

Why Childbirth Education Should be at the Top of your List when Planning for a Baby *an interview with Dr. Cheney Brinkley D.C.*

I recently had the chance to chat with the amazing Dr. Cheney Brinkley who is a Doctor of Chiropractic (D.C.), as well as a certified hypnobirthing practitioner and Doula. She currently practices in her hometown of Atlanta and specializes in Chiropractic care for both adults and children.

Tiffany: *What is a Mom going to learn from a childbirth class vs learning herself or reading books on the subject?*

Dr. Brinkley: The way I look at it is similar to this: I am a Chiropractor. When I was in school, I could read about doing adjustments and taking care of my patients all day long. I could write down copies of the book for you, word for word. I could totally do that no problem. However, it wasn't until I actually did the adjustments that I could see a complete difference. There were times that I could read about an adjustment, but that didn't actually work in real life. I had to learn what worked for me in real time. The Childbirth education classes are so great, no matter which ones you choose from Lamaze, Berkeley, Bradley, or hypnobirthing, which is what I am certified in. Whichever method you choose is going to give you real time and practice in front of someone that has seen a lot, and knows what they are teaching really works. Of course we are going to suggest that you read up on certain topics, because not only does reading make you more knowledgeable, but it gives you opinions and questions. When we do this practice alone, typically we try to search these questions on the internet, and there are a million different answers that ultimately end up leaving mom with more questions and she isn't necessarily going to know what is the truth. So to have that person with knowledge that you trust and can talk to face to face really makes all the difference.

Tiffany: *What is the difference between a childbirth education class vs something like a Lamaze or birthing class?*

Dr. Brinkley: They are all a little different. Lamaze and Bradley are birthing technique classes, so they are going to cover topics like pushing, breathing techniques during birthing, etc. Hypnobirthing will also cover plenty of breathing techniques as well as different relaxations styles. While they all have slight differences, the common goal is helping mom birth a baby the easiest way possible. They are all different for a reason because some people need different techniques than others. Some people may get into hypnobirthing and realize this is just not working for them, while Lamaze may feel like a better fit. They all are really great, you just have to choose the option that works best for you. A big difference in childbirth education classes vs birthing classes is that we don't just talk about delivery. I will cover topics about the 4th trimester and the baby's first hours as well as the first few months postpartum. We cover so much more information than just how to push. This will really help you have the best experience possible.

Tiffany: *Is a childbirth class usually one class or a series of classes?*

Dr. Brinkley: Bradley and Lamaze will typically have 2-3 classes or more, and sometimes a hospital will offer one long Saturday class for people who don't have the time to come to multiple classes. My childbirth education classes (hypnobirthing) meet for a little over a month. We get together once a week for 2-3 hours. I do both private and group courses. The reason I like to do classes more than once is to give you time to practice, and as you come back each week, you are accountable committing to this practice to help you through birth. Some of the things we practice include affirmations to help overcome the negative emotions that come during the tougher times of childbirth as well as breathing techniques. If you come to me and say " You know, I've been working on this breathing technique but I just can't get it down" then this gives me the opportunity to walk you through it. By the end of the 5 weeks, you will have had the right amount of time and practice to know what to do. If you have any other questions or difficulties, it gives us the opportunity to go back through the materials and walk you through. Another great thing about multiple classes is that each one is broken down into a different topic so we don't have to cram so much info into one class and are able to give you the right amount of instruction.

Tiffany: *So I actually did not have a childbirth education class prior to having my child, mainly because it was played down a bit by my OB. I feel like during the experience I had a really heightened level of anxiety. Do you find that moms who go through some sort of education prior to delivery have a lower anxiety level?*

Dr. Brinkley: Yes definitely! We really work on ways to work on anxiety. We also talk about different situations each a week and the more you talk about something, the more natural it becomes and then you are less likely to have the anxiety. You are able to get all your fears out there and talk about it beforehand. I've found that the more opportunities you have to talk about things that scare you, the less it will when that fear becomes a reality. Also, the breathing and relaxation techniques really help mom push through that anxiety. You are already stressed during pregnancy and tired from growing and carrying a baby around. To be able to talk through issues and take that component of anxiety out of it, even if it's a one day class because that's all you have time for will make a huge difference. You can go get your questions answered, know your options, and you will feel a lot better.

Tiffany: *At what point during a pregnancy would you recommend a mom to be signing up for a childbirth education class?*

Dr. Brinkley: Most moms will come to me from 25-30 weeks so we have enough time to get the classes in and practice before the baby arrives. I have had mom's come in at 38 weeks and we just work with the time we are given. Obviously, I would advise against coming in too early. If you come to me at 11 weeks, I am going to tell you to relax and enjoy your pregnancy for a little while! You still have so many changes to go through and childbirth education should come a little later. I will have some moms that want to start around the 20-week mark because they really want to have adequate time to practice the breathing and then others that want to start at 35 or 36 weeks so it is fresh in their mind. It really just depends on the type of person you are and what you need. If it were me, I would start at 31 or 32 weeks so I will be done around 36 weeks and it's not too late, but still to a place where I won't forget the information.

Tiffany: *Can you tell us a little more about what you do with hypnobirthing?*

Dr. Brinkley: *Hypnobirthing is a form of childbirth education that focuses on breathing the baby down vs pushing with relaxation techniques. We are focused on a lot of mind over matter to really help bring you almost to a place of hypnosis during labor. It's really really cool and honestly not something I ever thought I would originally be into until I saw how it worked for women. I knew I had to get in on this so that I could help my doula clients as well.*

Tiffany: *Is there anything else you would like readers to know about childbirth classes?*

Dr. Brinkley: *If you decided to do classes, that it is so great. If you don't that's fine too. You should never feel pressured into doing something. It's about what works best for you and the baby, and at the end of the day, no matter how you do it, you'll end up with that little baby so just choose the route that makes you happiest and the people that are going to support you through that journey.*