurry and without any pushing from me she

slid out with ease while I was kneeling on a beanbag on the floor!

Talia measured 2.8kg and 45.5cm. I felt an instant connection to her and very protective, like a mother hen. She was, and still is, an absolute dream child and we are so blessed to have her in our lives.

"Not once did I experience anything I couldn't handle"

'I felt like I was pushing for hours'



Baby bliss

Luke and I were in such a state of euphoria after the birth of our baby, we forgot to check if we had a boy or a girl!

Wanting a natural water birth, RACHAEL ARCHER took it slowly to bring baby Isabella into the world

idea of birthing my baby freaked me out. I knew getting educated would help ease my fears so over the next nine months, I researched, read, watched and learned everything I could about labour and birth.

By the time my due date rolled around I felt prepared physically, mentally and emotionally. Eight days after my due date we were still waiting, so my midwife gave me a long list of things that could potentially bring on labour naturally, and I started to get contractions the next night. I spent a few hours on the toilet, as it was the most comfortable position for me, then woke my husband, Luke, at 3am when the contractions were getting too painful to handle on my own.

At 5am we called the hospital and then made our way in.

BED, BATH AND BEYOND

Upon our arrival, a midwife checked to see how dilated I was but I didn't want to know as I knew I would be disappointed if it was only a few measly centimetres. The midwife started a bath, as I was planning a water birth, and while it filled I got into the shower.

When I finally sank into the bath it was absolute heaven. I can't remember if I automatically started to push, or if my midwife told me to, but I started anyway. The midwife coached me through it and told me to go super slow to avoid tearing.

"When I finally sank into the bath it was absolute heaven"

I felt like I was pushing for hours! It was exhausting but, looking back, I'm happy I took my time as my body worked out what to do and I didn't

tear at all. The baby's head came out and I could only do one push with her head under water. Unfortunately, her arm was up so I had to stand and with the next push, the midwives pulled her out. They handed her to Luke and he put her on my chest. It was the best feeling ever! All the intense pressure

disappeared and we were finally looking at our beautiful baby.

We had decided to leave the gender of our baby as a surprise and we were both in such a state of euphoria that our midwives had to remind us to check to see what we had! Our beautiful baby girl, Isabella, arrived into the world, naturally and drug-free. She measured 4kg and 53cm and was perfect. ★

"My body worked out what to do and I didn't tear at all"

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