

birthtalk

MAKES
BIRTH
BETTER

Katie and Sapina meet little Mika. A gentle VBAC after a previous traumatic caesarean. Read their story on p 5



Dec 2009

Merry Christmas!

This is the last issue of our newsletter for 2009. This bumper-issue is packed with stories from women & men about not only meeting their babies, but the journey to an empowering birth.

Whether first-time parents, or couples working towards a better experience after a previous birth, all the parents here have made a considerable journey of self-exploration, absorbing new information, & taking great care & responsibility in the arrival of their child. We would like to thank them all, especially for taking the time to write down their experience, while caring for newborns, and sometimes toddlers as well!

A busy year

So much seems to have happened this year...and most of it good! Our biggest achievement was redoing our entire website, in collaboration with the lovely Holly Jewell, a Birthtalk mum, who designed then uploaded the entire site - over 80 pages!

Thanks too, go to the many women (and some men!) who allowed us to share their stories & photos on our website - these personal insights are invaluable and so inspiring.

Our new Facebook page

We often hear from women, "I wish I'd found you sooner!". And we'd love to give them the opportunity to find us sooner too, which is why you can now find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/Birthtalk.org.

February 2010 Courses full

Our Feb VBAC Course & "Path to a Better Birth" antenatal course are booked out already, and a waiting list is growing. If you missed out on a place, still contact us, as there may be an opportunity for a private "Crash Course". Plus, there are still some casual spots in the "VBAC Facts and Stats" night on Feb 3, so RSVP fast! Thanks to those already booked - looking forward to seeing you in the New Year!

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Xmas Issue

2009

Birthtalk was begun in 2002 and is run by a registered midwife/childbirth educator and mum. Birthtalk was created to bridge the gap between what is needed by women to have a positive birth in our culture, and what is commonly offered - before and after birth. Our focus is on empowering birth, regardless of where or how a woman gives birth. Meetings are in Brisbane. Phone Consultation is available, and queries via phone or email are always welcome!

TEL (07) 3878 7915 (Deb) EMAIL info@birthtalk.org (Melissa)

Events

Meeting Venue

Toowong Physio Rehab Centre, 13 Morley St, Toowong.

Our evening meetings run from 7:30pm - 10:00pm.

Healing From Birth meetings are FREE.

For other meeting costs, see our Calendar page on our website at www.birthtalk.org

January

12

Healing From Birth 7:30pm
Debrief your birth in the context of gaining clarity about "what happened", and making peace with the experience.

February

3

VBAC COURSE BEGINS (this night is open to all, not just Course Attendees. Please RSVP)

VBAC STATS & FACTS 7:30pm
Birthtalk will present a "big picture view" of VBAC & caesareans - a perspective that can be hard to obtain elsewhere. We offer evidence-based information within a context that may be helpful for women in decision-making and addressing the issues surrounding VBAC.

9

Healing From Birth 7:30pm
Debrief your birth in the context of gaining clarity about "what happened", and making peace with the experience.

17

"THE PATH TO A BETTER BIRTH" Antenatal Course begins COURSE FULL 7:30pm

March

3 - 31

ANTENATAL COURSE & VBAC COURSE CONTINUE

9

Healing From Birth 7:30pm
Debrief your birth in the context of gaining clarity about "what happened", and making peace with the experience.

2010 Daytime Sessions

Birthtalk has often been requested to provide meetings during the day, especially for Healing From Birth meetings, and until now, we just couldn't work it around our families.

However, as our babies are growing up, Birthtalk is happy to announce some daytime sessions in 2010!

These will include "Healing From Birth" meetings, as well as education sessions around the theme of working towards an empowering birth and the impact of birth on our parenting experiences.

Birthtalk Daytime Sessions will be held at the Brisbane Montessori School at Fig Tree Pocket, Brisbane. More information will be available in the new year, so, if you have always wanted to come along, but night-time just wasn't suitable...2010 may be your year!

Debby as Doula in 2010

Debby from Birthtalk has provided a doula service for some Birthtalk couples the past few years, but has been taking a break recently. We are happy to announce she is starting again next year, and has some vacancies from April 2010. Deb acknowledges the honour & privilege it is to support couples, and looks forward to sharing the journey with some of you next year.



"Deb was instrumental in giving me the right tools to make all the right decisions for me to make my labour the best it could be. It was very reassuring to have her there in case things didn't go as planned, so I could focus on my job at hand, my husband could focus on me and Deb was really there for both of us. Deb is my birthing hero, she is knowledgeable, compassionate and an absolute rock. I can't thank her enough."

Kylie (above after her VBAC) had Deb for her doula

First-time Mum

Empowering hospital birth at 35 wks

Antoinette and Matt hired Deb from Birthtalk as their doula, and attended sessions from Birthtalk's "Path to a Better Birth" Course as part of their preparation. Antoinette's waters broke at 34 weeks, leading to an intense period of decision-making. Below is her Birth Story, and on the next page, she shares her Birthtalk experience.

5 weeks early, 3 hour birth

Our Daughter Isabeau Rose came into the world in quite a hurry. She was 5 weeks premature and her birth only took 3 hours. Our birth experience started 10 days before her actual birth date. My waters broke when I was just heading to the pool for a swim. The waters were completely clear which reassured me but still I was concerned knowing I was only just over 34 weeks. I called my Doula, Deb, who recommended I go to the hospital just to check things out.

I had been booked into the Birth Centre at the RBH but of course because this was considered a complication I had to see a doctor (something I had avoided throughout my pregnancy) at the Birth Suite. Their first concern was with me only being 34 + 2 days, so recommended I get steroids to assist the baby if she was birthed too early. I had no contractions or any other signs I was going to labour but statistically over 80% of woman who's water break deliver within 48 hours and over 90% within 5 days. They said if I didn't labour within 48 hours they would like to try to keep me in hospital until I was 35 weeks and then induce.

Emotions running wild

My birth plan always said I did not want to be induced and that I wanted to birth at home for as long as I could. So you could imagine my emotions were running wild at this point. But I had done my research and had thankfully recruited Deb as our doula, plus we had been to Birthtalk so knew how to navigate the system.

Staff attitudes changed

Questions, questions, questions - I asked them all - what would happen if we do nothing, what are the risks if we do what they say etc. They were at first taken aback that someone was asking these questions - it did appear they were used to mothers just accepting what they said. But I asked in a polite and informed way and their attitude completely changed.

They were great and found all the information they could for us to make an informed decision. I was treated with great respect -

don't know if it was the way I asked, my age (I am 37 so probably come across confident) or I happened upon some really good people. They had said it was a big risk to not induce as the baby is being exposed to the risk of infection - when I asked what are the statistics on that - they couldn't answer. I also knew my risk of infection was higher in hospital so was keen to only stay for a short time.



3 days in hospital

Anyway over the next 3 days I had many different conversations with the midwives and doctors on duty. Two wonderful midwives were completely supportive of me going home and lasting as long as I could for the sake of the baby growing as much as she could inside me. Doctors were concerned with the risk of things like stillbirth etc which could occur if I did get an infection. Again they had no figures on that risk and how much it increases the longer you leave it.

A plan of attack

Anyway after 3 nights I convinced them I would not be induced. Also that I only lived 10mins away from the hospital - that I would check my temperature every 2-4 hours and keep myself extremely clean and they had booked regular checkups with me for them to keep checking on me. I met with Deb during that week at home to go through the scenarios I could be faced with and what our plan of attack should be. This was reassuring and really clarified what we needed to do. So I went in for two more checkups and assured the doctor in attendance I was sticking to the decision to not induce. They were really good about this decision and didn't try to scare me or anything.

So 10 days after my waters broke, I was having dinner with all my siblings and I started to bleed slightly, called my doula, she said chances were I was going into labour, I started to get slight period pains so was then sure the time had come. Within an hour of being with my family the contractions got very intense and I had to leave the restaurant. My partner Matt wanted us to go straight to the hospital but with it being my first child I was sure I was going to be labouring for 10 hours plus so insisted on going home. I headed straight to the shower after a very stressful drive through Fortitude Valley on a Saturday night!!

Timing contractions

I was in the shower for about 40mins and Matt was timing my contractions and talking to Deb on the phone. It became apparent

contractions were coming fast and furious - 3 within 5 mins so Deb suggested meeting us at the hospital and that we should head there straight away. The short drive I can barely remember - I was completely in my birthing zone by then and came out of it temporarily when we arrived at the hospital. Was relieved to see Deb waiting for us at the front of the hospital and from then everything happened really quickly. I had heard other women talk about the sound that many women make when birthing and found myself doing the same. This low groan made complete sense and relieved the pain I was experiencing when I had contractions.

The most amazing experience

Within an hour of being at the hospital our beautiful girl was born. So I started to feel period pain by 6.30pm and we had our Isabeau by 9.45pm. She came out screaming which was reassuring with her being premature and everyone was really relaxed and left us to bond with her. It really was the most amazing experience holding this little bundle (she weighed in at 2.285kg) and putting her to my breast. I then had hoped to birth the placenta naturally as well - unfortunately it came away in pieces and I was bleeding a bit.

I was not at all concerned - all I cared about was that my daughter was well and I could hold her close. Eventually we had to make the decision to have a manual removal which ended up taking several hours (the spinal tap didn't work like it should have so they ended up giving me a general). But before I knew it I was awake and holding our little girl again. My partner Matt held Isabeau for the whole time I was in theatre and Deb came with me to help me through going under etc.

So that is our birth story - I am so glad I was able to birth her without any assistance of drugs and although it would have been great to have delivered the placenta that way as well, I felt totally in control. We asked all the questions and again we were treated with respect. We were given the time required to make a decision and for me to bond/start the breastfeeding process with Isabeau, so was happy with the outcome.

©Antoinette and Birthtalk

Journey to Birth

Antoinette's Journey with Birthtalk

Antoinette shares her reasons for attending Birthtalk, and the challenges she faced with a baby born at 35 weeks.

Birth is not a sickness

My sister suggested Birthtalk to me when I was thinking of getting pregnant. I have always been a keen believer in mother nature and think humans interfere too much and felt that pregnancy and the birthing experience should be as close to the way nature intended as well. I don't believe it is a medical condition or a sickness. I was looking for reinforcement and real woman who had had these positive experiences. Also wanted to learn more about all the options I had to ensure I had the birth I wanted.

Before attending Birthtalk, I did believe I was born to birth but that due to the way we are socialised I didn't know how to and would need as much info as possible.

All the knowledge I needed

Birthtalk reinforced and empowered me to believe in myself. It also showed to me how birth can impact on your life and your bonding with your baby. It gave me all the knowledge I needed to ensure I felt great about my birth experience. The thing that I learnt which was really important to me was that you can't know what kind of birth you will have but you must have complete buy-in and have your say so that you have control over your own body.

Informed, responsible, caring

I had a lot of decisions to make on behalf of my family leading up to, during the birth and when Isabeau was in Special Care and I felt I was as informed, responsible and caring as I could be for my baby during this decision-making process. This was critical to me in ensuring I felt I had started my role as a mother in a powerful and loving way. I was completely overwhelmed in the first couple of days seeing my baby in special care, someone said to me it is like your heart has been ripped from your body and is walking around outside of you completely vulnerable. I have never felt so vulnerable in my life but at the same time so proud of myself for the birth I gave my little girl. I felt completely devoted to her within hours and I couldn't imagine how I would have felt if I had a different birth experience.

Antoinette and Isabeau



Completely together

Having been to Birthtalk with Matt and us deciding to recruit a Doula really meant that Matt and I were completely together with the decisions we needed to make. I felt confident he would defend and protect me during the experience and he was fully aware how important that was for all of us. He was an amazing birth partner and dad throughout the whole experience and really made me feel good about the decisions we made.

Relieved to have Doula

Our decision to recruit Deb as our Doula was critical in the whole process, particularly with my waters breaking early. Deb came to me with all the different scenarios we could do along the way and this really made us both feel so much better about standing our ground and not inducing labour. I know without the biological info I learnt at Birthtalk and without Deb (who has two children) I would have been more fearful of the contractions than I was.

She helped me believe I could do it, in a way Matt just couldn't because he can't experience this first hand. When we arrived at the hospital and I was in a lot of pain and Deb was there - I was completely relieved. I don't like hospitals and knowing she was going to be there made me relax. I completely trusted she was there for me and had my best interest at heart - not to mention she had lots of experience to draw on (unlike Matt and I!)

Relief to have my baby home

When Matt and I got Isabeau home (she was in special care for 5 days) we were so glad to have her out of hospital I had no fear about being able to care for her. My only concerns were with her feeding enough so she put on weight properly. But otherwise I was just relieved she was with us finally and we could put her in an environment which would make her grow fast. Breastfeeding was a challenge in some ways but not in others. Due to her being premature I needed to start expressing straight away -

Isabeau's sucking instinct was pretty good but needed a little encouragement and she was very sleepy. The expressing was fine after a couple of days when my milk came in but was exhausting. I would have much rather had her on my breast than a pump. But I had always wanted to express from time to time so was glad I was learning quickly.

Breastfeeding support

It was really tough in that first week having to stay at special care so I could be close to her when I just wanted to be home amongst my own things. The breastfeeding itself certainly seem to come quite well compared to many of my friends - it helped I had Deb and my sister (she is part of ABA and does counselling) and made sure I had all the basics and that Isabeau had the attachment right. Within 2-3 weeks she had it down pat and I didn't need to check her - it was a great feeling! She would feed up to 17 times a day to start with - again I was so glad she was feeding it was a pleasure and not something I resented at all - in fact still isn't. I love breastfeeding and see myself doing it for a long time. It is when I feel closest to Isabeau and I must say feel sad for my partner who misses out on this experience.

Baby doing brilliantly

Overall I feel proud of my birth experience and how I came out the other side. I feel I made the right decisions for Isabeau and she is doing brilliantly because of it. I think every woman and their partner (it is critical they attend as well) having their first baby should do Birthtalk's course, without doubt. And for those women who have had disempowering birth experiences, it is essential. I had so many friends not have the birth experience they deserve, I tell everyone I can about Birthtalk and how it can help heal or give you birth you should have.

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Hospital VBAC

after previous traumatic
caesarean

Katie attended our Healing From Birth meetings, and some Antenatal sessions, to heal from a traumatic caesarean, and prepare for an empowering second birth.

An email to Birthtalk

Dearest Debby and Melissa, I'm so grateful to both of you for your amazing compassion, support, expertise and wisdom and for all the healing you helped me to achieve about Mia's caesarean birth so that I could go into this birth feeling as empowered and prepared as I did. As a result we all had a wonderful experience.

I had a 12 hour labour, 4hrs active, 2hrs pushing and an all natural - nodrugs/ interventions/canulas/continuous monitoring - VBAC!

Mika was 10 days overdue and that day I had elected to stay home rather than go in to hospital for monitoring and talk of inductions! I had had a couple of nights of intermittent contractions and he was wriggling plenty so I knew things would happen soon enough. Labour proper kicked in around 1am that night and we stayed at home, supported by our wonderful doula from about 5am. My gorgeous Mia wandered into the lounge when she woke up at about 7:30 am and, on seeing me in the birthpool with the room dark, candles on and Sapina playing the ukulele, exclaimed with wonder and excitement "Mika's coming!" She and my mum, who arrived soon after, were able to be with me for the next hour or so, scooping water over my back during contractions before they went off to the park together and things got a little more intense for me.

At about 10:45am we left for the hospital and with the support of two fabulous midwives who were very respectful of our birthplan, our beautiful 4.135kg boy Mika was born 2hours of pushing later. I had a second degree tear so being stitched up wasn't fun but I was able to go home that evening after all checks were done. We were all home and back in our own beds by 12pm!

It was a truly amazing, empowered birth and incredibly healing for us all. I just feel so proud and delighted and grateful!

thank you so much

Much love

Katie



Homebirth

after two not-so-great
hospital vaginal births

Robyn attended Birthtalk's "Healing From Birth" support group, and some sessions from our Antenatal Course, as well as some private sessions with Deb.

I started attending Birthtalk as I didn't know I had options when it came to my birth. I had an obstetrician who I felt was trying to make me do everything that was more convenient for her and not in mine or my babies best interests.

I met Deb as a Doula and she introduced me to Birthtalk to help me have a better birthing experience.

I thought birth was a very medicalised process that I had no control over. I didn't understand how the birthing body worked. I had only experienced birth by being induced and labouring flat on my back. I didn't know I had a say in what happened to me.

Baggage from my births

Birthtalk taught me that I can have an empowering birthing experience. I also discovered how much "baggage" I still have hanging over me from my first 2 births. The "Healing From Birth" session was perfect in helping me to come to terms with what was done to me during my first 2 births. It also helped me to learn exactly what happens to my body during labour.

Angry & depressed

After my first birth I was very angry about the experience I had, I was depressed about what I experienced and I never actually bonded with my daughter, on the outside I was really happy but inside I was very lost. I did love my baby but I didn't feel a connection with her as we had very little time together in the first 24 hours of her life. I was no longer in a relationship with her father so I didn't have any intimacy with my partner.

Then I had my second baby. At first after my son was born I thought I had a good birthing experience until I started processing what happened. As I was induced for my obstetrician's convenience and was made to labour flat on my back strapped to a CTG machine again I was disappointed that I had given in to having drugs and I was angry at the way I was spoken to by my obstetrician and the way I was treated by some of the midwives. I was given a lot of support with breastfeeding and was a lot more confident with my son how-



ever I did still take a few weeks to recover I wasn't really wanting to be intimate with my husband, I didn't get as depressed or anything like that this time.

Amazing birth

My third birth, I had the most amazing birthing experience. I was in control of my birth from the moment labour started, I recovered so much faster than I had ever experienced I felt so great about myself. I had a better connection to my husband as it was just him and I for the most part and I actually wanted to be intimate with him a lot sooner than I thought I would. I have an amazing bond with my children now as they got to be a part of my labour and birth.

In hindsight

I wish I had had access to Birthtalk prior to my first two births so that I could have had a better birthing experience. The one I really wish I had access to before I had my son was the "Healing From Birth" session so I could have gotten rid of a lot of baggage before I had my son.

I was able to talk openly about what had happened to me and actually get support to allow myself to process my feelings instead of bottling them up. It was great to get support rather than the usual you had a healthy baby that is all that matters that I had received in the past.

Recommending Birthtalk

I would (and have) recommended Birthtalk to woman who are pregnant, especially first time mums because as a first time mum you don't generally know what your rights are and what to expect when they are in labour. I would also recommend Birthtalk to any women who have experienced birth trauma.

Thank you to both Debbie and Melissa for all your help and support.

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SEE ROBYN'S FULL BIRTH STORY NEXT PAGE



Birth Story -

Illyria's arrival

On Thursday about 4pm I had a very strong contraction it felt a little different to what I had been experiences but again I just told my dh that it was the same thing I'd been having for the last 2 weeks and I just tried to ignore it totally.

Contractions

The contractions kept coming but I wasn't timing them although I did find out later that my husband was timing all of them apparently they were 10 mins apart and the noises I was making were a lot deeper then they had been.

I ended up going with my husband to watch him bowl, I was still having regular contractions but I just made sure to breath through them. We left the bowling alley at 10pm and the contractions had started getting more painful again and they were coming about 8min apart, we were almost home when my contractions became 5mins apart.

Roaring

We got the kids out of the car and into bed and I jumped into the shower the hot water was amazing I had expected the contractions to stop but instead they became 2 mins apart and I was roaring through them. I got out of the shower to stop using the hot water and Scott started to fill the birth pool for me.

I was bouncing on my birthing ball in my room and became very scared so I asked Scott to come with me into my nest and I turned to him and said that I wanted an epidural and I couldn't do this. He just reassured me then with the next contraction I said to him I want Tricia and HOT water and I want them both NOW.

Called the midwife

Scott asked what kind of feelings I was having with the contractions and I said I had a pressure feeling in my bottom and with that he grabbed my phone and called Tricia, while on the phone with her I had another large loud contraction and she told Scott that she was on her way. He then helped me into the birth pool that didn't have a lot of water in it but it made such a difference just having that really hot water on my back and belly.

By the time Tricia got to me she could tell I was well and truly in established labour and she checked bubs heart rate and it was perfect she then set about getting enough water into the birth pool for me to birth in the water safely.



I couldn't let go of Scott and contractions were very close together, my midwife then suggested I get onto my knees "like a frog" so I did that and I started hanging onto Scott.

I could feel her coming

I had one contraction in that position when all of a sudden I could feel her coming and I screamed that at Scott and my midwife and she just calmly said to go with it and Scott was telling me I was doing great.

With the next contraction I instinctively started to push and my waters broke then with 2 contractions I breathed/pushed her out into the world at 1.05am Friday the 28th November 2008.

A new little sister

With the position I was in neither Scott or I could catch her but Tricia did and I turned over and she was put onto my chest.

After Scott looked at our beautiful little girl he went and woke Jenny and Xander up they came out and Jenny soon started taking photos of her new little sister.

After a short amount of time Scott and Tricia lifted me out of the pool and I got into my own bed where Illyria and I had our first breastfeed and in fact we had our first tandem feed as Xander decided that he was hungry as well.

After I had birthed Illyria's placenta and she had finished her first feed about 30mins after she started Jennifer cut her cord and Tricia took her to weigh and measured her. She weighed 7 pounds 5 oz.

Amazing

Her birth wasn't exactly how I had pictured it but that is bound to happen when you over analyse everything. But it was still an amazing journey/outcome and I'm so glad that I had her at home in water being held by the man I love as I helped her come into the world.

Having Illyria at home with no drugs, not being hooked up to monitors and not being stared at the entire time I was in labour was amazing. It would have been great to catch her myself but feeling her come out of my body and having my children there to meet their new sister as soon as she was born was amazing. I can't imagine anything better. ©Robyn & Birthtalk 2009

Need help? Confused about your options?

Birthtalk's co-founder, midwife Debby Gould, offers Private Consultations.

From preconception & early pregnancy, right through to post-natal support, Deb can create a consultation tailored to your needs.



Confused about your options regarding the birth? Obstetrician or midwife? Hospital, Homebirth or Birth Centre? Private or Public? She can explain the benefits and differences between each of these and help you find the best place for you to give birth.

Need help with a Birth Plan? She can help you formulate a Birth Plan, which includes an education process & can be a great communication device between you and your support team.

Going over your Birth Notes? Debby can explain and explore your previous Birth Notes, and help you consider ways to have a better birth next time. She can also offer support after a traumatic birth experience.

Due soon? Deb can even hold a private Crash Course if your baby is due before our next Antenatal Course concludes.

You can sit with Deb at her place, or yours, and explore your options for your baby's arrival together.

Debby also offers Doula support - to access her site, and read about her services, plus testimonials, just go to www.birthtalk.org/contactus.htm and follow the link.

Contact debby@birthtalk.org or call (07) 3878 7915.

Sarah came to Birthtalk's "Healing From Birth" group 18 months after her first birth ended in caesarean. Then, when she became pregnant, she attended our VBAC Course.

Terribly anxious

During my first pregnancy I found the information available about birth choices overwhelming. Furthermore, my life experiences up until falling pregnant led me to believe that birth could be dangerous. I worked with children with cerebral palsy and brain injury; and my husband's family had a history of cerebral palsy. I was terribly anxious about the risk (albeit low) of having some sort of birth trauma that might affect my child's health.

As a result, I decided to rely on one information provider to guide me through the decisions of childbirth – my obstetrician. The obstetrician came highly recommended from many girlfriends and I assumed she would have my best interests at heart, and would encourage natural childbirth, unless there was a real medical need to have a caesarean.

Expressed concern

These events led to my first birth being an 'elective' induction on my due date. My obstetrician was going on holidays on my due date and when I expressed concern about her absence for my birth, she suggested an induction. I did some research about inductions but did not really know where to look for the most accurate information. When I questioned my obstetrician about the increased risk of requiring a caesarean she assured me that in my case, this was unlikely.

I was induced with gel, artificial rupture of membranes and syntocin, and endured the inevitable cascade of intervention that I now know accompanies many inductions. My son was born by caesarean section due to slow progress and foetal distress. The caesarean itself was straightforward with no complications; however, my lasting memory of the procedure was that it was very clinical.

Felt ripped off & foolish

My son was handed to me wrapped up like a Christmas present (no skin to skin contact) before being taken from me while I was stitched up. He was healthy from the



moment he was born and breastfed easily. My recovery from the caesarean was excellent. However, the entire process left me with feelings of being 'ripped off' and foolish that I didn't truly understand the ramifications of induction. Given that the only outcome I'd wanted in my birthplan was a healthy baby, these feelings were completely unexpected and gave me significant grief.

Had to talk about feelings

When my girlfriends talked about their births, I was very jealous of their experiences. In comparison, my birth experience didn't seem 'good enough'. I found the transition to motherhood difficult and was extremely overprotective of my son. I can't say for sure that these feelings were related solely to my birth experience, but I'm certain there was some impact.

I attended a 'Healing from Birth' meeting when my son was 18 months old. I wasn't sure what I would get out of the meeting, but something inside me knew I had to talk about my feelings to women who understood. My husband, although sympathetic and supportive, didn't understand why I felt disappointed. The meeting was a revelation in itself. I always thought I'd felt ripped off because I'd had a caesarean. I realized at this meeting that disappointing birth experiences take many shapes and forms. It was here that I first learned those wonderful words that Deb and Melissa always talk about – a good birth includes feelings of empowerment, feeling safe, feeling acknowledged and so on.

Birthtalk instrumental

After my first birth, I had very little confidence about my ability to birth. I often thought 'maybe I'm just one of those women

who need to have caesareans'. I wondered if I'd ever have the chance or the ability to birth vaginally.

Birthtalk was instrumental in helping me process my feelings about my first birth, and was an important part of my preparation for our second birth. The constant mantra about good birth vs bad birth helped me to develop a birthplan that encompassed all my needs and wants. Birthtalk also changed my preparation for my second birth because Birthtalk's classes were where I met my wonderful doula, Cheryl!

Looking back

When I look back at my first birth, I believe Birthtalk would have helped to allay my fears about birthing without my obstetrician present (ie. I would have felt confident to work with the obstetrician on-call). I would have appreciated the importance of allowing birth to progress naturally, as long as mother and baby are well; rather than choosing to have an induction. Had I made decisions based on knowledge, rather than fear, I believe my first birth experience would have been quite different.

A revelation

Melissa and Deb have been so open and giving with their time, knowledge and resources. It was a real comfort to know that I could bring questions to the meetings and know that those questions would be answered in a factual, non-judgemental way. It was a revelation to know that good and bad births take many shapes and forms. I was able to take this information with me to my second birth and know that whatever the outcome, I was able to ensure that I had a good birth.

(cont'd next page)

Benefits of doula support

I believe that having Cheryl as our doula was instrumental in achieving the birth I wanted. Because of Cheryl's presence I was able to remain relaxed and focused on labour, confident that she would attend to my needs throughout the process. My goal for labour was to manage for as long as possible without pain relief. Although I decided to have an epidural after 13 hours of labour, Cheryl was completely supportive and reassured me that I had made the best decision under the circumstances. I also had complete understanding of the impact of choosing an epidural due to discussions that Cheryl and I had had during our birth preparation sessions. This meant that I did not regret my decision at any stage following the birth.

I also wanted my husband to experience the labour and birth without expecting him to understand the needs of a sleep-deprived woman in labour. Because of Cheryl's presence, my husband found the experience extremely positive. He was able to completely focus on supporting me and found Cheryl's guidance and suggestions invaluable. Also, during 17 hours of labour, he was able to rest now and then because Cheryl was able to support me while he grabbed himself something to eat! In my husband's words - "Everyone should have a doula!"

My second birth

My second birth was exhausting, empowering and fantastic. I was supported by my husband and our wonderful doula, Cheryl. I went into labour naturally on the evening of my due date. I arrived at the hospital 4cm dilated and was having contractions every 3-4 minutes. I thoroughly enjoyed this part of the labour. My husband and our doula made me feel like a queen, offering massage, position changes, sips of water and regular encouragement. I was in awe of what my body could do. I'd read about the powerful effects of the hormone oxytocin and was amazed that I was able to sleep (for 1-2 minutes!) between contractions.

I succumbed to an epidural after 13 hours of labour. However, because I had thoroughly researched the pros and cons of an epidural, I made this decision with complete confidence. My daughter was born vaginally (vacuum extraction), after 17 hours. Although there were some hiccups with her delivery (shoulder dystocia and respiratory distress) the whole experience left me euphoric. I didn't even mind that I didn't get to hold my daughter until she was examined (at length) by the paediatrician due to her traumatic delivery. However, this time, I asked for skin-to-skin contact and

attempted breastfeeding in the delivery room.

I felt completely amazed that even though my son's birth had been straightforward and safe I had so many negative feelings. In contrast, my daughter's birth was longer, unpredictable and scary; yet my feelings about it were completely positive. I believe the difference between the two was the presence of our doula and the information I obtained from Birthtalk. I can't wait to have another baby to do it all over again!

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Moving on from birth trauma - facing each birthday.

Often, women who have had a traumatic birth can find their child's birthday a challenge. It can bring up so many conflicting emotions of what was supposed to be 'the best day of their life'. Below is a letter from a Birthtalk mum...

Dear Deb and Melissa,

I would just like to let you know that last Wednesday my son turned 5. I did not even come close to tears. All I felt was pride and love for him all day. His birth experience is still with me but it no longer overwhelms me. It is due to your support, love and encouragement, your validation of who and what I am. Also, the knowledge that you are so willing to share. I cannot thank you enough. lots of love, Kay

A few years ago, Kay attended Birthtalk's "Healing From Birth" meetings and VBAC Course. With courage and strength she processed her first birth, and prepared for her VBAC. She now

attends Birthtalk to share her story with others. Her story is on our website at www.birthtalk.org/BirthStories/BirthJourneys.html



More babies!

Homebirth : a new dad shares the experience of the arrival of his first child

Dear Birthtalk,

The home birth went so well thanks. Little Robbie was born into a pool and was amazing from my point of view...I cannot explain how great it was and emotional :)

Our midwife was great. Labour started at 1am and it wasn't until about 6'ish Mel got into the warm pool when the contractions were more controlled and easier counted. Although the contractions were all going well, the pool was making Mel a bit too much relaxed. Our midwife suggested to get out of the pool and go for a walk to the toilet. This is where the crowning had started. After only moments Mel started to get the burning sensations below and then she went back to the pool. At 1.03pm that same day, Robbie's head came out into the pool and he had skin-on-skin straight away. The placenta was born around about 5.30 that afternoon....wow ;) I must mention though, Mel's waters broke 5 days prior! Nice.



We are so proud. It was all natural and I was so proud of Mel...she was so amazing. We thank you both so much for being a big part in this. If we never came to your classes we wouldn't have known as much....and who knows what could have happened with doubts that arose. We had both a home birth plan and a hospital birth plan just in case of an emergency. Thanks to you guys, we had a back up for everything I guess.

Darren

Twin birth : a first-time mum shares the full story of her twin's arrival - a vaginal birth

Romi's twin girls were born a year ago, and we are so happy to share with you the story of their birth. An excerpt is below, and the full story is on our new Facebook page - find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/Birthtalk.org, and go to the "Notes" tab to read Romi's complete birth story.

...*"I spent a couple of hours moving in and out of the bath and meanwhile singing Norah Jones quite loudly between contractions! (I had learned that singing helps 'relax' things) My husband Trent was providing the most amazing support, and this was enabled by our Doula Deb (from Birthtalk). Being free to move where I felt like within the birthing suite, I progressed labour relatively quickly."*...



Empowering Caesarean



Diana attended Birthtalk once, when 18 weeks pregnant. Sadly, she experienced a miscarriage, and did not attend further sessions. This email was received a short while ago...

I had another miscarriage later in the year at 11 weeks. So as you can imagine, last year was not a really good year. I would like to let you know that I have just given birth to a beautiful little boy, born at 40 weeks and 5 days.

In preparation for the birth, I had written a birth plan including instructions on a natural birth and caesarean based on the one Birthtalk links to, on the CANA website.

Alexander was born via an elective caesarian (due to skyrocketing blood pressure) and wow, it was a far different experience from the emergency caesarean I had with my daughter.

In preparation, I chose a paediatrician who I knew would encourage and support immediate skin on skin. At the birth, we were able to see him actually be born and as we didn't know the sex to see that for ourselves. The obstetrician included both myself and my husband in the caesarean process and the paediatrician included my husband in Alex's checks including cutting the cord.

I would like to thank you both. Even though I only ever managed to attend the one session, that and your website enabled myself and my husband to work towards and successfully achieve an empowering birth experience. Thank you for providing the resources.

Many thanks, Diana

MERRY CHRISTMAS

expires 21st December, 2009



GIFT
VOUCHER
\$35

Birthtalk™
makes birth better™

Christmas Vouchers Available

A Birthtalk mum has suggested that we offer Gift Vouchers, as she herself wanted to be able to purchase them! As a result, we have designed a Birthtalk Gift Voucher PDF, that we can personalise and email to you, for you to print out and present to the lucky recipient, or forward to them via email.

Do you know someone who is pregnant, and scared about birth? Why not introduce them to our popular Antenatal Course, "The Path to a Better Birth", by gifting them a voucher to a dollar amount specified by you, paying for part of the course. In the Course they can bring their biggest fears, or their family fables about birth, and we will sort fact from fiction from horror story. An uplifting experience, which usually leaves attendees sighing with relief that they could voice their niggling concerns and hear the truth in an atmosphere that focuses on birth as a celebration. You can, as others have done, just email Birthtalk and let us know how much you'd like to gift.

Or perhaps someone you know could do with a private session with Deb, Birthtalk's co-founder and registered midwife. She can tailor a consultation to suit anyone's needs, whether it is a first-time couple needing advice on where to have their baby, or someone traumatised by birth who needs a private debrief, or someone with special needs, eg birthing again after a previous premature birth. A Birthtalk Gift Voucher might be just the incentive they need to seek information, support & insights from someone who truly understands the importance of making decisions from knowledge, not fear. (\$55/\$90/\$120 depending on session length)

You can even buy a Gift Voucher to pay for an entire Birthtalk Antenatal Course or VBAC Course. (see our website at www.birthtalk.org/CalendarFull.html for prices)

For more information, just contact us at info@birthtalk.org.

Want a Doula?

Contact us at info@birthtalk.org for a current list of Doulas in the Greater Brisbane area. We can also provide a list of questions to ask any Doula you interview.

When should we come to Birthtalk?

And other FAQ...

1. When should we begin attending Birthtalk Antenatal sessions?
Unlike regular Antenatal Courses, (which you attend in the latter part of your pregnancy), we encourage you to come to Birthtalk as soon as you can. The information we offer can be very helpful when considering your care options, which requires a set of knowledge not often available to couples. Plus the earlier you attend, the more chances to hear positive stories, and good news about birth.

2. Should my partner or support people attend?
It is highly valuable for them to be at as many sessions as possible. It is vital for a birthing woman to be surrounded by people who not only know and love her, but also who trust birth & understand the importance of good support. Birthtalk can be a place for them to build this trust, based on facts and enhanced by hearing other women's stories. They can't support you well if they don't know why you need this support.

3. Is Birthtalk a Natural Birth group?
Birthtalk is not a homebirth group. We are not a natural-drug-free birth group. We are not a 'vaginal' or 'caesarean' birth group. We are an EMPOWERING birth group, and support women working towards a positive birthing scenario, in a variety of settings. We have women attending working towards everything from homebirth to elective caesarean - but ALL are working towards a better experience of birth.

Got a quick question?

Debby Gould, Birthtalk co-founder and registered midwife, is happy to answer any questions or concerns you may have about birth - just give her a call. It is completely free to have a phone chat with Deb, and she would love to hear from you. Birthtalk is dedicated to supporting families to have empowering experiences, and part of that is knowing you have a solid support network. Please call if we can help.



(07) 3878 7915

A very Merry Xmas from Birthtalk!



Thanks for a great year!

This year we have really felt the wonderful impact of having some very special women and men supporting us, especially in the second part of the year when both Deb and Melissa had some health issues.

Our most sincere thanks go to all the Birthtalk parents who have attended meetings to share their stories, and help with admin. Your insights have so greatly enriched the experience of Course Attendees... some of whom have then returned with their own stories to share!

Thanks also to Lucie and Kerri for their help with Facebook, and Brochure Distribution...your services have been vital in the running of Birthtalk this year and we are so grateful for your time and commitment to ensure other families can access our support.

We also want to thank the many families who share their stories & photos on our website, in this newsletter, and on our Facebook page...you bring Empowered Birth and Healing From Birth to life.

Midwifery Students attend

We have been privileged to again have midwifery students from Griffith University, who can choose to attend Birthtalk as part of their course. We have also had midwifery students from the Australian Catholic University & University of Qld attending, and the input and insights from all students has been very valuable. Their feedback on what they gained from the session has been immensely rewarding for ourselves and women attending.

Changes to legislation affect Birthtalk

Earlier this year, Nicola Roxon proposed new legislation making it impossible for midwives to attend births legally after July 2010.

As you know, Birthtalk is NOT a home-birth group, but we embrace the right of a woman to choose where she feels safest to

have her child, and the new legislation has the potential to remove this right

We appreciate everyone writing to us with their support for the petition, which was sent, along with many others from all around Australia, to Canberra.

Canberra Rally

Many Birthtalk mums braved the wet and cold to travel to Canberra in September for the 'mother of all rallies', to oppose the new legislation, and defend a woman's right to choose her place of birth. It was an amazing day - Deb attended, along with 3000 others from all parts of Australia, and held up her sign, which declared "Lose knowledge from Homebirth... Lose knowledge for ALL births!"

This battle is ongoing, with the proposed legislation now stating that midwives must work with a doctor, rather than being independent practitioners, which is unacceptable to most midwives. Stay tuned for more information on upcoming plans to oppose this legislation. It may have a profound impact on Birthtalk's existence, so we will do all we can to ensure women retain the right to choose where they birth, and midwives can work independently as specialists in normal birth.

Our new Facebook Page

This year we entered the world of Facebook, and we have found it has created many opportunities to connect with you all. (even if it can become a bit of a vortex!!)

We invite you to find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/Birthtalk.org, and 'become a fan'. It can be an easy way to receive our Meeting Invitations & Updates, and we are providing links to interesting articles, suggesting resources, and offering insights about empowering birth, and healing from traumatic birth.

It is also a way of enabling other women to access our information and support, so feel free to click the "Suggest to friends" link on the page. One in three women are suffering from birth trauma, so you just don't know which of your friends may be feeling isolated and misunderstood due to their birth experience.

And so many of you tell us you wish you found us before your first child...so maybe you can provide this opportunity to your friends who have yet to birth, by just joining our page.

Our Page has some new gorgeous photos of women with their babies, and quotes about their experience. There are even some photos of us! Hope to see you there soon!

Debby out and about

Throughout the year, Debby Gould, Birthtalk co-founder and midwife, served on a number of Groups at the Mater Hospital and the Royal, in an effort to represent women's needs in various forums.

Deb was invited to speak at the Wesley Hospital at an Inservice event for midwives, about the services Birthtalk provide and insights from women regarding their birth experiences.

Deb also presented at a Special Event featuring Canadian midwife, Gloria Lemay, where she spoke of Birthtalk's philosophy and understanding of Birth Trauma. She also attended a Home Midwifery Assoc meeting, explaining Birthtalk's philosophy & role in the community, especially in the areas of promoting positive birth, and preventing and healing Birth Trauma.

Her most recent appearance was at the Red Tent Festival in Byron Bay, where she presented a workshop in VBAC and Moving On From a Challenging Birth.

How can you help?

We often have Birthtalk women offering help, and asking what they can do to ensure other women and families receive our support. We are so grateful to you all. The greatest thing you can do right now is spread the word about Birthtalk - via word-of-mouth, by sharing our brochures around, sending this newsletter on, or joining our Facebook group.

All we really want for xmas is to have happy, empowered families everywhere you look... and Birthtalk is a great place to start - see below for some examples!

Merry Xmas from Deb and Melissa

