

TOUCHING AND COMMUNICATING: AN EXERCISE FOR EXPECTANT PARENTS

Labor and birth are all about letting go. I have found that even parenting is about letting go: letting go of your baby from your body, letting go of your baby as she/he begins to crawl and walk, letting go of your baby at your breast, letting go of your baby as he/she leaves for college. When we hold on to one thing, there is a tendency in our body to hold on to other things. This exercise will help you, as a couple, let go of the tensions between and within you. The letting go frees up energy and will help your or your baby's mother open and let go of the baby within you (or her).

Find a quiet time when each of you are rested and have adequate physical energy and can be emotionally invested in the process. Find a place where you will not be distracted, unplug the phone, put the kids to bed. Sit quietly across from each other with your knees touching. Close your eyes and sit quietly for a few minutes while relaxing your body and calming your mind. Open your eyes and look into one another's eyes as a reminder of your commitment to one another and your willingness to commit to this process with a loving and caring attitude.

Select which of you will share first. For the purposes of our example, "she" will share first and "he" will listen and encourage her by asking the following question: "What are you withholding?" She responds with a statement about her feelings. Statement made should follow the form of expressing feelings, not blame. It is appropriate to say, when asked, "I am withholding my anger at you for working late so much." It is not helpful to say "You are selfish with your time."

He responds simply with "Thank you" and no more. For example, if she were to respond with "My fear of labor," he cannot question "Why?" It is important that he (and she at her turn) simply listen and give thanks to her for sharing her feelings, even after the exercise is complete. The point is for each of you to simply express your feelings and be heard. The conversation will look something like this:

He: What are you withholding?

She: My fears about the baby.

He: Thank you. What are you withholding?

"He" asks the question until she can honestly say that she is no longer withholding anything of which she is aware. When her turn is complete, switch roles so each of you has the opportunity to let go of all that is withheld.

If one of you feels stuck and has nothing to say, the other should simply listen for a moment, then say "Thank you," acknowledging the effort and anything that may still be withheld.