The Birth of Miriam Hazel

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ABSTRACT

My birth story for Miriam Hazel starts well before her birth, with the birth of her sister, our first-born daughter Colbie Laia. When I gave birth to our first daughter 3 years prior, I was in a completely different place with my body and my mind. Birth was scary, recovery was rough, and my first year followed suit. During my pregnancy with Miriam Hazel, my obstetrician encouraged me to consider a natural birth. I talked to other women and although still frightened, I became more confident and had the birth I never knew I wanted. The birth of Miriam Hazel was incredible and the recovery was completely different. This is my story of Miriam Hazel's birth.

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My birth story for Miriam Hazel starts well before her birth, with the birth of her sister, our first-born daughter Colbie Laia. When I gave birth to our first daughter 3 years prior, I was in a completely different place with my body and my mind, being almost 100 lbs heavier. Birth was scary, recovery was rough, and my first year followed suit. I was depressed, felt totally out of my element and at the same time, desperately in love with my precious girl.

Since having Colbie Laia and getting pregnant with Miriam, I had lost all the weight and then some and was having an amazingly healthy pregnancy, thank goodness. As we approached the 37-week mark, my obstetrician, who birthed my first daughter, asked me if I had considered doing a nonmedicated birth. He encouraged me, saying it would likely go faster because it was my second birth and my healthier body would likely have an easier time.

So I thought about it. I was scared. So, I called my mother; she had two daughters, 11 years apart.

Maybe she had some advice, and she did. She said, “Trust your body. You can do this! You were my second, and I did it with no drugs and felt amazing, exhilarated, and invincible.” I wanted that experience, but again, I was afraid. So, I did what most mildly neurotic people do: I polled. I asked other moms what they had done and then came upon and was put into contact with Judith Lothian. I was unfamiliar with her work, but I knew after researching that she was a leader in normal birth and childbirth education, a great resource and one I would undoubtedly use to determine if this whole “no drug” thing was for me.

I will never forget what she told me: that the body usually has breaks that come between the contractions and those would be my time to regroup. She also said that I could enter into it open and trusting and see where my body would take me. I loved that because it gave me an out if I got scared but it also empowered me to take the time to make the

choice on my terms. Finally, a short day after our conversation, she sent me an e-mail and it said this:

It was so lovely talking with you today. A strong, confident woman. With experience and wisdom. What a pleasure. I will be thinking of you over the next days. You are on an incredible journey. One that is yours alone. Your journey will be your own, but we, all the mothers in the world, are on it with you. Sounds silly, but it really isn't. The birth of your second daughter will be amazing. You are bringing all the strength and wisdom of giving birth before, being a mother, and all of your life . . . to this birth. I am thinking of you. Please let me know how you are doing. And, do not hesitate to call for a "pick me up" or questions. Really.

I held onto this idea, that I was not alone. I was standing on the shoulders of women who have come before me, on the shoulders of my own lived experience to carry me through, and it was this idea that truly grounded that birth day for me.

I woke up on 39 weeks and 2 days with period-like cramps. I thought they were just more "practice" contractions because for a week or so before I thought it was happening and it wasn't. So, I told my husband to go to work.

Almost immediately after, I knew I had likely made the wrong choice. I was home with my older daughter and started timing my contractions that started at

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about 15 minutes apart and quickly became 9, and then 7, and then I knew, this was no practice. I swiftly called my friend to take my daughter to school, kissed her goodbye knowing this was the last time it was just me and her. That was a really emotional moment as well that I never anticipated having. Then, I ate some peanut butter toast and called my obstetrician who said that it sounded like I was in labor. He said, "Either come to your 9:30 appointment or meet me at the hospital, and for goodness' sake, call your husband and tell him to turn around!"

Well, I showered and ate and by the time my husband, Brandon, arrived home at 8:30 a.m., he knew we were in business! On the way to the doctor, I called my father and quickly had to have him hold on because of my contractions. That's when I knew it was "real". My body had some intense muscle memory and I knew I was having Miriam that day. By the time we arrived and walked through my obstetrician's office, he took one look at me and said, "I don't even have to evaluate your cervix. I can tell you are ready." But remember, I am the neurotic one, so I had him check, and as it turned out, I was 6 cm dilated! He said, "Listen, if you want to have an epidural, you need to go to the hospital now because your daughter is coming soon."

Once I arrived at the hospital, the nurses checked me in to our room and it was the room I had birthed Colbie Laia in 3 years before! My husband and I smiled at each other. It felt like the universe was conspiring to welcome our baby girl into the world. The nurses checked me and I was 8 cm dilated. I still wasn't sure I was going drug free—in retrospect, I knew but I wasn't able to acknowledge it.

Once the doctor arrived, he checked me and I was full—my water had not broken yet. At this point, my contractions were hard and fast but I was still managing them quite well. Within a few moments, my doctor advised me with the next contraction

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to push and that would break my water. Well, I got on the table (the first time I had been laying down through this entire process) and I pushed. Suddenly, and with a gush of water, I was in an out-of-body experience. I felt sensations I was not prepared for, but yet was, at the same time. I had my husband around me, and the amazing birth nurses, and my obstetrician, and after the second push, the baby crowned and with the third push, she was out. She was beautiful and healthy and I was lucky. I had had the birth I never knew I always wanted.

My recovery was phenomenal, and my mood was amazing as well. I felt like myself but like a warrior goddess at the same time. I was present for the whole

process and I think this empowered me to enter into the first few weeks with Miriam Hazel grateful and centered. I was calling the shots for what worked and what was needed for my baby girl and for my family as a whole.

I am forever grateful for this experience. And for anyone who is afraid—as this was a very pervasive sensation for me throughout—I encourage you to be open and to get support and have faith in your body to tell you what to do. If you fall, it will catch you.

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