

[Birth Without Fear](#)

- [Home](#)
- [About BWF](#)
- [Essential Oils](#)
- [BWF Conference](#)
- [BWF Store](#)
- [BWF Topics](#)
 - [Birth Stories & Pictures](#)
 - [Birth Videos](#)
 - [Birth Without Fear](#)
 - [Breech Birth](#)
 - [Cesarean Birth](#)
 - [Due Dates](#)
 - [Loss](#)
 - [Pregnancy](#)
 - [Research & Statistics](#)
 - [Unassisted Childbirth](#)
 - [VBAC](#)
- [Further Topics](#)
 - [Breastfeeding](#)
 - [Circumcision](#)
 - [Co-Sleeping & Bed Sharing](#)
 - [Hot Topics](#)
 - [Inspiration](#)
 - [Motherhood](#)
 - [Post Partum](#)
 - [Vaccines](#)
- [I Am Strong](#)

One Extraordinary Birth (Six Days of Labor, 33 Hours between Births, Two Healthy Babies)

by Birth Without Fear on July 15, 2011

Part I: Once Upon A Choice

It wasn't that I set out to be an enthusiastic proponent of homebirth. As a matter of fact, I hadn't thought much about what kind of a birth experience I would like to have until I got pregnant. Somehow when I found out that I was carrying a baby (or what turned out to be two babies in my case), it became clear that it was my greatest desire to allow these children to enter the world in the most sacred, peaceful, loving way that I could imagine. The more people gasped in disbelief of the possibility of having a natural home birth with twins, the more I wanted this experience to be the first gift I gave to my children. This is my tale of the miraculous labor and highly unusual births of my twin boy and girl, Zaanti and Miela.

When I was 6 months pregnant we relocated to Southern California and I looked for prenatal medical care there. Most women have already chosen their doctor and figured out a birth plan by then, so I was a little concerned about finding the right prenatal care. Moreover, I had been reading books about birthing written by midwives, yoga teachers and psychologists and was really considering having a homebirth with a midwife. In the stories about homebirths the women went through amazing vision quests, discovering their own strength and softness and molding into the divine feminine. I wanted one of those experiences where I came to a seemingly insurmountable mountain, scaled it, and then I did it again and again. I wanted to bond with my partner Francis and feel the primordial creative force coming through us as we journeyed together with our babies through the transition from the unseen world into the material world. And I wanted to feel everything, yes, everything...the joy, the fear, the pain.... I wanted to feel what millions of women have gone through since time began. And nowhere in this vision of mine did I see bright lights, hospital gowns, being hooked up to an IV and immobilized, being told what to do and when to do it, etc...

I faced resistance from some friends and acquaintances after sharing with them my desire of giving birth at home, so I stopped talking about it except with a few select friends who were supportive and encouraging. Francis and I had to put aside the naysayers' words about the impossibility of a vaginal delivery, the hopelessness of finding a midwife when I was seven months pregnant, of birthing drug free, etc. Miraculously, I found a wonderful OB/GYN who agreed to do my prenatal appointments and be a backup doctor for my homebirth. Now I just needed to find a midwife willing and capable of safely delivering my precious twins at home. This proved to be no small feat, but where there is a will, there is a way. After speaking with a dozen doulas (birth assistants) and midwives, writing emails to every Southern California birthing center, and talking to anyone and everyone who knew anything about giving birth naturally, I finally found an amazing midwife who has delivered 14 sets of twins and over 500 singleton births. We drove 3 hours to meet with Brenda and at that first appointment I knew that I found the person who I trusted enough to be the first one to touch my babies. She was mama earth embodied: nurturing, grounded and serene. Moreover, being a midwife is truly her calling; she is passionate about giving women like me a choice in how we brought our children into the world. After weeks of searching for a midwife, I knew she was the one we've been looking for!

I was so grateful and relieved to have all the birth plans finalized. At 36 weeks, we went in for a routine appointment with the doctor where we found out that Zaanti (Baby A – the first one in position to come out) was footling breech and Miela (Baby B) was vertex. The OB/GYN said that she no longer felt comfortable being a backup doctor for a homebirth and strongly suggested that I schedule a C-section at 38 weeks. My heart tightened. My throat narrowed. I felt as if I was breathing through a tiny straw, getting just enough air to get by. Tears welled up and I told myself to be composed enough to thank the OB/GYN for her opinion, tell her we'll think about it and go process this news at home. As soon as we left the office, I became hysterical, and Francis had to physically hold on to me so that I didn't fall. This news was so sudden and so directly opposite of the birth experience we had been wanting that it was difficult to digest. It was at this time that I worked through and accepted that what I can control is setting a clear intention of following my own Wisdom; the rest was out of my control so I needed to surrender to the events as they unfolded. Whether it was a C-section or a vaginal birth, I wanted it to be conscious and with a conscience. Francis and I decided to gather some more opinions before we chose to either schedule a C-section, plan for a hospital delivery after going into labor or continue with our intent to birth at home.

I have spent almost a decade practicing and teaching yoga, meditated for countless hours, participated in a 10-day silent meditation retreat, but nothing even came close to what happened in the week after that last OB/GYN appointment. I entered a period of the most intense spiritual living so far in my life. I meditated,

prayed, journaled, spoke with every ‘expert’ I could on the topic, and even consulted with a psychic. But mostly I listened. Not to the outside, but to the inside. I closed my eyes wide open to the internal compass leading to a birth that honored me, Francis and the babies.

When I spoke with our midwife about the news, she didn’t seem concerned. Brenda had delivered many breech babies, even breech twins and two footling breeches. In the spirit of full disclosure she told me that she had one footling breech baby that died, but after the coroner’s report came out it was clear that it had nothing to do with the positioning of the baby during the birth. I asked Brenda if she would need extra assistance during the birth or if this latest development changed anything. She said no, that I can always have an extra midwife or doula, but that is not necessary and is up to me. I felt reassured and comforted by her confidence that nothing is out of the ordinary in the babies’ positioning. If I had no physical symptoms and if I put all my trust in the Source of Life within me, I knew all will be well with the homebirth.

I connected with a gynecologist who has been practicing for 42 years and he told me that before they started using ultrasounds routinely they delivered babies in all kinds of positions, and doctors back in the day knew how to deliver healthy babies in a variety of presentations. He was not concerned about the footling breech position, but mentioned that with twins it was usually the second twin that had difficulties. He suggested that I wait to go into spontaneous labor and then bring my midwife to the hospital to help with the delivery. I also emailed a doctor who is a vocal supporter of midwives and he wrote back a very caring email saying that even though he felt the birth may be safe, his knowledge of western medicine and liability reasons mandated him to advise me to birth in a hospital, probably through a scheduled c-section.

One of the midwives I spoke with told me that if she were having twins, she would trust Brenda above anyone and everyone she knew and that as long as Brenda, Francis and I felt comfortable still proceeding with a homebirth, then there is no reason not to. She explained to me in detail that a baby who had a foot sticking out can tuck it back in at any moment and vice versa. And since babies change position all the time, it is more likely that I would have a breech than a footling breech baby. What shocked me is that my gynecologist didn’t explain that to me. She seemed to think that if Baby A was footling breech now, he may be footling breech in two weeks when she wanted to schedule a C-section. If it is possible that the babies may still shift position, why would I have my babies cut out of me two weeks early? Hmmm, my internal compass was starting to really lean in the direction of the homebirth.

What sealed the deal in our decision was speaking with a psychic. I never felt the desire to speak to a clairvoyant before, but I wanted to explore all of my options so I spoke with her for about half an hour. She exclaimed: “No wonder you intuitively feel like you don’t want to go to the hospital! I have a vision of you having more complications than usual and being totally unconscious in a hospital setting” Whoa, that sent a chill down my spine. Who wants to be unconscious while you have two newborns wanting to be held by their mommy? On the other hand, who wants to lose a baby? I asked her if she saw me losing a baby or having complications if I were to birth at home. She said that one of the babies might take a few moments to find its breath, but that besides that she saw two healthy happy babies. I cried when she said that. It is not that I thought she could see the future, but her words really resonated with me. I was (and still am) willing to go through any lengths to have healthy and happy babies. To me, that meant staying away from unnecessary interventions and allowing the animal in me to give birth in a natural and instinctual way. I believe that homebirth is not for everyone, but so is the case with hospital births. I would love to see our culture moving in the direction of having lots of birthing options easily available so that a woman could choose the option that feels safest for her.

Ultimately, Francis and I had a heart to heart and, being the amazing partner he is, he said that he trusted

whatever decision I felt was best, but that he felt most comfortable with a homebirth with Brenda. We agreed that we would try everything in our power to turn Zaanti (baby A) around and barring any health complications we wanted to labor at home. I saw a chiropractor who performed the Webster technique to help turn Zaanti vertex. A couple of days later I saw an acupuncturist for the same purpose. The night after my acupuncture appointment there was so much movement in my lower abdomen that could have signaled Zaanti turning down. For better or for worse, I never had a chance to confirm what position he was in for sure because I went into labor the next day. Either way, all of my contemplative practices clearly pointed me in the direction of keeping the initial plan of homebirth, while still covering all bases by pre-registering at a local hospital in case I needed to go there.

Part II: Zaanti's Birth

On Monday of my 39th week of pregnancy, my water broke. I was so excited I could hardly talk when I called Francis and told him to hurry home. Then I called the midwife and told her to hurry because I thought I may deliver the babies before she had time to make the 3 hour drive. After all, my mom's labors were both very quick. Well, Brenda arrived and my contractions were still mild at best. I had called my mom in the Bay area after my water broke and told her that I will call her when the babies have arrived. However, my mom was so excited that she left work and drove straight to Southern California. After she arrived, my labor slowed down so much it was almost non-existent. Brenda said: "Babies come at their own time" so I just needed to be patient and to let nature do its job.

Tuesday came and went and Brenda stayed with us to monitor me. I was taking lots of Vitamin C and Echinacea in order to prevent any infection since that is a concern after the water breaks. The babies heartbeats were both great and it seemed that Zaanti was making his way down. So Brenda, Francis and I prayed, meditated, waited, and waited and waited. By Tuesday evening I knew something was off and I spoke to a therapist in Germany named Kim Hutchinson. She is a friend's therapist and as many people in my life, she appeared at the perfect time and was a vital resource for me during labor. Kim told me what I knew in my heart was the truth: having my mom there slowed down my labor because I was focusing on my mom and picking up her nervous energy and therefore I wasn't directing my attention to tuning into my body and communicating with the babies and. Francis and I agreed that we needed to get my mom out of the house and I was nervous about asking her to leave. However, I was a mother now, and my unborn children needed me to place their needs (and my own) above my mother's. This was one of the lessons I learned: now I had my own primary family to take care of and therefore everyone else needed to take care of themselves. Francis managed to explain to my mom that we love her and understand why she would worry about me and the babies, but this was not what we needed in the house. My mom was wonderful and understood that the best way that she could help me now was to go to a local hotel and hope for the best.

After she left on Wednesday afternoon, my contractions got steadily stronger and by Thursday afternoon I was in full active labor. It has been such a journey to get the opportunity to labor at home that I hadn't even thought about what it would actually be like to go through contractions without any pain medication. I was so grateful to feel every contraction and every movement in my body, but I certainly reached a point when I was starting to doubt if I could do this. After about 14 hours of active labor, I told Francis and the midwife that I wasn't sure I was cut out for this birthing thing. I knew from my Bradley (husband-coached birth) classes about transition phase and it was pretty obvious that I was at that place of total doubt, and feeling terrified that there is no point of return: these babies had to come out one way or another! Francis kept reminding me how strong I was and how this was going to pass. Brenda prayed over me and assured me that I am no different than any other woman and that I can do this. They trusted in me and that helped me trust in myself.

By midnight I was almost fully dilated. I had been in the kiddie pool Francis set up in the bedroom and needed to go to the bathroom. When I was on the toilet I finally felt the urge to push. I was enjoying pushing in that position, but Brenda asked me to lie down so she could have access to our breech firstborn. I lay down on the floor and immediately the pain became unbearable. The only thing better than feeling the doubling-over pain of the contractions was the doubling-over pain of pushing. After a few pushes Brenda said: "Reach down and feel your son's balls." This got me laughing and as I reached down I could feel teeny tiny little testicles. I thought to myself: "This is one ballsy guy!" After another push, Zaanti's butt came out and Brenda adjusted him so that he would slide out in the next couple of pushes. I felt so much trust in Brenda and in the holiness of the moment, I never felt any doubt that Zaanti would come out perfectly healthy. Finally I gave one last push and Zaanti's head came out. After a total of 21 hours of sacred, pain-transcending, mountain-moving, roaring labor Zaanti was born at 1:45 a.m. on September 17th, weighing 5lbs 6 oz.

Brenda put him on my chest and I was in awe of his tiny face. His eyes were wide open and he looked me right in the eyes. The Love-Joy-Ecstasy I felt in that moment was indescribable... Then he lifted his eyes up and looked right in Francis's eyes. Brenda said that in her 20+ years of catching babies she has never seen a baby make direct eye contact on the day of his/her birth. At that moment, I could palpably feel how special this boy was. I was instantly bonded to this tiny creature and felt as if Francis, Zaanti and I were moving in an ecstatic dance, looking at each other in turns, feeling our bodies close, breathing deeply and syncing the beat of our hearts.

This is the time when most women relax and enjoy the time with their baby. I had one more in me though! Thank goodness my friend Susie flew out from San Francisco and arrived a few minutes after Zaanti's birth. She is a mother of two who gave birth at home and was a tremendous support for me during the pregnancy and labor. It was her therapist in Germany that has been helping me. As much as I wanted to keep cuddling with Zaanti, I let Susie care for him and just bring him in for feeding and cuddles. I knew I had to focus on my little girl Miela coming out. The thought of going through another skin-ripping delivery was frightening. But I knew that if I could do it once, I could do it twice.



Part III: Miela's Birth

As soon as Zaanti came out, my attention split into two places and has remained that way since. One part of me was with Zaanti and the other with the unborn fetus in my belly. I kept checking in, wondering if contractions will start again. A few minutes passed after the first birth and nothing. I kept holding Zaanti and now another 10 minutes passed. I got cold so I climbed into bed. At this point it has probably been about 30 minutes and I asked Brenda if she could check me again and see what was going on. Miela's heartbeat was steady and strong; I was dilated about 8cm, but had no contractions. I ate an enormous meal that was waiting for me and started to feel incredibly tired. It was already around 4am so Brenda suggested that I sleep a little and call her when the contractions recommenced. Francis and I cuddled up together and slept a few hours. I woke up a bit anxious for Miela to come out, but I was still strongly feeling a divine presence around me and felt very connected to my Inner Wisdom.

I took a walk, kept putting Zaanti on to nurse, ate, prayed, meditated and waited. It was tough for me to wait and allow the process to unfold. That was certainly one of the major gifts that these births have brought me – learning patience and allowing things to take the time they need. I ended up speaking with Kim in Germany again and she put me in an amazing frame of mind, welcoming this journey just as it was and connecting with Miela and asking her what she needed from me. It was very clear that there are two of us going through this birth and Miela had just as much of a role as I did. And this girly girl was so comfortable in the womb that she was in no rush to come out! At a certain point in the afternoon Brenda discovered that Miela had decided to play around since she had so much room – this lady went transverse (sideways) on me! This was the one and only time I had a hint of panic. I knew that transverse babies could not be delivered vaginally and I certainly did not feel that I had come so far just to have a c-section with the second birth. I turned within and searched for an intuitive guidance, and it became clear that I needed to use my resources and try everything I can to turn Miela around and give birth to her at home, unless there was any danger and we needed to rush to the hospital.

Having problems gives us the opportunity to experience the joy of coming to a solution. As I again connected with Kim in Germany, I instantly felt that I tapped into Spirit through her. She asked me to have Brenda check Miela's heartbeat, estimate her positioning and find out if one of the placentas was blocking the cervix. Indeed that seemed to be the case. Then Brenda left the room and Kim guided me into a sort of trance. I entered a hyper awake state, completely lucid, but surreal. Kim and I worked together to connect with Miela, to encourage her to turn head down. I did certain hand movements over my belly and visualized what I wanted to happen. I imagined Miela and me together arranging the perfect space for her to turn and come out easily and effortlessly. I was in such a place of trust, felt so present, so aware of the physical and non-physical, that I may as well have been high. I've always said that I'm not interested in drugs because I am high on life and this time I was really living it!

And it worked! When Brenda came back in the room about 30 minutes later it was game on – the placenta had moved out of the cervical opening and Miela was in a vertex position and making her way down! I was still dilated 6-7cm. Apparently Brenda could feel contractions happening, but I couldn't really feel them. Whew, what a difference from the day before with Zaanti's excruciating labor. Like this, I could give birth all day long!

A few hours passed and Zaanti finally started breastfeeding. Evening turned into night and my contractions started getting stronger. In the early morning on Saturday, the contractions kept growing, but Miela was still not descending enough to push so I asked Brenda to break my water. I was getting tired and I was ready to stop walking around with the cord to Zaanti's placenta sticking out a few inches between my legs. But most

importantly, I wanted to hold both of my babies safely in my arms and kiss the bejesus out of them. So Brenda did the one and only intervention during the entire birth process. Around 9am she used some kind of a midwife tool to break my water. Within minutes my contractions got real strong, real fast. All of a sudden I remembered what it was like to have waves of pain come crashing over, but this time I knew how to relax into the sensations, allowing them to wash over me instead of fighting them. And it helped that I was too exhausted to even care about the discomfort! Soon, I felt the urge to push and after only a few pushes, Miela was born at 10:45am, 33 hours after her much older twin brother. She weighed 6lbs 6oz, a whole pound heavier than her brother, even though they were the same length. Healthy, pink, chubby baby was squirming and screaming in my arms. My heart was overflowing with so much love for this amazing creature who taught me so much already. That's when I finally released more fully than I ever thought possible. I cried out in intelligible howls, holding Miela tightly to my heart, shaking and wailing. I did it! WE DID IT! My children were both here. They were healthy, beautiful and with all their parts in place. We were at home. I was in MY bed. I was a champion! I felt such a flood of emotions come over me that I think only Francis understood what I was saying because he was also floating in the Love-Joy-Beauty that surrounded us. I've had an evolving spiritual relationship with God/Spirit/Source, but at that moment it was clear: I was touching the Unnamed and it was holding all of us in its divine bliss.

The last thing left to do was birth the placentas. Once they came out I intended to encapsulate them and take them for hormonal balance, nutrients and milk production. Brenda checked the placentas and came to the bed exclaiming: "Zaanti is a miracle baby!" It turns out that he had a huge blood clot between his placenta and cord. That was why he wanted to come out early and it also explained why he was a pound less than Miela. This boy was so smart to break his water and signal to me that he needed to get out. Luckily, the blood clot did not affect him adversely as both of the babies had high Apgar scores. Miela, on the other hand, was as comfortable as could be and was in no rush to leave the womb. I already knew that they are their own people, with different personalities, but now I tangibly felt how unique they each are. And they've got separate birthdays to prove it!

Part IV: Happily Ever After

This miraculous birth passage certainly would not have been possible without all the amazing people who came to support us during this time. Although there were many that did not believe in our endeavor, the ones that trusted us showered us with their love and faith. I am so grateful for our lay midwife Brenda Capps who went above and beyond the call of duty by staying with us the whole six days and monitoring me and the babies closely the entire time. She is truly an earth angel! I am also incredibly grateful to Kim in Germany, who was an inspirational and transformative guide for me during this birth. My friend Susie Small was also instrumental in our experience and to her I am forever indebted. Moreover, countless friends and family members were keeping us in their prayers and wishing us well. I am certain that their positive thoughts tremendously helped us in our birth journey and for that I am eternally grateful.



In the end, this unbelievable birth experience taught me so many wonderful lessons and has been the gift that keeps on giving. I learned to allow things to blossom at their own pace; just as an apple seed will take its own sweet time to become an apple tree. Patience was never a virtue of mine, and I used to think that sitting back was being idle. Now I feel that while it is essential to hold a strong intention, it is just as important to relax and enjoy the journey while it meanders. I now recognize more clearly that I am not in control and that I don't need to try to fix things or figure them out all the time. I have grown to appreciate uncertainty and trust that the old proverb about everything happening for a reason really is true.

Another wonderful lesson has been to discover that there was a well of knowledge within me that was richer than any outside source. Had I relinquished my internal compass to experts, I would have had a very different birth experience. Had I ended up in the hospital, there were at least three instances during my labors that would have resulted in a C-section. Moreover, I would not have had the opportunity to build confidence in my intuition and my ability to manifest things that seem virtually impossible. It is amazing to live life recognizing that there is a sage inside of me and being able to communicate with this wisdom. I now viscerally feel an internal guidance that helps me make decisions, both big and small. I am convinced that everyone has their own guru inside and if they take the time to listen and then find the courage to follow this guide, they will be living a life of truly limitless and unimaginable proportions. If I can create this kind of a birth, what else can I create in my life? Truly, all things are possible – for me and for you!

The victory I felt as a result of this birth experience was incredible... and necessary... because now I needed to manage breastfeeding and caring for these two angels. That is another story within itself that I will share with you another time. All you need to know is that we are still breastfeeding 9 months later and are all healthy and thriving!

*Lana has given me permission to share her birth story! You can visit her on her blog [VeryLana](#).

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