

# Thoughtful Childbirth for Everyone

## Birthing – Facts vs fiction

**A = Ask for more time.** As long as you and your baby are doing well, it is safe for labour to last a long time. It can be normal for progress to be very slow before the cervix is dilated to 6cm, taking more than 6 hours for the cervix to dilate from 4 to 5cm and more than 3 hours to dilate from 5 to 6 cm

**B = Birth plans increase vaginal birth.** In a large (14 630 deliveries) study, researchers found that women who attended childbirth education classes and / or had written birth plans were significantly more likely to have a vaginal birth

**C = Caesarean surgery increases risks after hysterectomy later in life.** Previous caesarean surgery increases the risk by 16-29,6% of experiencing at least one complication following hysterectomy later in life

**D = Drinking and eating in labour.** Research shows that people labouring under less restrictive eating and drinking policies had shorter labours by about 16 minutes

**E = Exercise during pregnancy.** Levels of endorphins rise during pregnancy and peak around the time of the spontaneous onset of labour. Women who exercise regularly throughout pregnancy have even higher levels of endorphins and shorter, less painful labours

**F = Failure to progress in labour.** As long as the labouring person and baby are healthy, and as long as the length of labour does not meet criteria of labour arrest, labouring people should be treated as if they are progressing normally

**G = Gentle birthing breath** – for second stage of labour. The focus is to keep the jaw and perineum relaxed

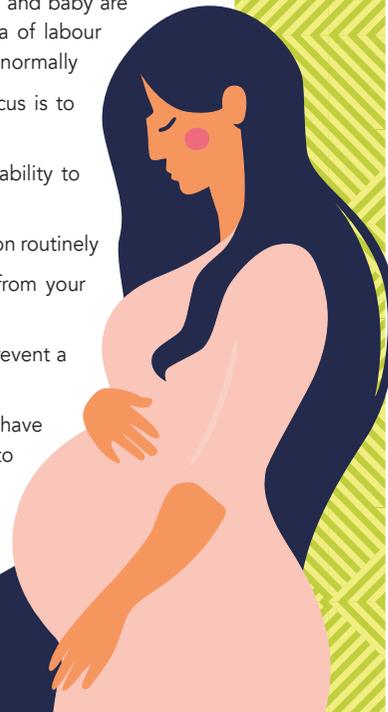
**H = Healthcare providers** who increase your confidence in your ability to grow and birth your baby will help keep your stress levels down

**I = Inductions** should ideally not be done before 39 weeks of gestation routinely

**J = “Jump up and down”** to ensure you get what you want to from your labour and birthing experience

**K = Vitamin K is a vitamin we need to clot blood.** It is given to prevent a rare but possible deadly brain bleed in the first 6 months of life

**L = Let labour begin on its own.** Both you and your baby will have the optimal number of receptors needed by your birth hormones to facilitate labour and birth if labour begins on its own. Increases in



foetal catecholamines in the last days of pregnancy will prepare the baby's lungs for air breathing after the birth

**M = Microbiome formation of the baby** is healthier in vaginal birth and breastfed babies, setting up a baby on the road to a healthy life and not one of chronic disease

**N = Nipple stimulation as an induction tool for labour.** Researchers recommend that women focus only on one breast at a time and include rest intervals.

**O = Oxytocin.** Natural oxytocin is released both in the brain causing a calm and connection response and, in the uterus, causing labour contractions. Artificial oxytocin can cause contractions but does not enter the brain so try to avoid having it

**P = Pushing.** Do not begin pushing until you feel the urge to do so. Waiting to push until you feel the urge will decrease the time you spend pushing. Pushing in response to your body's urges, rather than being “coached”, is safer for you and your baby

**Q = Questions.** Ask questions and ask for the research evidence to substantiate their answers so you can make truly informed decisions

**R = Relaxation strategies** – Prolonged high or severe levels of stress are linked to premature birth, poor growth of your baby and reduced newborn head size

**S = Stay at home in early labour.** Experts recommend that hospital admission be delayed until the onset of active labour at about 6cm dilation

**T = Tea – red raspberry leaf tea during pregnancy to induce labour naturally.**

**U = Ultimate experience is for birth** to be a vaginal birth, without medication, having your baby skin to skin so he can go through the 9 instinctive stages and long term breastfeeding

**V = Visualisation and relaxation** are complementary medicine strategies used in conjunction with facilitated partner support that reduced epidurals by 65% and caesareans by 44%

**W = Water birth.** Waterbirth is a reasonable option for low-risk birthing people. Evidence shows that babies born in the water have similar health outcomes compared to babies born on land

**X = Xtra care.** Use a doula. Doulas are experts at non-pharmacological pain management strategies which promote the release of endorphins

**Y = You need to believe in yourself and in birth.** Most women (at least 85-90% can and should give birth vaginally

**Z = Zero in after birth** and make sure your baby is skin to skin with mom immediately and uninterrupted after birth. This will cause a peak in maternal oxytocin that reduces the risk of postpartum haemorrhage and promotes mother-infant bonding

Expectant Mother's  
Guide Journey App

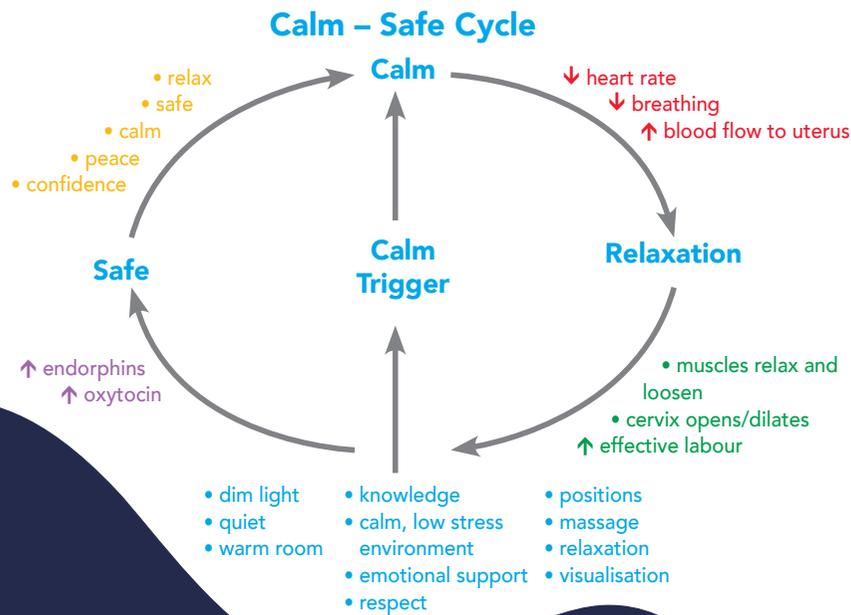


**EXPECTANT**  
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## Labour Calm Fear Cycle



## Effective Parenting

### 7 habits for highly effective parents

By Johan Verster – Husband, Pastor, Father of 4 young children

#### 1. Effective parents are physically and emotionally present

As we consider the hallmarks of effective parenting – many parents make the mistake of thinking that their primary role is to provide for their family's material needs. Although we do have a huge responsibility in this regard, we have an even greater responsibility to tend to our children's emotional needs. We have all seen the movies, and know personal stories of children that grew up with all that the world could offer and yet ended up utterly miserable and self-destructive, because they lacked the one thing that they truly longed for – love from their parents.

Recent studies have argued that a parent's physical and emotional presence is especially important in the development of their children's emotional wellbeing. There is no amount of toys, or video games, friends or babysitters that can replace the parent-shaped-void in a child's heart. And there is no school, extra curricular activity, or therapy that can nurture and shape a child into healthy adulthood, as a loving and present parent can manage to do.

#### 2. Effective parents know and speak their children's love languages

A book that many of us will be familiar with is Gary Chapman's *"The 5 love languages"*. The principle articulated in the book holds true for our children as well. Each of our children have their own unique way of 'registering' that we love them. The 5 Love Languages are quality time, physical touch, words, gifts, acts of service

#### 3. Effective parents discipline their children

We live in a world where 'discipline' often gets a bad rap, because many equate it with physical and emotional abuse. It is however helpful to remember that the word *"discipline"* and the word *"disciple"* (which means *"to be a student"*, or *"a learner"*) are part of the same semantic family. In other words, to discipline your children is for you to be intentional in training and instructing them, not in a classroom setting, but in the context of everyday life.

The problem is that many parents feel guilty for all the hours spent at the office and so they opt to rather be the "nice guy" at home. They are not intentional and consistent in disciplining (and discipling) their children and the result is that their children's unruly behaviour ends up someone else's



problem – the mom who is frantically trying to manage the household, the schoolteacher who is trying to do his/her work, a society who is eventually burdened with dysfunctional citizens. At the end of the day it is however the children themselves who are the greatest losers in this regard. To use an analogy, the tree that should have been shaped while it was still moldable, grows up unhealthy and deformed and the older and bigger the tree gets, the more work is required to prune and replant it.

#### 4. Effective parents instill healthy family rhythms

We live in a high-paced day and age where the ever-increasing demands of life have the ability of draining and destroying any notion of family-life. Work deadlines, business trips, birthday parties, countless extra curricular activities and piles of homework all have the tendency of keeping us busy “doing” and hardly ever able to simply “be”. Enter the effective parent. It is the parent’s responsibility to lead the family; and part of leading them is to set the pace and create those spaces where the family can enjoy the things that truly matter. It is the parent’s responsibility to put healthy rhythms in place – eg daily communal meal times, weekly off-days, monthly outings, yearly holidays. Children desperately need structure in their lives and it is the parent’s job to create those structures and instill those rhythms that will strengthen the family as a whole; and its individual members.

#### 5. Effective parents know when to say NO

A significant shift in parenting has taken place over the last few decades. When I grew up the old maxim still held true – “*children are to be seen and not heard*”. This was of course an unhealthy way of viewing and treating children, but I fear that our modern-day society has fallen off the other side of the horse. We live in a day and age where children have become the centre of their own universes. Everything revolves around them and parents are doing everything in their power to keep their children comfortable and happy and entertained. I believe that this shift in our parenting has resulted in us raising up a whole generation of, well...brats. The problem with little brats is that one day they will have to step out into the big bad world and they will have to come to terms with the fact that life doesn’t really revolve around them. They will have to compete with a million other brats who also thought, and are fighting to be the centre of the universe. The effective parent is wise enough not to keep playing this game. They grasp that the loving thing to do is to help their children come to grips with the fact that (in the words of The Rolling Stones) “*you can’t always get what you want*”. This lesson can daily be taught in a whole host of ways: not giving in every time the baby is throwing a tantrum, not allowing the toddler to grab a toy from his/her siblings, not allowing the child to interrupt a grownup conversation, not giving in every time the child is screaming in the shops for a sweet – even if you can afford to buy it!

#### 6. Effective parents know when to say Sorry

The effective parent is not the perfect parent. Nobody is perfect. There are many times when we mess up. We get home from work tired and stressed and so often the children are on the receiving end of our frustrations. We lose our cool over minor incidents, we fail to keep our promises and when they ask us to play with them, we often say “*no, not now, I’m busy*” when we’re actually simply lazy or self-absorbed. The effective parent is however adult-enough to own their own mistakes, weaknesses and shortcomings. They are willing to look silly in front of their kids and apologize for not loving them the way they ought to. They are humble enough to ask their children for forgiveness and patience as they seek to be a better parent. It is not the imperfect parent, but rather the parent who themselves lives above the “house-rules”, that end up disillusioning their children.

#### 7. Effective parents keep their marriage strong

It might sound like a cliché, but there is no greater gift a parent can give their children than to keep working on their marriage. Children are way more perceptive than we would like to acknowledge and they are masters at sensing when there is tension between the parents. Experienced schoolteachers will tell you that by merely looking at the work, demeanour and behaviour of their pupils, they can make an educated guess as to how things are going at home between the mom and the dad. There is a strong correlation between a healthy marriage and a healthy child. May we continue loving our children by continuing to love our partners!

Unlike the tips in Covey’s “*The 7 Habits of highly effective people*”, which might lead to you achieving business success and great financial riches, fostering the abovementioned habits will probably not get your face on the cover of ‘*Time Magazine*’! But that does not mean that you will not be wealthy! There is no man so wealthy as the man who has that which money can’t buy – namely happy, contented and well-grounded children who loves, and is loved by their parents.

Ensure you attend Childbirth Education classes. Find your childbirth educator today and learn more about classes so you can truly make informed decisions about your pregnancy, birth and parenting experiences.

[www.expectantmothersguide.co.za](http://www.expectantmothersguide.co.za)

