

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

ICEBREAKERS

1. Write "Birth" on the left side of the flip chart. Ask the class to come up with words that describe birth and list them underneath. On the right side, write down "what I want it to be..." Some answers will fit both sides, some won't. Ask couples what they have done and will do to bring about the birth they desire.

2. Group questions

This ten minute activity will acquaint you with others in your group. Gather as many answers as you can from the people in the room.

1. How many children do you have? _____
2. What is the most common eye color in the group? _____
3. Who has the most unusual job? _____
4. How many pets do you have altogether? _____
5. What is the most common birthday month in the group? _____
6. How many in your group can do the Macarena? _____
7. Who has the earliest due date? _____
8. How many labor partners have gained weight this pregnancy? _____
9. What is the most unusual food craving in the group? _____
10. Who has had the weirdest pregnancy dream? _____

PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL CHANGES

1. Separate into women's and men's groups. Ask one person to serve as the recorder. Each group is to come up with physical changes they have experienced during pregnancy. Men are to list their own changes, not the women's.
 - a. Group recorder reads the list
 - b. Describe couvade after men share their list
2. Each group is then asked to list emotional adjustments that have been experienced during pregnancy. Again, men share their own, not the women's. Sexual adjustments may also be included.
 - a. Group recorder reads list
 - b. Ask if any clarification is needed and allow group to answer.
 - c. Pose the following question?
Why is there so much emotional upheaval in pregnancy?

This allows families to see the work that is already taking place to define their role as parents. Adjusting relationships to create more than physical space for their new baby. Emotional adjustments are positive signs.

GRAFFITI TASK

1. Write a word on a large piece of paper that elicits feelings (cesarean section, epidural, episiotomy, etc.). Pass the paper around the room and ask everyone to write a word or statement or feeling about the word. Then tape the paper to the wall. This is a good tool for assessing the class attitudes toward these procedures. Then discuss.

BIRTH VIDEOS

1. At the end of any birth shown, stop the video and ask the group to process the following:
 - a. What things did you see that brought the woman comfort?
 - b. What things did you see that got in the way of comfort?
 - c. What were your reactions to the doctors/midwives/nurses interactions with the family? How might you do the same or avoid the problems?
2. Divide the class into several groups of 2-3 couples each. Give each group a piece of paper with a heading (pain, medications, cesarean, or unmedicated birth). Ask them to discuss and record the advantages and disadvantages of each. Then share with the whole group.

PROBLEM SOLVE OR ROLE PLAY

1. Role play a simulated contraction where mom imagines she is in bed with an IV and an external monitor. Follow up with an imagined contraction without either. Compare the differences.
2. After describing the characteristics of each phase of labor, ask group members to consider what they would need for comfort and safety to give in to the labor and let go of the baby at this point. Ask labor partners what they need for comfort, as well.

GETTING ACQUAINTED

Example 1:

Each person is given a blank name tag and asked to put his or her first name or nickname on it. Then they are to list three (3) words or brief phrases that tell something about themselves that can be used as conversation starters. Examples could be hobbies, children, work, states, etc.

Diane (Di)

1. loves cross-stitching
2. Wisconsin native
3. 2-year-old boy

After about five (5) minutes have couples circulate around room and meet as many new people as possible.

Materials required:

Blank stick on name tags

Approximate time required:

Flexible, depending on size of group. Maximum time 15 minutes.

Example 2:

Introduce yourself to the person next to you. Then introduce that person back to the group.

Example 3:

Gather one piece of information that is common to you and the person next to you and share it with the group.

PREGNANCY GRAB BAG

This technique provides visual opportunity to discuss healthy lifestyles.

Use your imagination — items may include:

water

soft drink can

coffee can

substitute sugar packets

canned vegetable

frozen vegetable bag

milk carton

cereal box

yogurt cup

beer can

sunscreen

hair dyes

cigarette package

music tape

scented candle

lip balm

over-the-counter cold or pain medication

PARTNER TALK

Answer each of the questions in your section according to your own feelings. Your partner will answer the same questions, and also try to predict what you wrote. After a few minutes, I'll ask you to rejoin your partner and share your answers. This activity should help enhance your communication on several pregnancy and postpartum issues.

For Moms-to-be

1. During labor, the thing I want most from my partner is
 - a. *encouragement*
 - b. *physical contact*
 - c. *help with breathing*
 - d. *just being there*
2. The hardest part about having this baby will be
 - a. *waiting for labor to begin*
 - b. *labor itself*
 - c. *delivery (pushing)*
 - d. *adjusting to motherhood*
3. Right now, I feel as if I want to have _____ more children
 - a. *no*
 - b. *one more, that's it*
 - c. *at least two*
 - d. *as many as possible*
4. After the baby is born, the thing I most want from my partner is
 - a. *help with the baby*
 - b. *help with housework*
 - c. *emotional support*
 - d. *take-out meals*

For Partners

1. During labor, I think she will
 - a. *be calm*
 - b. *be in control*
 - c. *need reassurance*
 - d. *need a lot of help*
2. When she is in labor, we will leave for the hospital when the contractions are
 - a. *regular*
 - b. *5 minutes apart*
 - c. *3 minutes apart*
 - d. *so close we have to go*
3. The thing I am most concerned about after this baby comes home is that
 - a. *our lives will be totally disrupted*
 - b. *mother(-in-law) is coming*
 - c. *we won't find time as a couple*
 - d. *I don't know what to do with a baby*
4. Agreeing on a name for this baby has been
 - a. *easy*
 - b. *not so hard*
 - c. *difficult*
 - d. *impossible*

The way I teach...

15 Fun, Fast Ideas for Your Childbirth Class

by Nancy Hollenbeck

I have a lot of fun teaching childbirth classes. The participants want to be there (most of the time) as opposed to those junior and high school students I was accustomed to in my earlier years of teaching.

Some things that have kept me in "love" with teaching are: I love what I do; I get my class involved, including the partners; I have confidence in my teaching ability; I am always willing to try new teaching techniques; and I use a wide variety of techniques.

Here are fifteen tips that I have learned throughout my years of teaching. Some of these ideas might be obvious and some may be new to you:

1. Get to know your participants' names early on in the series and use their names frequently. They feel more at ease and a part of class. One childbirth educator recommended creating name tags the size of a completely dilated cervix (10 cm), and I've used it because it helps the couples visualize what they can expect and it's big enough for me to see. I make the name tags and print the names on them before the class starts. This helps me remember the names.
2. Have food and drink at every class session. You can provide the snacks and drinks the first class and then have the class sign up for the remaining nights. The food gives the class something to do during the breaks, encourages conversation among the class members, and makes them feel at home. You always want to foster relationships within your class, because those relationships will carry on after the class is over.
3. Find out what the class wants to learn. If they feel they have a say in the material, they are more apt to be involved, listen, and learn. Place blank cloud cut-outs on the wall and have the couples write in them what they hope to learn in the series.
4. Always start on time and end the class early. If you haven't finished with a particular subject at the end of class, simply end the class and pick up where you left off in the next class. Pregnant women are very tired and often uncomfortable by the end of the class and many are not absorbing the information at that time anyway.
5. Validate their concerns and fears. Acknowledge that most of the moms have read and heard some pretty horrible birth stories from friends and family members. Reassure them that they will have their own stories to tell and that every birth is unique, different, and special.
6. Have studies and statistics ready. Most classes have at least one attendee who needs to know numbers. For example, many dads want to know the risks for epidural anesthesia. Contact the anesthesia department in your hospital to find out the most current statistics on the epidural rates and find the most current studies on epidural anesthesia.
7. Bring in guest speakers ranging from pediatricians to car seat safety experts to massage therapists, etc. This will offer a change in teaching style for your class.
8. Use humor. The use of humor can help to create a more relaxed learning environment by breaking down barriers to communication between you and the couples. When you use humor, couples feel less intimidated and more at ease to ask questions and make comments throughout the class. I bring in several comic strips about pregnancy and early parenting. There is also an excellent set of slides depicting the discomforts of third trimester that deals with these often difficult subjects in a light and humorous way.
9. I bring *O* magazines to class to help teach visualization. Oprah has a section in every issue called Breathing Space. It is an amazing picture every month of different settings with a caption to it. I usually bring in five to ten issues, with pictures ranging from snow scenes to beach scenes. Everyone has a different idea of what is relaxing to them and they're usually able to find their "scene" to help them with visualization.
10. Make the information relevant to their past experiences. For example, ask if any couples have run a marathon. Ask them how they deal with stress on a daily basis. Ask them what the first thing they

do when they come home after a bad day at work, and relate that to comfort measures in labor.

11. Review after every subject with games and group activities. For example, role play a cesarean childbirth; place index cards on a Velcro board for stages of labor; send home a crossword puzzle on newborn characteristics or play labor bingo.
12. Use the educator freebies you receive as class gifts for the games that you play.
13. Invite past couples as guest speakers to share their experiences with labor and early parenting.
14. Let them know what to expect in class and also what is coming next week. One way is to draw a "street map" each class on what will be covered that class session. Draw a winding road with a beginning and an end with billboards, trees, etc., and write the class highlights on the road.
15. Incorporate "top ten" lists wherever you can. For example, "Ten things not to say to a pregnant woman"; "Top ten comfort techniques to use during labor"; "Top ten reasons to use a birth ball in labor."

As childbirth educators, we have a great opportunity to offer our new parents a wide breadth of information in a fun, interesting manner. Most of the information and skills we teach them are lifelong skills. I continue to look for new, fun things to do in my classes. This not only keeps it fun for me, but for all of my couples. Play songs, read books, have them write in journals. Make it educational, make it meaningful — and make it fun!