

BELIEF, HEALING AND EMPOWERMENT EXERCISES

Clearing A Space

GOAL: To help rid yourself of self-defeating beliefs and replace them with affirming beliefs; to help your affirmations work for you.

1. Pick an affirmation that is powerful for you.
2. Pick 2 colored pens.
3. Write down your affirmation.
4. Think about how it feels when you read it.
5. With the other pen, with your non-dominant hand, write down whatever first comes to mind in response to your reading the affirmation. Be honest.
6. Rewrite the affirmation in its original color with your dominant hand.
7. Write your reaction with your non-dominant hand. Be honest. Let your reaction be whatever it is.
8. Repeat this "dialogue" until you find that your response has become neutral or positive.
9. End by rewriting the affirmation one more time.

Changing your beliefs

GOAL: To discover and assess beliefs you hold that can help or hinder your birthing and to make changes if you judge change necessary.

1. Make two columns.
2. In the left hand column, write down beliefs you have about pregnancy, labor, or birth.
3. Next to the belief, in the second column, write where that belief came from.
4. Do you want to keep them all?
5. Make a separate list of beliefs you want to keep. Post it in a conspicuous place and refer to it.

Letter writing/Journaling

GOAL: To help clear unwanted, defeating feelings of anger, guilt, blame, or fear.

1. People sometimes retain these feelings from previous birth experiences. Try letter writing. You don't have to mail the letter, the healing is in the writing. Write a letter to anyone you need to: your doctor, your husband, yourself.
2. Another option is to simply create a list to help you forgive and release. One possible form for your list is this:

I forgive (name) for (deed).

Breaking cycles, avoiding patterns

GOAL: To affirm that you and your pregnancy and your birth are not the same as your mother and her pregnancy and her birth.

Find a quiet spot, play your favorite soothing music and write about your birth, when you were born, from your mother's perspective. Write as though you are your mother, birthing yourself. You may discover feelings you did not know were there! Remember, grammar doesn't count this time! Let your feelings flow.

Grieving

GOAL: To release feelings of grief which may interfere with labor.

Grief from past births, abortions, miscarriages, sexual abuse or the loss of a loved one can resurface during labor. It is important to express as much of your grief as possible before labor. Try letter writing or journaling. Allow yourself the time and space to fully mourn what needs to be mourned.

Celebration/Affirmation

GOAL: To affirm yourself for the ways you are caring for yourself and your baby; to assuage any lingering self-doubt from previous births.

1. Write a congratulations letter about your previous birth to yourself. Remember everything you did right: planning, eating, learning, loving.
2. If this is your first pregnancy, congratulate yourself for the ways you are mothering your baby now, what you are learning about pregnancy and parenting, how you are growing (as an individual or as a couple) or for the planning you are doing.
3. If letters do not appeal to you, consider making a list affirming the same issues.
4. How about a list for your spouse? Encourage her/him with a list of the things you like about what she/he did.
5. Some examples of affirmations for your list:
 - I affirm myself for eating well and exercising throughout my pregnancy.
 - I affirm myself for my ability to labor so long.
 - I affirm myself for acting in the best interest of my child.
 - I affirm myself for being strong enough to handle a cesarean delivery.
6. Affirmations don't have to be all about labor and birth. Write love letters to one another and to your baby. Exchange them or read them to one another during labor for a wonderful dose of love!