What's Love Got to Do With It?

by Robin Sale

"That's what got the baby in there. That's what gets the baby out."- - Ina May Gaskin, midwife, encouraging couples to spend time alone to get labor going.

At 10:30 A.M. on the day my son was born, labor signaled to me with clear, leaking waters. My midwife told me to forget about my errands. "Go home and rest up.", she suggested. Later that day my husband arrived home with some last-minute needed items. The moment we looked at each other I doubled over into my first "real" contraction. Concerned, my husband asked if I'd been laboring alone like this for long. "No," I smiled when the contraction passed, "We were waiting for you."

Love is a powerful force in childbirth. I've heard it said that the birthing partner acts like a kind of magnet, drawing the baby out. This sort of statement probably can't be backed up with science but it makes sense to me that a baby might be more excited to come into the world where there's plenty of love awaiting her.

Amidst the technical choices and preparations facing birthing couples; ultra sound, doctors, midwives, prenatal testing, epidurals, fetal heart monitors, IV's, pain medication, car seats, child care, furnishing the nursery, maternity/paternity leave, etc., it's easy to forget that this is, after all, an affair of the heart.

What if we were to make love a priority in our preparations for birth? Put it right up there with safety or comfort in childbirth. In all the busyness of nesting - - preparing the house or working that extra bit before the baby arrives, couples might also consider taking time for 'inner nesting.' This may be as simple as daydreaming together about hopes and wishes for the coming child. Writing or reading poetry for the baby or for each other. What favorite bedtime stories, family rituals, holidays, music will be shared with the little one? What cherished parts of this world will be explored together as a family? What guiding values will be most important?

Parenting begins with pregnancy. Gayle Peterson, Ph.D., researcher and author, talks about communication between a couple as the soil in which the garden of family grows. It needs to be turned over, fed and cultivated regularly. In such a garden children and parents thrive.

Taking time before the baby comes to speak and, more importantly, to listen from the heart will help two people weave together a new, strong and beautiful family vision.

Nurturing love during pregnancy becomes as vital as good prenatal care when considering the deepening commitment and added challenges of becoming a family. This doesn't mean that pregnancy will look like the days of wine and roses. In fact, parents-to-be are often surprised to see their own family of origin "material" staring them in the face, sometimes through the eyes of their loved one. Although it's unpleasant, a lot can be learned by our past family issues. Think of it as compost for the family garden. Sharing what's difficult together and offering an open heart to trust and confide in builds more intimacy than a thousand candlelight dinners.

Babies intertwine two lives together more indelibly than the most sincere wedding vows. Is it any wonder that Cupid, the God of Love, is depicted as a baby? No one can really prepare for all the changes that come with the birth of a child. Or the sound of a baby's first cry. Like Cupid's arrow it pierces the heart, opening it to a love never known before. In that moment, love has everything to do with it.

Robin Sale, CHT, offers prenatal yoga and support groups, body-mind birth preparation classes for couples and individual birth counseling/ hypnotherapy sessions. She and her husband, Saladin, are the lucky parents of Aaron, age 14.

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