

Mind Focus Techniques

It can be really helpful during labour, particularly during contractions to concentrate your mind and attention on something specific. By focussing your mind elsewhere you will be less aware of the sensations going on in your body. You will also find it easier to stay 'in the moment' and so not be worrying yourself with what could or might happen, instead distracting yourself from any discomfort you may be feeling and so being less aware of these sensations.

A special place

Think of somewhere that can be a 'special place' for you, a favourite childhood haunt, a beach from a special holiday, somewhere which has sentimental attachment to you. It can even be simply somewhere that you feel relaxed like snuggled up under your duvet in bed or curled up on the sofa. It doesn't have to be exotic, the important thing is that you can imagine yourself there and feel relaxed and secure when you do.

Close your eyes and escape to this place in your mind when you need to.

I used this technique during the birth of my son and chose a beach in Goa where my partner proposed to me. It's a beautiful, calm, relaxing place which has very special memories for me. When I imagine being there it brings back all the lovely feelings of safety, warmth and love as well as helping me feel relaxed and at ease.

You can practise this during your pregnancy. Imagine being in your special place when you need to focus or calm yourself.

Sound

Music can be a great distraction both emotionally and mentally. Think of this beforehand and compile a few playlists to play during labour - one with songs that relax you, another with your all time favourite tunes to help keep your mood positive and uplifted.

The sound of your partners voice can also have a soothing, relaxing influence on you. It can be really helpful for the birth partner to offer praise and reassurance when needed - remind her how well she's doing and how much she's loved.

Visualisation

It can have a really positive impact during your pregnancy to imagine your birth happening the way that you want it to. Allow yourself to experience it in your mind, how you feel, how your partner supports you, how loved and safe you feel and the overwhelming joy that washes over you as you meet your baby for the first time.



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Rehearsing this over and over in your mind can help you believe that your birth can and will be a positive experience. We tend to live up to our own expectations - they often become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

You can also use visualisation techniques during labour. Imagine your body opening easily and your baby moving down. Or imagine a beautiful flower opening up, blooming, its petals spreading gradually apart. Thinking of an object opening or repeating the words 'open, open' in your mind can help you to release any tension and relax as your cervix softens and opens.

Some women like to visualise a metaphor that is similar to the sensations and emotions of the contractions. For example, imagining the contractions as waves and surfing along with each wave, or letting the waves wash over your body.

Repetitive activity

A repetitive mental activity, such as counting, can help to focus your mind. Count your breaths, count to 10 and then back down again, or count the seconds during each contraction (one mississippi, two mississippi...).

You could try a colouring book - there's a real trend for them at the moment and the act of colouring can be really soothing, almost meditative. Or repeat a song or poem in your mind.

External focal point

You might want to close your eyes and use one of these methods of focussing internally or you may find it easier to focus your attention on an external point - your partner's face, a particular object in the room, or a personal or sentimental object like an engagement ring.

Focus on your chosen point and take a deep breath in. As you breathe out soften the focus of your eyes and count '5' in your mind. Take another deep breath and soften your focus further as you breathe out and count '4'. Keep doing this until you reach '0' and you should find yourself in a light daze, similar to how you feel straight after listening to one of the hypnosis MP3s. This is a great technique to use any time that you feel that you need to regain control and focus.

