

Creating the right Birth Environment

One of the most important ways to help yourself have a positive birth is to make sure that you feel as safe, supported & secure in your surroundings as possible. The easiest way to do this is by using your senses. Think of a spa and the way that it is designed so that, as soon as you walk in, it hits all of your senses and makes you feel calm and relaxed - the mood lighting, the strong fragrances, the chilled out music.

Here are 5 ways you can use your senses to create the perfect environment for birth:

1. Sight.

Dim lighting can make any space seem more intimate and relaxing. It can also draw focus away from any medical equipment (if you happen to be in a labour suite) and make the room feel less clinical, much cosier & more personal.

You can use fairy lights, electric candles or just dim the lights in the room. Most birth centres are usually set up with mood lighting systems too which makes this much easier to achieve.

An eye mask can also be a very simple way for you to shut out any unwanted distractions and help you stay calm & focussed. It's definitely worth packing one in your hospital bag.

2. Smell.

Use your favourite fragrance to help promote feelings of relaxation. This can be a room spray that you can take with you, massage oils or simply something like your partner's aftershave sprayed onto a t-shirt.

You can also create positive emotional triggers now which you can use during your labour. For example, light a scented candle while you're at home anytime you're feeling nice & relaxed. You'll start to create an association between that particular smell and how lovely & relaxed you feel. If you repeat this process enough times, when you smell the candle it will trigger the feelings of relaxation. You can then light the candles at home during the early stages of labour, and have a co-ordinating room spray in your hospital bag ready for the hospital/birth centre, to help keep you calm.

3. Taste.

It's so important during labour that you keep your energy levels up so make sure that you have plenty of drinks and small, high energy snacks with you (you're unlikely to feel massively hungry but will need little bursts of energy to keep you going). Refreshing, simple things like fruit juice, nuts, cereal bars, & sweets are great and easy to pack. Make sure that you have plenty of comfort snacks - feel good foods which are high in energy but not too filling.

4. Touch.

In the same way as some children have comforters - toys, blankets, dummies or other little special items that make them feel safe & secure - as adults we can feel reassured when we surround ourselves with familiar or sentimental things. Do you have a favourite t-shirt/comfy slippers/snuggly blanket or special pillow? Then make sure that you have it with you during labour (while at home or take it with you to the hospital/birth centre).

5. Sound.

Play music that you know relaxes you. You can create a playlist of music that you find soothing or that has a positive emotional association for you (i.e. your wedding song). Or maybe get your partner to create a playlist for you.

Silence during contractions can really help you to stay focussed with your breathing during contractions. Don't be afraid to ask the medical team to support you in this by respecting your need for quiet.

