

Doula *and* dad

THE BEST SUPPORT TEAM FOR LABOUR

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It is impossible to predict or control how birth and labour will pan out. Will you connect emotionally with your midwife? How will you deal with contractions? Will you have a swift or long, drawn-out delivery? How will your partner react to seeing you in pain? Faced with these uncertainties, many women find enormous reassurance in having a doula by their side.

Doula is loosely translated from Ancient Greek as 'female servant'. She provides information and emotional and

physical support before, during and after birth. In other words, a woman who reads your lips in labour, keeps your space sacred and safe and stands up for you when you are at your most vulnerable.

Traditionally, wise and experienced women from a village supported a woman throughout pregnancy, birth and beyond. In this day in age, this care has vastly vanished and made way for a hospitalised birthing arena. Hospitals are great for emergencies and sick people. Birthing and pregnant women are generally neither.→

So what does a Doula do?

Pre-natal Support

During two to three extensive pre-birth visits a Doula fills in any gaps in a couple's understanding of the physical birthing process, as well as options available. Moreover, she will provide numerous techniques for natural pain relief and show you suitable labour positions. She will make sure you've got everything necessary in your birthing bag and an Option B on your birth plan.

Additionally, a Doula will work with you and your partner on any unconscious fears, deep-rooted emotions and unhelpful beliefs which could hinder the natural birthing process. The father to be will be equipped with innumerable ways of

commenced, a couple calls their doula when they feel the need for support. She will stay until after the birth.

In Malta mostly only one support person is allowed in the birthing room. A Doula can be on stand-by and provide support when dad needs a break for napping or eating. Like this, mum is never alone throughout the birth.

Doulas often use the power of touch and massage to reduce stress and anxiety during labour. Together with psychological reassurance, constant knowledgeable support, breathing, aromatherapy and acupressure points, this helps to stimulate the production of natural oxytocin. Contrary to its synthetic version, it not only causes uterine contractions, but also a feeling of well-being and higher pain threshold.

even long enough for certain wounds to heal, the transition into parenthood can often be a bumpy road.

Statistically, having continuous support considerably boosts the chances of having a positive birthing outcome. Women are less likely to use pain relief medications, medical interventions like vacuum, forceps-assisted births or episiotomies, emergency caesareans or suffer from post-natal depression. Many studies also show that labour tends to be shorter and babies are likelier to have higher Apgar scores at birth.

“Doulas are a form of pain relief!”

Personally, my Doula lifted me up when I was down. Forty-eight hours into labour, she came home with a super smoothie and nourishing soup to raise my energy levels, gave my husband a break and suggested more useful positions to increase the efficiency of the contractions. After three days, during the last hour of pushing, her constant gaze and firm touch, together with my husband's guided acupressure, was what got me through the magical water birth I had dreamt of. Like every birth teaches a lesson, for me it was that while finding my utmost inner strength, I also needed to accept the help of others. I couldn't have done it without them!

How to choose a Doula

- Most importantly is that you click when you meet a potential Doula for a non-binding and free-of-charge chat. Furthermore, here are a few useful questions to ask:
- What training have you had?
- How many births have you assisted?
- What services do you provide?
- What are your fees?
- Are you available for my due date?
- What happens if for some reason you are not available at the time of my birth?
- What made you become a doula?
- What is your philosophy regarding childbirth? 📍

If you do have any further questions about Doulas, natural birthing, conscious parenting and the like, don't hesitate to get in touch with Doula, pre-natal Yoga Teacher and sailing mother of two Dini Martinez: dini.martinez@gmail.com



helping his partner through each contraction. Indeed, fathers are often just as, if not more, relieved and grateful for having constant knowledgeable support nearby.

In addition to the pre-natal sessions, you are generally left with a heap of additional information and resources like videos, books, copies of useful articles and even music and guided birth meditations to go through at your own pace.

Birth Support

In a typical hospital setting, doctors and midwives don't stay in the room with you throughout your labour. A doula will be on call and available 24/7 two weeks prior and two weeks after the estimated due date. Once labour has

Post-natal Support

Once the baby arrives, parents' questions and concerns usually quadruple. Again, a Doula can help them stay calm and focused. She will stay for up to two hours after birth, as well as pay a post-natal visit or three in hospital or at home. Throughout these, she will assist with anything from cooking home-made wholesome nourishing meals, offer breastfeeding support and baby care to help parents manage any potential post-birth traumas.

In other cultures, pregnant women and nursing mothers are treated as something special, even divine. In a society which advocates pre-scheduled Caesareans and maternity leaves not