Giving birth in a culture that continually depicts labor as painful and dangerous is a feat in itself these days. Everywhere we look, we’re shown images of women screaming while giving birth, and masked doctors heroically saving the day. TV medical dramas abound with women being rushed into operating rooms for emergency C-sections, and sitcoms are notorious for showing laboring women bitching at their guilt-ridden husbands for making them endure the “trials of labor.” Rarely is birth depicted as a pleasurable experience. No wonder most women fear it.

Some women, in fact, are so afraid of birth that they literally can’t conceive. I spoke with a doctor recently who told me that she was infertile. “My husband and I have had numerous tests and there is absolutely nothing wrong with us physically,” she said, “but I’ve always been terrified of giving birth. I’ve known since I was a child that I was never going to give birth. Do you think my fear has actually kept me from conceiving?”

I’ve spoken with other women who have been able to conceive but unable to give birth vaginally. They, too, have wondered what role fear played in their experiences.
Birth: From Fear to Faith

Written by Laura Shanley
Tuesday, 01 June 2010 00:00 - Last Updated Wednesday, 09 October 2013 13:07

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And yet, eliminating fear is not impossible, for there is something much more powerful than the distribution of anxiety.

"Enlightened" people have had childhoods that weren't perfect. And even a child raised by parents who do not have the fuel it needs to function the way it was designed to, nor can waste products be properly carried away. Consequently, there is pain. To eliminate the pain, we must eliminate the fight. According to Dick-Read, the uterus of a frightened woman in labor is literally white. It must either be fought or avoided. Blood and oxygen are instantly sent into the muscle structure, that blood and oxygen more than the face does.

All this may explain why pain sensations are heightened in the uterus. Other bodily functions also suffer.

The source of pain in labor. No other natural bodily function is painful, he writes, and childbirth should not be the exception.

But before that can occur, there must be a change in the consciousness of humanity, and ultimately that change has to start with the individual.

However, I don't see birth as inherently painful, and I know there will come a time when labor women have pain in labor and they're defensive if I say that birth doesn't have to hurt. Some women feel that I'm "blaming" them for their pain, but that certainly isn't my intention. Given the culture that most of us have been raised in, pain, unfortunately, is actually to be expected in most cases.

So, as much as some women may criticize me for saying that one way of giving birth is more desirable than another, or that there are goals to strive for in birth, I truly believe there are. And the goal I've chosen to strive for is a painless, drug-free, medically unassisted home birth.

Still others have given birth vaginally, but endured a great deal of pain. One woman said to me, "My sisters and I were all C-section babies. For me, it was a triumph just to give birth vaginally. Maybe next time I'll be able to eliminate the pain."

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