Kristen's Birth Story

Kristen Mosier

ABSTRACT

Kristen shares the story of the birth of her son. She had a rapid labor and was not sure, because she was moving so quickly, that she could have the natural birth she planned. After a wait in triage, Kristen, with the support of her husband and mother, and with the encouragement, support, and protection of her midwife, gave birth to her son.

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I was 3 days shy of my due date and ready to pop. My back hurt, I was exhausted, and my nesting instincts were maxing out. So I woke up that day and told my husband we were walking . . . all day long. So, we walked to some stores and met friends for brunch, enjoying a relaxing but active day.

That evening, we were watching the Yankees play-off game, which was running into extra innings. At 12:30 a.m., I couldn't keep my eyes open anymore so I headed off to bed. About 15 minutes later, just as I was dozing off to sleep, I was jolted awake with a crampy feeling in my abdomen. It was just about the exact moment that Derek Jeter broke his ankle that my contractions began. I went into the living room and announced, "Something is happening." So my husband came into the bedroom and we sat on the bed quietly paying attention to these new sensations and wondering if this was it. Sure enough, the pain moved quickly to my back and I was certain our little guy was ready to start his journey. I called our midwife to tell her my contractions were already 5 minutes apart.

She encouraged me to run a warm bath and then take a nap if things slowed down. Really? I thought she sounded crazy—a nap! But I gave it a shot.

My husband ran the bath, dimmed the lights, put on music, and got the hypnobirthing script ready. We had practiced for months and this was the big night. I had recently read somewhere that it might help to keep your eyes open to avoid internalizing the pain. So I quietly breathed through the contractions, focusing on a spot on the wall in front of me. I told myself, "These are just sensations; I'm interpreting them as painful." As he began reading the script, the contractions seemed to be coming extremely fast. We timed them and now, they were 2 minutes apart and extremely intense. I was thinking to myself, "If this is early labor, I'm in trouble." I was wondering if my choice to labor in a hospital birthing center drug-free was the right one after all.

I had signed my mother up to be my doula and she was already on her way to my apartment when we called the midwife and said we would be heading to the hospital. I jumped in the car with my parents and we drove across town. I never hated my dad's hybrid SUV more than that night. I quietly breathed

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through my contractions staring at a spot on the door, all the while internally cursing every bump and traffic light we hit. Nearby the hospital, there are a number of one-way streets, so getting to the door seemed like the longest journey of my life. I entered the hospital and headed to triage, stopping every 2 minutes to breathe through a contraction. When I arrived, my midwife told me to come on back and I said I needed a minute to get through the contraction I was having. She looked at me and said, “You don’t look like you’re having a contraction.” Really?

However, once they hooked me up to the monitors, they could see that I was in active labor. They broke my water, which intensified things. But the little guy didn’t seem to appreciate the intense contractions (or he was napping through them); his heart

rate was reading low. They gave me a bag of sugar water and closely watched to see if his heart rate would rise. In that moment, I wondered if I would be able to have the birth I wanted or if this would quickly turn into a frenzy of activity. I’m almost certain that if I had been in another place with another practitioner, that may have happened, but my midwife carefully monitored me and rubbed my back, confident that things would take a turn for the best, and they did. Good timing because at that moment, I felt the need to push.

Pushing, for me, felt like the force of gravity was weighing my whole body down. The worst part of it was that I was in triage alone, lying flat on my back (this was not in my birth plan). My husband was doing the paperwork and my midwife was making sure everything was in order to get me down to the birthing center. My mom wasn’t allowed back because it was such a tiny area. A back rub would have been nice at that point! But soon enough, my midwife appeared, and we headed down a floor to the birthing center.

When we arrived in the birthing center, at last, I immediately felt I needed to push. Pushing was a relief to me, as I could finally do something active. My husband put on some relaxing music and held my hand as I worked hard. But after about an hour, my midwife recommended an episiotomy. I wasn’t pleased, but seeing my son’s large head afterward, I’m guessing she was right. No drugs,

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no topical numbing, just scissors. It wasn't pleasant, but there was so much sensation happening already (and I knew I was getting so close), so I persevered. A few minutes later at 6:47 a.m., my baby boy arrived weighing 6 lbs 13 oz. I immediately tried to pull his beautiful slimy body up to my chest, but the umbilical cord was too short, so as it pulsed, I held my hands on him at my belly. Soon enough, I was able to pull his tiny body up and see his precious face.

Next came my placenta, which frankly my midwife seemed more excited about than my baby. She exclaimed that it was large and beautiful, but I was too busy staring at my little boy to notice. Afterward, it wasn't pleasant because I had a distended bladder from not urinating during labor, and I needed a catheter to get relief. But that was all forgotten as they placed Grayson (as we named him) between my husband and me. Feeling love and exhaustion in equal measure, I closed my eyes and drifted off to a new kind of sleep, that of a mother.

KRISTEN MOSIER has her Masters in Science in Marriage & Family Therapy, and has training in childbirth education, perinatal mood disorders, and the transition to parenthood for couples. She lives in Brooklyn, NY, with her husband Jeff and son Grayson (who is now 3 years old!).