

## Jo, Nigel & Josh's Calmbirth experience...

During the last trimester of pregnancy, my husband Nigel and I had five weeks of calmbirth classes with Kerri-Ann. After these, I listened to the CD's daily, reread the booklet and practiced the breathing techniques on a regular basis – walking, going to sleep, during Braxton hicks and leg cramps. At 33 weeks I was diagnosed with Gestational Diabetes and told by my obstetrician I will probably be induced at 38 weeks! I successfully managed the gestational diabetes through diet, exercise and daily monitoring. I was still induced, but it was three days after the due date.

Close to the induction day, I had severe doubts in my ability to perform a calmbirth. I panicked! Then I realised I had to put 100% into trying, otherwise I would NEVER know if the calmbirth techniques would have worked. I told myself - if I stayed calm, I could potentially avoid interventions or tearing. I read the calmbirth booklet again and listened to the CD's at least twice a day...

At 10.00am I had my membranes ruptured and was put on an intravenous drip and the contractions or 'waves' began. I automatically began my well practiced 'breathing' technique whilst sometimes visualizing the rainforest where Nigel and I had our honeymoon. Breathing deeply and slowly in through the nose, counting 1,2,3,4, and then calmly breathing out through the nose, counting 1,2,3,4. I wanted an 'active' birth, so remained standing the whole time, walking around with my 'inducer buddy'. I still ate, drank, laughed, answered questions and rested between contractions. The midwives were really supportive; they read our birth plan and had attended some in-services already about calmbirth by Kerri-Ann.

Nigel changed the music CD's we'd created ourselves, lit my fragrant 'melts' for me and stuck on the window the positive affirmations friends had written onto a poster for me during my 'blessing way'. These all contributed to me staying focused for the calmbirth.

As my contractions became more regular I lifted each foot and swayed my hips, whilst leaning on the edge of the raised bed. Nigel either massaged my lower back, or used light-touch massage learnt during the calmbirth classes, running the back of his hands from my shoulders down to my arms. I used the gas to take the 'edge' off the pressure in my lower back, which felt like a heavy bowling ball was trying to push its way out. I also used the gas to consciously slow my breathing, the deeper the breath I took, the louder the rattle of the machine.

When the contractions felt like they were overlapping, my obstetrician thought to check my dilation. I heard someone say I was 7cm. A midwife suggested I roll on my left side to see if it would speed things up. When I did - WHOA!! I could feel my body pushing out the baby! It was amazing! As learnt during calmbirth class, my uterus muscles were expelling the baby with no effort from me at all! I could picture it. I was asked if I still needed the gas, I said I didn't but was concentrating on my breathing too much to remove the mask myself. Nigel took the gas mask off my face and without it I started panting quickly and the midwife reminded me to concentrate on my calm breathing, which I immediately did and am thankful for because it meant I could relax between contractions again. I'd also begun to moan, which I couldn't stop, so just relaxed and let my body do what it's designed to do.

After about half a dozen contractions, I felt the top of the baby's head as it crowned. The obstetrician and midwife said the head may come out on the next contraction, so I did a 'push' to help and out it came. I took a break between contractions and told them I'd assist pushing the rest of the baby out on the next contraction. This 'push' was shorter and at 2.07pm, our Joshua was born! He was lifted up to lie on my chest but the umbilical cord wasn't long enough for him to reach, so he lay across my soft belly whilst we waited for the cord to finish pulsating. Then Nigel cut the cord and our little boy was put on my chest for his first breastfeed. Joshua's eyes were wide open as his mouth searched for the breast! While he tried to feed, we all watched on in awe.

