



Birth Smarter, Not
Harder
What They Skipped in
Prenatal Class



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Table of Contents

Welcome	03
Chapter I: What They Don't Teach You in Prenatal Appointments	04
Chapter II: The Physiology of Birth	05
Chapter III: Evidence-Based Tools & Real-Life Prep	07
Chapter IV: Common Questions & Misconceptions	09
Chapter V: Final Thoughts	11

WELCOME

Hello, I'm your Childbirth Educator, Kat Thompson.

Hi there,

Whether this is your first baby or your fifth, there's something you should know: childbirth education isn't just about breathing techniques and diagrams. It's about understanding your options, your body, and your power.

In a world full of Google rabbit holes, rushed prenatal appointments, and outdated advice, getting evidence-based, affirming information can feel like trying to decode a foreign language.

That's where I come in.

As a Childbirth Educator and Full-Spectrum Doula, I've supported families through every stage of pregnancy, labour, and postpartum – and I created this freebie to give you a taste of what birth education can really be.



No scare tactics. No jargon. No pressure. Just grounded information, gentle guidance, and a little bit of “why didn’t anyone tell me this sooner?!”

Let's dive in.

- Kat Thompson



CHAPTER I

What They Don't Teach You in Prenatal Appointments

You've probably had at least one prenatal appointment where you left with more questions than answers. That's because most appointments are focused on medical check-ins – not education.

You're left to "figure it out" through books, forums, or well-meaning (but sometimes outdated) advice from friends and family.

Here's what's often skipped – but what you really deserve to know:

Birth is not a linear process.

Labour doesn't always start with contractions and end in a quick "push and done." It can ebb, flow, pause, and pick up again. Understanding that birth unfolds in stages – and those stages vary for everyone – is key to reducing fear and increasing confidence.

You have a right to informed choice – even if it feels rushed.

Every test, scan, and intervention is optional. Yes, even that cervical check or membrane sweep. You're allowed to ask questions like:

- What are the benefits?
- What are the risks?
- What happens if I wait or say no?

You might recognize that from the BRAIN acronym – a powerful tool I teach in my classes.

Pain relief is more than epidurals and breathing.

Comfort techniques can include acupressure, massage, hot water, movement, position changes, sound, breathing, TENS units, and more. Pain management doesn't mean pain elimination – it means choosing what helps you feel safe, calm, and supported.

Mental health matters.

Birth trauma can begin long before labour starts. Feeling dismissed, unsupported, or confused during prenatal care can lay the foundation for a difficult birth experience. That's why education is a tool of protection – so you walk in knowing your rights, your preferences, and your voice.



CHAPTER II

The Physiology of Birth

What's actually happening – and why it matters

Understanding how your body works during birth can help reduce fear, build trust in the process, and allow you to advocate for your needs with confidence.

Stages of Labour (And What They Really Feel Like)

You've probably seen the textbook stages of labour: early labour, active labour, transition, and delivery. But here's what they don't usually tell you:

- **Early Labour:** This stage can last hours or even days. You might feel mild cramps, low back pain, or nothing at all. It's a good time to rest, eat, and distract yourself. Many people don't realize this is still labour – and that's okay.
- **Active Labour:** Contractions get stronger, longer, and closer together. It's usually when folks head to the hospital or call their birth team in. You may need more coping tools now.
- **Transition:** Often intense and overwhelming, this is the “I can't do this” stage – which actually means you're very close to pushing. It's normal to feel emotional, shaky, or out of control.
- **Pushing & Delivery:** This stage varies wildly. Some people push for 15 minutes, others for hours. You may feel pressure, stretching, or a mix of sensations. Breathing, positioning, and encouragement matter here.
- **Placenta Delivery:** After baby is born, you'll still need to birth the placenta. This often happens 5–30 minutes later and may involve mild cramping. It's an important part of the process and often overlooked in classes.

CHAPTER II

The Physiology of Birth

Hormones: Your Body's Built-In Support Team

Your body releases an incredible cocktail of hormones to help you birth:

- **Oxytocin:** The “love hormone” helps contractions happen and keeps you feeling connected. Dimming the lights, cuddling, or even laughing can help boost oxytocin naturally.
- **Endorphins:** Natural pain relief kicks in as labour progresses. The more relaxed and safe you feel, the more endorphins are released.
- **Adrenaline:** Sometimes helpful, sometimes disruptive. Too much adrenaline (fear/stress) can slow labour, while a little surge at the end helps you push effectively.

Learning how to support your hormonal flow (with environment, support, and mindset) is key to a smoother birth experience.

Pain vs. Intensity: Reframing the Narrative

Pain in birth is not the same as pain from injury – it’s productive, purposeful, and often manageable with the right tools. It’s okay if it still feels intense or overwhelming, but knowing that your body isn’t “broken” can shift your mindset entirely.

Where I Come In:

As a childbirth educator and doula, I offer judgment-free space to explore your feelings, questions, and fears around birth. Whether you’re someone who wants all the information or you’re feeling a little overwhelmed by it all – I tailor support to fit you.

CHAPTER III

Evidence-Based Tools & Real-Life Prep

From knowing your options to making empowered choices

Birth education isn't about memorizing every single possibility – it's about building confidence in your ability to make decisions that align with your values, preferences, and circumstances.

The BRAIN Tool: A Framework for Informed Choices

Whether you're asked about an induction, a cervical check, or breaking your water, BRAIN can help you pause and process:

- B – Benefits: What are the benefits of this option for me and my baby?
- R – Risks: What are the potential risks or side effects?
- A – Alternatives: Are there other options?
- I – Intuition: What is my gut telling me?
- N – Nothing: What happens if we do nothing for now?

This tool isn't just for the birthing person – it's great for partners, too! I teach practical ways to use BRAIN in prenatal sessions and classes.

Birth Plans: A Map, Not a Script

Birth plans aren't about control – they're about clarity. Writing one helps you understand your priorities, educate yourself about options, and open up conversations with your care provider or team.

Some topics to include:

- Pain relief preferences
- Who you want in the room
- Positions for labour & pushing
- Preferences for newborn procedures
- Cultural or spiritual wishes

Tip: I offer templates, checklists, and guidance to help make this easier – and more meaningful.

CHAPTER III

Evidence-Based Tools & Real-Life Prep

Comfort Measures That Actually Work

While every body and birth is different, many people find comfort in:

- **Movement & Position Changes:** Rocking, swaying, or kneeling can reduce discomfort and help baby move down.
- **Breathwork:** Simple, paced breathing helps regulate your nervous system.
- **Massage & Counterpressure:** Especially during back labour.
- **Water:** Baths, showers, or birth pools ease tension.
- **Tools:** TENS machines, rebozos, birth balls – small tools, big relief.
- **Environment:** Dim lighting, music, familiar smells (like essential oils), and kind words matter more than you'd think.

We'll explore these and more in my birth prep sessions or classes – so you can find what works for you.

What Does “Evidence-Based” Really Mean?

It means I teach based on current, peer-reviewed research – not internet myths, outdated practices, or fear-based narratives. But I also honour your intuition, your lived experience, and your cultural values.

You don't need to be an expert. You just need support that helps you make the best choices for you.



CHAPTER IV

Common Questions & Misconceptions

Breaking down myths & lifting the veil on childbirth

Whether you're a first-time parent or have given birth before, questions are natural – and unfortunately, so is misinformation. Here are some common things people wonder (or worry) about... with the honest, supportive answers you deserve.

“Is childbirth always painful?”

Pain is part of labour – but so is power, rhythm, and release. Everyone experiences it differently, and there are many ways to manage and cope with discomfort. What matters most is feeling safe, supported, and in control of your choices.

Your pain relief options aren't just epidural or nothing – you can mix and match comfort techniques and medical tools.

“What if I go past my due date?”

Due dates are estimates, not expiration dates. A “normal” full-term pregnancy ranges from 37 to 42 weeks.

Most first-time birthing people go past 40 weeks. Your provider may suggest monitoring or induction options – and that's where informed decision-making comes in.

Use the BRAIN tool to explore your options if induction is suggested.

“Do I really need to take a childbirth class?”

While not mandatory, classes can change your entire experience. A well-structured, inclusive class helps you understand your rights, prepare mentally, emotionally, and physically, and know what's normal (and what's not). It also boosts your partner's confidence!

Many of my clients say they felt more “in control” and less afraid after attending class – even if they didn't use every single technique.

CHAPTER IV

Common Questions & Misconceptions

“Can I still make a birth plan if I want an epidural or a planned cesarean?”

Absolutely. A birth plan isn't about how you birth – it's about your values, preferences, and communication with your team. Whether you want minimal interventions or plan for a cesarean, your voice matters.

I help clients create plans for unmedicated, medicated, induced, and surgical births – because all births deserve support.

“What if I forget everything I learned when labour starts?”

This is super common – and totally okay. That's why practice, and having a supportive birth team, is so important. You don't have to remember it all. You just need someone there who does and can gently remind and guide you.

That's where a doula (hi, that's me!) or an informed partner can make a big difference.

“I've heard too many horror stories – what if something goes wrong?”

It's normal to feel anxious, especially when people love to share dramatic birth stories (uninvited). But birth doesn't have to be scary. Yes, unexpected things can happen – but most are manageable with the right support and preparation.

Childbirth education empowers you with tools and confidence, so you're not caught off guard – even if plans shift.

And if you've had a previous traumatic experience, you deserve care that honours that. You're not “too much” for wanting a healing birth this time.

CHAPTER V

Final Thoughts

Childbirth isn't a test you have to pass – it's a transformative experience that unfolds differently for everyone. Whether your birth is fast or slow, medicated or unmedicated, vaginal or cesarean, planned or spontaneous, your experience is valid – and you deserve to feel informed, supported, and respected throughout.

Childbirth education isn't just about gathering facts – it's about finding your footing. Understanding how birth works, how your body works, and what your options are allows you to walk into labour with clarity and confidence. And if something doesn't go as planned? You'll still have the tools to advocate for your needs and process your experience.

As a doula and childbirth educator, I'm not here to tell you what kind of birth to have. I'm here to walk alongside you, to answer questions (even the awkward or emotional ones), to help you sort through information, and to support you in discovering what's most important to you.



You don't have to know it all right now. You just have to start – and trust that your voice matters.

If this freebie resonated with you, I'd love to support you further through 1:1 sessions, my upcoming group workshops, or virtual coaching. Reach out anytime – no pressure, just a chat.

- Kat Thompson