

# Preparing for Active Birth: what is most important to expectant couples?

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## Summary Themes of Key Issues

Effective education and preparation for childbirth is an important part of the midwifery role and scope of practice. Awareness of the diverse needs of expectant parents, including concerns, fears, goals and priorities is an essential part of understanding the changing culture of birth and parenting in society. This is important to effectively engage with and prepare families for the challenge and uncertainties encountered in childbearing and parenting, and to equip them to meet their priorities within different maternity services. Attending antenatal classes is normative behaviour in Western culture. But how effective are “classes”, and who do they serve? Do classes meet the needs of the pregnant woman and her family, or socialise parents to conform to the culture of institutional settings and providers attending birth? Current literature surrounding preparation for childbirth in Western societies provides a contextual backdrop to the needs examined in this poster. 1 - 10

Content analysis is presented for the self-identified needs of expectant parents (n=1200) who attended Active Birth preparation workshops at a metropolitan yoga studio in South Australia between the years 1996 – 2017. Bi-monthly workshops for small groups (8 – 12 couples) were conducted by three facilitators, two women and a man – a yoga teacher / physiotherapist, a midwife / childbirth educator, and a relationship counsellor. At each workshop participants were asked to write down three priorities and/or goals they wanted to address during the workshop. The predominant concerns, fears, priorities and goals identified by couples and their support persons were grouped thematically. Of 1200 expectant parents who attended the workshops, 912 (76%) were having their first baby. Of the other 288 (24%) had already birthed children, either with their current partner, or previously. Most women, 865 (72.1%) were in their final trimester of pregnancy and a further 335 (27.9%) were in second trimester. Only 52 women (4.3%) were un-partnered or identified as single parents and 16 (1.6%) identified as same sex couples. Maternity services, providers and systems used by participants: Private Obstetrician / Private Hospital, 335 (29.6%); Public Caseload Midwifery / Midwifery Group Practice, 439 (36.6%); Public Hospital Maternity Care 179 (14.9%); Planned Homebirth with Private Midwife or Public MGP service, 125 (10.4%); GP Share-Care / Regional Hospital, 102 (8.5%).

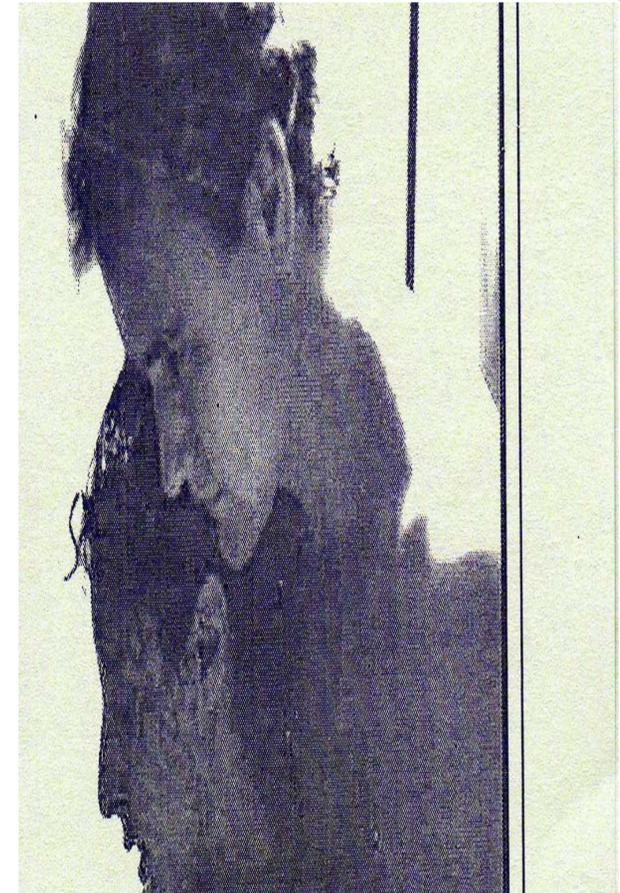
**“negative stories are told freely,  
positive stories are kept quiet...”**

“ I wanted to give birth in the bath .....Jon continued to encourage and vocalise with me to manage the contractions. We had done some hypnobirthing practice as well as the 'Birth Skills' techniques Vanessa described during the Coast Yoga workshop. I had imagined a very serene birth, putting my hypnobirthing into practice, but in the end it was the vocalising (loudly!) that I found most helpful in managing the contractions, and having freedom to move my body into whichever position felt right. In the bath I remember reaching down and feeling our little one's head as it was crowning, and the sensations of the "ring of fire" but feeling very reassured this was normal. I also remember when the head was out, thinking she'll be here in the next contraction, and sure enough she was... being educated about what to expect during this stage of childbirth helped to reduce any fears I may have had, and left me feeling confident in what was going on and how my body was designed to handle it. ”

**Zuhra's story of Ziliya's Birth** (extract, January, 2017 - 41 wks + 6 days)  
 Initially planning to give birth at home, Zuhra gave birth in hospital with support from her husband and midwife due to post-dates pregnancy.

### References

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Woman's needs	Couple's needs	Men's needs	System issues
Optimising vaginal birth	Bonding time Work as team	Be Informed: what happens	'Managing the provider/s'
Dealing with fear & pain	Make birth a positive event	Support role @ birth	Respect: birth is sacred
Avoid drugs & interventions	Decision making-rights	Advocating for partner	Options: twins/breech
Positions for active birth	Managing uncertainty	Father's role - networks	Access:VBAC Water / Home
Healing: prior birth trauma	Confidence Connecting	Skills & tools: birth & coping	Cultural practices
++++ Stories	Birth Plans	Control	Choices
Social support empowerment	Children @ birth	Balancing view of risk/s	Asserting own needs