



Client Testimonial and Birth Story

Here Jemima and Sean share their journey, not only of their birth, but of the journey building up to it. They are a perfect example of how sometimes your body or your baby throws a curve ball, and your plans might have to change. But Hypnobirthing will be there for you through it all!!

“Hypnobirthing always appealed to me but before I did the course I did have a preconception that it was for uncomplicated straightforward births. I wanted a water birth with fairy lights and calming music so I thought it would be perfect for that. What I didn’t realise I would get are the tools and strength it would give me for when all our plans changed.

Our birth story is very different from my ‘plan a’ but it was also the most empowering and positive experience I could have hoped for. My pregnancy was considered low risk apart from my age being 40, and so I was under midwife and consultant care from the start. Induction was mentioned due to my age as being a possibility at 39 weeks but open to discussion as we got closer. Otherwise all low risk options such as the birth centre which was my favoured choice were open to me, and that’s what we went ahead and planned.

At 30 weeks we took a one night trip away to Bath, a birthday present and babymoon treat, however a few hours in as we were making our way to the hotel for check in my membranes released. Well that was unexpected! The first thing Sean and I did was look at each other and laugh, we couldn’t believe it! The second thing we did was get ourselves over to Bath maternity hospital where they confirmed my membranes had released, started me on a course of antibiotics as a precaution against infection and gave me steroid injections which would support baby to breathe if he was born in the next couple of weeks. We also had a scan that showed he still had plenty of fluid and was now head down.

I was kept in overnight and have to admit that was a scary time, although I knew at 30 weeks if he were to be born he would have a good chance at being healthy, he would also need to spend quite a bit of time in neonatal support and if that happened in Bath we would be 150 miles from home for a long time. The calm breathing and relaxation techniques from hypnobirthing were so helpful in that 24 hours and thankfully we got home back to Cornwall the following evening. A plan was made for regular monitoring and to try to keep the pregnancy going for as long as possible, the risks of being born preterm being higher than the risk of infection after membranes released.

This is where we realised that our ‘plan a’ birth plan was unlikely to be possible. They suggested induction at 37 weeks, their reasoning being that the risk of preterm would be gone so there would be no reason to

risk infection. While we could see the doctors logic we also had a more holistic viewpoint, taking into consideration the risks of induction and with Terri's reminder we used our BRAIN thinking to rationalise that if we were happy to take a risk of infection for weeks, why would we suddenly decide that had to change overnight at 37 weeks if all was still well with the pregnancy. We were quickly learning that without the knowledge and confidence that our hypnobirthing course had provided it would be very easy to get swept up in the medical system rather than ask questions and make informed decisions.

At 32 weeks we had a growth scan, this had been booked in from the start as part of the additional provision due to my age, and it showed that baby was measuring smaller than expected. We knew that growth scans can have quite a margin for error and were reassured that it didn't necessarily mean it was a cause for concern but that a second scan would be needed after a while to assess if growth had stalled which could be an indication that the placenta wasn't working as well as it could be. We prepared ourselves for the likelihood that our plans may need to change again and I spent time researching stories of positive induction and gentle cesarean, using BRAIN to consider which would be the best choice for us if growth was not improving following a second scan.

Again without the hypnobirthing course I'm not sure it would have occurred to me that I had choices even now and could do my own research as to what was best for us.

At the second scan 10 days later, he was still measuring small but had grown at the pace they would expect between the two dates. We had two consultant appointments scheduled in for that day, the first as part of the scan and she said that weighing up the risks of his small size, my age and the early release of membranes she would recommend we went ahead with induction right away, at this point I was 34 weeks. We decided we would go to our second consultant appointment to discuss further before making our decision and at this appointment using our BRAIN thinking we decided to let baby stay in until 37 weeks but were given an induction date once we reached full term.

When induction was being suggested early on simply because of my age, and even later on because of the membranes release I was still hesitant that it was the right choice, but given his small size as well at this point I decided that we would keep a close eye on his movements and that he was safe but that there was no need to take any risks once he reached full term.

I spent the following week researching positive induction stories and preparing questions for my next midwife appointment so that we could still ensure that when the date came around we would feel in control and have a great experience. I do still believe that from doing that preparation we could have ensured that was the case, however my body, and our baby were in agreement about other plans. It's funny the power of the mind. I'd spent weeks telling my bump since the membranes released that he has to stay in, but when we got to 35 weeks and with an induction looming I started to relax and say 'ok you could start thinking about coming now and be ok'. At 35+3 Sean had work that evening and we both said to the bump, 'ok stay in today, anytime from tomorrow you can come'.

At 35+4 I started to feel very mild sensations which I assumed to be practice surges. I didn't really time them and though I was aware of them they didn't get in the way of me going about my day as usual. We carried on with a regular Sunday, visiting family and doing things that we enjoy.

The following morning at 4am I woke up and felt the sensations were slightly more powerful and closer together so I decided to start timing them with an app and found they were about 10 mins apart. I stayed

resting in bed but couldn't get back to sleep so I started using my calm breathing and surge breathing, as well as rainbow relaxation techniques.

By 6am the surges were every 6 mins so I woke Sean to let him know we might want to have some breakfast and start slowly gathering the last of the bits for the hospital bag. Delivery suite had never been my first choice but I had written a plan b birth plan ready and we took along lots of things to ensure we could make the environment as comfortable and relaxing as possible, including a lamp for low lighting, essential oils, my birth ball, and a Bluetooth speaker ready to hook up to my favourite chilled out songs.

We called up ahead and were told to get to delivery suite for 8.30am which we did and were shown to a lovely room where I was popped on a monitor to check all was well with baby. I consented to an examination which showed my cervix was still closed.

They asked me how painful my surges were and I said not at all but a fair bit of pressure, and told them I'd been practicing hypnobirthing techniques which may be why I wasn't experiencing them as painful at all and was happily using my breathing. I don't think they were convinced of that and even I thought I'd never get off this lightly! They suggested it was likely these were practice labour sensations and sent us home, saying they would see us at our next scan which was booked in for 3 days later, unless anything changed in the meantime.

I wasn't convinced simply because everything I had read about practice surges suggested they were irregular which these definitely weren't but thought perhaps it must be the case. We went for some food and then home for a lie down because I'd been awake since very early and the excitement that had been keeping me awake had been replaced by an overwhelming desire to rest upon being told that today was almost certainly not the day we would meet our son.

By 1pm I felt that the sensations were intensifying, and while I was still comfortable using my surge breathing alternating with my calm breathing I decided to start tracking them again and found they were around 4 mins apart and 60 seconds long. For the next hour we discussed whether we should go back in or if this could still be practice, but by 2pm I felt a shift in how they were feeling so called back up and was told if I felt I needed to come back then to pop into the Day Assessment Unit to be monitored and then if necessary they could send me up to delivery suite later on.

The car journey became uncomfortable, mostly because sitting really felt like the wrong position to be in. Sean dropped me off at 2.30pm and went to park the car and we left all our bags in the car in case we ended up being sent straight home again. At this point I was having to stop walking while my surges were happening as it was taking all my concentration to breathe through them.

When I got into DAU the midwife sent me to the waiting room where again sitting was too uncomfortable with the feeling of pressure low down and I felt that standing and swaying was the only position I wanted to be in. The midwife came back, took one look at me and said she was taking me straight up to Delivery Suite where we were put back in the same room as before.

We waited for someone to come and see to us and I put my arms around Sean as we stood for support, while he helped me to focus on my breathing and gently stroked my back. After two or three more surges I suddenly felt as though I might feel sick and

Sean went into the corridor and asked a midwife to come in to see us. She came in and asked me to get onto the bed to hook me up to a monitor and said she would examine me again in a moment, and left us to it. Lying down on my back really wasn't comfortable for me and on the second surge like this I felt a big gush of waters.

Sean went back out and asked for her to come back in again because things seemed to be moving quickly. I had two more surges in close succession where my whole abdomen was visibly moving as I felt my body's reflex. She remarked on how active he was being and I just about managed to get the words out 'that's me'.

At this point I have to admit I wasn't convinced that breathing was going to do the trick anymore and that perhaps I would have to concede to ask for some help because of how powerful and now different these surges felt. As she examined me I thought to myself 'if she says I'm only 2cm can I really keep this up for hours?', however she quickly looked up with a surprised smile and told me my cervix had completely gone and that if I felt my body wanting to push to go for it. I realised this was near completion and that I knew to expect those thoughts might enter my head at this point, so I could totally do this!

At this point a few things happened very quickly; because baby was small and early they needed an incubator set up ready and doctors in the room in case he would need resuscitation once he was born, so I was wheeled to a bigger room that was set up with what we needed, and the monitor was whipped off. As soon as we got in I said I needed to get off my back and got onto my knees with my head and arms at the top of the bed for support. I was offered gas and air which I gladly accepted (I've had it before and I am a big fan) and tuned in to Sean who was stroking my back, stroking my arms and gently speaking to me in such a calm voice with reminders about my breathing and how well I was doing and that my body was made to do this.

I vaguely recall an anaesthetist in the room popping a cannula in my hand for antibiotics and laughing that he may not have time to get them in before baby was born but it was worth a go. He apologised for the pain of inserting it as though I had any idea it was even being done - my eyes closed and with all my focus on my breathing and Sean's words I was in a total bubble, though I was vaguely aware of a positive, happy and even jokey atmosphere in the room. I think I even laughed as the Midwife and I encouraged Sean to have a go on the gas and air between surges.

For the next few surges I used my down breath only and let my body move the baby, and the midwife said she could see the baby's head. At this point she said she was having trouble picking up the heartbeat with me in that position so if the head wasn't born in the next surge she'd ask me to get onto my back to make it easier to monitor baby. There was no way I was getting on my back so I started to push alongside my breath to much positive but gentle encouragement.

Within a couple more surges Sean told me his head was halfway out which was amazing as I thought he still had further along the birth path to travel, and after the next I heard Sean say 'oh hello' which made me laugh. With the midwife's help letting him know what to do, Sean had hold of our sons head and as I had the final surge he received the rest of his body which was then passed through my legs to me. His cord was very short so I could only lift him to my tummy as I was helped to turn around and lie down for cuddles. The cord was left to go white before Sean cut it and then baby could be moved up higher to me for more skin to skin time.

Because he was small and early the doctor did need to take him for a short time to give him a check over before he could come back to me for more cuddles so we couldn't have an uninterrupted first hour but I knew we had special circumstances so was prepared for that, and Sean was able to be with him that whole time.

I had a small internal tear that had a couple of stitches but otherwise only a small graze on the outside. All our lovely items from home never made it out of the car boot but I did notice after the birth that there were fairy lights in the room, and our midwife and doctor team were all fantastic and kept the vibe calm throughout.

Our midwife said to me that they do find sometimes with hypnobirthing mums that they don't look like they're in labour when they arrive and said she was so impressed with how it all went for us. The birth left me feeling on top of the world and so empowered by the whole experience. Sean has always been as cool as a cucumber but the way he supported me using the techniques we learned in our hypnobirthing course was everything. We absolutely rocked it! Thank you Terri!