The Third Time is the Charm
 Julia’s Birth Story
 08/03/09

This was my third pregnancy and I was wanting to do it differently this time. I had two beautiful children, but also two medicated births. My first child was induced a week after his due date. I came into the hospital and they started a pitocin drip at the same time they stared an epidural for me. I had him in 2-3 hours. With my second child, I went into labor naturally, but spent hours in triage in tremendous back labor without support from the nursing staff. By the time I was checked, I was 5cm dialated and the epidural was started. As my daughter flew down the birth canal, we asked repeatedly for the doctor (since I knew she was coming). My husband went into the hallway to get any one he could find to help us. Meanwhile, the nurse on duty actually tried to push the baby BACK IN!

This time, I felt like I wanted to do it without interference. And I felt like I could. My due date neared, I began to have concerns about whether I could do this and sought out labor support. I met with Amanda and we discussed what my experiences had been and what I hoped to do this time. We agreed to meet again in my home to review positions and stretches and watch some birth videos that would help me visualize what this birth might look like and how I would cope. At my home, in addition to our work, Amanda met with my family – my husband and two children + my mother-in-law. Now everyone had a face to put with a name. We talked about breathing, visualization and when I would contact her when labor started. I seemed to give birth pretty quickly, so we decided on having her come sooner rather than later, since we also lived a ways apart. We emailed back and forth and called each other on the phone. At that point it was a waiting game…

The day of my baby shower arrived and with food galore, including my mother-in-law’s delicious Turkish dishes, we had a wonderful time. I noticed some twinges, but continued with the party. About 4pm in the afternoon, I called Amanda to say that I thought I might be in early labor since the twinges had not gone away. I was having a rush every 20 minutes or so. We agreed that I should get some sleep and call during the night if they got much closer together. I had a hard time sleeping and wandered around, practicing the positions we had reviewed during our visits. I sat in child’s pose, leap frog and some all fours to help as the labor grew more intense. I felt like I was managing okay. Around 3 am, I called Amanda again and told her that the contractions were 10minutes apart and we were heading for the hospital. She said she was on her way. We headed for the hospital, checked in, and found out that I was 8 cm dilated already, 100% effaced. I had done a lot of work at home! In the labor/delivery room, I had my husband, my mother and my sister present. I was in fairly intense back labor and laying on my back in the hospital bed when Amanda arrived. She had me get up on my feet and squat with her during the next contraction and that felt better. She asked that they bring me a birthing ball and I sat on it, leaned forward on to the bed and rotated my pelvis. As a contraction would come, Amanda would breathe me through it and have me focus my energy down towards my pelvis. She suggested that my husband massage my lower back which felt really good too. I told Amanda that I was scared about the pushing part. She said that it was usually not the most uncomfortable parts and that we’d take it a bit at a time. I got up to change my position on the ball and all of the sudden knew that she was coming …now. I told Amanda that I had to get on the bed, that she was coming. She and my husband helped me on the bed and I laid back and braced myself for what I knew instinctively was coming. The pressure became much more intense and then it felt like the baby was tearing down my body. I began to scream because it was so painful. I screamed for probably 7-8 seconds, before the nurse yelled at me to get my attention. “Julia”, she said, “I need you to stop pushing! The baby is here, we just want her to come out as slowly as possible to preserve your perenium, okay?” I began breathing shallowly as they lubed my vagina up with jelly. In a couple of pushes, she was out. It had been so fast! What I had read said that the pushing time usually lasts 20minutes to 2 hours – not 10 seconds! My husband cut the cord and Caelan was officially “ part of our world!”

With the relief that she was out and okay, I relaxed a bit. The nurse called out for a shot of pitocin to encourage the placenta out, but Amanda asked that we wait on that to see if it would descend on its own. The nurse said something terse back and we waited. Caelan was not brought to me to begin nursing until 15 – 20 minutes later. By that time, the pitocin had been administered directly, which was not the policy (should be introduced with 1 liter of fluids). I began to feel flushed, shaky and my heart was racing. Amanda noticed this and asked the doctor about this reaction. The doctor stated that this was common with pitocin administration and we asked no more about it. The placenta was delivered and half the size of a normal placenta, so we sent it away for testing. The doctor on call (not my doctor or his back-up), came in as we were waiting for the placenta. She inspected my vagina and said that there was just a single stitch that needed to be done. They gave me a local anesthetic and began sewing it up. I could still feel the area and said that what was going on, hurt. They seemed oblivious and continued their work. Once I was sewn up and cleaned up, they gave me Caelan. She seemed great – all systems go. She latched on with Amanda’s help and we sat for a bit just admiring her and reveling in the moment. I had done it, just the way I wanted to – without interventions or drugs! Amanda was amazed at what I had accomplished at home and chided me for not calling her earlier. But I really had felt like I could manage the pain. I hadn’t really worried about the labor because I knew Amanda would be there when I needed her – and she was. I said good-bye to Amanda and headed to my recovery room.

During our first few weeks home, I suffered from intense headaches on the top of my head and what appeared to be high blood pressure. I am in good shape and had never had either of these things before. I began to do more research and discovered that the pitocin I had been administered, had been given incorrectly and could mean major side effects for me. I shared this information with my OB and he suggested I get an MRI to be sure there was no hemorrhaging . He said there was nothing to do but wait for the pitocin to exit my system and the side effects to wear off. I was horrified and the incompetence and threat to my well-being. We are continuing to follow up with the hospital with a charge of negligence in the hopes that they will step up their education/safety practices with new nurses. It has been hard to have such a wonderful experience tarnished with this, but I am still in awe of my body and what it could do. I feel a connection and worthiness with this child that I didn’t feel after my other births. We labored together and were both “born” through the experience. Amanda continues to check in with me, making a follow-up visit once I was home and then calling and writing frequently. It is comforting to know I’m being thought of and watched over.