Right on Time—Quinn’s Birth

Kacy Cutler

ABSTRACT

In this column, Kacy shares the birth story of her daughter, Quinn. Through using comfort measures for labor that she learned in her exposure to Lamaze Childbirth Educators and Doulas, and by listening to her intuition, Kacy was able to have the hospital birth she desired.

The Journal of Perinatal Education, 27(3), 127–129, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1891/1058-1243.27.3.127>

Keywords: birth story, comfort measures, labor support, childbirth education

I’d like to think my birth story started 10 years ago. As a college graduate, I took a job at an association management company where I started working for Lamaze International on their education programs. Organizing webinars and the annual conference exposed me to a topic I’d never thought too much about, childbirth. As the daughter of a woman who had three cesarean births, I didn’t know what was considered normal. I spent so much of my young adult life trying not to get pregnant that I never considered my thoughts on the topic of pregnancy or how I pictured the birth of my children.

Working for Lamaze International exposed me to information that would help me 10 years later when I learned I was pregnant with my first baby. I remember I thought, “I can do this!” I felt informed when I went to my doctor’s appointments and my obstetrician was supportive of my choice to birth without medication.

At my 37-week appointment, I was 1.0 cm dilated, 2.0 cm at my 38-week appointment, and 3.0 cm and about 80% effaced at my 39-week appointment. Throughout those last 3 weeks, I’d been

Working for Lamaze International exposed me to information that would help me 10 years later when I learned I was pregnant with my first baby.

getting shooting pains down the insides of my legs and some cramping in the middle of the night that would last for about 10 minutes but would not come back. I woke up on November 9, my due date, with some cramping at around 6 a.m. I thought, “Oh, just another cramp; it will go away,” but it came back. I immediately thought, “This is it!” And then I thought, “Wow, on her due date, what a punctual baby!” I waited for an hour in bed timing my contractions. I had three contractions about 20 minutes apart. I texted my mom, who was in Chicago, to get on a plane. Her bags were packed, and she said she would be there by 2 p.m. I woke up my husband, Will, who was very happy to have had a full night’s rest. We went about our regular morning routine. I got up and made breakfast and tried to relax. I

I tried to stay as mobile as possible; with every contraction, I would lean over the bed, and Will would squeeze my hips, holding me steady.

downloaded a contraction timer on my phone, sat on my birth ball in my living room, and started to monitor my contractions. I stayed very calm, breathing and swaying through each contraction. Around 11 a.m., I called my doula who was about to board a flight back from Mexico. We knew there was a chance she might not have been available on my due date, and we had decided not to get a backup. She talked me through a contraction and suggested I do some sidelying releases and other hip opening exercises and to keep moving.

At 12:45 p.m., my contractions were about 5 minutes apart. I called my obstetrician, and she asked me to come to her office so she could check me before she sent me to the hospital next door. I made sure to eat a sandwich before we left because I would need my strength during labor. The car ride to the hospital was very uncomfortable. I'd been standing through much of my labor and sitting in the passenger seat was not a position my body wanted to be in. The nurse in the doctor's office ushered me into an exam room where I had another heavy contraction. My doctor came in to check me, I was 6 cm dilated

I turned over to give birth to the placenta and hold Quinn skin to skin. I remember thinking, "That wasn't bad at all!"

and 90% effaced. She sent me next door to labor and birth, assuring me she was on her way.

Will and I checked in, and I was happy to have a labor nurse who was 36 weeks pregnant. I gave her my list—no pain meds and intermittent fetal monitoring. Will was in charge of keeping the family up to date on my progress and doing hip squeezes. I tried to stay as mobile as possible; with every contraction, I would lean over the bed, and Will would squeeze my hips, holding me steady. Every 20 minutes, I'd have to put the fetal heart rate monitor back on, but otherwise I was able to walk around the room. I kept thinking of when Sigrid Nelson Ryan, childbirth educator, visited the office one day and explained to the staff that by walking during labor, you were activating pressure points in your feet that would help reduce pain. I remembered listening to Ina May Gaskin speak at a Lamaze conference about watching women dance during labor. So, I just kept moving and swaying.

My contractions started to get closer together, and I started to feel nauseous. Hip squeezes turned into my husband bearing the weight of my body during contractions as my legs were starting to get tired. The nurse came in to check me—9.0 cm and a rim. I was almost there. At this point, I got on the bed on all fours. With my next contraction, I felt the urge to push. My doctor was not yet at the hospital, and they told me to try not to push yet. More nurses showed up in the room in case I wasn't able to wait. I started to sweat profusely, and I recognized that I was going through transition. I was wearing a nightgown and thought that I needed to be ready for skin to skin with my baby so off came the nightgown! I

was facing the back of the bed and wasn't aware of what was happening in the room. I was concentrating on my contractions. I remember looking down and seeing my water breaking with a contraction. My doctor was there, and I was given the go-ahead to push. My first push came with a huge scream. My nurse looked at me and said, "Kacy, don't scream; use that energy and focus it on where you feel the

pressure." My next contraction I bore down. To me, it felt like the baby should have been halfway out at that point, but my obstetrician announced about two pushes later that she could see a quarter size of my baby's hair. "Just a quarter!" I thought. I looked over and saw my mom next to me. She made it just in time and was wiping sweat off my brow.

After 20 minutes of pushing, I gave one last big push, and Quinn Elizabeth came screaming into the world. Still on all fours, they passed her between my legs, and I picked up my beautiful crying baby. My doctor cut the cord while I held Quinn's legs. I turned over to give birth to the placenta and hold Quinn skin to skin. I remember thinking, "That wasn't bad at all!" Although I would describe my birth as quick, I think I had been preparing for it for the past 10 years. I'm thankful for my husband, my mom, my doula, nurse, and obstetrician, but I'm also thankful for my childbirth education experience and exposure to such great educators that gave me the confidence to have the labor I wanted.

KACY CUTLER *has served as the parent/consumer member on the Lamaze International Board of Directors since February 2018. She resides in Arlington, VA, with her husband and daughter.*