

My Thoughts For Partners: From A Loving Arms Student



On our first day of J's class, she asked us to write down either a question or a fear that we had about the upcoming birth. I wrote that I was not sure if I would know how to support my wife well. I had never been through a labor and delivery, and never seen my partner in the kind of pain that was sure to come. I was afraid that I might be hesitant to offer help or might offer the kind of help that was not helpful.

In the weeks before the birth, some of it during J's class, my partner and I talked quite a bit about what she liked and disliked when I tried to comfort or massage her. The specifics about what "works" all pretty much flew out the window during delivery. But the practice of her being able to freely tell me what she found comforting, and me being able to accept what she told me without becoming defensive when she said something was not working, were invaluable. In other words, working to develop methods of communicating what works (and doesn't work) that were comfortable to both of us served us better during labor than actually trying to figure out exactly what would work. The latter is just too difficult to predict.

My advice to the partners and other supporters of the mother:

During labor, jump in and try to be helpful. Your partner may be in "laborland" as mine was and was often in no position to articulate what she wanted. SO rather than asking her questions about what she wants, just do what you think will help, whether that means massaging, getting water, or just talking to her. It seemed easier for her to ask me to stop doing what didn't work than to explain to me what she wanted. It just takes less energy to say "stop that" than to say "Please rub my calves in circular motions, alternating from left to right at 30 second intervals".

Above all, remember that you are most likely the person in the room that she trusts most and is most comfortable with, so try not to wander off. Let her know that you are there for her. You're both strong enough to do this, so stay calm. You'll be rewarded in the end with a beautiful little baby of your own. And we'll be pulling for you.

A Loving Arms student.