



Partners and Doulas

The birth of your baby is a very private event. You might be wondering if a doula will replace or exclude your partner or intrude.

Many partners, and mothers-to-be as well, are concerned that a doula will be a "third wheel" or will exclude the partner from sharing in the birth. When you talk to parents who have had a doula present for their birth, though, the opposite usually turns out to be the case. A good doula always remembers that this birth is the *parents'* experience, not hers. She is there to support *your* wishes and help the two of you to maintain your physical and emotional resources to share the birth together.

If one of you feels reluctant about having a doula, talk about it together. Be honest about what's bothering you. If your partner wants to be the one you rely on the most, he may feel that if you want a doula, it must mean you don't think he will do a good job supporting you. Usually that's not at all true, but it helps to talk it through. Many partners actually find they are *more* actively involved in the birth when an experienced professional supporter is present.

If, on the other hand, your partner feels a bit (or a lot!) uncomfortable about being present at the birth, a doula's presence means you have continuous support while your partner is free to respect his own limits and come and go throughout labor.

Things you can do to make for a comfortable relationship between you, your partner, and your doula:

- As a couple, be open and **honest** with one another about your feelings about having a doula or other aspects of your birth you may not agree on. This won't be the first or the last time you disagree when it comes to your child! Use the chance to work on your problem-solving skills.
- Talk when you first meet with your doula about any specific **expectations** you have, or things you want her to do or *not* to do. Be clear about what you want her role to be so there are no misunderstandings. This is *your* birth and you are paying for a service. Make sure it is what you want!
- During the birth, if you see something the doula is doing that you want to be able to do -- maybe massage or a pressure technique, ask her to **show you** how.
- Don't be afraid to ask for some **privacy** if you would like, at any time during your labor. Privacy helps labor progress! And a good doula respects your needs and won't feel put out in the slightest.

Doulas can help partners by:

Stepping in to help when the partner needs a **short break**. Labor is hard work, not just for the woman, but for those supporting her!

Offering suggestions, when asked, about **strategies** that might be comforting or helpful during labor.

Providing **reassurance** to the partner as well as the woman giving birth. If a partner has never seen a woman in labor before, it can be very reassuring to have someone focused on *his* needs to answer questions, give an encouraging smile, and put everything into context! This is an amazing journey for partners too!

Providing **information** and an objective sounding board when you have questions or decisions to make.