A Wondrous Birth

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ABSTRACT

In this column, the author describes tending to a mother who displayed a quiet confidence throughout her pregnancy and birth experience. This birth story provides powerful support for women's inherent ability to give birth. Women already know what they need to give birth simply and easily.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The birth story presented here was originally published in November 2006 at "Giving Birth with Confidence," the Lamaze International blog of Judith Lothian and Charlotte DeVries, authors of *The Official Lamaze Guide: Giving Birth with Confidence*.

A WONDROUS BIRTH

Recently, I attended what was perhaps the most beautiful birth I've ever witnessed. Keiko, pregnant with her first child, was raised in Japan and moved to the United States with her husband 6 years ago. Because English was not her native language, she chose her words thoughtfully and, in so doing, was eloquent beyond measure.

All through her pregnancy, Keiko possessed an extremely positive attitude. Whenever she had a pregnancy discomfort, she would inquire, "This is normal, yes?" When I assured her that it was, she would smile and say, "Then all is well."

At various times throughout the pregnancy, I

asked if she had any concerns or fears about the upcoming birth. Invariably, she would look at me with a confused expression and ask, "Am I supposed to be afraid?" At one of our sessions, I offered to teach her some comfort measures to use in labor. She politely declined, saying that she didn't think it made sense to learn new skills for labor because she had Tai Chi—"an already acquired skill"—to use. She believed the upright positions, gentle movements, and focused breathing of Tai Chi would be all that she needed.

Exactly on her due date, Keiko started having contractions. As planned, she stayed home until the contractions were strong and close together. When I joined Keiko and her husband at the hospital, I found her standing, wrapped rather elegantly in a hospital blanket that she had somehow fashioned into a garment. She looked beautiful. "I think it is working!" she said, smiling. Whenever a contraction came, she quietly and gracefully moved in rhythm with her breathing. Unless you were watching closely, you wouldn't even know that she was having one. When the contraction was over, she would smile again. "I really love the rest periods," she said.

When the contractions became very intense, Keiko had to work hard. She spent the entire labor

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out of bed. She said she couldn't imagine not being able to move. All the way through, she kept her positive attitude. "It's very hard," she said several times.

Keiko pushed (squatting) for about 30 minutes before baby Kaito made his way into the world. He was immediately put on Keiko's belly where he rested, quiet and wide-eyed. When Kaito was ready, Keiko confidently put him to breast, and he latched on like a pro. I marveled at the ease at which he took to the breast. It never occurred to Keiko that it would be any other way.

Now, I can't stop thinking about this birth. As Judy Lothian often says, it was "birth as it should be." Somehow, we have to encourage women to have the confidence that Keiko did. We have to change the cultural attitudes that tell us birth is something to be feared and endured, instead of something to be embraced. Childbirth education may unwittingly be a part of the problem, giving

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new parents the idea that birth requires a whole new set of skills, when in fact they have what it takes from the start.

Thank you to Keiko, husband Alex, and baby Kaito for allowing me the privilege of being with you during this wondrous event. I will remember you and this birth, always.

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The Official Lamaze Guide: Giving Birth with Confidence, by Judith Lothian and Charlotte DeVries, is available for purchase through the Lamaze Bookstore and Media Center at a reduced price for Lamaze members. Bulk-order discounts are also available. Call the bookstore at 877-952-6293 or log on to the bookstore's link at the Web site of Lamaze International (www.lamaze.org).

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