



Do Not Use Lamaze Breathing in a Shoe Store

Deb Gauldin, RN, PMS

ABSTRACT

Perinatal educator humorously discusses ways Lamaze comfort techniques are used during times other than childbirth.

Journal of Perinatal Education, 14(1), 61–62, doi: 10.1624/105812405X23586

Keywords: humor, childbirth education, Lamaze techniques

I think childbirth educators all agree the relaxation techniques they teach couples to use during labor are actually life skills. The visualization and breathing, as well as the sense of accomplishment gained from successfully using these techniques, can be applied throughout one's life.

Years after my children were born, I found occasion to use Lamaze breathing techniques during a painful cortisone injection. Haven't many of us turned to Lamaze in the dentist's chair? If practiced, these skills are internalized, and can be called upon in many situations. I can't count the times my knees have actually buckled and my jaw has fallen limp when a Muzak version of Pachelbel's Canon is played over the sound system in a grocery store or elevator!

We also know that relaxation techniques can also be beneficial in alleviating emotional pain and suffering—the kind of suffering my children avoided when, instead of smacking them, I would “get a grip” and begin patterned breathing. In fact, while other parents sent their toddlers to a time-out, nothing mobilized my children faster than hearing me begin to breathe rhythmically.

Fast forward to a time I found myself shoe shopping at the local mall with my teenage daughter, Kate. Shopping with a teenager is reason enough to twitch, but looking for a “vegetarian” shoe brand presents a special set of frustrations.

Kate became an animal rights activist and a vegetarian at age 12, shunning any products made from animals. I think she would say that most of the time I was supportive and encouraged her to follow her convictions. This particular trip to the mall was not one of those times. Earlier that day, I had been, in Kate's words, “totally



unreasonable.” I was unwilling to spend a small fortune ordering nonleather, purple, ankle-high, Doc Martens-style boots from England. Imagine that!

And so it came to pass that two “happy” shoppers entered the mall through an expensive store. As we approached the shoe department, I speculated that leather would likely be the only option available at such a nice store.

Was I saying she could only look at “cheap shoes from a cheap store,” as Kate accused me of doing? No, I was saying that expensive shoes are usually made of animal hide, I replied.

Leaving the anchor store, we continued past a popular, inexpensive, chain shoe store. Fearing Kate would not appreciate this “cheap” option, I continued on. “Aren’t you even going to let me look here?” asked Kate. I swallowed hard and followed her into the store. I went to the short, stubby-shoe section and she headed for the long, narrow area. Several minutes and much eye rolling later, Kate found me and wanted to know how I could possibly help her buy shoes if I was two aisles away? “Alrighty then,” I sighed, following several steps behind the princess.

In silence, I sat teetering on a little stool as Kate selected a stack of boxes containing slender, man-made footwear. Just as she bent down to lace up one of the shoes, I leaned forward and accidentally bumped into her. She grunted at me with disgust, “Do you have to be so close?”

About to throttle her, I found myself completing a deep, cleansing breath instead. I continued to inhale and exhale. In and out. In and out. In and out.

It was then that Kate uttered words that absolutely define the relationship between a mother and her teenage daughter. “Do you have to breathe?” she asked. As a matter of fact. . .

DEB GAULDIN is a childbirth educator who travels nationally presenting keynotes and workshops. For booking information, call 800-682-2347 or visit her Web site (www.debgauldin.com). Deb’s CDs and tapes contain humor and songs about pregnancy, childbirth, and the adjustment to parenthood. They are available through Lamaze International (800-368-4404).