

Aug. 20 2005

Dear Expectant Parent:

My husband Jason and I decided to hire our doula, Shira Martorana, just three weeks before our expected delivery date of Aug 1, 2005. Prior to this we attended the Child Birth Preparation course offered at UCSD, read countless pregnancy/labor/delivery books, went to prenatal yoga and worked out 2-4 times per week all in order to better prepare ourselves for the birthing experience. We also had a birthing team which consisted of my mother, a very close friend who is a registered nurse as well as the midwives at the Birthing Center at UCSD. However, I had planned on having a completely natural birthing experience and despite all of this I still did not feel fully prepared for our upcoming birth.

We met Shira while having lunch at a local restaurant one afternoon. She gave me her business card and asked that I call her if interested in her doula and Hypnobirthing services. Since we were taking all the right steps in order to be ready for the birth and even considered taking advantage of the free volunteer doula services offered at UCSD we originally didn't think it would be necessary to hire and pay for a doula. However, after thinking about it a few weeks we decided we not only wanted to learn the principles and techniques taught in Hypnobirthing that Shira recommended but also liked the idea of getting to know our doula before going into labor. In the end my husband and I are very thankful that we hired her and agree that she was worth every penny of her fee.

We began our 5 week Hypnobirthing classes with only 3 weeks to go until our expected delivery date. Due to the short amount of time we had to work with, our instructor Jo Kilburn asked that we attend the first three classes with the other expectant parents and the last two we would complete with in private sessions. Shira came to every class with us. She was a true asset to us and the group as she had successfully delivered her two children using Hypnobirthing practices. It was really inspiring listening to the stories of her deliveries as well as those that she had assisted with through her doula services. For Jason and me it was wonderful having her be with us in each class. She provided many practical ideas that helped my husband quickly and easily get me into a deep, relaxed state that we would need during the actual birthing experience. For the next four weeks I read and re-read the Hypnobirthing books and listened to the scripts on the accompanying CD's several times a day. By the end of the class I felt much more confident and at peace with the birth.

Five days after my anticipated delivery date I was diagnosed with pregnancy induced hypertension. After going to the midwife to have my blood pressure checked they immediately sent us to the Labor and Delivery floor at the hospital to begin inducing labor. I was given an IV with Magnesium Sulfate to help lower my blood pressure and Petocin to help induce labor. Our labor and delivery didn't go exactly as detailed in our birthing plan, but Shira as well as some of the Hypnobirthing scripts reminded me to embrace the birth process regardless of how it turned out. Within a few hours of being given the Petocin, I was in labor.

I began by being 2-3 centimeters dilated and 75% effaced so we all assumed it would be a quick and easy labor. Seventeen hours later I began transition and breathing the baby down. The baby's head could be seen and preparation for the delivery was made. I found the tools and techniques that I learned through Hypnobirthing to be extremely useful during this time. They turned off the epidural so I could feel each surge. I kept repeating a line from one of the scripts that said, "I answer each surge only with my breath". And I was able to do exactly that. I was completely calm and at peace. After 6 hours of breathing down the baby very little progress was made. The baby's head was too large to fit through my pelvis. At that point the midwife said we may want to consider a c-section. I was prepped and taken to the operating room for delivery. Within 30 minutes our son Deklyn was born.

In the weeks, days and hours leading up to delivery Shira was an invaluable part of our birthing team. In the seventeen hours of early labor she was there at every minute to help support me and my needs. She was able to quickly and easily determine what would make me more comfortable and was always one step ahead with a cold wash cloth, ice water, soft hands for a massage, or whatever it took to help me have a joyful birth experience.

In addition, the support she provided for Jason was exceptional. He was originally a little apprehensive in hiring a doula, fearing that having one present would diminish his role as the birthing partner. However, she was able to gracefully and efficiently help him help me, while letting him take the lead in the birthing process.

We are both very thankful that we chose to hire Shira and would highly recommend her to expectant parent. She is remarkably friendly and easy to relate to yet extremely professional to me, my family and the hospital staff.

If you have any questions regarding Shira and our experience with her please feel free to call me or Jason at any time.

Kindest regards,

Serenity and Jason Gardner