

We chose the Bradley Method® for its simple, common sense techniques.

I KNEW I'D FOUND THE IDEAL doctor for my first pregnancy, when he put his strong, skilled hand on my shoulder, and said, "Gloria, don't worry about a thing, I'll take care of everything." What a relief. One of the main reasons George and I had put off starting a family for 6 years was because of my fear. Stories about birth always end with, "... but at least you have a baby when it's all over." I just wasn't sure that I could deal with the pain, even for a baby. What a relief to know that I wasn't going to have to worry about that anymore.

As the months passed, I busied myself with other matters concerning my baby's arrival. I chose a crib and painted the nursery. I examined every layette list I could find to be certain that I hadn't forgotten anything. Everything was ready, and yet, I felt uneasy. I still had to make it through birth itself. That worried me, but I tried to shrug off the feeling by remembering my doctor's comforting words.

Six months pregnant and all was well, or so I thought. Then I met Becky. What luck, a pregnant neighbor: someone to share the secrets of motherhood with. Becky asked me what books I'd read on childbirth. I showed her the pamphlet my doctor had given me months earlier at my first pre-natal visit. She gave me a half dozen books on the subject in return, including Husband Coached Childbirth by Dr. Robert Bradley. She asked which childbirth class I was taking. I noticed her look of concern when I told her that

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classes were unnecessary because my doctor was going to take care of everything.

Who would have thought that I would change my mind and choose "Natural Childbirth" as the way to bring my first-born into the world. Certainly not I! I found that reading Dr. Bradley's book was like opening my mind for the first time. It had been easier to pretend that someone else could take care of it for me. I now began to face the fact that this was something that I was going to have to manage myself. It was I, and not the doctor, who must experience my baby's birth. Now I understood why I couldn't shake those worried feelings. Birth was inevitable, and I wasn't ready for it.

From my reading I discovered that I had choices and decisions to make. The first was to include my husband George. I thought I had. "We" had decided on Jessica or Jason as the name.. "We" had decided that breast-feeding would provide the best start for our baby. "We" had decided on cloth rather than disposable diapers. This was our baby and "we" had decided that George would be an actively participating father - just as soon as the baby and I came home from the hospital. It hadn't occurred to either of us that birth was also something that "we" could do together. The idea thrilled us, and angered my doctor. So, in my seventh month of pregnancy we had a new doctor, different hospital, 1,000 questions, and "The Bradley Method®."

George and I chose the Bradley Method® for it's simple, common sense techniques, and because of its emphasis on the father's, as well as the mother's role in birth. We looked into taking classes at the hospital, but felt that 25 to 40 couples was too large a group to provide for individual attention. The Bradley Method® classes limited their enrollment to six couples. This allowed the instructors to get to know us and answer our many questions. We also liked the fact that Cheryl and Jerry (they were a team-teaching couple) were independent teachers. The didn't have an obligation to the hospital to prepare us for the institution's preferences. Rather, we were encouraged to investigate the many possibilities available, and choose those that appealed to us; in so doing, we took responsibility for ourselves and our baby. Ro example, accepting prenatal vitamins from the doctor, and taking them had been easy. Taking responsibility for our baby's nourishment by learning about nutrition, and really eating right, was much harder. The Bradley Method® wasn't a how-to-breathe-in-labor-and-make-the-pain-go-away class. It was preparation for parenthood. The Bradley Method® doesn't view labor and birth as a climax, but as a transition. It's emphasis is on the entire process of bringing a healthy baby into the world and bonding him happily to his family. The course included exercises, nutrition, labor and birth (what to expect and how to deal with it), relaxation, relaxed normal breathing, breastfeeding,

bonding, postpartum care, newborn appearance and behavior, labor rehearsals, the birth environment, emergency childbirth, and much more. But, always the emphasis was on the family unit as it adjusts and woks together to bring in a new member. How we looked forward to those classes! The information was

progressed we adjusted positions, as well as lighting and temperature, to further enhance relaxation. We had learned not to be distracted during contractions, but rather to focus on the job at hand. We knew that drugs could affect the baby, and were determined to avoid them if at all possible. It took great effort to relax

To learn more about the Bradley Method®
 To find out more about the Bradley Method® of Husband-Coached Childbirth or to locate a Bradley® instructor in your area, write to the American Academy of Husband-Coached Childbirth. AAHCC acts as the official training organization for

fascinating and the time passed all too quickly. The other couples in our class became friends to care about, and who cared about us. Together we investigated various birth alternatives and respected our individual choices. As a group we looked forward to a class reunion that would bring us and our babies together again.

In the meantime we worked hard and invested the kind of energy that our babies deserved. George and I decided on those things that were important to us for our baby's birth, and discussed them with our new doctor. We changed hospitals again, in order to improve the environment in which our baby would be born. We changed many of our ideas on how to relate to a newborn, and eagerly awaited our own baby's arrival. At last I felt "ready".

Nine months had brought us to the beginning of labor. Would I make it? Would I be strong enough? Could I endure? With George by my side, and armed with the knowledge we had acquired, how could I fail? The Bradley Method[®] had prepared us well. Not just for a textbook labor, but for the many variations that are considered normal.

In early labor we ate lightly and played cards. We talked and walked, and enjoyed the moment that was upon us. We had learned to rely on our instincts, and to relax and flow with labor as other mammals do. It was like riding on a raft as the powerful ocean waves lift you up and down. As labor

during these tremendously intense contractions. I was sure that I couldn't maintain my dignity and control if my mind were clouded with drugs. It was hard. It hurt more than anything I had ever experienced before. Yet, I was doing it! Was in control! Could not have managed without George's support and participation. After 36 hours of hard work we shared the joy that was our reward. Our baby girl was born alert and healthy. Yes, it had been hard and it had hurt, but as I gazed at George, proudly holding our daughter in the delivery room, I realized that it had also been the most exhilarating experience of my life. We had never been closer, nor felt more fulfillment. We came home with our infant daughter just six hours after her birth. Utilizing the information learned through The Bradley Method[®], we continued the bonding experience that was to weld our family unit together. Three and a half years later Emily was born. We chose to birth Emily at home, with her young sister present to welcome her. Hospital birth and home birth had both provided us with rewarding experiences never to be forgotten. Today, as we await the arrival of our third child, Rebecca or Adam, I am mindful that The Bradley Method[®] has brought many things into our childbearing years. Most important, it gave us the power to take responsibility for our own lives. Never again will we consider letting someone else "take care of everything" for us.

all Bradley[®] instructors. Only those teachers who have been formally certified under AAHCC may call themselves Bradley[®] instructors and the organization requires recertification annually. Bradley[®] instructors are also required to submit information forms to AAHCC following each birth. Write to: AAHCC, Box 5224, Sherman Oaks, California 91413-5224 (800) 423-2397 or (818) 788-6662 www.bradleybirth.com