

## Homebirth: A Father's Perspective

Written by Jeff Sabo

Friday, 01 June 2012 00:00 - Last Updated Thursday, 15 August 2013 12:49

---

Finding out that you're going to be a father is a very crystallizing and defining moment in a man's life. Some men run from it, others embrace it, and still more are, frankly, puzzled by it—and some fears and uncertainties, once believed to have been overcome, can come flooding out again:

*Will I be a good father?*

*Will my children love me?*

*Can I escape my own upbringing, and do better?*

*Can I parent with my heart, more than with my head?*

*Will my partner still love me if I'm not a good father?*

*Would she even tell me if I were doing poorly?*

*Will I ever learn enough, know enough and contribute enough to our parenting relationship?*

*How will I respond if the kids get sick? How will I respond if one of them dies?*

*How can I keep them safe, provide for them, provide for my partner and stay happy at the same time?*

# Homebirth: A Father's Perspective

Written by Jeff Sabo

Friday, 01 June 2012 00:00 - Last Updated Thursday, 15 August 2013 12:49

PREGNANCY

## HOMEBIRTH: A FATHER'S PERSPECTIVE

By Jeff Sabo

**F**inding out that you're going to be a father is a very crystallizing and defining moment in a man's life. Some men run from it, others embrace it, and still more are, basically, puzzled by it—and some fears and uncertainties, once believed to have been overcome, can come flooding out again.

Will I be a good father?  
Will my children love me?  
Can I escape my own upbringing and do better?  
Can I parent with my heart, more than with my head?  
Will my partner still love me if I'm not a good father?  
Would she even tell me if I were doing poorly?  
Will I ever learn enough, know enough and contribute enough to our parenting relationship?  
How will I respond if the kids get sick? How will I respond if one of them dies?  
How can I keep them safe, provide for them, provide for my partner and stay happy at the same time?  
It can be completely overwhelming under the best of circumstances. We experience a sudden sense of being responsible for someone else, of having to provide for them, and our partner. And we may still be grappling with the other uncertainties and insecurities that we have carried around with us for years.

There is an immediacy to being a new parent which requires us to handle essential situations in a calm, thoughtful manner. But if we have not been willing or able to reconcile our fears and uncertainties, "rain" and "thoughtfulness" are states of being that are difficult to

attain, and even more difficult to maintain. I think that, under stress, we are prone to default to our most basic personalities, to use whatever familiar coping mechanisms we've used in the past. Sometimes, the only way to really work through this effectively is to look on to something familiar that helps ground us a bit, so we can deal effectively with the swirling emotions and sensory shifts in... well, just about everything that comes with being a new parent.

In order to grasp my new life, I had to rely on my old paradigms of what a parent "should" be for guidance. In my head, I had mapped out exactly what I had to do to raise a child, be a husband, have a productive household and be an accepted member of society. For me, it was pretty simple, really. Dad works, mom works, breakfast as a family with a healthy meal, lunches and book bags all packed the night before, kids on the bus and doing well at school, work being hard but rewarding, home by 4:00, kids all there, dinner together, then chores, some time to play, then homework, then time to brush your teeth and put on your PJs, and off to bed by 9:30 or so. Of course, the kids would play sports, I'd be a member of the league, mom would be on the Chamber of Commerce, etc., etc. We might even go to church on Sundays and sing in the choir. It's important to note that these "expectations" of what my life would be like were not some mere abstract, or some societal norm that I simply bought into. These were things I wanted. They were what mattered, they were the way it was done. If

did it this way, everyone would be happy, no one would get hurt, and we would raise our kids to be responsible members of society. And as a dad, my role was critical—I had to be the driver to ensure all of this happened on schedule.

But as a soon-to-be father, all of that was overwhelming. I had to focus on finding ways to control things as early as possible, to make the wonder of pregnancy easier for me to process and deal with, despite the flurry of changes. I had to establish some sort of comforting paradigm for how my children would spend their time in sleep, and how they would come into the world. In for our first child, I approached the birth process in ways that were familiar and made sense to me. In fairness, I should mention that both my wife and I were raised in traditional ways, and although we knew that we wanted to be more connected to our children that our parents were to us, we still agreed that the birth would be in a hospital, and that the pregnancy and delivery would be with the help of an OB-GYN.

Our first son, Kai, was born in the hospital, in a fairly traditional way. Overall, it was... okay. In retrospect, the word that comes to mind is "satisfactory." We did attend a birthing class for several weeks that was sponsored by the hospital, which provided us with fantastic insight and guidance into several paradigm shifts—in chronic illness, vaccination choices, cloth versus disposable diapers, etc. We prepared by reading books like *The Hip Mom's Guide to Pregnancy* and spent hours trying to learn

all we could to have an authentic and non-invasive pregnancy as possible. I loved the time when Ginger was pregnant. The way she glowed, the laughter and joy we felt, all of the changes, even the nervousness of the uncertainty—it was all part of a joyous process as we got ready for our first son. On the morning her water broke, we called the hospital to let them know we were on our way (by the way, people do that!), and then sat down and watched an old episode of *Columbo* and ate granola before we went in. There was no fear, no concerns—just uncertainty, and a lot of tingling nervousness as we readied ourselves to meet this little dude that we had been talking to all these months.

When we got to the hospital, the experience became... clinical. The nurses were nice enough, I suppose, and they did their best to accommodate our wishes. They did indeed with Phoebe a bit easier than I would have liked, and the labor was very long. I felt so helpless. The woman I loved—my soul mate, my best friend, and the person who changed my outlook on life—was in obvious pain and there was nothing I could do. As the



101 pathsofparenting.com.au 2012 ©

101 pathsofparenting.com.au 2012 ©



A photo of the cover of *Pathways to Family Wellness* magazine, Issue #34.