

# PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF 'BIRTHING FROM WITHIN' CHILDBIRTH CLASSES

1. Childbirth is a profound rite of passage, not a medical event (even when medical care is part of the birth).
2. The essence of childbirth preparation is self-discovery, not assimilating obstetric information.
3. The teacher is "midwife" to the parents' discovery process, not the expert from whom wisdom flows.
4. Childbirth preparation is a continually evolving process (for parents and teachers), not a static structure of techniques and knowledge.
5. Parents' individual needs and differences determine class content.
6. Active, creative self-expression is critical to childbirth preparation.
7. The purpose of childbirth preparation is to prepare mothers to give birth-in-awareness, not to achieve a specific birth outcome.
8. Pregnancy and birth outcome are influenced by a variety of factors, but can't be controlled by planning.
9. In order to help parents mobilize their coping resources, it is critical for childbirth classes to acknowledge that unexpected, unwelcome events may happen during labour.
10. Parents deserve support for any birth option which might be right for them (whether it is drugs, technology, home birth, or bottle-feeding).
11. Pain is an inevitable part of childbirth, yet much can be done to ease suffering.
12. Pain coping techniques work best when integrated into daily life, rather than "dusted off" for labour.
13. Fathers help best as birth guardians or loving partners, not as coaches; they also need support.
14. For parents, pregnancy, birth, and postpartum is a time of continuous learning and adjustment; holistic support and education should be available throughout that period.
15. Childbirth preparation is also parent preparation.

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