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For more information on Doulas and about Kelly be sure to visit her informative website.

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Benefits to Having a Doula by Kelly Matras

A birth doula (doo–la) provides physical, informational and emotional support to expectant mothers and fathers. The support typically begins early in the pregnancy and extends to just after childbirth. Post-partum doulas provide additional support post-partum.

I once believed that doulas were only for women who wanted drug-free births at home. I have since discovered that doulas are a valuable resource in many settings. There is a doula for every woman; whether it is a first-time Mom giving birth in a hospital, or an experienced Mom choosing a water birth. Truly, there are as many doula-types as there are Moms.

Becoming a parent is an amazing journey. It does not require you to take a course or pass a written exam. It is a whirlwind of emotion. Expectant parents-to-be consume baby - related information hoping it is enough to prepare them for the unknown. Worrying about the upcoming challenges and the unknown even impacts already experienced parents. All expectant Mothers end up losing sleep over questions, worries, hopes, dreams and fears.

The word *doula* comes from the ancient Greek meaning *a woman who serves*. Historically, laboring mothers were accompanied by at least one doula. It is only with the *medicalization* of labor in the last century that doulas have been pushed to the background.

Every Mother’s wish is for a magical handbook they could open to any page to find an answer for their current need. While a doula is not a magical handbook, she is knowledgeable about the entire birth process. A doula recognizes birth as a key experience in the Mother’s life and understands her needs. She assists the couple in preparing for the birth and supports their plans. You can be guaranteed that a doula will be a guiding light, an ear to discuss whatever you need when you need, and a friend with an ability to calm.

When comparing doula attended births vs. births without doulas, the following

patterns emerge:

- shorter labors with fewer complications
- babies born with measurable lower stress levels
- newborns take to breastfeeding more easily
- Mothers often report greater satisfaction with their birth experience and Fathers are more at ease

It is obvious what a doula can do for Mom but what does she do for Dad? Often the loudest sigh of relief when the doula has arrived comes from Dad. He is about to embark on his own journey into fatherhood. While Mom prepares for the physical job of giving birth, Dad has an equally important role of her support. He will soon experience labor in his own way. There are many unknowns that he too will face. A doula helps Dad be the best support for Mom as well as ensuring continuous, uninterrupted support when fetching items for the Mother or taking short breaks.

When a birth doula has completed helping Mom and Dad through their journey into parenthood, she can help recommend a post-partum doula. Post-partum doulas offer emotional and practical support services after the birth process. Some doulas are even trained to provide birth and post-partum support.

When it’s time to embark on your own journey of childbirth and parenthood, take some time and remember the benefits of a doula. Let her provide you with the invaluable support that you will cherish forever.

I am DONA International professionally trained birth doula. I believe that birthing naturally means birthing in the way that comes naturally to you.

Whether you are at home or in the hospital, with a midwife or doctor, with or without medical pain support, vaginally or by cesarean birth, birth unfolds in many ways. As your doula, I support your personal preferences and desires.

..... Continued on page 3



Benefits to Having a Doula ... continued

My goal is to support each woman individually by recognizing that we are all unique. I want you to have the birth experience that you want. I want to create a safe and warm environment for you to labor and birth in. I want to ensure that your birth memories are protected and will do everything I can to

capture it for you. I want to connect as women, as mothers, as friends. I would be honored to support you and your partner on your incredible journey into parenthood.

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