

# WHY BRADLEY® CLASSES DON'T TEACH "THE BREATHING"

## "BREATHING" MAY BE HAZARDOUS TO YOU AND YOUR BABIES' HEALTH

Many childbirth educators are teaching dangerous breathing techniques which could lead to exhaustion, panic, hysteria, dizziness, hyperventilation, brain damage or worse. Fortunately many couples find complicated breathing patterns too hard and abandon them before adverse effects occur.

The reason for this misguided technique in labor is distraction. Distraction may be a valid technique (but not as effective as tuning-in to your body) for labor, but using breathing as the distraction may be very dangerous. Tapping ones toes, or fingers etc., would be much safer.

The Bradley Method® insists that mothers continue to breathe throughout labor and birth ...but normally. The natural breathing for human beings is abdominal or diaphragmatic breathing. This uses the least amount of effort (conserving energy) and is the most effective. That is why it is taught to patients with lung disease.

Breathing should be kept as slow as comfortable but should increase or decrease according to the amount of work the mother is doing. Women should never be made self-conscious about breathing, since this will change their pattern from normal. Nor should pregnant women be given a certain number of times to breathe per minute. This again is unnatural.

### SLEEP IMITATION OR RELAXATION IS THE KEY TO LABOR JUST BREATHE NORMALLY.

Under panic conditions whether it be in labor or another situation, people generally use chest breathing which creates panic, tension, pain, and more chest breathing. It is necessary to break this cycle with relaxation, normal abdominal breathing, and sleep imitation. Voice and touch relaxation from (the coach) and gentle guiding of normal abdominal breathing will generally restore calm, control, and comfort to labor.

At no time should anything but normal breathing be taught or used in 1st stage labor.

During 2nd stage labor the normal instinct is to take breaths, and hold for the normal pushing contraction. These instincts are normal and should be followed.

The question always comes up "What if a mother must stop pushing?". First of all this should be a very, very, very rare problem unless it is for the staff's convenience, not a medical necessity. Should this really be necessary it is my experience that panting works, but does not feel good,... blowing works, but does not feel good,... candle blowing works, and does not feel good... and all of these unnatural breathing patterns may be dangerous. Natural abdominal breathing "works" and does not feel good, but at least does not have the adverse effects of unnatural breathing patterns.

For these reasons The Bradley Method® does not teach anything but normal, easy to do, life sustaining natural breathing.

" 'BREATHING' IS AN OBSTETRICAL INTERVENTION ... JUS...  
SURELY AS IS DEMEROL... PEOPLE WHO USE BREATHING  
TECHNIQUES ARE NO LONGER LOW-RISK,"

Selected references:

"...hyperventilation of the mother with or without supplemental oxygen significantly reduces, rather than improves, the oxygen supply to the fetus."

"Hyperventilation is common among women in labor. It may be encouraged during natural childbirth or occur spontaneously because of pain, apprehension, or anxiety and go on continuously or intermittently for hours or even days."

"Since spontaneous or artificial hyperventilation is common in women before and during childbirth, these findings appear to be of clinical importance and may explain previously puzzling cases of perinatal asphyxia."

Lancet Feb. 5, 1966 Page 286-8

"Such training (childbirth education) should also stress the risk of excessive hyperventilation, unfortunately often advocated for women in labor."

Journal of OB/GYN British Commonwealth Vol 81 Page 611

"It is still the practice in many places to encourage as much as possible deep breathing during labor so that "a good oxygen supply is ensured for the baby" although such a policy was proved wrong many years ago"

Journal of OB/GYN British Commonwealth Vol 76 Page

"Hyperventilation occurs spontaneously in many women during labor; it is an integral part of Lamaze's technique for painless childbirth... (Hyperventilation) causes maternal hypotension and profound metabolic acidosis in the fetus."

American Journal OB/GYN Vol 91 page 76

"The term 'natural' implies the way it is done in nature, and anything that deviates from this cannot truly be called natural. Many imitators have appeared in the years that have gone by with a multitude of variations in breathing techniques with some rather odd activities to distract the mother from her uterine activity. Some groups have achieved the acceptance of doctors by stating that they are not trying to get the doctors to use fewer drugs and medications, rather they are trying to make childbirth "more meaningful," " What ever that means!"

Robert A Bradley, MD Husband Coached-Childbirth Page 13-14

"The description of "prepared" childbirth is more appropriate to Lamaze than "natural" (a term that is more often associated with... The Bradley Method®.)"

"Success has no relation whatever to the use of medication...Lamaze training is not preparation for an endurance contest... Medications are available when needed to enhance the labor experience"

"The couple does indeed, learn very precise and structured breathing patterns to control uterine sensations... It serves no useful purpose to ascertain how "natural" the labor and delivery were..."

JOGN Nursing March/April 1977 Page 53

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**AMERICAN ACADEMY  
of  
HUSBAND-COACHED  
CHILDBIRTH®**

**Teachers Information sheet**

**July 1974**

**BREATHING**

Breathing in Childbirth Education has been overemphasized. Originally it was a means of diversion or distraction in other methods. In the Bradley Method® we teach slow easy abdominal breathing since it is normal. Abdominal breathing is the type used by all other perspiring mammals having perspiration glands. Most men and children breathing with the abdomen naturally, it is only women we have to teach to breathe this way. Perhaps this is a result of concern with a flat stomach or the wearing of tight clothing.

HCC pg. 43 "5. The need of controlled breathing. Animals breathe in first-stage labor in the same fashion as in sleep. Because labor is what the term implies—hard work—the breathing is deeper and, as labor progresses, more rapid. pg. 61 "...learn to 'bulge' her abdomen out actively, deliberately, with each inspiration, and then let go and rhythmically let her abdomen drop back down with expiration. The weight of your hand laid lightly on her abdomen serves as a guide, ...your hand a ride on the waves." ..."This type of coaching is most easily achieved in the propped-up contour-chair position...."

Breathing is a normal bodily function!

**Purpose**

- A. get oxygen into the body tissues
  - 1. with decrease of  $O_2$  in system  $O_2$  goes to most essential organs first
  - 2. Medication given while  $O_2$  low would be higher in essential organs such as brain.
- B. Expel Carbon dioxide
  - 1. Waste product
  - 2. Controls desire to breathe
  - 3. low  $CO_2$  - respiratory alkalosis and PH increase
  - 4. Muscles give off  $CO_2$  during labor...harder labor more  $CO_2$

**Normal, diaphragmatic breathing, or abdominal breathing**

- A. Uses one muscle
- B. Most efficient type of breathing
- C. Conducive to calm relaxed attitude
- D. done at a rate and volume to maintain a balance of  $CO_2$  and  $O_2$
- E. rate is generally 1 to 1 1/2 to 3. It generally takes twice as long to exhale.
- F. Breathing should be slow and comfortable, and will adjust itself to amount of work being done.
- G. Breathing should be silent - noise means working too hard.
- H. Breathing through the nose provides moisture and humidification.
- I. Breathing through the mouth dries out the membranes - ice chips or a wet cloth needed.
- J. Breathing through the mouth permits larger supply of air and is perhaps a result of relaxed jaw.

## **Costal breathing, chest breathing**

- A. Uses the intercostal and accessory muscles of the shoulders and neck**
- B. More work - have to lift up the weight of the thoracic cavity**
  - 1. heart**
  - 2. lungs**
  - 3. rib cage**
  - 4. etc.**
- C. Not a natural form of breathing**
- D. Causes panic**
- E. Not efficient**
- F. Does not take advantage of capacity of lungs.**
- G. May lead to hyperventilation**
- H. NOTE: Complex, rapid, chest breathing cannot be used as an anesthetic or analgesic without seriously jeopardising mother and baby.**

## **Hyperventilation - Abnormal CO<sub>2</sub> caused by over breathing**

- A. Effects on mother**
  - 1. changes ph**
  - 2. causes maternal alkalosis**
  - 3. affects O<sub>2</sub> saturation**
  - 4. Increases blood pressure**
  - 5. constricts: blood vessels**
  - 6. changes level of potassium**
  - 7. affects cardiac rhythm**
- B. Effects on Baby (same as mother-plus)**
  - 1. affects baby before there are any visible**
  - 2. changes O<sub>2</sub> and body chemistry from normal**
  - 3. constrict's blood vessels - less O<sub>2</sub>**
  - 4. possible delay in breathing**
  - 5. cyanosis possible (lack of O<sub>2</sub> in tissues)**
  - 6. maternal alkalosis may be deleterious to the fetus**
  - 7. Virginia Apgar M.D. has said "babies from Hyperventilated mothers should be monitored 24-48 hours after birth."**

**Breathing changes because of pregnancy:**

**Quote from Obstretic Analgesia and Anesthesia by Charles E. Flower Jr. M.D.**

**"There is an increase in pulmonary ventilation of 42 percent in the patient at term. This represents a 20 percent increase in the tidal volume and respiratory rate. Pregnancy also requires a 10-15 percent increase in oxygen consumption due to basic metabolic changes in the pregnant female and the fetus. Moreover, there is an 18 percent reduction in the functional residual capacity of the lungs.... These diminished functional capacities in the pulmonary system permit very rapid changes in the concentration of gases in the lungs. Rapid changes in arterial oxygen saturation PCO<sub>2</sub>, PO<sub>2</sub>, and ph".**

## **THINGS TO REMEMBER**

**Slow-easy abdominal breathing is a reflection of good relaxation and may be used by coaches as an indication of relaxation.**

## **BREATHING IS A NORMAL FUNCTION**

**Breathing can alter behavior patterns**

**Breathing should be comfortable, slow, quiet, through parted lips.**

**Over concern about breathing can cause deviation from normal breathing.**

**Teach in contour position III. A. Husbands hand as guide**

**BREATHING CAN BE A DANGEROUS THING WHEN WE TRY TO CHANGE IT FROM WHAT IS NORMAL**

**"It's not nice to fool mother nature"**