

Dear new Mom,

Foremost, I would like to congratulate you on your pregnancy. Your life is about to be touched by the most incredible love you will ever know. My sweet bundle of joy entered my life on July 19, 2004. It was the most exhilarating day of my life. Most of what made my birthing experience so wonderful were the preparatory steps I took under the guidance of my Doula, Shira, and the faith and confidence my husband and I had in her expertise.

Although my pregnancy was not a walk in the park, my labor and delivery was a smooth and beautiful experience. Because I was going to begin my first semester of law school just five weeks after my baby's due date it was essential that I had her on time. Under the discretion of my doctor, Gilbert and I decided to induce labor with an injection of Pitocin on July 19, 2004. I had been admonished by my doctor that the Pitocin injection would cause my surges to come faster, stronger, and painfully. However, Shira assured me that I had the strength and ability to manage my labor. She asked me, "When you think of labor and delivery what word first enters your mind?" I said, "Smooth." "Then," she responded, "that is what your child birth experience will be. The mind is very powerful. It has the ability to control and dictate your feelings and emotions. Just keep listening to the tapes and practice what you've learned. Do not open your mind to negativity. Only focus on your smooth delivery and you will be terrific!"

At 5:00 am on the morning of July 19, 2004 my alarm clock went off but my husband and I were already awake. We were giddy, like two little kids because this was IT. After nine months of incessant nausea and vomiting, anticipation, and false labor, breathing exercises, and hypno-birth preparation, the BIG day had finally arrived. We were going to have, see, and hold our precious little baby girl. I was scheduled to have my labor induced at 6:00 am. When I arrived at the hospital, Shira was already there to greet us. She had introduced herself to the medical staff that would be assisting in the birth and had offered them muffins and bagels. Shira was incredible. With all of the anxiety we were feeling, she took care of all of the formalities, including providing a "Thank You" card for the staff. Moreover, with the copy of my birthing plan in hand, she quickly went to work, ensuring that our wishes were being met and respected. With her assertive yet tactful way, Shira dealt with our difficult nurse. Our nurse was very conventional and not a true believer in the hypno-birthing method we were employing. Shira did not let the nurse's skepticism interfere with her job. She maintained her composure, persisted with her work, and remained optimistic and calm at all times. Shira's vast knowledge of the various medical procedures and the medical equipment used in the birthing process was also very impressive to my husband and I as well as the medical staff. She asked the questions that I could not ask and clarified any discrepancies in my understanding of the ensuing procedures. Her expertise and compassion put me at ease. I felt confident that this was going to be the smooth labor that I had envisioned. More importantly, it was at that moment I realized how fortunate I was to have Shira there by my side.

Her soothing voice of encouragement, the dim lights, the soft music playing in the background, and my husband's gentle touch enveloped me and carried me to a serene place in my mind. Gilbert and I could not have been as focused on one another and the birth of our baby had Shira not been there to handle everything else. As the surges came, I imagined myself with my baby girl riding a magnificent wave on a huge rubber donut.

Shira whispered softly in my ear with each surge, “You’re feeling your baby move into position. Your precious baby will be in your arms shortly.” As the surges came more quickly, she located pressure points in my back and feet and massaged them with baby oil. Under her guidance, Gilbert massaged key areas in my back while she worked on my feet, legs and arms. I felt like a princess. I was being given the full treatment package. In between surges and during, we talked and laughed together. At one point, the nurse asked, “Wow, did you feel that?” “Feel what?” I asked. She was referring to a sharp surge that showed up on the monitor, but I did not feel a thing. The power of hypno birthing was working its magic and Shira was amazing. During more intense surges, I closed my eyes and envisioned myself on that wave with my baby while Shira and Gilbert massaged me. I never screamed out or lost control. I would not let myself leave the picturesque place in my mind. I only breathed in and out in a slow deep manner. The nurse was baffled. She became a witness of the power of hypno-birthing. I had been there about six or seven hours and I had dilated six centimeters. I was calm and I was enjoying my labor. It was a beautiful experience. I know that sounds strange but it was. It is an indescribably awesome feeling to experience your body prepare itself for the birth of your baby. It’s natural—nature’s miracle.

However, not everything went according to plan. The Pitocin had caused an adverse reaction in me. I had developed hypertension. The doctor advised that I have an epidural to stabilize my condition. After discussing my options with him, I decided to try on my own to stabilize my condition without it. But when that didn’t work, I agreed to have the epidural. My main objective had always been to have a safe and positive experience in bringing my baby into the world and Shira had helped to prepare me and my husband for possible deviations from the birthing plan. Nevertheless, I was grateful to have Shira at my side to support me during that potentially mind boggling decision. She just rubbed my hands and massaged my arms and legs while telling me that I was doing great and that she was very proud of me. After the epidural, I felt numb. Shira recommended that I try and get some sleep (I wish I had taken her advice) but I was so anxious that I could not sleep. About two hours after I had been given the epidural, I felt my little baby pushing her way out into the world. Within moments, Shira, my husband the doctor, and the nurse were huddled around me. This was REALLY IT. I remember Shira whispering in my ear to remember to breathe. During that moment, all of my attention was fixated on Shira. I heard no one’s voice but hers. The advent of giving birth to my baby girl was more than I could take. I finally burst into happiness. My smile fixed itself permanently across my face. I looked at Gilbert and he too was in a whirlwind of exhilaration. Within three pushes, less than fifteen minutes, Raquel Marie was born. The doctor asked Gilbert if he wanted to do the honor of cutting her umbilical cord. He turned to Shira, who nodded as if to say go ahead and he commenced to cut the cord that allowed the air to fill Raquel’s little lungs. I was gratefully shocked. Gilbert had been adamant about not cutting the umbilical cord but Shira had given him the courage to do it. Gilbert later recounted that cutting his baby’s umbilical cord was the most awesome experience of his life. The doctor then placed her little nine pound six ounce wet body on my chest. I wrapped my arms around her, looked into her tiny black-blue eyes and sang to her.

Although my husband was at first skeptical of the whole hypno-birthing method, our experience has convinced both my husband and me that there is no other way to have

a baby. Even the hospital staff that assisted with my birth was amazed at how smoothly my labor and delivery went. After the birth of my baby, the nurse leaned over me to say that she was impressed with how well I handled my labor especially considering that I had been induced. She said that she had never seen anyone handle Pitocin as well as I had. The Hypno-birthing method and Shira's expertise facilitated the smooth delivery of our little bundle of joy.

We are quick to share with our friends our hypno-birthing experience and recommend Shira to anyone who is expecting. She is professional, compassionate and gifted. She is worth every penny and then some. I can not place a monetary value on the beautiful gift that she gave us: the best day of our lives. As Gilbert calls her, she is like our daughter's second Mom. I hope that you too will embark on this wonderful journey with Shira. I am confident that she will help you make your birthing experience as wonderful as it is meant to be.

If you have any questions, feel free to call me!

Sincerely,  
Traci and Gilbert Gastelum