

Mind and Body Birthing

*Hypnobirthing*

# Positive Birth Stories



Told by mothers, for mothers to inspire and  
uplift the next generation of birthing women

by Gemma Struzena

# Hello and Welcome!

My name is Gemma Struzena, I'm a certified hypnobirthing teacher and proud mum of two gorgeous girls and I am so happy to have you here!

Wherever you are on your pregnancy journey, reading positive birth stories is a powerful way to prepare yourself for your own positive birth experience.

This collection of stories is filled with real experiences from real mothers who've birthed before you.

I hope that from these stories, you'll start to feel a sense of calm confidence, and inspiration. There is so much we can learn from reading the stories of women who have birthed before us.



*There is so much we can learn from reading the stories of women who have birthed before us.*

Wishing you strength, peace, and the most beautiful birth ahead!

*Gemma xx*

# What is a positive birth?



A "positive birth" is an experience where a woman feels empowered, supported, in control, respected, and generally has a positive perception of her birth journey: regardless of the specific way her baby is born. Whether it be vaginal or Caesarean, with drugs or without, a positive birth is an experience where a woman feels safe, informed, and able to navigate her wishes during pregnancy and birth feeling calm and confident.

- **Feeling supported:** Having a supportive healthcare provider and birth partner who respects your choices and needs.
- **Sense of control:** Actively participating in decision-making and manage the birthing process. Confidence in expressing your birth wishes, wants and needs.
- **Respectful care:** Being treated with dignity and kindness throughout pregnancy, labour and birth.
- **Access to information:** Having accurate and comprehensive information about the birthing process as well as a good understanding of your options for giving birth.
- **Feeling safe:** understanding what is happening and feeling calm and in control throughout.

A faint, light green background illustration of a woman's profile, facing right. A heart shape is integrated into the design, positioned near the woman's head. The overall style is soft and artistic.

# Gemma's

home  
birth story

# Gemma's birth story

**This is the story of my first birth. After completing a hypnobirthing course and learning about birth I knew that a home birth was something I wanted. My baby girl was born at home, in the birth pool after only 8.5 hours of labour.**



When I started my pregnancy I had assumed I would give birth in a hospital. My image of birth and the experience I would go on to have as a first time mum could not have differed more greatly. Before I completed my hypnobirthing course I thought giving birth was going to be something painful and very medical. But as I began to learn about the process of birth through my course I realized that a home birth was something that very much appealed to me. As my birth partner did the course with me he understood how safe a home birth was and seeing as we lived only a 20 min drive from the nearest hospital we decided to plan for a home, water birth.

I remember as part of my birth prep watching a video of a woman birth her baby using hypnobirthing in a birth pool. She was just breathing calmly one minute and then picked up her baby out of the water the next. It was the most incredible thing and that image really stayed with me. I thought – that's what I want!

In the days leading up to me going into labour I felt fine. My pregnancy had been very straightforward and I had kept active with lots of walking and cycling. My due date came and went. I had a friend whose due date was after mine and she went into labour before me! My due date was January 2nd and on January 13th I had a midwife appointment. I decided not to have a sweep but asked her to see if she thought baby would be coming soon. As I was planning a home birth, the midwives were only insured to attend for 14 days past the due date. I was already 11 days passed at this point and I didn't feel close to labour compared to other birth stories I'd read about women having their show or cramping. I felt nothing! The midwife examined me and said I was 1cm dilated!! That meant my body was beginning to make the changes it needed and so I felt reassured baby would soon be on the way – and she was!

That night I woke up around 1am with some light cramping. It felt a bit like stomach ache and I went to the toilet and pooped (twice!!) so I thought it must have been something I ate!!! I didn't realise this was a normal part of your body getting ready for birth! I was in and out of sleep for the next couple of hours and then at around 3am the cramping sensations were getting a bit stronger so I decided I wanted to practice my breathing. I woke my partner up and asked if he wanted to go and sleep in the other room as I was "having some cramps" and wanted to practice my up breathing. He was more than happy to go as I was anyway disturbing his sleep!! Haha!!

"It all felt very manageable."



After he left I turned the lamp on in the bedroom and decided to use an app to track my surges. After 3 surges it told me I was in established labour – well, I thought, that can't be right. It all felt very manageable! So I tried timing a few more surges and again it told me I was in established labour – which meant I would need to call the midwife. By that time it was around 4am and I thought I wouldn't disturb the midwife in the middle of the night. I decided to wait until around 6am and then I would wake my partner and we could call the midwife then. So for the next 2 hours or so I just continued to breathe through my surges. I remember messaging my friend who lived in Canada and was on a different time zone to me. I didn't tell her I was in labour – we just chatted for a bit!



At around 6am I went to wake up my birth partner. I told him he might not be able to go into work that day as I was having cramps and was probably in labour! (probably!! Haha!). He initially said "okay" and rolled over back to sleep! I went back into the bedroom to continue breathing through the surges. After a few minutes my partner cottoned on to what was happening and came to see how I was doing. He got out his birth partner checklist and was reading through to see if there was anything he should be doing. He started trying to count my breathing through the surges but I found that really annoying so I asked him to stop. I mostly felt like I wanted to be left alone!!

I remember telling him to call the midwife and he said he wanted to check I was actually in labour first!! Haha! I agreed – it was all so manageable, and I was a first time mum so I didn't know what it was supposed to feel like. I also didn't realise how far along I was – I thought it would take ages. This was around 7am – little did I know I'd be holding my baby 2.5 hours from then!!

“It felt amazing to have the water on my back during the surges.”

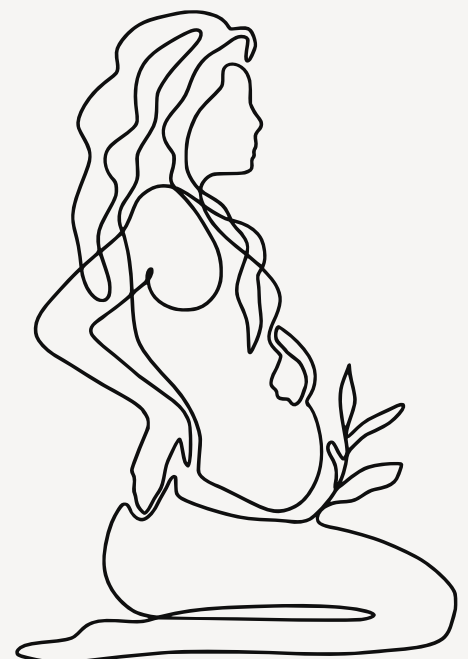
So my birth partner got dressed, had a coffee and some breakfast and was reading the news on his phone. I had a shower – it felt amazing to have the water on my back during the surges. I even shaved my legs as I knew the midwife would be coming soon.

At around 8am I heard my husband on the phone to the midwife. He told her I'd been in established labour for about an hour – well, it had actually been about 4 hours at that point according to my app!! She said she would be there in about 45 mins.

After this I remember something really changed with the sensations. Whereas before I had been breathing through each one with ease, now they were starting to get more powerful and intense. There was a new kind of pressure (which I now realise was the baby moving further down). I remember leaning on all fours over the sofa and wanting to crouch down lower and closer to the ground. My body was leading me through and definitely wanting to be in UFO positions. As I was leant over the sofa on all fours I remember focusing on my breathing and repeating the affirmation "I can do anything for a minute". At this point I began to get a bit worried that the midwife wasn't there. I remember saying to my birth partner "where's the midwife and you need to fill up the birth pool". I then felt the urge to go to the toilet. My birth partner had to help me there. When I got there I realised that I'd had my bloody show.

While I was on the toilet I heard the midwife arrive. She asked where I was and my partner said "she's on the toilet – don't go in!" Kudos to him for trying to keep my privacy!! I think I called through the door to let her in – I was so relieved that she had arrived and as soon as I saw her I said "I think I need to push". She asked if she could have a look and said "oh yes, I can see the baby's hair!" Then she said that she had left her bag with all her stuff downstairs in the car (she had not expected me to be so far along already). My quick thinking husband told her to stay with me and he rushed down to the street with her car keys to find her car and the bag and get it for her.

The next 30 mins or so I was in my zone so not really aware of what everyone else was doing. My husband told me afterwards he spent this time rushing to fill up the birth pool. I remember needing to squat as the baby was pressing down further. The feeling was really intense and felt like a lot of pressure but not at all painful.



When transition hit I starting asking for help. The midwife was amazing and calmly helped me into the birth pool (even though I didn't really want to move at that point) and I'm so glad she did. 2 surges later the head was born and then on the 3rd surge my baby was born. In the birth pool, at home like I wanted. I have to admit that I was in a bit of shock after she was born and couldn't stop shaking!

*It was the most amazing and incredible feeling to know  
that I did it: - I birthed my baby!*

It was definitely very powerful and intense but it was not at all painful. It was amazing. I sat in the birth pool enjoying skin-to-skin with my baby and after about 20 mins I had another surge and my placenta was born – it felt like birthing a jellyfish!! Haha!!

My whole labour had lasted only 8.5 hours from my first surges at 1am to the birth of my baby at 9:30am. I truly believe I would not have had this incredible birth without hypnobirthing and I'm so thankful that I signed up to a course, did the practice and that I had the most supportive, chilled, and open-minded partner with me as well. I am also really thankful for the amazing midwives. When I told them during my pregnancy that I was considering a home birth they said "okay" They didn't try to put me off by saying I was a first time mum so I wouldn't be able to do it. They were really supportive and amazing!

*Gemma*





Molly's

home  
birth story



# Molly's birth story

**Molly is a first time mum who gave birth to her baby girl at home. She said "I feel in awe of my body and mind and grateful for everyone who supported me."**



I found out at 4 and half weeks that I was having my first baby, pregnancy was fine apart from usual sickness until 13 weeks and pelvic girdle pain at the end, we felt very lucky to have (what we would call) a low risk pregnancy. Don't get me wrong pregnancy was hard at times, work was very stressful and naturally pregnancy bought up a lot for my partner and I about how to navigate this change in our lives.

I started pregnancy yoga sessions at around 15 weeks and looked forward to each week's hour and a half of pure focus on my baby. I found it extremely blissful and rewarding to connect with my baby away from the hustle and bustle of every day life. Around the same time I started to look into Hypnobirthing. It blew my mind when I read women were choosing home births for their first babies and that they could take control of their birth preferences and even where/how they had their babies.

"I found it extremely blissful and rewarding"



It lit a spark in my mind that perhaps I'd want to birth at home, but I was quickly switched off this idea by families worries that 'it was my first' and hospital was 'safer'. So, I started to explore water birth and water as a form of pain relief. I came across a lot of information about high BMI in regard to not having your birth preferences honoured in a hospital setting. Especially when it came down to having a water birth. My BMI is regarded as 'high risk', despite having no concerns throughout my entire pregnancy and delivering a very 'average' sized baby. I was reading that I would have to strongly advocate for myself (basically convince health professionals that it would be my risk to take on), that I wanted to use a pool and go to the birth centre. It made me feel uncomfortable, that perhaps my weight would control the birth of my baby if I were to have her in hospital.

This bought me back to researching data around home births and asking questions about what it would be like to birth my baby at home. I learnt about potentially having more time with the midwife than in hospital, having more of a chance of producing endorphins and oxytocin and having access to home comforts which would potentially encourage things along. I decided that for me, home birth would be the best option to feel in control, empowered and at ease.

I felt confident by 28 weeks ish that we had done the research to support our home birth decision. Our midwife was supportive but always informed us of the additional risks due to my high BMI, which we knew of. We were lucky that our local hospital has a fantastically holistic home birthing team, so we didn't need to worry about not having availability/support etc. In addition to the midwives I had my access to weekly yoga classes and my hypnobirthing course and hypnobirthing teacher who really helped us to finalise our birth preferences and talk through concerns. For me, I found this reassuring as I had a supportive network who were qualified in knowing the benefits and risks who I could rely upon and understand my body/decisions and future birth throughly.

So it comes to the labour.. I was around 36 weeks when my mucus plug went and had just come on maternity leave (thank goodness!) I carried on like normal but was secretly hopeful and excited to meet my baby soon. The following week I had mild period pains, checked out by MAU and confirmed I had 'tightenings' but it still could mean weeks or days.

The day before I started labour, I met my friend's baby, watched nostalgic movies from childhood, ate a delicious curry I still dream about, ate dates, pineapple and drank raspberry leaf tea! At 5am the next day I awoke to stronger period pains but I carried on like normal. I let my partner rest whilst I made myself some tea, in this time I felt a trickle and saw some more mucus and a little tiny bit of blood. The show! How exciting - it was starting! I tried having a bath to ease the pain but oddly I didn't enjoy the heat, I was then sick - I knew this was another sign of being in labour so we called triage to let the midwives know of our home birth beginning.



From around 8am-12pm my partner and I began setting up the room and pool. I even ate some strawberries and a croissant! It was a beautiful day so I did some walking in the garden and listened to my favourite chilled music. The midwife came. I accepted an examination and was 6cm! I was so proud of my body and thought "I can do this"! She helped me use a tens machine and checked on baby every 15 minutes. Another midwife came too and they set up in the kitchen, I could hear them chatting away. I got in the pool and found the water a dream. There's a great photo of me eating a solero in the pool whilst my cat watched from her cat tree! The time went so quickly and before I knew it my midwife was telling me that she had to swap shifts with another two midwives.

I found the contractions manageable and listened to my music playlist on repeat, it reminded my body of calmness and gave me goosebumps that 'it was all happening'. Throughout the day I declined more examinations but I wanted to check how many cms I was dilated before my midwife left as we trusted her judgement. I was 9cm at 5pm! I was thrilled. She wished us well whilst the other midwives came in.

Contractions were very close together now and lasting a while so I knew my body was doing its job but wondered why my body hadn't felt the urge to push yet. The midwife suggested it may have been because my waters hadn't broken. She suggested she could break them, as I was going for low intervention I was reluctant to say yes. We used our B.R.A.I.N learnt from hypnobirthing and decided to accept. The midwife broke my waters at 9pm which felt like a huge relief!

I jumped back in the pool and hoped for the best. I felt my sacrum move to allow baby's head to come down - an amazing but uncomfortable feeling! I felt the majority of contractions in my lower back but was lucky to gain relief from the rest in between them. I accepted gas and air occasionally but found it disorientating at times. Around 10pm I was reminded that if I could push, to try. I think we all wondered why baby wasn't quite here yet. This is when my doubt came in, I was convinced I'd have to be transferred into hospital even though I could feel how low and ready she was. I quickly reminded myself this was my transition stage and that I was close to meeting my baby.

"I was so proud of my  
body and thought -  
I can do this."

Quickly after this I asked the midwife to pull her out! If only! I found the pushing the 'hardest part' and even though I had written in my birth preferences to not coach me to push - I welcomed being told exactly what to do. After a few more surges in the pool, my thighs began to cramp which distracted me from pushing. The midwife encouraged me to move and perhaps try out of the pool but it was hard to make decisions/movement especially how much I had relied on the water this far. At 11pm I managed to get out, kneel by the sofa and start pushing. My noise changed and I felt like I was connected to my inner cave woman! My partner and midwife talked me through it.

“I was connected to  
my inner cave  
woman!”

An hour and five minutes later, our baby girl was born. Healthy, average sized and safe. The midwife supported my perineum so I had no tears. I can't praise the midwife who delivered her more, she informed us when we needed to, she trusted my body and was just incredible. I accepted the injection to deliver my placenta, whilst delayed cord clamping and skin to skin were achieved. My partner had her on his chest whilst I was inspected for any tears which was a special bonding time for them both. She was here, I had done it!

I write this 6 weeks post partum, I feel lucky that I had this experience but also wish that others can too. I feel in awe of my body and mind. I feel grateful for everyone that supported me. I feel emotional but positive. I hope my story shows you can use hypnobirthing to have the birth you wish despite BMI and gives you hope. My mind did change at points but that's okay, trust your intuition and everything will be okay!

“I feel in awe of my  
body and mind.”

Molly



Sarah's

birth centre  
story

# Sarah's birth story

**Sarah was a first time mum who chose to birth in her local birth centre. She said "the birth was the most perfect experience I could have wished for."**

The week before Agnes arrived, I had been experiencing some lower back aches and pelvic tightening. Eating dates and drinking raspberry leaf tea daily might have had something to do with this! Despite this being our first baby and unsure of exactly what these signs meant, my instincts told me that something might happen before long.

On Wednesday 26th September I had some bump photos taken at home which made me feel very close to the baby. I then drove into Manchester to have lunch with my husband at my favourite pizzeria, followed by an afternoon of shopping. By the time I got home I was exhausted but had had the most wonderful day doing things I love. All in all, I'd had a pretty big dose of oxytocin that day!

That same night at 1.30am, my waters broke in my sleep; I woke up thinking I'd wet the bed! I woke my husband up to tell him things had started. Initially we were very keen to go straight to the birth centre, however at this point, I'd only had some aches that were few and far between. My husband Alex suggested we "BRAIN" the decision to go to the birth centre. At this point, having listened to my body and considered the timings of my surges that Alex had noted down, we decided it was better to stay put and get some rest until I had progressed further. So we had some food and went back to bed. I managed to rest with my husband, but by 6am my surges were starting to get a little stronger. I ran a bath, lit some candles and listened to my hypnobirthing MP3. I then woke Alex up at 7am to let him know that my surges were strengthening, so he made us some more food, continued to monitor the timings of my surges, and we made our way to the birth centre.

When we arrived, the midwife asked me a few questions, but as I was able to talk through my surges and wasn't exhibiting any signs of stress or strain, she didn't believe I was very far along and suggested we go home. Instead, I decided to listen to my body as I could tell that things were progressing at a good pace and that I should stay. The midwife therefore recommended I get in the birthing pool to see whether this would either slow down or accelerate the pace of the birth. I was very happy to do this, so we went into the room I'd hoped to give birth in and Alex set about making it homelier.

We had a birth playlist on, lavender scent diffused in the room, and the sun was beaming through the windows. As soon as I was in the pool, I felt really relaxed and Alex gave me clary sage to smell on a damp flannel throughout my surges. He was by my side constantly feeding me water, encouraging me and mopping my brow. After about 2 hours in the pool, I could feel the surges building and Alex noted that I had reached the '3 in 10' point. I asked him to update the midwife, so she came back to check on me and asked if I'd like an examination. I had previously thought I wouldn't want one, but knew I was making good progress (plus part of me wanted to prove to myself that my instinct to stay at the birth centre was right). It turned out that I was already 4cm dilated, which was a delight to hear!

"I ran a bath, lit some candles and listened to my hypnobirthing MP3."





I then bounced on the birthing ball for a short time, ate some dark chocolate and got back into the pool. From then on, the birth really sped up. I was fully dilated within 30 minutes; this first stage had been very, very quick. The midwife then started getting things ready in the room and I began to really focus on my breathing and visualised relaxing scenes, coached by my wonderful husband Alex. In one of my most powerful surges, he encouraged me to think about a balloon ride we had taken on holiday in Burma, which helped me through it enormously. Towards the end of the transition phase, I asked for some gas and air to help me along. I started to feel the urge to push and steadily changed my breathing technique to get the baby moving, coached along constantly by Alex and the midwife.

“I felt the urge to push  
and steadily changed  
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technique to get the  
baby moving.”

Gradually however, I felt the gas and air was actually making me feel spaced- out, drowsy, and was slowing the birth down as a result. So I stopped taking it and instead just focused on my breathing. I felt very animalistic at this point as I breathed and made noises through each surge. The midwife and my husband were hugely supportive and helped me keep things moving; advising me on when and how to breathe and push. Not long after this point (only 45 minutes after I was fully dilated), Agnes was born in the water at 12:56pm. The midwife guided Agnes between my legs towards me and I scooped her out of the water. I held her close to me on my chest until the cord stopped pulsating, and my husband cut it. I then handed her to Alex for some skin to skin, while I got out of the pool and delivered the placenta naturally in one push over the toilet.

Alex handed Agnes back to me for a feed and she latched on properly right away; it was almost like she had done this before! It was a joy to watch her little mouth feeding so intently. I was checked over and was delighted that I had no tearing and required no stitches.

The birth was the most perfect experience that I could have wished for. I had written down my birth in the past tense the week before, and what actually happened was the same almost word for word. I felt hugely empowered by the hypnobirthing course we did; the main thing I took away was to trust my instincts and do what I felt was right for my baby and my body. My husband Alex was the best birth partner in the world – he kept me calm, hydrated and even made me laugh throughout – I couldn't have done it without him. We now have a beautiful baby girl, who is the most amazing creature I have ever seen, and who entered this world in an extremely calm and relaxed way.

*Sarah*





Victoria's

birth centre  
story

# Victoria's birth story

**Victoria used the hypnobirthing she learned to have a positive birth at her local birth centre. Victoria was 39 weeks pregnant when her waters broke at home. Baby Joshua was born naturally after only 4.5 hours of labour!**

It was the August bank holiday weekend and the weather was miserable. This worked in my favour as it meant I had an excuse to set up camp on the sofa, watch loads of TV and snack all day. After spending the Sunday indoors due to the rain, my partner Steve got a little cabin fever and so on the bank holiday Monday we ventured into town and Steve treated himself to a Virtual Reality headset. Naturally I wanted a go, so there I am 38 + 6 days pregnant at home, in my PJ's, experiencing a virtual shark attack and shooting on a range like I'm in a cop film! I was completely relaxed and at ease, as was Steve, and we were just having fun at home.

By that point, I had been experiencing period-type cramps for about a week but they were very mild and not at all uncomfortable. I just assumed it was baby engaging but to be on the safe side I had put a towel down on my bed 'just in case my waters went'.



“I was completely relaxed and at ease.”

That night, I woke up with a bit of backache. I sat up and Steve rubbed my back for a minute then I was fine and went straight back to sleep. Again, this was nothing uncomfortable and I assumed it was because I had slept in an odd position as I only experienced it once. In the early hours of Tuesday morning, at 2.40am I heard a little pop and felt fluid in between my legs. When it felt a little more slippery, I knew it wasn't just a wee. I gathered up the towel and Steve stirred as I hobbled around the bed to the bathroom. He asked if everything was ok. 'I think my waters have gone', I said smiling and getting excited. Upon closer examination in the light, I could see it was definitely my waters and the 'plug' had come away too.

I called the birth centre and they advised we go in so they could check the fluid. We took our hospital bag and the car seat, although we thought we would be home again in an hour or two and not be back at the hospital for another day. On the way to the birth centre I had a few period pain type cramps. We arrived at the birth centre and walking from the car I had a few more that were more comfortable if I stood still. Again however, they were not painful and perfectly manageable.

As we arrived the staff were very welcoming, all was well with my waters and they gave us the option of either going home or staying for an hour or so to see how things progressed. We decided to wait and it's just as well we did. We arrived at the birth centre at about 3.30am and by 4.30 / 5am I was having 3 surges in 10 minutes that were lasting at least 40 seconds each. I stayed upright and walked around the room and in between each surge you really do just feel completely normal. Steve was there rubbing my back during each surge and we were both very relaxed, knowing from our hypnobirthing course what to expect, and that everything I was experiencing was gearing up to us meeting our baby boy.

It was quite amazing! I laid on my back so that the midwife could listen to baby's heart rate. She took her hands away and said 'you are having a contraction'. A few seconds later I could feel the surge starting.

It was amazing how she could see my body doing its thing, before I even felt anything. I have to say at this point, I had two surges laying down on my back whilst the midwife listened to baby and they were the most uncomfortable, so from that point on, I was on my feet. Although the midwife did check to make sure my cervix was dilating (at my request) she could not tell me how far dilated I was as she didn't want to risk infection at this early stage. Knowing my cervix was dilating however, was enough for me. Now the surges were coming more frequently and stronger, I found myself leaning over the bed and birth pool so staying mostly upright. This was the most comfortable position for me and whilst I tried bouncing on the ball, I felt sitting on it was almost blocking baby. The midwife said to let her know if I wanted any pain relief. I thought things would get more intense so wanted to hold off even gas and air until I felt I would benefit from it most.

By about 6.30am (I guess as by this point things were getting a little more serious and I lost all concept of time) I found myself on all fours on the bed and 'in the zone'. The surges were coming pretty consistently now and I could really feel things happening. The midwife was telling me to listen to my body, and it was incredible how I really felt my body doing all the work. The only thing I needed to do was breathe and every now and then, ever so gently push to aid baby's head crowning. But this was the smallest of pushes and my body really did just take over.

*"My body really did  
just take over."*

I realised at this point that I wasn't moving from that position and this was confirmed when I asked the midwife to run the water for the birthing pool and she said 'I can my dear, but it takes 20 minutes', inferring that baby was going to be out in that time. I felt the crowning more in my bottom and not at all in the front to the point that at one point I was sure he was coming out the 'wrong hole' but they assured me he wasn't!

My waters had broken at 2.40am and Joshua Steven was born 4.5 hours later at 7.24am at 39 weeks weighing 6lb 7oz without any pain relief. Josh had the cord wrapped around his neck and a knot in the placenta and he came out a little blue. But with the constant monitoring of his heart rate and the midwives' amazing support, Josh was delivered safely and soundly and was having a little cry in no time. I then went on to deliver the placenta naturally by sitting on the toilet with a paper bowl in the pan, and had stitches following a second stage tear inside (I had gas and air for this as I was very sensitive down there at this point and didn't have the drive of getting a baby to aid me through). After some tea and toast and Josh's final checks, we went home that evening to start our new adventure as a little family.

*"It taught us to be comfortable. calm and trusting of my body"*



I really think that hypnobirthing played a huge role in my quick labour. Not only did the course provide us with an in-depth understanding and awareness of birth (what to expect, our choices, the options and the different routes birth can take), but it taught us to be comfortable, calm and trusting of my body, making it an amazing and wonderful experience.

*Victoria*



Rhiannon's

home  
birth story



# Rhiannon's birth story

**After an “amazing” home birth with her first baby, Rhiannon decided to birth at home again with her second baby. She said “It's so lovely to be in your own space after giving birth. You can really soak up all those cuddles in privacy and peace.”**



I had my first son at home in the middle of the pandemic and despite everything going on in the world, it was an amazing birth. I used the tools I'd learnt in hypnobirthing throughout so even when things didn't go to plan, I felt calm and in control. When I became pregnant again in 2023, I knew I wanted another home birth.

I woke up at around 4am feeling unmistakable surges. They were fairly regular but not very close together. My birth partner and I set up our living room as we'd planned to. This included LED candles, my birth playlist, low lighting and happy photos playing on the TV in a slideshow. At around 6am, my toddler woke up and I felt my surges slow down. I no longer felt as comfortable (I didn't want to scare him) and I could feel my body slowing down. Our bodies pick up on such subtle signals. My father-in-law collected him at around 7am and I instantly felt more relaxed again and surges began to increase in frequency.



My surges quickly became intense and I felt the urge to rock my body throughout them. I listened to my body and did this. I decided to have a bath, which helped for a while, and then continued to move through the surges, using my hypnobirthing breathing techniques all the time. My birth partner called the midwives to tell them I was in labour. They didn't come out yet but told us to ring again if anything changed.

By 10am, surges were incredibly intense and their duration was increasing. I started to feel increasingly uncomfortable and was breathing deeper and requiring more and more energy to focus on my affirmations. I had a bit of a “wobble” but my birth partner continued to reassure me, rub my back, offer me water and stayed by my side reminding me that I was so close. Looking back, I was in transition. I'm so glad we did hypnobirthing together as he knew this too and was able to keep calm and bring me back to my calmness.

“I'm so glad we did  
hypnobirthing  
together.”

I asked for the midwives to be called again. They said someone was on their way. I got back in the bath. Very quickly, I felt the urge to push and shouted to my birth partner, who rang the midwives again. They said the midwife was on her way but hadn't made it yet. I could feel the baby moving down the birth canal at this point so the midwife on the phone advised my birth partner to call an ambulance so that we could have a medic there if needed. He then ran downstairs and left the door open for the midwife so she could come straight in when she arrived.

*"I felt so powerful."*

I felt the stinging sensation of my baby's head as he crowned. I felt so powerful. My birth partner was on the phone to the ambulance service, who were advising him to put his hands under me but before he could, our son had entered the world and I had caught him. Within seconds, the midwife was in the house. "We're in the bathroom upstairs. he's here," was my exclamation. I was honestly on such a high.

2 ambulances arrived after that, but only one crew stayed once they knew we were both healthy. The midwife and the paramedics stayed and did all the checks on me and baby. I needed stitches, which they did while baby and I enjoyed skin to skin for our golden hour. They also put the towels in the wash for us and made cups of tea! By 3pm, I was showered and on the sofa with a take away cuddling my newborn.

*"It turned out to be the most empowering experience of my life."*

Home birth gives you a real chance to rest. It's so lovely to be in your own space after giving birth. You can really soak up all those cuddles in privacy and peace. If anyone had have asked me whether birthing with no midwife was something I'd have wanted, it would have been a hard 'no'! But, with the trust I had in my body as well as the strength of mind hypnobirthing had given me, it turned out to be the most empowering experience of my life.

*Rhiannon*



A faint, light-colored background illustration of a woman's head and shoulders, rendered in a sketchy, artistic style. A small heart is visible on the left side of the illustration.

*Nav's*

birth centre  
story

# Nav's birth story

**Nav had a positive natural birth at her local birth centre. She said "our midwife was amazing and followed all our guidance on our birth plan".**

My contractions started at 3.30am. I left Taj sleeping, to rest for the day ahead. I made myself comfy on the sofa, with a hot water bottle and watched back to back episodes of "Keeping Up With The Kardashians" (secret guilty pleasure). The surges were 5 minutes apart at this point and I breathed through them.

During the day we listened to the MP3 scripts, used the breathing and massage techniques, ate Domino's, watched some of our favourite shows and tried to remain as relaxed as possible.

The surges intensified towards the evening. We'd been in regular contact with the birth centre throughout the day and were advised to come in at this point. We got there around 12am and our lovely midwife Laura had set up the birthing suite with dim lights, candles, relaxing music and the pool all ready (we'd made them aware that we were hypnobirthing).

We brought along our own candles, fairy lights etc. but didn't even end up getting these out of the car!

I chose to be examined at this point, but the midwife was unable to see how dilated I was as the babies head was quite low. I got into the pool around 1am, which eased the pain of the surges somewhat. I continued to breathe with the surges and we welcomed our little baby boy Kyan into the world a few hours later, weighing 7lb 14oz.

I managed it without any pain relief, no gas/air and luckily I also avoided any stitches, which I believe was due to us remaining calm throughout all the stages of labour and letting my body slowly do what it needed to.

Our midwife was amazing and followed all our guidance on our birth plan, she left us to it and was there when we needed her.



"Our midwife was amazing and followed all our guidance on our birth plan."





*Katie's*

hospital  
birth story



# Katie's birth story

**Katie was 9 days past her due date and used her hypnobirthing tools to help her have a positive hospital water birth.**

Losing the plot a little a few days before the birth (being 9 days over), I wrote a birth story as if I could choose one myself. It's amazing how close this turned out to the real thing. I put this down to staying calm and focused with the help of my hypnobirthing.

I started with low-level early surges at 3am on the morning of the 14th April at home and set up the day ahead as a relaxed and chilled out one. Reece was working at home that day so we lit the log fire and whilst he worked, I watched some TV and sat bouncing on my ball. His parents came round with the biggest bar of galaxy chocolate I'd ever seen and I tucked into this and had a nice relaxing day!

"I continued to breathe with the surges."

By evening the surges had gotten stronger and closer together but I was determined to stay in my peaceful haven as long as possible before heading to the hospital where I'd chosen to birth my baby. At around midnight we called the hospital and headed down. They told me I was 4cm dilated so I was happy with this starting point in the hospital and we stayed. This was the only examination I had and then I left Mother Nature to her business.

We had a labour room and managed to control surges in here with the help of affirmations and staying calm and focused before being moved to the pool room. Getting into the water was a revelation. The heat and cosiness provided great relief and helped me to continue to stay calm as labour progressed. The nurses and Reece were amazed how far I'd gotten with no pain relief.

Six hours later, and throughout the night, I birthed my baby Elsie in the pool taking a little gas and air towards the end to assist with the overwhelming and powerful feelings of bringing her into the world.

I truly couldn't have done this without my hypnobirthing practice. I was incredibly fearful of labour and all it entailed beforehand and yet the course guided me through the fact I had choices and some control to labour in a way I felt comfortable with. I turned down stretch and sweeps to get me started, examinations when they were requested, and relied on my body to see me through in the end.



Our hypnobirthing course meant my partner Reece also went into the process with great knowledge and confidence that our baby's birth could go as we wanted. And it did!!

Katie



*Louise's*

birth centre  
story

# Louise's birth story

**Louise is a first time mum who used her BRAIN to accept a stretch and sweep with Propess pessary induction as an outpatient. She went on to birth her baby naturally in the birth pool at her local birth centre.**

Our appointment at Pinderfields Hospital on the Wednesday could not have gone better and was quite different to what I'd imagined it would be, in a very positive way. We spoke to a lovely midwife, in length, about what all the different methods of induction would mean: how accepting them may change things from our intended birthing preferences, how the hospital environment could be different from what we had prepared for at the birthing centre, and how we may be able to work to keep things as close as possible to what we wanted. The midwife could not have had more time for us and answered all our many questions and was very reassuring and able to pick up on what was important to us. Thanks to what we had learned in our sessions with you, and referring to the BRAIN questioning method, we were also able to be confident in asking as many questions as we felt we needed to know answers to, in order to feel decisions we were making were fully informed and we were in control.

Happily, after talking us through everything, the heartbeat monitoring showed baby was well and checks on my tummy showed baby was already sitting very low. We were offered the choice of stretch and sweep with Propess pessary induction as an outpatient. This meant she could do this for us at the appointment but could allow us to return home to see if things progressed into active labour, rather than be admitted and have to wait in the hospital ward. This also gave us the opportunity to still carry out baby's birth at the birthing centre if labour started within 24 hours.

“We had tea and watched some comedy while my labour continued to progress.”

This really appealed to us, as it allowed us the chance to keep close to our birthing preferences if everything worked in our favour with the induction. It was pleasing to us that the midwife we were speaking to had picked up on this. Happily, we agreed to go ahead with the induction on this basis. The stretch and sweep examination showed I was already slightly dilated before the induction even went ahead, and I could feel the induction had already started to work as we drove home from the appointment in the car. I really believe that being able to stay focused on positives and stay calm and relaxed, as well as in a home environment helped in the labour progressing quickly.



Rob returned to work in the afternoon and by the time he returned in the evening my aches and tenseness which I had felt on the way home from the appointment had already separated into clear surges which had seemed regular and consistent for a couple of hours. Rob timed these for me when he got home and confirmed to me that we were already almost within the time frame of regularity when they ask you to call in. We had tea and watched some comedy while my labour continued to progress and by 8.15pm that evening, Rob made the call to the birth centre to let them know we had regular surges and would likely be coming in that evening. As everything was still very bearable, calm and under control we chose to continue at home for a few more hours.

As the surges got stronger and more defined I used the calm breathing and visualisations to stay calm and later also a TENS machine. The tip of also having a cooling face cloth to hand proved to be of great benefit as well! At 9.45 we left home for the birth centre. When we arrived I started to get a little confused, having felt I may have started to push a couple of times and also feeling my waters may have broken as we arrived in the car. This meant I found it difficult to concentrate on questions I was asked on being admitted to the birthing centre, in regards to examinations to check if my waters had broken and what it would mean if I did or did not want to have these. Rob knew at this point however to step in and help in answering for us, to prevent any further confusion from myself and ensure I did not start to get stressed that I was not fully understanding.

“The breathing and visualisation techniques were so well practised they came as second nature.”

Checks showed I was fully dilated and my waters were about to break so we were taken to a room in the birthing centre where there were two midwives waiting to help bring our baby into the world. Having a copy of our birthing preferences I think really helped the midwives to quickly understand the type of birth we were hoping for, and they were very calm and supportive, allowing me to follow my body's natural urges to push and never trying to instruct me. I was still in a bit of confusion as we entered the birthing room but again, Rob was able to confidently take control and explain we had wanted a water birth, allowing the midwives to start filling the pool for us. Once he had put on the calming music we had chosen for birth (the same one we had used while practising the breathing and relaxations in the lead up to the birth) I was soon calm and focused again.

The breathing and visualisation techniques were so well practised they came as second nature and I drew on happy memories from one of our holidays to help me through the strongest contractions. Baby Alistair was born naturally (without pain relief) in the birthing pool at 00.17am on the Thursday morning. 1 week and 4 days later we are all still doing well and enjoying learning from each other and establishing our routines as a new little family.

I have to say that the trainee midwife who tended to us during the birth congratulated us on how well we had done and what a calm and focused birth it had been, thanking us for allowing her to experience it with us!! This I feel is a testament to how useful your sessions were to us and how well the techniques of hypnobirthing aided the birth of our son.

We would like to thank you for all your support and advice throughout our pregnancy. Rob and I really enjoyed attending your sessions and the principals and techniques are definitely something we will continue to draw on and refer to in everyday situations.

*Louise*





Danielle's

hospital  
birth story



# Danielle's birth story

**Danielle had a positive hospital induction birth at 37 weeks. She used her hypnobirthing tools to help her relax and said "everyone was impressed how I managed the surges breathing through them".**

So we went into hospital for a quick scan on Friday 15th December (my predicted due date was 8th Jan). As I was classed as high risk, this was an extra 36 week scan and I'd been fairly unwell all December so I suggested to Mathew that he came along to this one to be on the safe side as I suspected things weren't going too well.

Darcey's abdomen was measuring on the small side, and after one or two other issues the doctor advised that we induce her at 37 weeks as she was better out than in. Myself and Matthew asked a lot of questions to make sure we agreed that it was absolutely the right thing to do for our baby. We had the weekend to prepare and I was mainly in the bath listening to the hypnobirthing tracks on repeat for the full two days. Mathew also booked me in for a head and shoulder massage on the Sunday afternoon which was marvellous.

"I was back on my ball  
bouncing away  
practising my  
breathing."



I was in hospital for a few days on a shared ward (definitely take earplugs and headphones to block out as much noise as possible), with two pessaries over Monday and Tuesday. By Wednesday I was dilated enough for my waters breaking. Immediately after this great news was bad news that there wasn't enough room for us on the ward we needed to be on. This was my only wobble. A lot of calming down later (mainly due to Mathew being amazing), I was back on the ball bouncing away practising my breathing. During this time the only sleep I managed was after listening to the hypnobirthing tracks! It really was a godsend having them to listen to on a shared ward.

Mathew went home at around 9pm on the Wednesday evening (as is standard when mum needs to stay in hospital), and at 11:30 pm I was awoken to the news that I could go round to delivery. Mat arrived shortly after and I was taken to a large very clinical, cold room. The midwife who was with me constantly was amazing, as was Mat who even though I wasn't easily accessible for massages, made sure he was there stroking and constantly reassuring me. I had my waters broken and was hooked up to the monitor and hormone drip to get things started. We got the lights turned down as much as possible and I was able to cope with the surges that came strong and steady and breathe through them all nicely.

I was then checked at around 6am and was only 3cm dilated. At this point I was finding it really difficult to relax... the room, the cannula going in took a few goes, the machines everywhere....my waters were still coming and I was shivering with adrenaline. I knew this was bad news and was in for the long haul so I asked for an epidural. By 7:30am I had one and I'm not sure if it was the act of sitting up for it or just relaxing knowing I was going to be ok after this but the surges very quickly felt different and they were pushing down.

“The breathing and visualisation techniques were so well practised they came as second nature.”

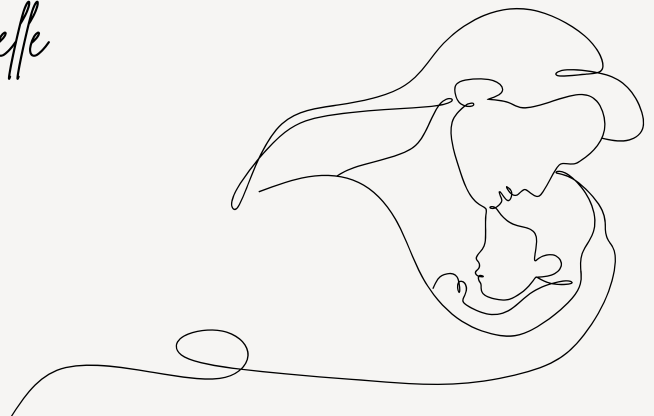
The midwife then checked to see how dilated I was but the baby's head was showing and a short while later with some pushing she arrived with me in a relaxed state talking and happily working through it once the epidural kicked in.

I'm convinced calming down after the epidural just progressed things very quickly as I was able to use the techniques straight away again and without it I would have been in there much longer.

*“Everyone was impressed how I managed the surges breathing through them.”*

Darcey was born at 9:17 am Thursday the 21st December. We eventually got her home on Christmas Eve! Everyone was impressed how I managed the surges breathing through them and making the decision for the epidural was possibly the best decision.

*Danielle*





Ellen's

Caesarean  
Birth Story

# Ellen's birth story

**Ellen had a positive unplanned Caesarean birth. She said "I used my birth affirmations to focus on the positives".**

I called the labour ward on the early hours of Sunday morning as I was worried that my show was an unusual colour. They asked us to come in straight away and we headed to the hospital thinking we would be back home in time for breakfast and that we were just being overly cautious: we had no idea we'd be holding our daughter in a matter of hours!

When we got to the hospital we had the shock of our lives to find out the baby was breech and that I was already 2cm dilated. We'd been told since week 36 she was head down and engaged and I'd had 4 stretch and sweeps by 3 different midwives all of whom had said they'd "tickled her head" and she was head down.

The doctor informed us we had two choices: a c-section or to try and turn baby. The latter had a 50/50 success rate but if it didn't work, baby didn't like it and her heart rate went up (and she had a history of getting distressed with a high heart rate), this would end up in an emergency c-section. I felt like all roads led to a c-section, but I used my birth affirmations to focus on the positives and that we would be seeing our baby that day; although my tranquil water birth was no longer an option, having a healthy baby was the main thing.

"I used my birth affirmations to focus on the positives."

I spoke with the surgeon and explained that I would like a hypnobirthing led c-section with my own music playing, minimal talking from the staff in the room, skin to skin contact straight away and delayed cord clamping. The staff were amazing, talking us through all our options and respecting our wants and needs and I felt that I had control over what I could control.



Walking into theatre I have honestly never been so scared in all my life and I was shaking like a leaf. Once the anaesthetic was delivered and I laid on the bed, Brett put on my chosen track and I focused on my breathing. There were a few complications before the surgery started (I have a severe latex allergy and some of the staff didn't realise so bits of equipment had to be removed and the process started again), so there was a long gap before the surgery started which I was aware of as I could hear but I was so relaxed and calm focusing on my breathing I just let them get on with their jobs and the nerves and worries I'd had walking in melted away. The actual surgery felt so quick to me as I was focused on my breathing and I was holding Libby in no time! After Libby was born the anaesthetist remarked on how calm I was throughout the whole process. He asked if I was meditating as he'd never had anyone's heart rate go down during surgery before. This was all down to focusing on my breathing and the techniques you taught me.



Alison's

hospital  
birth story

# Alison's birth story

**Alison used her hypnobirthing tools to help her have a positive hospital birth. She said "Despite the need for medical help, I had the birth I'd wanted".**

I'd been feeling surges occasionally for about two days when I felt that they were starting to become regular just as we were getting ready for bed. An evening of snuggling up with hubby in front of the telly was obviously great for building my levels of oxytocin. After a night of surges we headed into the birth centre before the morning traffic hit the roads, where we were warmly received. We had a male midwife, David, who listened calmly to our requests and we found that this sat very well with the approach they take normally, encouraging nature to take its course. Despite this, after several hours the surges diminished, partly I think, due to the room being a bit chilly, so we made the decision to head home. I was gutted! I was ready to meet my baby!

At home I watched some nature documentaries, listened to the meditations and rested and by the early morning we had stronger and more frequent surges again. Back at the birth centre, I consented to a vaginal exam, mostly to reassure myself that things were progressing and I was 9cm dilated – joy!

At the birth centre we turned on the candles, played some soothing music and used my breathing. The surges were still powerful but after several hours progress was slow and my waters hadn't broken. After several requests, my waters were broken for me, which made me a lot more comfortable and the second stage of labour began. However, despite all the good work, time had taken its toll and I was exhausted. Supporting our wish for a natural birth, our midwife, David, suggested some more active positions to help move baby but eventually it was clear that we needed some help.

"I used my birth affirmations to focus on the positives."

The maternity unit was not attached to a hospital so I needed to get an ambulance to take me there. This was not something I was looking forward to! Mike was brilliant and kept the music going, and made sure that the ambulance staff knew to keep their voices soft and quiet. As we set off, he told me to think about my happy place that we had practised so often. It worked! - I remembered how tranquil and happy I felt on the beach we had breakfast on during our honeymoon a few months earlier, visualising the trees we sat underneath.

When we arrived at the hospital, Mike spoke to the hospital staff about keeping their voices quiet and posted a sign on the door. While it was a much harsher environment, the little touches like the relaxation music and candles (even under the harsh strip light!) helped remind me to remain calm, and I did! I had a syntocin drip and felt better very quickly, but the surges were not strong enough to move baby so after some discussion with the doctors, we prepared for forceps in theatre. Although I'd dreaded the idea of forceps, Mike and I used the "BRAIN" process to discuss our options and remain rational, which helped reassure me that this was the best option for us and we felt very much in control.

Mike brought the music into theatre with us and again spoke to the staff about keeping their voices quiet, and shortly after, our baby boy Angus was born. As requested, Mike passed him to me and introduced our son to me, as I'd wanted. Despite the need for medical help, I'd had the birth I wanted. I had remained calm and did not scream or shout. We'd remained in control of the options and staff had respected our wishes at every step. And most importantly, Mike had been an integral part of the process, and he felt that he was able to help me birth our son.

Alison



*Sarah's*

home  
birth story



# Sarah's birth story

**Sarah had a positive home birth using her hypnobirthing tools. She said "I felt so relaxed and calm. It was perfect".**

On Monday 21st November at about 8am, I woke up to a bit of water trickling down my legs. I rang the birth centre who said just to keep an eye on it and ring them back if I lost any more - I didn't. I went about my daily chores and we did the supermarket shopping that evening. I had an early night as I was feeling very tired with slight period pains. I'd had a bloody show that morning too; I'd rung my friend in Switzerland who's a doula and she told me to relax and not to get too excited as it can go on for a few days - just to carry on as normal.

I woke up on Tuesday 22nd November with more intense tummy cramps and I wasn't comfy laid down so I went into the lounge. I left my husband asleep so he wouldn't start panicking and getting stressed! I knew our baby was coming.

I had short, very frequent surges and I did my up calm breathing through them. One of our dogs didn't leave my side, he licked my arm through every surge, he was great. Lee woke up at 8am to find me hanging over the back of the sofa. By then my surges were getting very strong and I needed my tens machine. I had a bath first and then bounced on my ball, I then rang the home birth team to let them know things were progressing. I breathed through my surges with my tens machine on, on all fours which was the best position for me to be in.

"I just went with it."

By 11am I rang the home birth team again as my surges were getting more intense and I felt like I needed more help maybe with gas and air. At that point some of my waters went. Lee started getting the pool ready, he was getting a little stressed as the liner wouldn't go on but he had pumped it up too much! We let a bit of air out and on it went. By this time my surges just changed completely - my body wanted to push. I was trying to fight it at first because I thought it was too soon and we had no midwife with us yet. I just kept thinking, 'remember what we've learnt, listen to your body, baby knows best', so I just went with it, using my birth breathing as well.



The pool was ready, and the two midwives arrived about 40mins later. We had said no student midwives in our birth plan but two had arrived with each midwife. The first two midwives that arrived sat in the lounge observing me and Lee thought this wasn't right. He remembered what our hypnobirthing teacher had said about people watching you and he asked them to set up in the kitchen. He'd told the students that they could watch from the window in the door.

I climbed into the pool and it was amazing, such a relief. All the pressure I was feeling went - I felt so relaxed and calm. We had our piano piece playing from the hypnobirthing tracks, candles on, blinds down and Lord Of The Rings on in the background too. All of which I was oblivious to as I was in my zone. Still calm and floating around in the pool, changing positions all the time. I did have to keep standing up for the midwife to check baby's heartbeat which was a bit frustrating as they didn't have a waterproof doppler.

Up until 3pm I was still doing my birth breathing whilst squeezing Lee's hands. I kept losing my breathing but Lee got me back on track. I snacked on jelly babies and Lucozade which did make me feel sick after a bit. By 3pm Lee had said to the midwives that he wanted me to get out of the pool. They said they could see if I need the toilet to get me out. I really didn't want to get out but Lee insisted, he did think I was too relaxed and that gravity needed to play its part too. I climbed out with Lee's help, then... that was it! I had a huge surge and bearing down weight. I just couldn't hold myself up: Lee had to take all my weight. I do remember grabbing his balls too! The midwives thought it was most amusing, I'm sure Lee didn't!

“Three big surges and our baby was out.”

One of the midwives said 'baby's head is here', I just thought OMG! Lee kept saying, 'you're nearly there Sarah, baby's coming'. Three big surges and our baby was out - a boy. Our baby Henry. Born 3.05pm, 7lb 13oz.

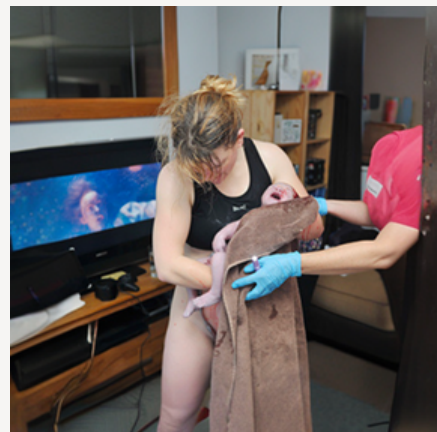
I'd done it! Our first baby born at home with no pain relief. It was perfect and Henry was perfect. We had 3hrs at least of skin to skin, delayed cord clamping and Henry was latched on within minutes of being born. I cut the cord and held him tight, we couldn't believe he was here.

My placenta came out naturally in one piece on the toilet. My blood pressure had dropped, I felt sick and dizzy because I hadn't eaten anything all day or drank a lot. I had a jam sandwich and a cup of tea. The midwives were thinking about sending me to hospital but decided I didn't need to in the end. I had a second-degree tear and it took them 40 minutes to stitch me which wasn't pleasant but I got more skin to skin with Henry which was perfect.

The midwives left at about 6pm and we just sat looking at Henry in our arms at home with our dogs too thinking, 'we did it, he's here, our miracle baby boy'. Just perfect!

*Sarah*

“It was perfect.”





# Rebecca's

## birth centre story

**Rebecca is a second time mum who used hypnobirthing to have a positive natural birth. She says "This birth has shown me that it's really possible to have an incredibly positive birth, even if you've had previous tough experiences."**

# Rebecca's birth story

Our first daughter was born during the first lockdown in 2020, into a world of uncertainty and after a long battle with infertility and IVF treatment. We live in Norway, so the system is different to what we're used to in the UK, as is the language. Because of the pandemic, my husband wasn't allowed to join me for the first part of labour and thanks to my overly anxious mind, not eating anything for the whole duration and hardly moving, I had a long and tough labour of over 30 hours. I ended up with an epidural after 15 hours of active labour, which led to the usual cascade of interventions at the end of the road due to a 'failure to progress' - oxytocin drip, coached pushing on my back because my body was exhausted, an episiotomy, the ventouse and just over 1L of blood lost. Although I had felt informed throughout, I just couldn't help but be disappointed in the outcome as I found it incredibly overwhelming and it took a long time to come to terms with. I was keen that if I was ever to give birth again, that the second one be a better experience.

Fast forward 10 months and by complete surprise, we found out that we were pregnant again! This time, with no help needed from science! Pregnancy was pretty smooth, with the exhaustion being the hardest part, thanks to having a baby/toddler to look after. I had pretty bad pelvic pain for much of it too, but found an excellent pelvic specialist chiropractor, who really helped, especially in the final weeks. I really wanted this birth to be different to Maia's. Although we got our gorgeous girl at the end of it, I felt so out of control in those final moments and the more I read and educated myself during this pregnancy, the more I realised that the path I had been on had made interventions almost an inevitability. Thanks to hospital policy and arbitrary timings, I began to understand that my difficult birth was most likely nothing to do with me 'failing to progress' and everything to do with my environment and the 'options' that were presented to me.

"I felt like a positive birth was much more achievable this time around."



I spent the last few weeks of pregnancy religiously reading positive birth stories and following some brilliant Instagram accounts that were focused on empowering women and their birthing partners through pregnancy and birth. I loved listening to pregnancy-focused meditation tracks in those weeks waiting for baby and I felt like a positive birth was much more achievable this time around.

As our first daughter was born at 39+6, I was sure that this one would be punctual too. So I was completely thrown when my due date not only came and went, but seemed to become a distant memory! Despite having been 2cm dilated since week 38, nothing was happening. Talks of induction started to come up and I began to feel like it was inevitable. My hopes for a natural, positive birth seemed to be going out the window and I shed more than a few tears at the thought of being pushed into an induction.

It 41+1, I had an appointment with the hospital to check all was well with me and the baby. As I'd had a low risk pregnancy, they were happy for me to go to 42 weeks, but they offered me a sweep, which I accepted. I went home, excited that this might start things, but despite the odd cramp here and there, nothing happened. I had also gone to this appointment thinking I was 41+4 and that we'd be drawing up a plan for the end of the week. In hindsight, I'm very glad that wasn't the case! I was due back at the hospital at 41+6 to discuss next steps and schedule my induction. At 41+5, still having nothing more than the odd twinge here and there, I decided to try one last time and booked myself in for prenatal acupuncture with a private midwife company. It turned out, the midwife that was doing it was actually my first midwife when I was in labour before! I took that as a good omen and she was really reassuring that if I did need to be induced, the procedures in Norway are very gentle and give you lots of chances to get started naturally, before they progress to the dreaded drip. She also offered me a sweep and managed to stretch me to 3cm and gave me some exercises to do with the birthing ball to help baby into a better position. I went home feeling much more positive and spent the rest of the day relaxing, doing the exercises on the ball and feeling somewhat achy.

“It was like a wave  
moving up my stomach  
before it released  
again.”

After putting our daughter to bed, we sat down to watch something uplifting on the tv and I noticed that I was getting the odd contraction. I'd been having Braxton hicks in the evenings for weeks, but these felt a little more intense and I could follow the sensation of my uterus tightening throughout each one. It was like a wave moving up my stomach before it released again. They weren't coming in any particular pattern and weren't getting closer together, so I tried to ignore them so as not to get my hopes up. I timed them with the app to verify that they were actually happening, but didn't want to get Murray's hopes up. We went to bed around 11.30 and I went off to my room, saying I'd see my husband in the morning (I was sleeping in our 'soft' bed upstairs to help my hips). The last thing I did before bed, which I had never done before, after reading a positive birth story, was just have a quiet little word with my lady in my tummy. Asking her to come today and that we were so excited to meet her. I said goodnight to her and tried to get some rest.

At about 1am, I was woken up by some definite sharp sensations. I spent about an hour in bed trying to get some rest in between them as I was pretty sure that things were starting and I didn't want to waste all my energy at the beginning. But by 2, they were too uncomfortable and I couldn't stay laying down any longer so got up to go through to the living room to try and take my mind off things. I had a couple of loose bowel movements and some of my plug came away, so I was sure this was it and I started to time my contractions. By 2.30, they were already coming every 3-4 minutes and I was only really comfortable if I was standing and moving my hips through them. I went and told my husband that things were kicking off, but didn't need him just yet and I'd come and get him when I needed the support.

By 3.30am, the contractions were becoming increasingly tough to manage alone and I felt I needed some physical touch to get me through the peaks. As they were now coming every 2-3 minutes and lasting a minute, we called the hospital, who told us to come in since it was our second birth and it sounded like things were moving fairly quickly. My husband woke our daughter and collected all her things so that he could take her over to our friend's who was going to look after her for us. I tried to get dressed and collect the final items in between surges, breathing and circling my hips through each one. Finally he got back and we were ready to make the 15 minute journey to the hospital.

Surges were still coming thick and fast, so the ride was pretty intense, but listening to hypnobirthing affirmations reminded me to relax, keep my body soft and just breathe through each one. It was 5am by the time we got to the hospital and made our way to the midwife led unit on the 7th floor. It was very quiet and our lovely midwife couldn't even introduce herself without me hanging off my husband through a contraction! She showed us straight to a room, clearly convinced I was fully in established labour, which I was very relieved about because I had no idea how I was going to get through 20 minutes of monitoring before being admitted.

Once in the room, she turned off all the lights and I paced and moved around the room, trying to find a position that meant i could get through a surge. My husband tried the double hip squeeze technique, which was really helpful at the peak of each one and otherwise was great at just reminding me to relax my face and body during each contraction. After about half an hour, I was really beginning to struggle with the intensity of each one. They were so powerful and coming less than 60 seconds apart, that I couldn't keep my calm. My breathing definitely sped up and I started to doubt my ability to do this naturally if I wasn't close to the end (little did I know!!). I asked the midwife to perform an internal exam, but being on the bed for it was hellish! She said I was 5cm, which felt like a bit of a blow and I had a bit of a wobble and asked for some gas and air, so she went to get a mask.

My surges were starting to feel a little pushy at their peak, but as I knew I was only 5cm, I tried to just breathe through the urge. Using the horse lips technique helped to take some of the power out of them when they were at the peak. Still, resisting the pushing was almost impossible! I thought perhaps it was because my waters still hadn't burst, so I decided to try and go for a pee and hoped that would help. While in the loo, I started making some pretty guttural noises and realised my body was really pushing now. Just as I was about to leave I felt a rush of liquid and thought it was my water, but when I looked down, it was blood. I went back into the room to tell the midwife, who, clearly a little concerned (though still very calm) asked if she could examine me again. I couldn't stay still and no way could I get on the bed, so she did it standing up. Not 10 minutes since my last exam and she told me I was 9.5cm!! I couldn't believe it!! The urge to push was real and so strong and she encouraged me to go with my body.

“Listening to  
hypnobirthing  
affirmations reminded me  
to relax, keep my body  
soft and just breathe.”

She was checking baby's heart rate with a Doppler and for a couple of contractions, it dropped pretty low after each one. They asked if I would mind getting on the bed and doing a little pushing, rather than breathing baby down as they wanted her here. I agreed as they allowed me to be sat upright with my knees at my chest, so I wasn't laying on my back. This type of pushing still felt less intense and overwhelming than when I was on oxytocin last time. I had a few strong contractions, which I pushed through and I could feel her descending. Such a weird feeling! They were applying a warm compress to my perineum and I could feel she was close to arriving, so that really spurred me on. Everyone was cheering me on, but no one was coaching me to push, they were just letting me work with my body and baby.



The ring of fire was unmistakable and the midwife asked me to hold her there for a minute or two. Thankfully, that next contraction was a slow one to appear and holding her there while breathing deeply was easy. With a couple more tiny pushes, her head popped out and I could see it between my legs! I felt her shoulders turn and with the next contraction, the rest of her followed onto the bed. I couldn't believe I'd done it! I picked her up and put her on my chest and just laughed. I'd birthed my baby without so much as a paracetamol! As a naturally anxious person, who likes control of her environment, I never thought I would be able to surrender to my body and just let it do its amazing thing. Especially since I have a phobia of vomit and being sick and spent a lot of time worrying about being sick during labour (I wasn't). I felt like superwoman!! I was checked over at this point and had lost only 100ml of blood and even more amazingly, had no grazes or tears and therefore needed no stitches. I was so glad we'd spent all those weeks doing perineal massage!

“I felt like  
superwoman.”

We were left for an hour to feed and bond before they weighed her and wrapped her up for us. Then we got some breakfast before being able to transfer down to the “baby hotel”, where we had 2 nights in a hotel staffed by midwives that's attached to the hospital, so we could get to know our little girl.

*This birth has shown me that it's really possible to have an  
incredibly positive birth, even if you've had previous tough experiences.*

The midwives were so happy that we were using hypnobirthing and told us how proud it makes them when women manage to have such positive births. I'm still pinching myself that it worked out this way. It has been a truly healing experience and any lasting sadness I have from the birth of our first daughter has been soothed by the knowledge of how incredible the birth of our second daughter was ❤️❤️❤️

Rebecca







I hope you enjoyed reading these  
inspiring and uplifting birth stories!



If you'd like to know more about the  
hypnobirthing courses I offer or to find out  
more about the ways in which I can help you to  
prepare for your own positive and empowering  
birth, please do get in touch.

*I'd love to hear from you!*

*- Gemma*



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