Julian's Birth

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ABSTRACT

A grandmother of seven and childbirth educator shares her daughter's successful vaginal birth after cesarean (VBAC) birth story in Switzerland.

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Six months ago, my daughter Veronica (“Vero”) gave birth to a beautiful little boy, Julian. She currently lives in Switzerland, so I went to Europe to be with her and to help and support her in any way she needed. Two years ago, her first baby was born by cesarean surgery. She had labored for a whole day without making much progress, then she suffered a detached placenta and a cesarean was performed.

Of all my daughters, Veronica was the most engaged in natural birth, so the cesarean, although necessary, left her with a huge desire for a vaginal birth. She worked hard and prepared herself for a vaginal birth after cesarean (VBAC). Being in a foreign country, she analyzed all her options with her husband and found the right caregivers and the best place for her to give birth.

Fortunately, little Julian's birth was one of the most incredible and amazing births that I have witnessed. It was completely free of routine interventions, and the fabulous midwives treated them with great respect and warmth. Veronica found in them a great support-

ive and encouraging team. They never doubted that it would be a VBAC and trusted Vero's ability to birth.

Even when things were not going as expected (Julian was in a breech position until week 36, and at some point was believed to be developing too slowly), they kept trusting nature, gave her a few exercises, but mostly encouraged my daughter to believe the baby would turn. We also had a gap between her estimated due date given in Mexico and the one given in Switzerland, but when we got closer to the birth and asked when we should expect it, they told us that when the baby was ready, he would let us know. They are true believers in letting labor start on its own. This attitude of trust and confidence in a woman's ability to birth remained all through labor.

Vero had a very long and tiring labor (two whole days). The first night with contractions was a time for her to gather her strength. She chose to be alone with her sleeping toddler, working her breathing, giving herself time and space, and trying to set up to the right frame of mind.

After laboring for 24 hours, we went to the clinic hoping to hear good news, only to find out that she was effaced but still with no dilation. Nevertheless, the midwives were supportive and suggested that we go back home walking and that she should take a

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long bath to see if she would be able to rest for a couple of hours and encourage progress.

Even though the news was not what we expected, Vero was not discouraged, and learning that the baby was fine, she continued to work with her strong and painful contractions. She even joked that all the Reyes Carrillo girls were cursed with long and strenuous labors!

Eighteen hours later, we went back to the clinic. To the relief and surprise of all, we learned that Vero was 7 cm. My daughter shed spontaneous tears of happiness and disbelief. She later confessed that by that time, she was already prepared for another cesarean due to lack of progress.

From then, it took only a couple of hours. There was no changing into sterile clothes, no procedures except for the sporadic monitoring of the baby to check that he was doing fine. Although we did not share the same language, the attending midwife and I worked in synchronicity to help Vero labor beautifully in different positions until she was ready to push. Her husband was by her side holding her hand or wiping her forehead the whole time.

Baby Julian was gently born into his mother's hands. She had caressed his head from the time it began to appear. Nobody touched the baby or Vero, and everyone in the room remained quiet respecting and honoring this magical moment. Vero took her baby in her arms and placed him on her chest. The baby was never suctioned or disturbed in any way and was left skin-to-skin with his mother for hours. Vero had requested a delayed cord clamping and cutting, which was honored.

After uninterrupted nursing, and when mother and baby were ready, the midwife touched the baby

for the first time, taking him in her arms to dress him, but first calling into the room little Elisa, my 2-year-old granddaughter who was waiting in the next room with her other grandmother. Elisa was in charge of selecting her little brother's first outfit and helped the midwife dress the baby. She then proudly held the baby in her arms.

The other midwives were called in to congratulate Vero and help her with a shower, and then brought along a hot meal. Tea, refreshments, and cookies were offered to the rest of the group. It was a relaxed, warm, and friendly atmosphere. It reminded me of a home birth, although it took place in a very mother-baby-friendly hospital.

Baby Julian continued to nurse beautifully. Vero could not take away the happy smile on her face. A few days after the birth, I walked quietly into her room, assuming mother and baby were napping,

just to find her grinning. When I mentioned that she should be sleeping, she answered that she would, but that whenever she closed her eyes, she went over the whole birth again, remembering and enjoying every minute of it. To everyone who has visited, she mentions that besides being the mother of her two children, experiencing the

birth of Julian was the best thing that could have happened to her!

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