

## Transitioning into Parenthood

For some couples the transition into parenthood is filled with wonderful, exciting memories, and for others filled with anxiety and stress. Most men and women will experience a mix of emotions as they move through the series of changes which is the rite of passage to parenthood – pre-conception, pregnancy, labour, birth and the newborn period.

The wisest advice I can give for couples contemplating the journey to parenthood is to (with an open mind) read everything, ask millions of questions, listen to as many friends stories as possible, and then finally make decisions based on your intuition as to what seems right for you and your set of circumstances.

There is no doubt having a first baby is one of the most significantly life changing event in any person's life, so it's worth spending time mulling over some of the important concepts beforehand, such as who will you select to help support you through this process? It's really important to gather a good support network to assist you, such as: family and friends, a general practitioner, a private midwife, public or private hospital, selecting between delivery suite or the birth centre, a naturopath, a chiropractor, a childbirth and parenting educator, the local breastfeeding association, just to name a few.



Many couples find the experience of pregnancy more than they expected both in terms of adjustment and the feeling of thrill, excitement, anticipation and wonder.

The current generation of expecting parent's often describe themselves as 'pioneers' in comparison to the previous generation, as they have so many new and wonderful options the previous generation may not have been able to select. An example of this is the option of having their partner not only being present at the birth, but also very involved and supportive both physically and emotionally. Many men currently expecting their first child when asked, "Was your father at your birth?" reply emphatically "No!", and for the rare one who says "Yes!" they usually haven't had much of a description from their father as to what occurred – you could say for previous generation's it's all a bit of a blank.

Most grown men these days have been taught by their fathers how to mow the lawn, how to change a tyre on the car, how to BBQ steak and sausages, but can't confidently turn to their Dad and ask expectantly, "Dad how do you support a woman during labour?" it's a question that might possibly turn up a blank perhaps?

However, for the next generation it will be completely different, the vast majority of dads-to-be will be able to say “Ah well you’re asking me something that takes me back to one of the most incredible days of your mum’s and my life...on the day you were born and, by the way, because you were our first it was a bit of a long day and night actually, we spent hours in the shower with me rubbing your mum’s back for comfort, and then she decided to rest her legs as they were getting tired, so she laid in the bath under the midwife’s instruction and then next thing she pushed you out in the bath, it was the most incredible thing I’ve ever seen in my life, truly it was like witnessing a miracle! And then all of a sudden I remembered from our birth classes that if I wanted to receive the baby, and be the first person to hold you, to mention it to the midwife, which I did, and so she guided me easily into how to receive you. It was amazing I have never felt anything so soft and vulnerable in my life! I’ll never forget it, I looked up at your mum and she had tears in her beautiful eyes, and she was crying and I passed you up to her arms and she held you gently and quietly talked to you and cuddled you for a long time. Son, I hope you have an experience as wonderful as that when you meet your first child for the first time. It’s a memory your mother and I cherish together, and always will.”

I frequently hear from the dads-to-be attending my courses that, “I just don’t want to be useless to my partner during the labour and the birth, but I don’t know what to do?” I respond with many ideas and suggestions throughout the course, and I always recommend to couples pluck and choose what suits them best, as there are a wonderful variety of choices available to be able to create your own positive and memorable birth experience.

Underpinning all of my work in my classes is the philosophy of calmbirth® training, and that is encouraging, supporting and guiding family bonding between a couple as they prepare for the birth of their baby. To focus on the role and the value of each parent, the importance of mothers, and equally the importance of fathers in the life of their unborn and newborn baby. With this in mind, by encouraging enjoyment rather than stress and fear during the period of the pregnancy and birth, creates the space for a more conducive atmosphere for good solid family bonding. Relaxation, joy, hope, courage, determination, togetherness creates good strong loving relationships. In a nutshell that’s what it’s all about.

My Transition into Parenthood course covers birth and baby care aspects in a very practical way whilst the calmbirth® course guides the “thinking and feeling” preparation, and focuses on the important skills for labour. Plenty of couples prefer to do both courses for a well rounded sense of readiness.

Whatever steps you take towards childbirth, look for the things that both inform and nurture both of you in your transition to parenthood. It’s my passion and something I know creates the best outcomes for new parents.

Julie Clarke is a Childbirth and Parenting Educator & calmbirth® practitioner based in Sylvania in Sydney and can be contacted on 9544 6441 or visit [www.julieclarke.com.au](http://www.julieclarke.com.au) for courses and dates.