

Getting it together

Sharing in birth elates dad

I've been involved twice as a parent in the birthing process. The first time was nine years ago and the latest occurred nine weeks ago. And I'm absolutely amazed at what a difference those nine years have made in the ways babies are born.

Mainly, the whole process has become more psychologically minded. It has become the emotionally satisfying and meaningful event that it should be, not just an exercise in loneliness and passivity like it used to be.

For fathers, the changes are incredibly important. Nine years ago, I was an interested outsider. I was outside the privacy of the doctor-patient relationship. I never even met the man who would deliver my son until three days after his birth. I was outside the

responsibility of planning and carrying out the delivery. I was outside the delivery room at the moment that my first son came squalling into the world. I was outside the window of the nursery as the nurse pointed to my little boy. And I was chased outside the maternity ward when it was time for my baby to visit his mother.

It sounds a little pathetic. But, actually, I didn't know how bad it was at the time. It was the way everyone was doing it.

ONLY NOW, having just been part of the birthing of my new son, can I see how comparatively empty that first birth was for the father, and even for the infant and his mother.

But I'm happy to tell you that modern birthing doesn't have to be that way.

If you carefully select your physician and hospital and actively pursue a natural, family-oriented process, it can be a sensitive, satisfying, loving adventure.

Thanks to the pioneering efforts of French doctors LaMaze and LeBoyer and to the research of new-born specialists, human emotions have finally received the attention they deserve in this key event.

Of course, some professionals still argue that caring about how pleasant the delivery room feels is just a gimmick to attract fad business. They complain that minimal medical intervention and maximum father involvement are just popular frills that are not essential to producing a good, healthy birth.

As a psychologist and recent new father, I couldn't disagree more strongly.

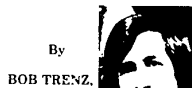
CURRENT scientific research on new-born infants has dispelled the traditional misconception that newborns are no more than instinct-driven organisms, without ability to appreciate the difference between mechanical, institutional treatment and personal, loving care. In fact, some scientists argue that those first hours are of crucial importance to the new child and to the parent-child relationship.

Finally, many professionals are seeing that a good birthing is not just one that produces a physically healthy mother and child. A good birth is sensitive to the emotional needs of everyone involved.

In a good human birthing, the mother, father, and infant are bonded tightly together at the moment of delivery. They should feel like a close-knit team at that moment, with the professional staff as assistants and side-line coaches. Birth shouldn't feel like something that is just happening to them. It should feel like a three-person creation, a victory to be celebrated.

AFTER THE BIRTH, I am utterly convinced that mother, father, and child should not be separated. That's when a three-way bonding process needs to occur, a cementing of their togetherness. But this would be drastically interrupted by placing the infant in the institutional care of the nursing staff and sending the father home.

With non-medicated births, these



By
BOB TRENZ,
Ph.D.

first hours are even more crucial. You would be as convinced as I am of this need if you could see the constant alertness, extending for as long as 24 hours, and watch the absorbent attitude of an infant who was born without medication.

As a father, no single aspect of the new birthing methods is as important to me as the maximum involvement of fathers in the whole process. Sensitive doctors are including fathers in early examinations, monthly check-ups, and all decisions about the delivery.

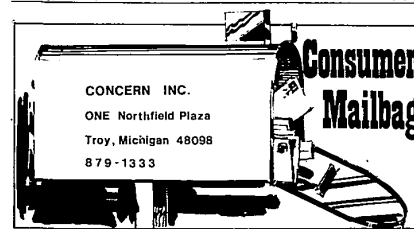
Husband-coached, natural childbirth methods provide an opportunity for real involvement.

In contrast to the bump-on-a-log feeling I had at the birth of my first son, I felt like this recent birth was my effort, too. In fact, I bristle a little when people say, "So you got to watch, eh?" I didn't just watch. I helped. And I felt crucial to the whole process.

THERE'S BEEN tremendous progress in the childbirth business. And there are even better ideas on the horizon. Outpatient births are already available at some local hospitals and clinics. Home deliveries are on the rise; and post-partum stays on maternity wards are getting shorter and shorter.

You shouldn't get the idea that these new good ideas are easily available from all doctors and hospitals, however. A large percentage of birthing professionals are still attached to more artificial, less family-oriented attitudes. As in any field, technological progress spreads slowly.

But, if you're willing to shop for your obstetrician, educate yourself, ask questions, request specific approaches, and persuade hospital staffs to individualize their methods, you can look forward to a memorable, creative experience—a human beginning for a new human and his family.



I try to be a careful shopper and read labels. Why do some foods have nutritional labels while others don't?

Nutritional labeling is not mandatory across the board. Only foods that make a nutritional claim or have added nutrients are required to carry a nutritional panel. For example, almost all cereals have nutritional labels because they are fortified with vitamins and minerals, while such foods as potato chips and canned vegetables are not and so usually do have this information.

Is the list of ingredients on a product useful in determining the quality of a product?

Marcia G., Southfield
Absolutely. The ingredients are listed in descending order by weight, the most first, the least last. This is an excellent basis for comparison shopping for quality and price. For instance, if a pre-sweetened cereal lists sugar as the first ingredient, there is more sugar in that cereal than anything else. The wise shopper could then compare other cereals and decide if it would be more economical to buy unsweetened cereal and add as much sugar as their taste required.

I sometimes feel I need a degree in chemistry just to do my weekly marketing. How can reading labels help if I don't know what I'm reading? Can

you help define some of the terms used on labels? What's BHT and BHA?

Shirley M., Southfield
BHA and BHT (butylated hydroxyanisole and butylated hydroxytoluene) are preservatives, more specifically anti-oxidants. They are found in everything from vegetable oils to gum. There is concern that they have not been adequately tested and may cause cancer and genetic defects. Concern recommends they be avoided. To help you with some of the most commonly used additives Concern, Inc., Detroit offers a fact sheet, "The Truth About Additives. For a copy send 10 cents and a stamped self-addressed envelope to Concern, Inc., Detroit, 1 Northfield Plaza, Troy 48068. What is the GRAS list?

Tom A., Troy
In 1958 Congress passed a law requiring manufacturers to test a new chemical for safety prior to using it in food. Additives already in use before this date were accepted as being safe solely on the basis of their having been used in food for many years; scientific evidence of safety was not required. These are the chemicals of the GRAS list, (Generally Recognized As Safe).

For additional information send 25 cents and a stamped self-addressed envelope for Eco-Tips No. 6, Food, Chemicals and Health.

GRACE R. GLUSKIN
executive director

Diabetes classes set

A winter series of diabetes classes offered by the South Oakland Health Center, 27725 Greenfield, Southfield. Register by calling the health department at 424-7058. The classes are taught by public health nurses and a nutritionist.

Attendance is limited to persons who have the disease or have a family member who has the disease. A written statement from a doctor is required for attending and can be presented at the first class.

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Volunteers

The Oakland County Volunteer Bureau, a program of the Volunteer Action Center of United Community Services, has weekly lists of agencies needing volunteers. Further information about these and over 200 agencies needing volunteer services may be obtained from the volunteer bureau, 643-7272.

OFFICE ASSISTANT—The Attic Theater in Greetown is looking for volunteers with some office and people skills to work one afternoon a week in the theater office. Duties include answering the phone, helping with mailing, filing, and handling routine office duties. Help is needed every day, but especially on weekends. Hours are noon to 4 p.m.

BOWLERS—Volunteers who enjoy bowling and would like to assist blind bowlers in scoring are needed by the Blind Recreation Society in Pontiac.

Help is needed also in transporting the blind to the bowling alley and back to the society's office on Thursday mornings. Also needed is someone who could take a blind man home from the bowling around noon on Thursdays.

OFFICE WORKERS—Volunteers with some office or organizational skills are needed by the National Foundation for March of Dimes' office in Birmingham. This would be a limited commitment through March.

DRIVERS—Adults with drivers licenses who would be interested in driving cancer patients to medical appointments are needed by Michigan Cancer Foundation. Urgent help is needed in Southfield, Birmingham, and Hazel Park, although drivers from any section of Southern Oakland County would be welcomed. Drivers are not called more than once a week.

YW offers running room

Runners and joggers in the northwest area may find exercise room at the Northwest YWCA, 2940 Grand River, Redford Township. A small fee will be charged to help cover

direct expense and it will be necessary to reserve by the preceding day since the facility will not be opened unless there is sufficient request. Call the YWCA, 337-6500, for reservations.

Lutheran Singers plan 3 concerts

The Lutheran Singers, a 50-voice choir representing churches all over the metropolitan area, will present concerts in Southgate and Livonia Sunday, March 5, and in Grosse Pointe Woods Sunday, March 12.

The performances will be at 3:30 p.m. March 5 in Christ the King Lutheran Church, 15900 Trenton, Southgate, and at 7:30 p.m. the same day in Faith Lutheran Church, 3000 Five Mile, Livonia.

Christ the King Church of Grosse Pointe, located at 20338 Mack, will be

the site of the 7:30 p.m. March 12 concert.

The singers, directed by Eric Freudenman and accompanied by Frank Kuhlmann at the organ, will present in all three concerts Bach's "Christ Lag in Todesbanden" and other choral favorites by Brahms, Mendelssohn, and Thompson. An orchestral ensemble will accompany some of the works.

There is no admission charge, but an offering will be taken at intermission.

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