

The birth of Josiah Aaron

We've really enjoying reading others' birth stories, and we're excited to share our own. Josiah Aaron was born at the birth center on November 10, 2010 after ten amazing, intense hours of labor. That's how the story ends, but I'll start at the beginning...

The night before I went into labor, I had contractions all through the night -- stronger and of a different quality than Braxton-Hicks. They tapered off around 6 am, but at the same time, I started having bloody show. I called our Midwife who said it might still be a few days, but the end was certainly close. She advised getting as much rest as I could and eating/hydrating well. I tried to go about my day as usual, wondering all the while if this would be "the day." It was November 9, two days before our due date.

I cleaned the kitchen, scrubbed the floor (yes, on my hands and knees, trying to keep baby in a good position, just like we learned in Bradley Method™ class!), and went for a walk... I had an intuition that I'd be in labor that night, so I rested a good bit too. Around 6 pm, contractions started again -- sporadic at first, but consistent enough by 10 pm that I called and spoke with another Midwife. She suggested that I try and rest. I went to bed at 11 and slept on and off between contractions until midnight.

At that point, the contractions had strengthened significantly, and I couldn't get on top of them if they started while I was sleeping. I gave up trying to sleep and started laboring in the nursery, experimenting with the relaxation techniques and labor positions we learned in our Bradley Method™ class. I notified my good friend whom we asked to come to our birth. She is an RN with some midwifery training; more importantly, she knows me better than most and has a calming, empowering presence. She had ended her hospital shift at midnight and was now speeding to Arlington from her home two and half hours north in Pennsylvania.

By 1:30 am, contractions were three minutes apart and strengthening quickly. I had also started throwing up, which continued until I started pushing. This was confusing, because I associated throwing up with transition and I knew I wasn't there yet. At 2 am, I woke Aaron, my husband. Knowing it would be a long night, I wanted him to get as much sleep as possible, but I needed his support by that point. We called the Midwife and decided to move to the birth center around 4 am.

My RN friend arrived around 3 am, and with help from Aaron and her, I was able to labor fairly comfortably until we left for the birth center. In fact, I was so content that a home birth started to sound very appealing. Aaron was getting nervous as my contractions continued to intensify and I stayed firmly put in the glider-rocker in the nursery. I finally agreed to leave for the birth center, and we arrived at 4:30 am. I was fully effaced and 5-6 cm dilated when we arrived, and progressed to 7 cm dilated during my internal exam. I was very grateful to be so far along. With fantastic support from Aaron, my RN friend, my Midwife and Birth Assistant, I labored in many different positions for the next 3 1/2 hours. My contractions were strong and 2minutes apart the entire time. After a couple of hours, I really wanted to push but it felt like the baby was still a little bit too high...and nothing seemed to be moving him down. I kept saying "move down baby, move down!"

Around this time, I began wondering if I could do it... The contractions were fierce and fast, and I was exhausted. In my lowest moments, I would ask Aaron to pray (later he told me it was more of a command than a request...I didn't have much breath to spare!). Each time, as he prayed, I sensed renewed strength, endurance and peace. I'm confident I could not have made it through without Aaron's strong support and God's grace.

If we could redo the exercise from our birth class where we ranked our priorities for labor, I would definitely put "freedom of movement" at the top. My turning point was around 8 am. I was on hands and knees in bed with a birth ball, and completely frustrated that nothing I tried was pushing us over the edge. Very abruptly, I stood up and insisted I needed to walk. I marched around the room a few times -- I think I was trying to "shake" the baby down -- and climbed back on the bed when the next contraction came. With a dramatic splash, my water broke, the baby dropped into position and it was time to push

It was 1 1/2 hours later, that the Midwife laid a very purple baby on my stomach. After a few minutes, Aaron peeked under the receiving blanket and announced that it was a boy. Josiah weighed in at 8 lbs 11 oz and measured 21.5 inches long.

I didn't expect birth to be as intense as it was, but I felt well-prepared, thanks to Kelly our Bradley Method™ teacher. I will never forget the euphoria and huge sense of accomplishment I felt afterward. I was overwhelmed with joy, relief, thankfulness for the amazing birth team that cheered me on each step of the way, and gratitude to God for this precious gift.

We are adjusting well to being a family of three and we're totally smitten with Josiah. He's a mellow little guy and it's amazing to watch him grow stronger and more observant each day. Sorry to be so long-winded. If you've made it this far, thanks for listening to our story. My fellow Bradley Method™ classmates are a part of this story because we all learned together. We enjoyed sharing our Wednesday evenings together with them.

Alyssa, Aaron & Josiah