

The Take Charge Routine

Reserve this for any time in labour when your partner hits an emotional low or

- they are in despair, weeps or cries out
- they want to give up and feel they cannot go on
- they are very tense and cannot relax
- they are in a great deal of pain

The take charge routine is exactly that: you move in close and do all you can to help until they regain their inner strength. Usually their despair is temporary; with your help they can pass through it and their spirits will rise.

Use whatever parts of the following seem appropriate:

- **Remain Calm.** Your touch should be firm and confident. Your voice should remain calm and encouraging.
- **Stay Close** by their side, your face near theirs.
- **Be an Anchor.** Hold their shoulders or their head in your hands, gently, confidently, firmly or hold them tightly in your arms.
- **Make eye contact.** Tell them to open their eyes and look at you. Say it loudly enough that they can hear you—but calmly and kindly.
- **Change your ritual during contractions.** Try a different position. Try changing the breathing pattern. Breathe with them or pace them with your hand or voice.
- **Encourage their every breath;** guide them in their patterned breathing; “Breathe with me...BREATHE WITH ME... That’s the way...just like that...Good...STAY WITH IT...just like that... LOOK AT ME...Stay with me...good for you...it’s going away...good...good...Now just rest. That was good.” You can whisper these words or say them in a calm encouraging tone of voice. Sometimes you have to raise your voice in order to get their attention, but try to keep your tone calm and confident.
- **Talk between contractions.** Ask if what you are doing is helping. Make suggestions: for example, “With the next one, let me help you more. I want you to look at me the moment it starts. We will breathe together so it won’t get ahead of us. Okay? Good. You’re doing so well. We’re really moving now...”

- **Repeat yourself.** They may not be able to continue what you tell them for more than a few seconds, but that's fine. Say the same things again and help them continue.
- **What if they say they can't or won't go on? Don't give up.** This is a difficult time for them. You cannot help if you decide they cannot handle it. Acknowledge to them and to yourself that it is difficult but not impossible.
 - **Ask for help and reassurance.** The nurse, midwife, or another support person can help a lot—measuring dilation, giving you advice, doing some of the coaching, and trying something new, even reassuring you that your partner is okay and that this is normal.
 - **Remind them of the baby.** It may seem surprising, but people in labour are so caught up in labour that they do not think much about their baby. It may help for them to remember why they are going through all this.
- **What about pain medications?** Do you call for them or not? It depends on:
 - **Their prior wishes.** Did they want an unmedicated birth? How strongly did they feel about it?
 - **How rapidly they are progressing and how far they still have to go**
 - **How well they respond to your more active coaching**
 - **Whether they are specifically asking for medications and how easily they can be talked out of them**

These factors help you decide what to do. It is sometimes difficult to balance present wishes against prior wishes. Try to stick with what they wanted before labour regarding medication use. But, if in labour they insist on changing from a plan of not using them, respect their wishes.

Many people have said, “I never could have done it without my partner. If it hadn't been for them, I would have given up.” By using the Take Charge Routine, you can indeed get your partner through those desperate moments when they feel they cannot go on. You can truly ease their burden by helping with every breath.

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