



ELEMENTAL
RENEWAL

Labor & Delivery Management, Three Yoga Postures

*an excerpt from Ginger's upcoming book, **Fit & Fearless Birth***

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The three main yoga postures I use for laboring moms are:

*Note that these poses are to be used during contractions. When you are not having a contraction, rest.

1. Supported Child's pose.



This pose needs to have a "wide stance" to it - which means during a contraction, mom needs to focus on separating the knees wider and sitting back to the heels a little lower.

The photo below pictures me practicing child's pose (with the bottom lower and not high in the air to promote downward movement and engagement of baby in the birth canal).

*This pose can also be done on the birthing ball, as pictured below. The birthing ball position can be used for pain relief as well, with the help of your birth coach.

Two Manual Techniques for the Child's Pose on the Birth Ball:



1. Your birth coach can stand behind you during this pose and the ball pose and apply pressure to the sacrum from its base. The hand will be placed on the lower low back and firm pressure can be applied during a contraction.

2. The other manual technique for pain relief and for opening the pelvic outlet is iliac crest (IC) pressure. This IC technique is commonly used when mom is sitting on the birthing ball. Find the IC by standing behind mom and placing a hand on either side of the top of the pelvis. During a contraction, firmly press the top of the pelvic together. Release gradually as the contraction gradually subsides. It is up to mom to tell the coach how much pressure she needs to relieve pain.

2. Supported Garland/Squat pose.



This pose should be gentle on the low back and sacrum, and moms should consult their health care provider before attempting this pose if you have pre-existing low back pain.

I support this pose with a birth ball and blankets for moms with low back pain or back labor. The pose can also be supported by the birth coach standing behind mom and holding her up by squatting with her.

If you do use a birth ball to squat, make sure someone is supporting it to keep it from rolling or it has a stop placed behind it. In the photo I used a sandbag behind my ball to keep it from moving.



Alternative to Squats:

Rocking on the birth ball.

If you cannot squat for any reason, then sitting and weight shifting/rocking/bouncing gently on the ball (while someone helps to support you AND you hold on to the bed) can help manage pain and facilitate pelvic opening. See photo at left.

3. Asymmetrical lunges or bowing warrior I from the knee.



This pose I used during the hardest of contractions. I also walked between contractions.

Some moms prefer to walk through contractions. However as contractions strengthen, I offer moms multiple avenues for working through them.

In addition to walking, I offer moms the option of asymmetrical lunges. Doing a warrior I pose in kneeling,

and while bowing forward, can widen the pelvic outlet and surprisingly manage pain. When you feel a contraction coming on, enter into the pose and as the contractions intensifies, begin to bow forward onto a birthing ball or support yourself with the hands on the floor or a blanket.

For Birth Coaches:

Communicate with mom by looking into her eyes. Contractions are painful and sometimes she will not be able to verbalize what she needs.

Work out a system with hand signals - where a thumbs up means more pressure or heavier massage and thumbs down means less. A stop sign with the hand can mean - stop, don't touch me. These signals are important to work out before you get into heavy labor.

For husbands and partner coached birth, holding that gaze into her eyes can also bring you closer together, help her focus, and share the love you have in bringing this new life into the world.

You want to provide full support for her, and be her voice - you should know the birth plan and her wishes during birth. (i.e. dim lights, music playing (or not), warm blankets during contractions, etc.) You can help her focus on labor and birth, so she does not have to be distracted by health care providers or ask for things that she wants.

A very important last point:

While mom is practicing all the poses above, you can also add acupuncture point therapy as well as the manual techniques listed above. A laboring mother has different preferences during birth, and you often won't know what those are until she has experienced labor for the first time.

My solution is to always carry a FULL TOOLBOX into the labor and delivery experience. What works for one laboring mother will not work for another. Some mothers may love massage during pregnancy and then all of a sudden not be able to tolerate having it during labor.

Be open minded and carry a thick skin. Pain may make it difficult for her to communicate her needs, so don't be easily offended if she barks out orders. Let her be in the birth zone, and give her the support she needs to be successful.

*All of the photos were taken during my late third trimester of my second pregnancy, around week 35.

Caution: All of the postures above are not a substitute for medical advice, and should only be undertaken with the supervision and/or approval of your midwife, physician, and/or physical therapist. The squat postures should not be taken until baby is confirmed head down. Postures for turning baby to the head down position are not included in this practice. While all of these postures can be safely performed during pregnancy to prepare for labor and delivery, this practice is specifically for use during labor.