

It's Not Your Mother-in-Law's Birth: Speak Up and Stand Firm!

By Hailey Murray



It used to be that women labored alone while their husbands stood in waiting rooms smoking cigars; boy, have things changed! Today hospitals and birth centers often allow multiple supporters with you as you labor and even during delivery (our hospital allowed four – I chose my husband, our doula and a very brave male friend who took beautiful photographs of our son's arrival). Some hospitals are even offering stadium-style seating, allowing up to 15 people in the room with you as you labor. If you plan to birth at home, there's no limit to how many people can join the party!

But is that what you want? Think carefully, and early, about who you might want beside you as you labor. If you have a spouse or partner they're almost certainly going to make the guest list, but would you also appreciate the support of your mother? Your sister? Your best friend?

If you plan to deliver in a hospital or birth center, call well before your 'guess date' to find out how many people can join you during labor, and don't forget to make sure you have approval from your spouse or partner before extending invitations. My own father still talks about how my aunt (my mother's sister) "grabbed" my older brother from the doctor and announced "it's a boy" before dad could even get a glimpse of his firstborn son, and that was thirty-one years ago! There are other potential ramifications you should consider, too - if you invite your mother to witness her grandchild's birth,

will your mother-in-law expect the same privilege?

If you definitely don't want mom or dad or your in-laws watching you moaning and sweating in labor, let them know as early as possible so they aren't disappointed – and have a speech prepared if they beg you to change your mind (try "the hospital's policy is that I can only have my husband there.") If there's one time you can be forgiven for a little white lie, it's now.)

When I was pregnant, my husband and I let our friends and family know that we didn't want anyone hanging out in the waiting room, but we promised to call our family with the good news and the baby's name as soon as we were settled after delivery. We even registered as anonymous at the hospital, so anyone ringing to ask if we were there would be told that we weren't.

If there's conflict in your relationship or your extended family, don't be afraid to confide in your nurses and make sure they know who can receive information about you or visit and who can't. If it comes down to it, the hospital staff will even help you remove an invited guest from your room if you're no longer comfortable with their presence. Don't feel embarrassed if you have family drama – labor and delivery nurses have seen it all, and they're used to playing gatekeeper!

My husband and I welcomed our parents to visit us in our recovery room after we'd had



several precious hours as a couple to bond with our new baby, and our siblings soon after. We didn't invite friends for a "meet and greet" for more than a week after we came home from the hospital – my husband and I both wanted (and needed) time to settle into our new lives as parents.

Because we'd detailed our wishes and explained the reasons for them well before our son's arrival, everyone understood. Our (very big, and very excited) family even waited a whole day for us to make the all-important Facebook announcement to the world before sharing the news more widely themselves.

Even my friends, who were thrilled to become my son's "aunties," gracefully accepted that only his actual aunts and uncles would become "Uncle Sean" or "Auntie Troian." It wasn't a difficult case to argue; with my two brothers and my husband's huge blended family, our newborn already had twenty-three official aunts and uncles to remember!

Before my pregnancy, I suspect most of my friends would have described me as a people-pleaser. But as soon as I knew I had a new life to protect, I found the strength to assert myself and defend my decisions, diplomatically but firmly. It helped me have a relatively stress-free pregnancy, labor, birth and postpartum experience, and my family and friends were all elated by our new arrival, whether they met him in the hospital or a few weeks after we brought him home. For me, the key was managing expectations early; don't wait until you're in labor to tell your 15 closest friends they are not coming with you into the delivery room, stadium seating or not!

Hailey Murray is a writer, editor, speaker and birth doula. She is also the Managing Editor of this year's Informed Pregnancy® Guide, and a proud mother to her two-year-old son Hugh. You can follow Hailey on Twitter @Hailey_Murray, or find her online at www.haileymurray.com

Mention this ad for a free class!*



aquaBelly®

WATER FITNESS FOR MOMS & MOMS-TO-BE

PRENATAL FITNESS & POST BABY BOOT CAMP

Group | Private | Semi-Private Classes

For more info, please contact Jen at:
805.428.0907, Jen@AquaBellyFitness.com
or visit www.AquaBellyFitness.com

*New Clients Only



Lil' Seed of Life

Birth Wellness Center

Phone: 877-674-SEED (7333)

Serving the Greater Los Angeles County area and beyond since 2009

- Birth Doula Services • Birth Education •
- Placenta Services • Breastfeeding Support •
- Postpartum Care Services • And More...

Free Consultations!

"With a little seed of education and nurturing support we empower the families of today in their journey of pregnancy, labor and birth, and postpartum care."



Photo by A.T. Studios

info@lilseedoflife.com

www.lilseedoflife.com



Renea Cotto, BA, AAHCC,
DONA& Bradley Doula, PES

877-674-SEED (7333)