

# Changing Birth on Earth: A Journey Towards Empowered and Holistic Birthing Experiences

The act of birth, a profound and transformative event, has undergone significant changes throughout the course of human history. From ancient practices steeped in tradition to modern medical advancements, the way we welcome new life has evolved in response to cultural shifts, scientific discoveries, and evolving societal attitudes.



## Changing Birth on Earth: A midwife and nurse's guide to using physiology to avoid another unnecessary cesarean by Gail Tully

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In recent decades, a growing movement has emerged, centered on the belief that birth is not simply a medical procedure but a sacred and empowering experience for both the birthing person and the child. This movement, known as the changing birth movement, advocates for a shift towards more holistic, respectful, and empowering approaches to childbirth.

## **Historical Perspectives on Childbirth**

In traditional societies, childbirth was often seen as a natural and sacred process, performed in the home with the assistance of midwives and experienced women in the community. Rituals and practices varied widely across cultures, but shared common elements such as communal support, reverence for the birthing person, and an emphasis on the spiritual and emotional aspects of birth.

The advent of modern medicine in the 19th and 20th centuries brought significant changes to the childbirth experience. Hospitals became the primary setting for births, and medical interventions such as episiotomies, forceps deliveries, and cesarean sections became commonplace. While these interventions improved the safety of childbirth for both mothers and infants, they also marked a shift towards a more medicalized and controlled approach to birth.

## **Changing Birth: A Movement Towards Empowerment**

The changing birth movement emerged in the late 20th century as a reaction to the perceived over-medicalization of childbirth and a growing desire for a more natural and holistic birthing experience. This movement is based on the belief that birth is a normal physiological process that should be respected and supported, and that the birthing person should be empowered to make informed decisions throughout their labor and delivery.

Central to the changing birth movement is the concept of informed consent. This means that the birthing person is provided with comprehensive information about all available birthing options and their potential risks and benefits, enabling them to make decisions that align with their values and preferences.

## Key Principles of Changing Birth

The changing birth movement encompasses a wide range of practices and perspectives, but certain key principles are common to most proponents:

- **Respect for the birthing person:** The birthing person is seen as the central figure in the birth process, and their autonomy and well-being are paramount.
- **Holistic care:** Birth is viewed as a whole-body, mind-body experience, and interventions are chosen that support the birthing person's physical, emotional, spiritual, and social needs.
- **Evidence-based practices:** Decisions about birthing interventions are based on sound medical evidence and a thorough understanding of the risks and benefits.
- **Empowerment:** The birthing person is actively involved in decision-making throughout their labor and delivery, and is supported by a team of healthcare providers who respect their choices.
- **Sustainability:** Changing birth practices also encompass a concern for environmental sustainability, advocating for reduced waste and the use of eco-friendly materials.

## Benefits of Changing Birth Approaches

The changing birth movement has been associated with several potential benefits for both the birthing person and the child, including:

- **Reduced interventions:** Studies have shown that changing birth practices can lead to a reduction in unnecessary interventions, such as episiotomies and cesarean sections.

- **Improved outcomes for both mothers and babies:** Research suggests that births with fewer interventions are associated with better outcomes for both mothers and infants, including reduced risk of postpartum complications.
- **Increased satisfaction:** Birthing people who have a positive and empowering birth experience are more likely to feel satisfied with their childbirth journey.
- **Positive long-term effects:** Changing birth practices can have a positive impact on the birthing person's physical and emotional well-being in the long term.

## Challenges and Future Directions

While the changing birth movement has gained significant momentum in recent years, it still faces challenges in promoting its principles and practices within the wider healthcare system. These challenges include:

- **Resistance from healthcare providers:** Some healthcare providers may be resistant to changing established practices or may not be adequately trained in holistic birthing approaches.
- **Hospital policies:** Hospital policies and procedures may not always align with changing birth principles, making it difficult for birthing people to access the care they desire.
- **Lack of insurance coverage:** Some insurance policies may not cover out-of-hospital births or birth centers, limiting the accessibility of alternative birthing options.

Despite these challenges, the changing birth movement continues to grow and evolve. Advocates are working to educate healthcare providers, change hospital policies, and increase insurance coverage for alternative birthing options. With continued progress, the hope is that more birthing people will have access to empowering and holistic birth experiences that honor their needs and wishes.

The changing birth movement represents a profound shift in the way we approach birth on Earth. By embracing holistic practices, empowering birthing people, and respecting the natural process of childbirth, we can create a future where all births are safe, empowering, and fulfilling. As the movement continues to gain momentum, we can envision a world where birthing people are celebrated and supported, and where each new life enters the world in a way that honors the journey of both the mother and the child.



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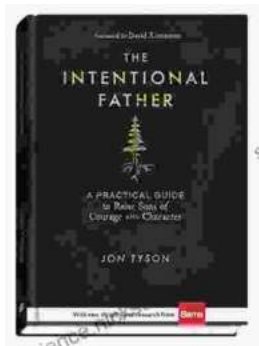
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