



DADS & DOULAS

When my wife told me that she wanted a doula, I was hurt. I truly thought with our first baby that I'd be able to be the end-all for my wife. She showed me the research. She let me meet some of the doulas. I still wasn't convinced that it would be the right choice for us. I subscribed to the "If you weren't at the conception, you shouldn't be at the birth rule." My wife wound up vetoing me. **Here are the reasons I'm glad that she did:**

1. A doula can spell you. I really thought I'd be able to stay awake for a big event like childbirth. Who didn't pull an all nighter in college? Bathroom breaks? Ha! I mean, if I could ride my bike for hours, drinking lots of water and not needing a bathroom break, surely I could wait a few hours while my wife was in labor, right? Wrong. Thirty hours into my wife's first labor and I was toast. I'd been up walking with her for what seemed like days as labor began. We'd come to the hospital and there wasn't any sleeping for me. I was physically tired and mentally shot. The doula really helped me out. With my wife's blessing, that 30 minute nap I caught helped me to refocus and be back on my game for the big event. And we won't even talk about how much fun my wife made of me for my small bladder. Needless to say, having the knowledge that my wife had someone else with her while I scarfed down food, went to the bathroom and grabbed a few winks kept me sane.



2. A doula remembers what she learned in childbirth class. I paid attention in childbirth class. I'd hear enough horror stories to realize that there was a huge, comprehensive final exam for this course – childbirth. But when push came to shove, no pun intended, the knowledge went out of my brain. Those early hours of labor I couldn't remember if we were supposed to eat or sleep, which positions were good or not so good. Thankfully, when the doula arrived, she saved my skin and made me look like the good guy. My wife never really realized that it wasn't my idea that she try certain positions, but that I'd been privately coached by our doula.

3. A doula knows the questions to ask. When we arrived at the hospital, everyone was bombarding us. Questions were flying from all directions. I was busy trying to help soothe my wife, who was not happy with the bumpy car ride to the hospital. Our doula stepped in and gave them all the information that they needed. Magically doors opened and we were offered a prime birthing room. Our doula also was very helpful in getting information. A nurse or a tech would come in and ask us if we wanted something, like a procedure or a medication. I had no clue. (See above where I forgot my childbirth class information!) Our doula would very calmly ask questions of them and of us until we had enough information to make the decision that matched what we wanted. It was never pushy or mean, just questions. She even reminded us that we could take some time alone to make a decision. That turned out to be a real blessing.

4. A doula speaks the language of labor. Our doula was an amazing translator. I'd ask a simple question like, "How's the baby?" And the nurse would respond with something like, "The EFM indicates that there are no decels during periods of stimulation." I'd give her my biggest smile and nod, like I knew what she was saying. Once she left the room, I'd ask our doula, who would carefully explain each part of what had been said. She also helped us decipher what AROM was as well as second stage.

5. A doula keeps you calm. Hard. Labor was so hard. And that's just how it felt to me. Thankfully, when the going got tough and my wife was in hard labor, it was difficult for me to keep anything in my brain. I forgot everything from childbirth class and all I could think of was "Surely this isn't normal!" Our doula would smile at me from across my wife on the birth ball and as if she had read my mind, would mouth the words "This is normal." Her calm smile helped me focus again on loving on my wife and keeping her calm. She showed me how and where to touch, she modeled how to behave quietly and efficiently and she made me the star in my wife's eyes.

When I first heard about doulas, I thought of them as birth interlopers. Now I don't know how anyone could manage to give birth without one. Our doula really helped bring me together with my wife as she gave birth. My wife remembers my constant support and never failing love or knowledge. She remembers the doula as a nice person who did some stuff in the background. We won't give birth without a doula. (And I also loved our postpartum doula!)

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