

Waikato Home Birth Association Inc. Newsmagazine 1999



Maggie Banks
Te Awa Rd
RD 3
HAMILTON

Exp:7/00

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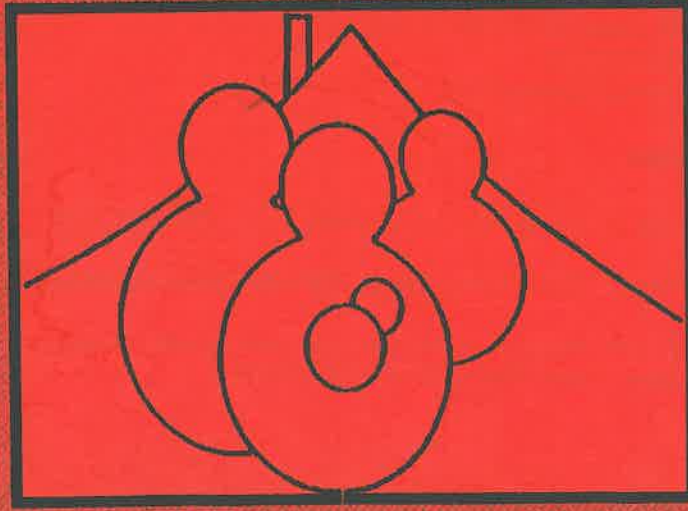
Waikato Home Birth Association Inc
P O Box 15043
Hamilton

WHBA CORE GROUP MEETING
Monday 20th September - 7pm
66 Ayrshire Drive, Hamilton
Phone (07) 846 4925
*** ALL WELCOME***

Waikato Home Birth
Association Inc.

Newsmagazine

September
1999



WAIKATO HOME BIRTH ASSOCIATION
P O Box 15 043, Hamilton
<http://whba.homepage.com>

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Sheryl Wright	(07) 828 8226	Newsmagazine Editor
Dianne De Estena	854 9686	Birth Preparation Classes
Clare Shallcross	855 6997	Immunisation Awareness Support Group

LIBRARY:

The WHBA Library is now located at "Parents Place" 113 Rostrevor Street, Hamilton Ph 838-2229 Please phone Joanne Ridder if you have any problems.

NEWSMAGAZINE:

We welcome your contributions but reserve the right to edit or decline at our discretion. Every effort will be made to ensure that all details are accurate but we accept no responsibility for errors or omissions.

Please send your birth stories, photos and articles to:

Sheryl Wright
 "Strathcroft", 492 Great South Road, Huntly
 Phone/Fax (07) 828 8226
 e-mail: dew.sm.wright@xtra.co.nz

Advertising rates:

Advertising space is available in our newsmagazine. Our rates are:
 \$15 (Full A5 Page), \$10 (1/2 A5 Page), \$8 (Business Card Size)
 We also offer a 10% discount for pre-paid runs of 6 months or more. For more information please contact Sheryl Ph (07) 828 8226

Deadline:

Material for the next newsmagazine is accepted up to midday on the 20th of the month.

SUBSCRIPTION FORM

If there is a GREEN spot on this form then it is time to renew your subscription.

No green spot? Pass the form on to a friend.

The \$20 minimum fee will list me as a member of the association and entitles me to 11 issues of the Newsmagazine and use of the library, located at "Parents Place", 113 Rostrevor Street, Hamilton, Ph 838 2229

POST TO:

Waikato Home Birth Association
 P O Box 15 043, Hamilton



Annual Subscription (your choice)

\$20 \$25 \$30 \$35 Other

Practising Midwife Professional Sub (\$50)

Cheque Enclosed for

\$
 \$
 \$

Name:

Address:

Phone:

"Have you Considered a Home Birth?" Booklets
 Free copies of these booklets are available for distribution by Midwives who are financial members of the WHBA. Copies are also available free to interested members. For non financial members of the WHBA there is a 50 cent charge per copy.
AIHA: A Guide to Healthy Pregnancy & Childbirth
 These books are also available for purchase at \$25 per copy.
 Please contact Joanne Ridder Ph 847 4987

MOTHERHOOD: A CONVERSATION BETWEEN FRIENDS.....

We are sitting at lunch when my friend casually mentions that she and her husband are thinking of "starting a family". "We're taking a survey," she says, half-joking. "Do you think I should have a baby?" It will change your life," I say, carefully keeping my tone neutral. I know," she says, "no more sleeping in on weekends, no more spontaneous vacations...." But that is not what I meant at all.

I look at my friend, trying to decide what to tell her. I want her to know what she will never learn in childbirth classes. I want to tell her that the physical wounds of child bearing will heal, but that becoming a mother will leave her with an emotional wound so raw that she will forever be vulnerable. I consider warning her that she will never again read a newspaper without asking "What if that had been MY child?" That every plane crash, every house fire will haunt her. That when she sees pictures of starving children, she will wonder if anything could be worse than watching your child die. I look at her carefully manicured nails and stylish suit and think that no matter how sophisticated she is, becoming a mother will reduce her to the primitive level of a bear protecting her cub. That an urgent call of "Mom!" will cause her to drop a soufflé or her best crystal without a moment's hesitation.. I feel I should warn her that no matter how many years she has invested in her career, she will be professionally derailed by motherhood. She might arrange for childcare, but one day she will be going into an important business meeting and she will think of her baby's sweet smell. She will have to use every ounce of her discipline to keep from running home, just to make sure her baby is alright.

I want my friend to know that everyday decisions will no longer be routine. That a five year old boy's desire to go to the men's room rather than the women's at McDonald's will become a major dilemma. That right there, in the midst of clattering trays and screaming children, issues of independence and gender identity will be weighed against the prospect that a child molester may be lurking in that restroom. However decisive she may be at the office, she will second-guess herself constantly as a mother. Looking at my attractive friend, I want to assure her that eventually she will shed the pounds of pregnancy, but she will never feel the same about herself. That her life, now so important, will be of less value to her once she has a child. That she would give it up in a moment to save her offspring, but will also begin to hope for more years - -- not to accomplish her own dreams, but to watch her child accomplish theirs. I want her to know that a cesarean scar or shiny stretch marks will become badges of honor. My friend's relationship with her husband will change, but not in the way she thinks. I wish she could understand how much more you can love a man who is careful to powder the baby or who never hesitates to play with his child. I think she should know that she will fall in love with him again for reasons she would now find very unromantic. I wish my friend could sense the bond she will feel with women throughout history who have tried to stop war, prejudice and drunk driving. I hope she will understand why I can think rationally about most issues, but become temporarily insane when I discuss issues that will effect my children's future. I want to describe to my friend the exhilaration of seeing your child learn to ride a bike. I want to capture for her the belly laugh of a baby who is touching the soft fur of a dog or a cat for the first time. I want her to taste the joy that is so real, it actually hurts.

My friend's quizzical look makes me realize that tears have formed in my eyes. "You'll never regret it," I finally say. Then I reach across the table, squeeze my friend's hand and offer a silent prayer for her, and for me, and for all of the mere mortal women who stumble their way into this most wonderful of callings - that of being a Mother.



Editorial...

Hi again!

Isn't it lovely to see spring here at last and to enjoy the lovely spring flowers popping up everywhere, the warming weather and the days getting longer.

Spring really is a time of new beginnings and we've had some new spring beginnings in our house with our baby Celina starting to learn to walk - an exciting yet sad step as we realise she is no longer a baby and now enters toddlerhood and all the mischief and discoveries that come with that!

Of note this month in the magazine:

On page 13 are details of our pie fundraising venture - we ask that **ALL** members please make the effort to support us with this - if everyone could just sell one or two pies the Core Group could instead of continually fundraising spend our time on services for members and promoting Home Birth Awareness in the Waikato.

Also on page 12 we have a wonderful offer for members (or anyone else you may know!) - a free birth videotaping service. Georgianne is one of our Childbirth Educators at our Birth Preparation Classes and she really would appreciate your support to be able to attend a few more births to complete her certificate.

Until next month - happy homebirthing

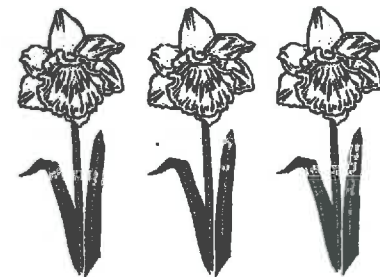
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e-mail: dew.sm.wright@xtra.co.nz

my webpage: <http://mysite.xtra.co.nz/~wright>



Are you "Arty" or "Creative"???

The Core Group is considering having some "Home Birth" T-shirts printed as a fundraiser and is looking for some design ideas.

* Should we use our current logo - or do you have a new idea?

* What wording would you like to see? Or a catchy slogan? *

SEND YOUR IDEAS TO:

T-Shirt Design
 Waikato Home Birth Association
 P O Box 15 043
 Hamilton



COMING EVENTS

September to October

Please note these dates on your Calendar

WHBA Core Group Meeting: Monday 20 September, 7pm 66 Ayrshire Drive ph 846-4925. Contact Gabi Klapka ph 855-6718 for the agenda.
Note: Special Meeting at 7pm to discuss changes to WHBA Inc constitution. ALL MEMBERS INVITED TO ATTEND.

Immunisation Awareness Support Group: Sunday 3 October, 2pm at Parents Place. **Gold coin donation. Guest Speakers, Dr Alex Jones and Dr Oliver Russell** - "Cranial Osteopathy for babies and children with a particular focus on looking after your child's immune system." Contact Clare Shallcross ph 855-6997 or Joanne Hodgson 855-7742 to register interest and confirm details of the address. "For an Informed Choice" tapes - two copies are available to borrow from the WHBA Library.

Home Birthers' Coffee Morning: Thursday 30 September, 10am, bring a plate and share morning tea at 40 Vardon Rd. Bring your babies and toddlers. Welcome to all members. Contact Bridgid Devich ph 849-9478. **Meeting regularly on the last Thursday of the month.**

Cambridge Home Birth Support Group: Tuesday 5 October, 10am bring a plate and share morning tea. Bring your babies and toddlers. Contact Tania Bullick ph 827-5165 or Vanessa McCall ph 827-4516 for details of the address. Welcome to all members. **Meeting regularly on the first Tuesday of the month.**

The Awamutu Home Birth Support Group: Thursday 16 September, 10am bring a plate and share morning tea. Contact Karene Clark ph 07 871-9114 for details of the address. Welcome to all members. Small library available.

Preparation for Birth Classes: Weekend Series: Saturday 16 & 23 October, 2 - 6pm, followed by a Labour Support evening on **Thursday 28 October, 7 - 9pm** at "Parents Place", 113 Place, **5 week series begins Monday 15 November, 7.00 - 9pm** at "Parents Place", 113 Rostrevor St. Contact Dianne De Estena ph 854-9686
Raglan Preparation for Birth Classes: Saturday 13 November, 10am - 3pm. Contact Adele Buckton ph 825-8942.

Pregnancy Yoga and Relaxation Classes: Thursday evenings, 5.30pm, at the St Andrews Church Centre, 6 Te Aroha St. Contact Paulette Whitford ph 847-7033.
Te Ahuru Mowai o Waikato - Whakawhānau ki te kainga. The Sheltered Haven Homebirth for Maori Women. Contact Rangimarie Hohaia 07-871-5858

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Immunisation Awareness Support Group

Sunday 3 October,

2pm at Parents Place. Gold coin donation.

Guest Speakers: Dr Alex Jones BSc(Hons) Ost London, and Dr Oliver Russell BSc(Hons) Ost London, from "The Osteopathic Clinic" 717 Grey St Hamilton.

Topic: "Cranial Osteopathy for babies and children with a particular focus on looking after your child's immune system."

Contact Clare Shallcross ph 855-6997 or Joanne Hodgson 855-7742 to register interest and confirm details of the address.

Waikato Home Birth Association
 Birth Pool for Hire
 For Details Phone:
 Glennis Head 846 4925
 Belinda Beetham 823 2902



BIRTH NOTICES



On	these parents:	had a:	named:	where:	Attended By
21/6/99	Carol & Ian Williams	Son	Dylan	Hamilton	Cathy/Megan/Miriam
7/7/99	Penny & Wayne Knuiman	Son	Ziggy	Raglan	Cathy/Megan
11/8/99	Pare & Andrew Philp	Daughter		Hamilton	Paulette
12/8/99	Maria Graham & Mark Haimona	Daughter	Parearau	Raglan	Cathy
15/8/99	Rebecca Turnbull & Stephen Wright	Son	Hamuera	Raglan	Paulette/De
18/8/99	Corina Renata & Mike Maihi	Daughter	Mikayla	Hamilton	Paulette/De
22/8/99	Kathryn & Doug Bridge	Daughter	Gaia	Hamilton	Adele/Hannah/Miriam
22/8/99	Kirsty & Doug Milne	Son	Bayley	Raglan	Cathy/Megan
29/8/99	Jean May	Daughter		Hamilton	Adele/Miriam
31/8/99	Cheranne & Marcus Edwards	Daughter	Samantha	Tokoroa	Lyndsay
1/9/99	Shelley Walker & Simon Dodds	Daughter	Laura	Hamilton	Megan

Internet Site of the Month:

This page features a homebirth story and a full set of amazing photos of the whole birth.

<http://members.home.net/mcmahan/niel.html>

Recipe of the Month: Homemade Baby Rusks

Remove crusts from thick slices of stale bread. Cut the bread into fingers or use shaped cutters. Put the bread on a baking tray and bake in a very slow oven (130oC) for about 1 hour or until dry and hard. Allow to cool thoroughly and store in an airtight container.

(Editor: My kids - big and small - love these!!)

Birth Story

Catherine Hayley-Maree Smith
2.4.1999

After a wonderful homebirth experience with my first child Sarah, three years earlier, I was looking forward to the birth of my second child at home.

Deciding on my Midwife was easy, with the superb care Paulette gave first time around having her again was a natural choice and I looked forward to our get togethers. Having visits which were over an hour long were common as we shared advice and tit bits over a cup of tea.

As the time neared for this baby to be born, I remember saying to Nikki (Student Midwife) with great certainty that I believe this baby will be born on the 2nd of April and that a 10hr labour would be nice (Sarah's was 15). March the 31st came and so did twinges of pain by 6am I was walking around the house with a hot water bottle telling my husband he wouldn't be at work long. (I guessed my prediction for the 2nd was wrong). By 11am all the pains had gone! but by 6pm that evening they were back again only to settle few hours later.

I went to bed wondering if I was going to see this baby soon. Lying down in bed was uncomfortable to say the least, up and down to the toilet several times in the night and only comfortable on my right side. (I have no idea how women who birth in hospital lying on their backs do it).

April the 1st came and went, the house was clean and tidy, but still no sign of baby. Another sleepless night, up at 2am again YEAH a bit of a show, up at 5am managed to sleep for an hour and a half on the sofa. Pains beginning again at 6:30am, into the shower by 7am they were becoming quite intense, a quick call to Paulette and then to my sister, Linda who was to be part of the support crew. Fortunately Sarah was at Gran's, so Steven and I could spend some time together, he began filling the pool, which by now I was very eager to get into as contractions were VERY intense and close together. This was very different to Sarah's labour.

I looked at the clock, 8:30, I said to Steven I don't think I can do this much longer. Paulette and Nikki arrived just before nine; it was wonderful to see them! I said to Paulette things had really picked up and I now had feelings of wanting to PUSH.

A recent study conducted by Ethel Burn & Caroline Blamey evaluated the benefits of essential oils in a labour ward. The essential oils chosen for study were:

LAVENDAR: was the most popular oil and was used to reduce maternal anxiety for pain relief and to lighten the mood.

- ❖ Circulatory stimulant
- ❖ Slight analgesic effect
- ❖ Calming
- ❖ Antiseptic, anti-inflammatory
- ❖ Promotes healing of wounds
- ❖ Headaches & fainting.

PEPPERMINT: was the oil mostly used for nausea and vomiting during later stages of labour.

CLARY SAGE : was the oil used most to increase contractions, however once in labour the tendency was for woman to feel more anxious and lavender was used again preferred oil to relax them.

NEROLI:

- ❖ Helps relax between contractions
- ❖ Calming
- ❖ Antiseptic

ROSE:

- ❖ Uterine relaxant
- ❖ Natural antiseptic
- ❖ Slight analgesic effect
- ❖ Helps relax between contractions

- Use a few drops of bergamot or lavender added to bowl of warm water to help refresh & disinfect the atmosphere.
- A week before your due date start to soften the perineum by using oil made of 5 drops of Rose Marco to each 5-ml almond oil. Once a day rub a little oil along the perineum this will encourage elasticity in the area and help prevent tearing during childbirth.

Article and information kindly supplied by:

Melissa Savage

Essential Oils Consultant

For further information please phone: (07) 828 8974



AROMATHERAPY FOR BIRTH



Preparing for Birth:

Babies are remarkable aware of the environment outside the womb. It is now thought that as well as being aware of the emotional state of the mother and the sounds she hears, the baby is also aware of the smells its mother inhales. If she is aware of these, the mother can prepare the environment so that it will be reassuring for the newborn baby. For a few days before the birth, at least, spend some time quietly relaxed listening to soft and gentle music rubbing your tummy and letting your baby know that everything is all right. The same music can be played on a cassette player in the delivery room, thus reducing the contrast between the womb and the outside world. While you relax at home listening to the music and communicating with your baby burn essential oils you will be using in the delivery room in a diffuser so that all the senses become inextricably linked in baby's mind: relaxation, welcome, music and aroma. When your baby is born it will be into an environment he or she recognises as being related to the mother and, moreover, to the mother being relaxed.

Essential oils in the delivery room should be used in a diluted form - not so much to fragrance the room as to cleanse the air and provide a familiar, welcoming aroma for the baby. Mix your chosen essential oil or oils with a small amount of water and use on a diffuser or on a cotton-wool ball under the pillow or on a radiator. Don't overdo it; you don't need a great deal and you don't want the midwife to get spaced -out. Lavender or neroli make excellent delivery room oils - used individually, not mixed.

To ease the mother's task during delivery, massage is widely recommended these days, especially as the partner is often present to do the job. Using a special mix of essential oils, we can incorporate the benefits of massage with those of the oils, and at the same time contribute towards the cleanliness of the air and ensure that the baby will have a pleasant aroma to greet him or her.

Labour with Aromatherapy:

- The birth process can be supported by the use of jasmine compresses or massage in the sacral area when suffering pain.
- Cooling refreshing compresses of rose water can be used for general relief.
- Juliette Guenier found Lavender to be not only calming for the mother but also the father and midwife. Aromatherapy is now being used by an increasing number of health professionals involved in childbirth.

I urged my team onwards to finish filling the pool, so that I would have some relief; I was trying to stay upright and mobile but was fast slowing down, being supported by Steven as he cuddled me and massaged my lower back was just great.

I hopped into the pool just as my waters broke at 9:30am, relief from the water was just great, the contractions quickly changed becoming less intense and further apart Linda arrived with frozen chocolate, yum! And she was quickly updated with my progress.

I was gently pushing and breathing through each contraction. I couldn't believe how fast things had gone and how easy this was compared to Sarah's labour. Paulette was encouraging saying that second births are often much quicker and I had probably done lots of gearing up in the last two days, I definitely agree with that! I stated "This baby is not far away from being born!" I could now feel baby's head and lots of hair, my support crew with lots of oohh's and arr's and comments about how dark it was confirmed this. I said to my team two more contractions and this baby will be out! And so it was Catherine Hayley-Maree was breathed out into the world at 10:14am on a beautiful autumn morning caught by her Daddy and then handed to me.

She breathed and pinked up immediately and after a few wee cries was keen to latch on to my breast. After the placenta was birthed Linda and Steven cut the cord, Daddy was then able to have his first cuddle; I was ecstatic laughing and crying at the same time, she was and is, just beautiful and perfect completely covered in vernix.

Linda soon rustled up morning tea for us all as baby and I settled on to the sofa and recounted the morning's events. After weighing dressing and admiring Catherine my wonderful team tidied up. Paulette and Nikki gathered their things and left while I took my new wee girl to bed for a rest in bed.

I would once again like to thank Paulette and Nikki for their quiet encouragement and splendid support, my sister Linda, who I hope I have now encouraged her to have her babies at home and my wonderful supportive loving Husband; Steven you are just fabulous. And me for being so blessed to have two beautiful home birth girls.

Quote of the Month:

"It's a funny thing about life; if you refuse to accept anything but the best, you very often get it." -Somerset Maugham

SIBLINGS AT A HOMEBIRTH – A PARENTS GUIDE

By Sheryl Wright

I thought it would be good to include in the magazine an article on having older siblings at a homebirth, especially as with the homebirth option many parents today are considering or planning this, but I was unable to find a specific article, just a lot of references, so I decided I'd have just have to put them all together and write one myself.....

Things to consider:

Firstly the most important thing to consider is the willingness / desire of the child to attend. It is also very important to acknowledge the child's rights to decide at any time that they don't want to see the birth. Some children are very excited about it beforehand, and change their mind at the time, and vice versa. It could be traumatic to make a child watch a birth that they don't want to.

Secondly how do you feel about having your children there? It's important that this is your decision and others do not convince you that this would be a good idea. Some women just can't imagine not having them there to share such a special event, whereas others do not want the distraction of having them (or anyone else) present. Be prepared to play it by ear and be open to changing your mind.

Some advantages are that watching the birth of a sibling is a great bonding experience for siblings and can help reduce rivalry - and its wonderful early sex education for kids, hard evidence that birth happens or should happen in the context of a loving family. Many women find that having children there "grounds them" and gives them something else to think about during labour.

Some other points to consider are:

- If labour begins at night do you want to wake them? With younger children it may be best to not wake them until well into labour.
- If a transfer to hospital becomes necessary, do you want the kids to accompany you? Some children may be frightened by the change of location, huge weird beeping machines, procedures (eg episiotomy), unfamiliar hospital staffs and the concern they can sense. Make sure they are prepared for this, or if they are not going to come, make sure there is someone to stay with them and answer any concerns they have and to make sure they do not feel deserted.

Preparation:

Once the decision has been made to include them the next step is to make sure they are fully prepared. Here is a list of ideas:

- start with Mum & Dad talking a lot about "when the baby comes out",
- read age appropriate books with parents and be open about any questions they have
- look at birth photos and talk about the process
- watch birth videos

Beaut Pies Fundraising



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Please send your orders (please specify type and filling) with cheques to: Glenlisse Head, 66 Ayrshire Drive, Hamilton by 20th September. Pies will be available for collection from the 24th September

Any queries please phone (07) 847 4987

WANTED:



Co-Ordinator for WHBA advertising.



This would only be a small role and would mainly involve organising our advertising for the Birth Preparation Classes in consultation with the Class Co-ordinator. You would not necessarily have to be a Core Group Member. For more info contact: Dianne (07) 854 9686

Having a Baby ????

Have you ever wanted to have a birth video of your baby to add to your personal collection of treasures but have no person with a video camera to tape it?

Let us do it for you!!!

WAIKATO CHILDBIRTH EDUCATORS ARE OFFERING A:

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We also offer:

- ◆ free information about birth services in the Waikato
- ◆ free no obligation labour support / massage to women and support for their birth companions

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- practise making "labour noises". Strange noises seem to be one of the biggies that bother's kids - even the bigger ones! It can be done in a fun and humorous way so when the time comes the noises are not unfamiliar.
- draw pictures of mummy pregnant and of the baby being born
- get into a pushing position and make "pushing noises" together - explain that mum will be doing hard work and it might sound like she's in pain (and will be in pain) but it's a "good pain"
- talk about the "good blood" that they will see
- movie's or even real life experiences of people working really hard at something are invaluable for kids as they prepare for birth eg Olympic competition, marathons, weight lifting, etc. showing people who are working hard, red in the face sweating, grunting or yelling with exertion and happy to be doing it!
- involve them in antenatal appointments - let them build up a trusting relationship with your midwife and ask the midwife to let them listen to the babies heart, show them the different "baby parts" by feeling your belly, allowing them to touch and see all the items in her birth bag etc.



- play with someone else's newborn so they are expecting a baby not an instant playmate
- try role playing eg imagine pushing a refrigerator across the kitchen - what does your face look like? what sounds do you make? - this is letting them know that mum's pushing noises are just the sound of hard work.
- use age appropriate terms eg something like "Mummy might moan" to call the baby to come out"
- explain that mum won't be able to help anyone else, and Grandma (or whomever) will be there just for the child.
- remember young children interpret events they observe according to the interpretations of the other people around them. If other people are very calm, they'll assume that this is a safe, calm event. Most young children are not "grossed out" by mud, poop or blood.

• Remember the senses:

- Sight: what birth looks like, what the baby will look like, what the placenta looks like, what white vernix is etc.
- Sound: the loud sounds that mummy might make, the crying of the newborn etc
- Smell: remembering mummy might not like a particular food smell while in labour, the smell of amniotic fluid, baby etc
- Touch: practise comforting touches, massage etc or maybe Mummy won't want to be touched at all etc.
- Taste: what Mum might like to eat / drink while in labour etc.

Caregiver for the Child:

It is important to have a Caregiver for EACH child so that the birthing mothers support people are not distracted or involved in caring for the child's needs. Choose your support person carefully - they must be fully supportive of your choice and not easily freaked out - kids will pick up the moods and negative energy of those around them. If no one in your family is suitable remember there are many aspiring child/birth educators, midwives etc who are very eager for the opportunity to observe ANY homebirth. Also another woman considering the homebirth option may see this as a wonderful opportunity to see first hand what it's all about.

However the Caregiver must be committed to staying or leaving - whatever the child expresses a desire to do. So if you think they might try to influence your child to stay so they can see the birth, choose someone else. Make sure the children have plenty of time before the birth to become comfortable with the Caregiver and that the Caregiver knows all of the child's routines and preferences and where things in your house are.

Keeping Kids occupied During the Birth:

Especially with smaller children it's important to have plenty for the child to do, as they really don't understand why birth takes so long. Here are some suggestions:

- Give the child a disposable camera - in addition to giving them something to do with their hands, it will give everyone some nice photos, and maybe their own personal photo album of the birth, which should enhance the bonding even further! Also, cameras can have the effect of distancing the photographer from the immediacy of the event, so this would provide them with a way of remaining present while reducing the intensity if it's getting to be too much.
- Have the child prepare a backpack etc filled with snacks and a cassette player with headphones, book etc. Have them pack their favourite pillow and sleeping bag if they want to "camp out"
- During labour have them bake and decorated a birthday cake to eat after the birth or maybe colour some pictures for the baby.

Roles in the Birth

Allow each child to participate at its own comfort level. Maybe assign their own special "birth helper" job eg announcing the sex, cutting the cord, helping weigh and measure the baby, cutting the birthday cake, announcing the new arrival to everyone who arrives after the birth or making some announcement phone calls etc.

Some Personal Accounts

- My daughters were 5yrs4mos and 3yrs1mo when their brother was born. My mother and grandmother were there for the kids. My 5 year old was totally into it, rubbing my back and breathing with me. After the birth she said, with wonder in her voice, Oh Mummy, congratulations! That was so great. My 3 year old mostly remembered that after the baby was born she got a Popsicle!
- My daughter was just turned 5 when she came to the birth of our third daughter. She was very "experienced" at seeing birth because she had watched ALL of the birth movies that I previewed during my pregnancy. She told me that she would not be scared and that if I screamed too loud that she would just cover her ears! We made sure that Lauren had a lot of things to do i.e. sticker book etc. in case it was a long haul. Well, the baby was born after only 35min. Right after the baby was born, Lauren exclaimed, "I didn't even have to cover my ears!" And, to show how normal birth is and the fact that children recognise this, as they were delivering the placenta, Lauren rushed over to me exclaiming, "Mum, LOOK! Look at my STICKER BOOK!!!!" Lauren is soon to be six now and still is talking fondly about "being there" when her sister was born. In fact she will still give anyone a play by play account of the birth if they give her a chance!
- A friend of mine told me about a birth where young siblings were present and the Mum made very, very loud noises during the labour. Afterwards, the Dad asked the 2-year-old whether she was frightened during the birth. The 2-year-old responded that she had never been frightened because the midwives kept saying, "You're doing great. Everything looks good." Sometimes we forget how much little ones depend on adults to interpret their experience for them. There are things that scare adults that won't scare a two-year-old who feels safe because all the adults are acting calm.

My Own Experience

I asked Dylan (5yrs) what happened when Celina was born (he was 4 ½ at the time) and this is what he told me:

"Granny made Shaun and me scrambled eggs for dinner. There was a pool there too but we didn't get the baby born in it though cause we didn't want to that day. Rose helped us to get the baby Celina out of our tummy. Mummy pushed her out of her tummy so hard and I went outside with Grandad looking at things and then Grandma came and said Celina is born so we went inside and saw her and she screamed and I had a cuddle with her and that was good and it was a girl and then me and Shaun went to bed and then the other people had dinner. In the morning we woke up and I came into my Mum's room and I said "where is Celina" and Mummy said she is in her bassinette so I went there very very quietly and I saw her fast asleep and she was very tiny not like she is now."

I asked Shaun who was just 2 at the time and he started to tell me about something that happened yesterday ☺