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IN THE NEWS

Meditation, Mantras & Visualization

By Dr. Ye Nguyen
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Try these 5 techniques to help you cope with all that arises during pregnancy and childbirth.

Through using meditations, mantras and visualization techniques, we are able to find a sense of peace amidst the unknowns of all that is entailed during labor and delivery.

These five techniques are all very helpful tools both during pregnancy and labor.

1. "Deep Belly Breath" Meditation:

This is a very powerful meditation to ground yourself during pregnancy, coping and dealing with the emotional – and physical – ups and downs of pregnancy.

I recommend setting aside time every day and having a consistent, ritualistic nurturing practice.

Start off with 5 minutes a day, and then gradually increase the minutes every week. The gift of peace is one of the greatest gifts that you can give your baby, while still in your womb.

Here is a simple technique for starting meditation:

- Place your hands on your belly, gently cradling baby
- Observe the sensations felt beneath your hands
- Do you feel warmth? Any movements?
- As your mind wanders off, breathe deeper into your belly.
- As a thought arises, label it as "thinking"
- Upon exhalation, let that thought float away, as if it were a cloud in the sky.

2. Mantras:

There is a lot of power in our words. When we speak of something, we believe in it. It affects our consciousness, our nervous system, our way of being. I like to use practical mantras when I teach Pregnancy Yoga. As we go into a challenging pose, "uncomfortable" feelings are brought up. Our tendency is to try to get out of the uncomfortableness, to escape, to avoid.

The mantra that I use with my yogini mamas is: "Strong mama breath. Breathe in for baby." This same mantra can be used during difficult times in pregnancy and during labor.

3. "Wave" Visualizations:

Through visualizations, we are able to decrease the intensity of pain. This can be a very powerful pain coping tool during labor.

See each contraction as a wave in the ocean. Watch it slowly peak in intensity and then allow it to slowly come down. See yourself as a jellyfish, allowing that wave to wash through you, being soft and supple in your body. Through your conscious breath, you are able to relax the muscles of your entire being.

4. "Blossoming Lotus" Visualization & Chant:

There is a Buddhist saying, "No Mud, No Lotuses". The lotus flower is a very sacred, pure & deeply spiritual flower honored by many different cultures. In order for it to blossom into a beautiful flower, it needs to grow in murky, muddy waters.

Visualize your cervix as a blossoming lotus flower. Upon every contraction, visualize & chant, "Open, open, open."



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5. "Third Eye" Visualization and Meditation:

Become aware of the space on your forehead between your eyebrows. This space is known as your "third eye". If we focus, yet allow our muscles to soften in this area, we are able to achieve greater concentration and possibly break free of our thoughts, whether they are fears, worries, anxieties or anticipation of what will be.

Directly inside our head, behind the "third eye," is our pineal gland. This gland is sensitive to light. From a physiological perspective, this gland produces serotonin, a derivative of melatonin, which is a hormone that affects the regulation of wake/sleep patterns. There is a yoga saying: "The light that shines within", which corresponds to the third eye/pineal gland.

Meditation/Visualization technique:

- Upon sitting or during a contraction in labor, relax the muscles on your forehead between your eyebrows.
- Focus the intention of your breath upon that area
- Continue with equal depths of inhalation & exhalation

Dr. Ye Nguyen is a Naturopathic Physician, Yoga Therapist and Doula. She lives in Haleiwa, Hawaii and gave birth to her second child, a girl, this July.