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Pain-free labour under hypnosis



Kerry Woodcock had no artificial pain relief during labour

Women are increasingly turning to hypnosis techniques to help them beat the pain of childbirth.

Complementary therapies such as aromatherapy and yoga are now frequently used during pregnancy as relaxation aids, but many women find that they can even get through labour itself without artificial pain relief.

But a leading midwife has warned that women should not be made to feel like a failure if they cannot get through childbirth on hypnosis alone.

Kerry Woodcock used an advanced relaxation technique called "hypno-birthing" during her 24-hour labour.



Deborah Henley: increasing confidence

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She said: "You don't look like a zombie, you are completely aware of everything that is going on around you.

"You are in a relaxed state and might not know how much time is passing."

Traditionally, women have been offered - and mostly accepted - a variety of pain relieving methods such as gas and air, pethidine and epidural painkilling injections.

Many complain later that, although they suffered little pain, the experience of birth had been denied them because they were not sufficiently aware of what was going on at the time.

Melanie Grey, from the Royal College of Midwives, however said that mothers should not be pressurised into having less pain relief than they actually wanted.



Melanie Every: emotional risks

She said: "I don't think there are any physical dangers - the dangers are emotional. A woman may feel they have failed if they don't get through childbirth using hypnosis alone."

Clinical hypnotherapist Deborah Henley told the BBC that often all the woman would feel after using the techniques was a sensation of pressure and tension within the womb.

She said: "What we are doing is preparing a woman before the birth, reducing her fears, and increasing her confidence."

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