

Portrayals of
CHILDBIRTH
IN THE
MEDIA
Is it Causing
Women to
FEAR?

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To Tweet or Not

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We have been watching our clients process their labors and births through Facebook, Twitter, blogging and other forms of social media. Is that in the best interest of the birthing mother or baby?

To tweet

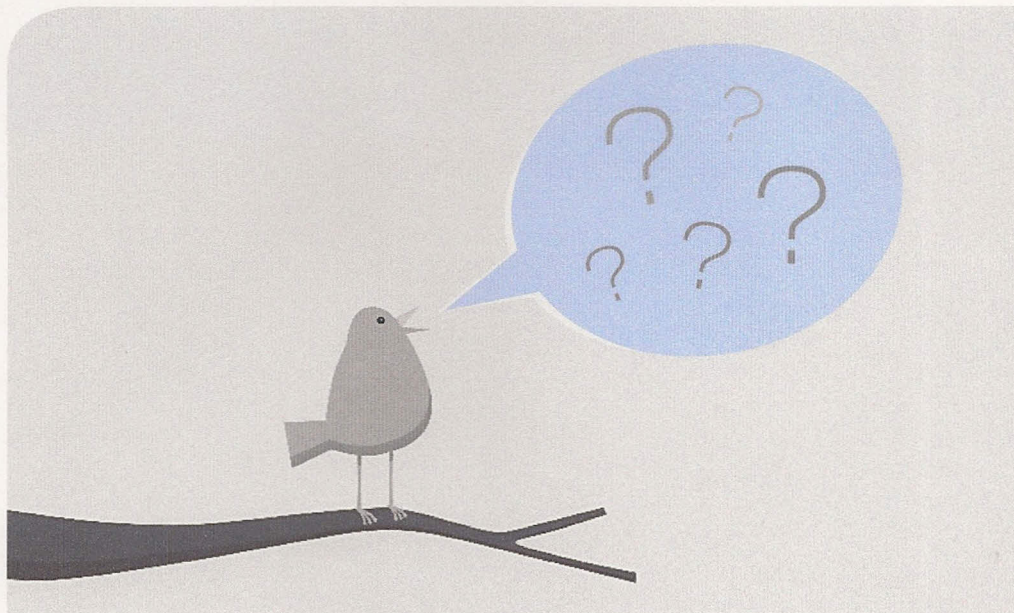
I strongly believe that a woman in labor needs to focus deep into her primal self so that her body can work on birthing her baby. Does bouncing between social networking sites remove her from the moment at hand? Maybe, as often a woman's role in her family is the networker she-who-keeps-everyone-informed—her job is to make sure that everyone feels a part of the family. Perhaps the tweets are the tech-savvy mom's way of justifying her limited hands-on support network. The Facebook post from her cell phone might be a way of asking for words of encouragement from her on-line friends. Reading the posts of support may be her version of a locker room pep talk.

Do the electronics get in the way of a purely natural birth? Maybe, but we are in a hospital away from her safety zone, away from pictures of her family and childhood, away from all things that—by their very presence—offer her support and encouragement. If she draws support from tweets and responses during labor then she should post. Conversely, if the very act of not posting is stressful to her then she should be able to.

I might not get it, but she does, and that's what matters.

Not to tweet

Just when the natural birth movement has begun to pick up pace again, technology makes its way into the labor room through a variety of social media to announce the start of labor and the progress therein.




True—it is a simple, fast and efficient way of keeping others informed who genuinely care (or have a sick curiosity) about the woman in labor. It is also a great way for a woman on an epidural to pass time. But for a woman who is attempting a truly natural birth, there is absolutely no room for electronic communications technology.

Here is why: The mere act of reading, processing and then responding to texts, e-mails and phone calls involves activation of the neocortex, the thinking brain. The neocortex is occupied by external sounds and voices, reading data, bright lights, feeling observed and interruptions. When the neocortex is stimulated, it inhibits the mammalian brain from working efficiently and can short circuit the most important hormone, oxytocin.

Dr. Sarah J. Buckley has written extensively about these "ecstatic hormones" of birth.¹ When a laboring woman is undisturbed, natural oxytocin is able to flow and labor progresses normally. These ecstatic hormones are produced in the limbic system, the emotional brain. When the neocortex

competes with the limbic system, the natural process of birth is interrupted. In other words, a stimulated neocortex can actually make labor slow down or stop altogether.

Labor is not a spectator sport! Knowing that stimulation of the neocortex by the act of engaging in social media could very possibly inhibit the release of this fast-birth hormone, would you not want to turn off those phones and give your thumbs a rest? 

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SOURCE:

1. Dr. Sarah J. Buckley, MD. <http://www.sarahjbuckley.com/articles/ecstatic-birth.htm>