

Coping Styles: What Comforts You?

As you prepare for your baby's birth, take some time to learn more about yourself and your partner. Childbirth is a challenging experience, both physically and emotionally. Reflecting on things that help in other challenging situations can give you some ideas for what *kinds* of support will be most helpful to mom in labor. Also consider: what do her support people need to make sure *their* needs are met too, so they have the strength to nurture mom?

You can write out the answers to the questions in journal style, then discuss them with your partner, or you can use this outline as a basis for conversation on these topics.

Normal Coping Mechanisms:

Mom, ask yourself:

- When you are sick, what helps you to feel better?
- What did your parents do for you when you were sick as a child, or what did you wish they had done for you?
- When you are too tired to go on, how do you find more energy?
- When you are scared of what's to come, where do you find the courage to move forward?

Dad/Support People, ask yourself:

- When you're mentally, physically, and emotionally exhausted, where do you find new energy?
- When you are scared of what's to come, or what may happen, how do *you* find the courage to move forward?
- When you feel helpless or out of control of a situation, how do you react?
- When you want to help someone, but feel like you don't know how to help, how do you cope?

Love Languages:

Review the handout about Gary Chapman's Love Languages, and consider which language(s) you are most comfortable speaking in, which language(s) your partner most needs to hear, and the challenges of your mixture of languages. (The languages are: Physical Touch, Words of Affirmation, Gifts, Acts of Service, and Quality Time.)

Learning Styles

Visual Learners tend to respond best to comfort techniques that work with visual images. Attractive surroundings, focal points, familiar objects, and visualizations work well.

Auditory Learners prefer sounds: music, being read to, breathing techniques, encouragement, praise, singing and being sung to. It may help them to vocalize (moan) during contractions.

Kinesthetic Learners work well with movement and touch: changing positions, walking, rocking, and all forms of massage.

Personality Styles

Introverts / Introspective types: If mom is normally quiet and reflective, and turns to inner resources to cope with challenges, she is likely to be the same in labor. She needs someone to sit quietly by her side, creating a quiet, dark, safe, relaxed environment for her labor. The goal is to minimize interruption, and support her in finding her own way through labor.

Extroverts / Active Types: If mom is normally louder and outgoing, and turns to friends for help with challenges, or needs to Take Action to deal with things, then she will need to "do something" during labor. She needs ideas to put into action: try movement, try massage, try breathing techniques, try focal points. Distractions are key. Support people are her coaches.