

A Man's Guide to Home Birth

by Tony Whitman

When my wife decided to have an unassisted home birth – she did her best to furnish me with the best reading and preparatory material that was available. However, since I was neither a medical professional nor a woman, the material just did not really apply to me. I could not memorize the medical terminology or get all touchy-feely for the home birthing guides to really sink in. So I decided to write my own guide – to touch on the things that I wish someone had told me, in ways that I could understand.

The approach of this guide centers on a checklist of things that I feel a man needs when being the other primary person in his wife's home birth. There may be doula's, midwives, family, friends, and a host of other related people at the home birth – but even with these people present, I still feel that men are the most important person there in their wife's eyes; and will need this list. Then the steps of the home birth will be walked through and discussed in terms of the item on the checklist needed for it.

These are the items that men need to assist in a home birth (not in order of use BTW): a black-light, princess wand (a barbie wand or any other type of wand toy will do,) fun-house mirror, catchers mitt/fishing net/soccer gloves, pocket watch, thesaurus, woman who has witnessed a live birth, six pack of beer (or favorite alcohol,) shovel, bucket, 1 dozen eggs, shredded mozzarella cheese, shower shoes, swimming shorts, push-up/pull-up bars or a wheelbarrow, old table covers (plastic holiday ones are best,) 1 big steak (red meat,) and 1 big cliché. *Most of these items are for preparing for the birth, while a few are for the actual birthing.*

The first real stage that lets a man know that labor is coming is what I call the “**Hypno-Fog.**” For example: my first child's birth, (at a 'birthing center' – which for me seemed to be a glorified hotel room with an attendant who spoke English, but that's not important,) I fell asleep when we got there while she was in labor. She gave me shit for years... But with the second pregnancy I slept almost 18 hours a day for the week before she was due, in preparation.

So when I came down the stairs and was informed that she was in labor at 9am-ish, I felt ready this time since I just slept for 10 friggin hours. But alas, after hanging around downstairs for about ten minutes, my eyes rolled into the back of my head, and I went and took a nap. (On a side note, this is where the doula's biggest strength lies – they are highly trained to withstand the Hypno-Fog.) It was after that nap during the Hypno-Fog stage that I discovered that women who are about to go into labor cast this area-of-effect spell that can drop a man to the floor in a matter of minutes.

So, you can either do what I did and sleep till she has that five minute window of alertness when she tells you it's time before she goes into labor la-la land...Or you can buy a **pocket watch** at month three of the pregnancy and try to hypnotize yourself once a week. Building up an immunity and resistance to trances will greatly increase your chances of withstanding the Hypno-Fog.

So now your wife is in labor-la-la land. This is where you can tell her that President Reagan has crawled out of grave, went to Burger King, and brought us some burgers – and she will say that sounds great! This is where the **thesaurus** comes in. Almost every guide out there says men need to say supportive things in-between contractions for thousands of reasons. But hey, I'm no P.H.D in English Composition – there are only so many different ways a person can say “Great Job Honey,” or “Doing Good!” So, during the last three months of the pregnancy I highly recommend writing down as many different ways of saying “good job” as you possibly can. Then take this list and write it on your wrist while she is maintaining her Hypno-Fog.

It's been a while since the Hypno-Fog has dissipated. She's knee-deep in contractions. Go have a beer. Seriously. One beer, or a few sips of wine, or even a shot of scotch. Even though you and Ronald Reagan are sharing that burger in the kitchen – your wife's instincts are going strong in Superman mode. If you are tensed, stressed, or panicky, she will sense it. This is where I highly, highly, highly recommend the one beer an hour rule. My advice here is for taking the edge off. If you just hammer the beers and get drunk, then you are worthless and a moron; and you and your wife should not have procreated. Having said that, there is nothing wrong with stepping out for a second and having a few sips of beer. (Make sure you have gum as well, beer breath is nasty to women in general.)

Now you're relaxed, your wife is relaxed, and her body is completely dedicated to pushing out Worf, Son of Mog. This is where the fun house mirror comes in. I learned that a woman's body in labor is like a slinky made out of chicken bones. It bends and warps in ways unimaginable to us mere men. If you stand in front of that **fun-house mirror** once a week and practice viewing how the body warps, twists, and morphs like a long lost member of the X-Men – you will actually be able to assist your wife in active labor.

Basically, my wife asked me to push and pull in places that seemed entirely unrelated to me. For example, if you push on both sides of her lower back, her pelvis fans out at the opposite end like a Chinese paper-fan. If you push on her tailbone, her uterus does a reverse-gainer with a triple-twist-greg-louganis style. During labor I really had to fight the urge to push on other places to see what else would happen. Maybe if I put my left index finger on the base of her skull, and my right elbow on the 5th lateral vertebrae – I could get her to reflexively punch a hole in the shower wall. This is the type of mentality you need to have, by practicing with that fun-house mirror, when she asks you to push

somewhere specific to help. It also helps for when the baby comes out, but more on that later.

After some serious labor, the baby is close to 'presenting' (or popping out.) Your wife will start to plead with you to do something about the pain. You can do what I did – sit there like a buffoon with a confused look on your face. Or...you can bust out the **Princess Wand** with confidence and start waving it over her while chanting “Anall Na-thrach Uth-Vas Bethud....” There is nothing worse than sitting there helpless while she asks you to perform magic tricks. At least with the barbie princess wand you can make it look like you are making the utmost effort to make that pain go away (even though she repeatedly stated before the birth that she wanted a “natural birth.”)

The pain is magically gone, and now the baby is presenting. If you took this manual seriously – then you are ready for what comes next. You took that **black-light** and bathed yourself in its hippy-trippy glow in a dark room a few times for this moment. The baby will be a splendid combination of purple and blue when it comes out. Don't panic, you're wife did not have an affair with Papa Smurf. That color is natural. You may have watched some you-tube videos of live birth, but it just doesn't come close to seeing it in real life.

The baby's Klingon-like head is starting to come out fully. This is where the **woman who has witnessed a live birth** comes in handy. It took every ounce of willpower I had to keep from blurting out “dear god I thought pterodactyl's were extinct, where is the rest of his face?!?!” But luckily I had the quick wit to look at my wife's friend and mouth the words “is this normal?” And she also had the common sense to just nod instead of calling me a total idiot. The bottom line, the last thing your wife will want to hear while she is pushing a baby out is you exclaiming shockingly that the baby is a mutant and the other woman stating that you are in fact, an idiot. She might start to feel that there might indeed be something wrong with the baby, and panic herself.

While waiting for the baby's shoulders to come out – I stumbled upon one of the most fascinating psychological phobias in the history of mankind. Even though your wife tells you she has the utmost confidence in you as a husband, lover, father, friend....she still harbors the very deep-seated fear that when the baby comes out you will be attempting to use a Jedi mind trick to make the infant levitate in place for fifteen minutes.

Yes, you heard me right, all woman have the real and serious fear that men will drop the baby when it comes out. She may be able to feel your forearms pressed on her thighs, she may see the top of your head as you are peering intently into her nether regions like you are deciphering Linear A writing, but she still thinks you are just hiding that apple and chainsaw and will start to juggle that baby when you have a firm grip on it. I wish that someone took a picture of my face so all could see the look of puzzlement when she asked me three times if I was ready to catch him.

This is where the **catcher's mitt, fishing net, or soccer gloves** come in. Choose one of those three items (if I ever catch a baby again, I'm going with the soccer gloves with the rubber gripping.) Set that item next to the place where your wife plans on having her baby at least two months prior to the due date. Seeing it day after day will help to dispel her phobia and make the last stage of labor more pleasant for the both of you. She will instinctively know that when the baby comes out, you will indeed be very ready; and that is no need to worry about your silly Jedi mind tricks.

You've caught the baby, it is in your hands, and your wife is crying. After the glow wears off, you will notice that you are covered in more fluids than your favorite porn star. You will need to be able to walk around without slipping and falling like a bad cartoon. The **shower shoes** and **swim trunks** help serve this purpose. But furthermore, you won't be grossed out or panicky that you are now a walking petri dish for a new secret government biological weapon. I made the hilarious attempt to count how many different fluids were on me and baby. I stopped counting at seven.

One month prior to the due date, take an afternoon off. Grab that **bucket**, the **eggs**, the **mozzarella cheese**, and the **shovel**. Put a shovel-full of dirt in the bucket, put in the dozen egg yolks, and the cheese. Mix it all together. Pour it all over yourself, let it dry....and let it stay on you for roughly three or so hours. I think you get the gist. The mud is the mix of blood and feces, the egg yolks for that nice texture and consistency, and the cheese represents the mucous and vernix. Doing this exercise will make sure you will not be distracted when you are covered in this wonderful biological recipe.

For even though the baby is out of your wife's body, the process is still far from over. I was under the naive assumption that hey, baby's born, time to make some calls and get some rest.....oh no my friend. Not even close. While the wife is in labor, the **plastic table cloths** should be put anywhere on the floor where she plans on walking. Most men are not told that when the placenta comes out, it is also accompanied by golf-ball sized clots of blood, or just blood in general – along with leftovers of your famous Colonel Manly's bucket recipe.

The placenta is out, and its friends are scattered on the floor like a Jackson Pollack painting. If you're lucky, your wife didn't have a too difficult delivery. But more often than not, she can barely stand up. Did you buy those **push-up bars**? If you are a well prepared man, you exercised for the whole nine months and are strong enough to wave your blond Fabio locks in the wind, pick her up like the Queen she is, and carry her to the designated place of rest while singing The Music of the Night from the Phantom of the Opera soundtrack.

Or...you are a lazy schlub like me who gets winded after retrieving the remote from the other couch. In this case, if necessary, bust out that **wheelbarrow** and cart her to the place of rest while resisting the urge to make livestock sounds. It is around this time that she is returning from her journey

to labor-la-la land and will start to remember the things you said.

The birth is done, you have showered - but what is that smell? Ah yes, you wont notice it. During your preparatory afternoon of walking around covered in dried and sticky Colonel Manly sauce, you took that **steak**, cut it in half; and let half of it sit around in the sun for two hours while you put the other half in the oven and let it burn. Then you put the two differently prepared halves of the steak into a bowl, and let it sit on the counter for two days. This will imitate the lingering smell from the fluids released during the birth. But have no fear, it will go away. Just tell people visiting the baby that you sacrificed two baby lambs to the great fire of Zeus in your den in honor of the new arrival.

When all is said and done, there is one thing you will need throughout all of this. Your wife will never tell you what it is, but I will. It is a **cliche**. During her nesting stage your wife will have lists for other lists. She will have bags of items placed strategically around the house in case of nuclear attack. You don't need to know what is on these lists, or what is in the bags. These are more for easing her recovery after birth than for you to administer and memorize.

In this case, that cliche is presence. She needs your strong presence. To be the clear-headed and commanding person there. This doesn't mean be a control freak, a micro-manager, or a bossy dick. You don't need to go to other end of the pendulum either and be the towering mute moron standing in the corner barely caring whats happening. It means just have that aura of confidence that lets her know that you know that everything will go perfectly. If she knows that, despite the overwhelming absurdity that men feel being an active participant in a birth, you are totally there and engaged – it will be better than any drug or shortcut a person could have up their sleeve. And by killing two birds with one stone, by being there with her to ease the whole process and making her memories of the birth more positive – she will repay you in the future. Women know men like rewards too.