My Labor With Riley

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ABSTRACT

The birth of my second child was a whirlwind filled with relentless contractions.

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My labor with my daughter Riley was nothing like my first birth experience with my son. My son was born at 37 weeks after 27 hours of labor and 3 hours of pushing. We got to the hospital at 9 a.m., and he wasn't born until almost 4 a.m. the next day.

I was 38.5 weeks along with my daughter Riley. It started around 9:30 p.m. when I noticed blood in the toilet. I called the doctor, and she reassured me that as long as I wasn't bleeding enough to soak through a pad, it wasn't anything to be alarmed about. I hung up the phone and started to feel mild cramping. I took a warm bath to calm myself down and to try to get some sleep. Around 1 a.m., I woke up and realized I was having contractions. I waited about a half hour before waking up my husband. At 2 a.m., he called his parents and asked them to come over (our 4-year-old son was asleep) so we could head to the hospital.

My contractions were strong and coming quickly. My husband told me to distract myself until his parents got there. I decided to change the sheets in our bed, in case his parents wanted to get some sleep. I had to keep taking breaks since the contractions were so strong, and I decided to time them. I remembered the doctor had said to head to the hospital once they were 5 minutes apart. They were coming less than 2 minutes apart!

My in-laws didn't get to my house until around 4 a.m. We hopped in the car and took off for the

hospital. It was an excruciating 30-minute drive. I couldn't talk through the contractions. I also didn't yell. I went silent and squirmed in my seat. I think my husband didn't believe how much pain I was in, since I was so quiet. I kept thinking this baby will be coming soon.

When we arrived at the hospital, I took a wheelchair to the maternity ward. There was another woman in labor too. We shared an elevator. She was moaning very loudly, while I kept completely silent, still squirming my way through contractions. Anytime anyone asked me anything, I looked at my husband and begged him to talk for me.

Once I was in my room and changed into the hospital gown, they checked my cervix, and I was 7–8 cm dilated. I was begging for an epidural. First the nurses needed to go through an agonizing amount of questions. Anytime a contraction hit, I'd turn to my husband for him to do the talking. Once the questions were finished, they hooked up my IV and started giving me fluids. Apparently, I was dehydrated so I needed to finish a round of fluids or two before I could get the epidural. I had also tested positive for Strep B, so they needed to administer antibiotics. Different nurses kept popping in and yelling "7–8 centimeters!! How did you stay at home that long??" I yelled back, "I didn't want to! I was waiting for my in-laws!"

When it was finally time for my epidural, they asked my husband to leave the room. He heard the nurses talking about my labor, saying “This is going to go quick!” He felt bad, because he wasn’t sure if I was in labor when we left the house, since I’d been so quiet!

While waiting for the anesthesiologist, I stared at the clock. It was 5:30 a.m. A new nurse had come in. She stood on the side of the bed, holding a pillow upright against her body, and every time a contraction came on, I leaned into the pillow and squeezed her so hard. The contractions were relentless. They were starting to take over my entire body. The nurse was so sweet, allowing me to squeeze her, and I must have been hurting her, because I remember her commenting on how strong I was. Once the epidural was finally in place, I finally had some relief. But because I was already so far along, it only dulled the pain of the contractions and didn’t erase it completely. By 7 a.m. I was fully dilated, but the doctor wanted me to wait a while to push to allow a second round of antibiotics to go through my system. The waiting, again, was excruciating. Every few minutes I moaned loudly through the pain. My husband was snoring on a daybed.

Around 8:30 a.m., a nurse took my temperature, and it was 101! A few minutes later, the doctor came in and told me it was time to start pushing! I was begging for cold washcloths on my forehead. At 8:40, I started pushing, while my husband held washcloths on my forehead. He was also responsible for holding

an oxygen mask over my face in between rounds of pushing. There was a team of two incredible nurses, along with my doctor. Each nurse held one of my legs and encouraged me to push! Different voices were coming at me “Don’t push with your legs!” Every time I collapsed after pushing, I’d hear “Keep your legs wide open, so the baby can breathe!” It was overwhelming, and I felt like I was on fire with my fever. All I could do was push. I felt “the ring of fire” I had felt with my son. So I pushed with everything I had.

My daughter Riley was born at 9:20 a.m. She came out with the cord around her neck, and she was blue, so after allowing me to peek at her quickly, they whisked her across the room to take care of her. Pediatric doctors and nurses raced into the room to clear fluid from her lungs and to work on her. My husband turned white. He couldn’t take his eyes off our daughter. “Will she be ok?” he asked. My doctor reassured him that everything would be fine, but he continued pacing.

I immediately felt rejuvenated. The pain of contractions, the fever—All was erased. I completely trusted my doctor and my instincts that everything was okay with the baby. As she stitched me up, I started chatting with all the nurses, asking about their children, and so on. I was energized and renewed!

Once I finally had my daughter in my arms, everything was calm. She was perfect. Dark hair and piercing blue eyes. I immediately felt like I knew her. Every time my husband talked, she opened her eyes. I remember commenting on how alert she was for a newborn. Although her labor was a whirlwind, and nothing like the long, staggering labor I had experienced with my first, everything after her birth was calm and peaceful. She was healthy and easy to care for. She immediately fit into our family.

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