



A Birth Partner Cheat Sheet

Uncertain about your role as a birth partner? Follow these eight easy guidelines.

- 1.** Support is a key element to a woman having a [positive birth](#) and postpartum experience. As a birth partner, identify the resources you have for informational, emotional and physical backup early on.
- 2.** As you learn more about [the process of birth](#), you will discover your strengths in offering support, and you can decide how you want to contribute to the birth of this child. Will you be the primary support, work more with the other team members or be by the mother's side with your full love and support while others do the hands-on work? A birth partner can serve in any manner that helps the laboring woman, so be comfortable, even joyful, in whatever role you both agree upon.
- 3.** Whether you decide to actively work with the mother or just shower her with love, simply being present makes a difference. The birth partner is usually the one member of the team who best knows her desires and can interpret her cues and express her wishes to others. Your personal history with the laboring woman is something the rest of the team doesn't have.
- 4.** In order to care for a mother in labor, you must also care for yourself. Eating and drinking during labor will give you the energy you need. Wear comfortable clothes and let the doula or nurse care for your partner while you take an occasional break.
- 5.** Ask questions. Unless you are birthing at home, you are in an unfamiliar setting surrounded by unfamiliar people.
- 6.** Be prepared to experience some strong emotions. Often, a birth partner is so absorbed in supporting the mother and remaining strong that he or she is surprised by the powerful feelings of love and awe that accompany seeing this incredible woman go through birth.
- 7.** [You and the mother may have the most familiar voices to the infant.](#) When you talk to the baby, he experiences a feeling of calmness that has a positive effect on his transition to the outside world. Stroking him will also reduce stress hormones and improve his breathing and temperature regulation.
- 8.** The postpartum period is a mix of joyous and difficult moments. The unpredictability of each day and getting to know your baby can sometimes make for a [challenging situation](#).
- 9.** After the excitement of birth dies down a bit, enjoy quiet time with the mother and baby, and delight in the miracle of birth and the part you played.