

WOMAN-CENTERED AND MEDICAL MODELS OF BIRTH: MIDWIVES AND OBSTETRICIANS

MIDWIFERY MODEL	OBSTETRIC MODEL
Midwives refer to the women they serve as clients.	Obstetricians refer to the women they serve as patients.
The woman maintains power and authority over herself.	Power and authority are handed over to the physician and hospital staff.
The woman shares responsibility and accountability for her care, along with her caregiver.	Physician assumes complete responsibility and accountability.
Mother and baby are a unit whose medical and emotional needs are complementary; what meets the needs of one meets the needs of both.	Mother and baby are separate patients whose medical and emotional needs may conflict; the mother's emotional needs may jeopardize the baby's health.
The goal is to assist the woman toward self-care as a healthy person in a state of normalcy.	The woman is encouraged to be dependent and is treated as potentially ill and in an abnormal state.
Emphasis is on pregnancy and birth as times of physical, psychological, emotional growth for the mother and baby.	Emphasis is on pregnancy and birth as times of stress and danger.
Birth is seen as the activity/function of a healthy woman.	Birth is seen as a medical event, requiring medical services.
The mother delivers her baby; the caregiver catches.	The doctor delivers the baby, either "from below" or, even more so, "from above".
A woman's pregnant body is beautiful and powerful and functioning perfectly.	A woman's pregnant body must be tested and measured and controlled to avoid disaster.
The birthing experience, itself, has a profound effect on a woman's mothering, her vision of herself as a woman, and on the life of her family. It is important, therefore, that her emotional needs be respected and satisfied.	Birth is exclusively about getting a baby, whatever the cost to a woman's body and emotions. The existence of a woman's emotional needs are rarely even recognized.
Birth is an indefinable, ever changing, completely personal mystery.	Birth is a flawed biological function which must be monitored carefully.