

## Beliefs about Birth: Pregnant Person

This activity is a starting point for discussion between those who are pregnant and those who support them. It offers a chance to explore underlying expectations about the birth experience. This forms a foundation for informed decision-making.

### What are your beliefs and feelings about birth<sup>1</sup>?

#### 1. What are your beliefs about the importance of the birth experience?

- a. The birth experience is extremely important and can have lifelong effects on the parent, baby, and the whole family. Everything should be done to make it a positive experience.
- b. The birth experience is a special time for the family, but it is OK if things do not go as expected. Parents and babies are resilient and will be fine.
- c. The birth experience is just one day. Babies do not remember it, and birthing parents need to get through it and move on to parenting.
- d. Other:

#### 2. Do you believe that birth is more of a natural process or a medical procedure?

- a. I am fine with whatever medical procedures make childbirth quicker, easier, and less painful for me.
- b. I believe that birth is a natural process, but that some medical procedures may help it go more smoothly.
- c. I believe birth should be as natural as possible with as few medical interventions as possible.
- d. Other:

#### 3. Which one of these statements most closely reflects your feelings about birth?

- a. I feel a lot of anxiety about my body's ability to give birth and my ability to cope with the labour process.
- b. I am nervous because it is a new thing for me, but I think that the labour and birth will work out okay.
- c. I believe that my body can give birth and I have confidence in my body's ability to do this.
- d. Other:

#### 4. When it comes to the care of you and your baby, what is important to you? What will make this birth feel satisfying to you?

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Clarifying Values & Priorities for Birth: Pregnant Parent* by Janelle Durham

## What are your health care preferences<sup>2</sup>?

Identify where you would fit on each spectrum:

### 1. What health care tools do you use?



**Naturalist**  
(Natural remedies  
or self-help)

**Technologist**  
(Technology or  
medical care)

### 2. How often do you use health care tools?



**Minimalist**  
(Only when I need to;  
I try to avoid)

**Maximalist**  
(As prevention; at the  
first sign of a problem)

### 3. Do you believe your tools are going to work?



**Questioning**  
(I'm unsure of treatments  
and care providers;  
I'm worried about side effects)

**Confident**  
(I'm confident in treatments  
and care providers;  
I focus on the benefits)

Understanding your general preferences may help you choose the health care providers and tools that are right for you. Examples:

- A Confident Naturalist who prefers minimal health care tools may choose a home birth with a midwife. They may have many questions about the use of technology and professionals that work in a hospital.
- A Confident Maximal Technologist may choose a hospital birth with an obstetrician and may even request an elective cesarean birth. They may need to be reassured that a vaginal birth is a safe choice for themselves and their baby.
- If a Maximal Technologist is being supported by a Minimal Naturalist, the supporter may need help understanding the pregnant person's pain medication preferences.

***Talk with your support person. What terms best describe you? How will that influence the choices you make in advance and choices you make in labour?***

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Janelle Durham, Kim James and Laurie Levy's descriptions of *Your Medical Mind* by Groopman & Hartzband (2011).

## What is your decision-making style<sup>3</sup>?

Identify where you would fit on each spectrum:

### 1. How much information do you need to make a decision?



#### Summary

(Only the most important facts;  
too much information stresses me)

#### Full Article

(As much information as possible;  
I like to have all the data)

### 2. Do you prefer to make your own decisions, or have an expert make the decisions?



#### Expert Recommendation

(I trust expert advice more  
than my own knowledge)

#### Self-Guided

(I want to gather my own  
info to make decisions.)

### 3. How quickly do you make a decision?



#### Ponderer

(I need time to mull things over;  
I can't decide under pressure).

#### Decisive

(I don't like to delay a decision;  
I want to act as quickly as possible).

During pregnancy, we often have time to think about decisions. During labour, sometimes decisions have to be made quickly. If you are focusing on contractions, your support person will be the one to ask questions and make decisions. It helps if your support person knows your goals, priorities, and how you make decisions so they can help you be comfortable with the process. For example:

- If a Decisive Summary person is supporting a Full Article person, the support person may have to ask more questions and gather more data than they normally would to help the pregnant person feel like they have all the information they need to make a decision.
- If the pregnant person is a Ponderer, then the support person may have to ask caregivers to give them a few minutes to discuss information before responding.

***Talk with your support person. Which terms best describe you? How will that influence the choices you make in advance and choices you make in labour?***

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from *Your Decision-Making Style: All Decisions* by Janelle Durham

## Beliefs about Birth: Support Person

This activity is a starting point for discussion between those who are pregnant and those who support them. It offers a chance to explore underlying expectations about the birth experience. This forms a foundation for informed decision-making.

### What are your beliefs and feelings about birth<sup>1</sup>?

#### 1. What are your beliefs about the importance of the birth experience?

- a. The birth experience is extremely important and can have lifelong effects on the parent, baby, and the whole family. Everything should be done to make it a positive experience.
- b. The birth experience is a special time for the family, but it is OK if things do not go as expected. Parents and babies are resilient and will be fine.
- c. The birth experience is just one day. Babies do not remember it, and birthing parents need to get through it and move on to parenting.
- d. Other:

#### 2. Do you believe that birth is more of a natural process or a medical procedure?

- a. I am fine with whatever medical procedures make childbirth quicker, easier, and less painful for the person in labour.
- b. I believe that birth is a natural process, but that some medical procedures may help it go more smoothly.
- c. I believe birth should be as natural as possible with as few medical interventions as possible.
- d. Other:

#### 3. Which one of these statements most closely reflects your feelings about birth?

- a. I feel a lot of anxiety about the body's ability to give birth and the birthing parent's ability to cope with the labour process.
- b. I am nervous because it is a new thing for me, but I think that the labour and birth will work out okay.
- c. I believe that the body can give birth and I have confidence in the birthing parent's ability to do this.
- d. Other:

#### 4. When it comes to the care of the birthing parent and the baby, what is important to you? What will make this birth feel satisfying to you?

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Clarifying Values & Priorities for Birth: Pregnant Parent* by Janelle Durham

## What are your health care preferences<sup>2</sup>?

Identify where you would fit on each spectrum:

### 1. What health care tools do you use?



**Naturalist**  
(Natural remedies  
or self-help)

**Technologist**  
(Technology or  
medical care)

### 2. How often do you use health care tools?



**Minimalist**  
(Only when I need to.  
I try to avoid)

**Maximalist**  
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### 3. Do you believe your tools are going to work?



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and care providers;  
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(I'm confident in treatments  
and care providers;  
I focus on the benefits)

Understanding your general preferences may help you choose the health care providers and tools that are right for you. Here are some examples of health care preferences during labour and birth:

- A Confident Naturalist who prefers minimal health care tools may choose a home birth with a midwife. They may have many questions about the use of technology and professionals that work in a hospital.
- A Confident Maximal Technologist may choose a hospital birth with an obstetrician and may even request an elective cesarean birth. They may need to be reassured that a vaginal birth is a safe choice for themselves and their baby.
- If a Maximal Technologist is being supported by a Minimal Naturalist, the supporter may need help understanding the pregnant person's pain medication preferences.

***Talk with the pregnant parent. What terms best describe you? How will that influence the choices you make in advance and choices you make in labour?***

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Janelle Durham, Kim James and Laurie Levy's descriptions of *Your Medical Mind* by Groopman & Hartzband (2011).

## What is your decision-making style<sup>3</sup>?

Identify where you would fit on each spectrum:

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(Only the most important facts;  
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**Full Article**

(As much information as possible;  
I like to have all the data)

### 2. Do you prefer to make your own decisions, or have an expert make the decisions?



**Expert Recommendation**

(I trust expert advice more  
than my own knowledge)

**Self-Guided**

(I want to gather my own  
info to make decisions.)

### 3. How quickly do you make a decision?



**Ponderer**

(I need time to mull things over;  
I can't decide under pressure).

**Decisive**

(I don't like to delay a decision;  
I want to act as quickly as possible).

During pregnancy, there is often time to think about decisions. During labour, decisions may have to be made quickly. If the birthing parent is focusing on contractions, you will be the one to ask questions and make decisions. It helps to know the pregnant parent's goals, priorities, and how they make decisions ahead of time. That way you can help them be comfortable with the process. For example:

- If a Decisive Summary person is supporting a Full Article person, the support person may have to ask more questions and gather more data than they normally would to help the pregnant person feel like they have all the information they need to make a decision.
- If the pregnant person is a Ponderer, then the support person may have to ask caregivers to give them a few minutes to discuss information before responding.

***Talk with the pregnant parent. Which terms best describe you? How will that influence the choices you make in advance and choices you make in labour?***

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from *Your Decision-Making Style: All Decisions* by Janelle Durham

*This material is designed for information purposes only. It should not be used in place of medical advice, instruction and/or treatment. If you have specific questions, please consult your doctor or appropriate health care professional. February 2021*