

Lotus birth - Bo's birth

My name is Jacqueline, I am born in Holland and I have been living in Italy since 1995. My husband, Bart, is also Dutch. Since 2002, we live on the beautiful hills of Oltrepò Pavese where our two daughters were born.

Kim was born at home in October 2002 coming into the world in water into a wine tub. Bo was born in January 2006 in hospital, in water with the Lotus Birth method. Two very special experiences that enriched and deeply changed my life.

Bo

I was expecting Bo in April 2005.

My pregnancy was going on quite well apart from some ailment of the hip and a slight pelvic pain that sometimes became intense: this was the signal to slowdown, which is not a very easy thing to do when you work on your own account.

Home birth

I am not in favour of doctors and medical tests: I prefer to find a solution in alternative therapies and self-healing. Just thinking about giving birth in an Italian hospital, where often women's wishes are not satisfied, where newborns do not co-sleep with their mothers and where brothers and sisters are not allowed to be present at birth, made me feel uncomfortable. Therefore, we decided again to get prepared for a home birth and we found two midwives willing to assist me.

In Holland, home birth is a very common thing and maybe, even after all these years in Italy, we are still very Dutch under this aspect...

The last "difficult" days...

However, at the end of December, I had to undergo several tests and echographies, also due to my high blood pressure. All was made even more difficult because of the abundant snow after Christmas. It was very cold and sometimes the temperature reached minus 16 C°. Our house is on top of a hill. In case of snow, we can only use a jeep but its heating system was out of order. We travelled in the frozen car, wrapped in blankets, with gloves, hats and snow boots and we used a scraper to clean the ice forming on the inside of the windows.

I wondered what on earth we were doing when I should have rested in a warm place and I really wished to spend the last pregnancy weeks in peace.

Hospital birth

When we reached week 42, we decided to have an echography at the hospital we contacted three years before, when I was expecting Kim. This hospital is well-known for being sensitive and respectful of the mother's - who is free to choose how to deliver - and child's rights. Moreover, their delivery room is very nice and pleasant with suffused light and background music. Even if I was not at home, I felt at ease. The only drawback was that this hospital was one and a half hour away from home!

The echography showed that there was almost no more amniotic fluid and the doctor thought that it was too dangerous to send me back home. He wanted to hospitalise me and bring on birth with the gel based on hormones. I firmly refused and we went back home in the afternoon.

That evening I had an emotional crisis: I wished I could stick to my choice but the circumstances made it too dangerous. At the end we decided that if she did not come to the world that night, we would have returned to the hospital in the morning.

Lotus Birth

I heard about Lotus Birth at the beginning of my pregnancy. The aim of Lotus Birth is to make birth a deep and non-traumatic experience for the child. Many studies have shown that the immediate clamping of the umbilical cord at birth is a shock to the newborn. With Lotus Birth, the umbilical cord is left unclamped following birth and remains attached to the placenta. After the birth of the placenta, umbilical cord dries and eventually detaches from the umbilicus (detachment generally occurs 3/7 days after birth) when the child is ready for this detachment.

My pregnancy was looked after by the midwives of Milan specialised in home birth until month eight. In summer 2005, Shivam Rachana, author of the only book on this subject, held a conference at their premises. I was not able to attend this conference but its message reached me by reading the book I received a few



days later. Since I do not believe in coincidences, I told Bart that I would have liked to consider the possibility of having a Lotus Birth. He did not like the idea at all. I felt lonely in my desire and unable to decide...

So from where did that strong feeling come inducing me to go on with this choice? I decided to ask my child. If it were important to her to be born in this way, it was enough for me. The answer was yes.

The birth...

The night passed and still there was no sign of contractions. The alarm rang at 5 in the morning and we went to the hospital, excited for what was going to happen...

We arrived at 8 and birth was induced. Bart and Kim were with me. We had prepared Kim for what was going to happen because we wanted her to take part in the event.

While Bart and Kim passed the time by playing with the different equipment in the room (the rope hanging from the ceiling, the big Skippy Ball etc.), I was lying down on the bed waiting for time to pass.

In the meantime, midwives and doctors bustled about me, asking me several questions and filling my file with pages.

I told everyone what I wanted and what I did not want: I wanted to have a water-birth, I did not want them to wash the baby right after birth, or put antibiotic drops in her eyes or place her in the incubator, all usual medical procedures. I did not want them to put the monitor on my belly during contractions and I did not want them to clamp the umbilical cord. I gave the midwife the book of Shivam Rachana together with other information.

She had never heard of it before...was there time for a quick course on Lotus Birth?

When contractions started, as they got stronger, I soothed pain by breathing, with the help of the mantra and light visualisation. During the last part of labour I was kneeling on the ground. The midwife let me free to do as I liked and respected my wish to be left alone.

As the contractions grew stronger, I fell into a sort of deeper trance. At a certain point, I felt that my baby was going to come into the world. I asked to enter into the water immediately otherwise she was going to be born on the ground. Supported by Bart and by the midwife and accompanied by Kim, we moved into the room with the delivery tub. The water was marvellously warm and I tried to control the contractions to give my child enough space for coming to the world without lacerations. In the interval between contractions, I was able to feel her small head with my hand before she slipped out a wonderful feeling!

I was happy to have given birth only in the presence of Bart, Kim and the midwife, as if I were at home even if I was at the hospital...

I asked Kim – who had enjoyed herself by helping the midwives fill the tub – to come into the water with us, which was surely nonconformist for the hospital, as well as the presence of big brothers or sisters during delivery. It was a touching moment: all three of us in the water, with Kim caressing lovingly the head of the baby. A baby boy or a baby girl?

We had decided not to know it in advance therefore it was a surprise for us to hold our baby girl in our arms after nine months. We decided to call her Bo.

After a short while, the placenta was also born in water.

We enjoyed the marvel of our unity for about an hour and in the meantime Bo started to suckle my breast.

Once out of the tub, we wrapped the placenta in some diapers and we went to the nursery to weigh and measure my baby and to meet the paediatrician. He made us sign other papers in which we declared that any possible risk of this delivery with the placenta still attached fell on our own responsibility.

On the contrary, the midwife thanked us for this beautiful and unusual experience she had lived. As for me, I thanked her for her respectful help thanks to which I experienced the fact that giving birth in a hospital may be a nice experience after all.

The meeting with the gynaecologist on duty was quite difficult: he was definitely against the idea of leaving the placenta attached to the baby and listed all possible dangers trying to persuade us to clamp it but, owing to my resoluteness, he left the room annoyed saying that he should have reported to his head physician. At the end we signed an umpteenth document of assumption of responsibility for our choice and they allowed me to stay for the night.

It was already late in the evening and I wanted some peace to concentrate on breastfeeding.

Bo fell asleep on my belly. I was about to fall asleep when the new paediatrician on duty came in suddenly to convince me to change my mind and clamp the cord since he considered the situation as very risky. I did not



want to change my mind but in order not to cause further upheavals I agreed to let them measure the temperature of the baby every hour

After this last visit, I felt very tired and violated in my intimacy; I had only just gave birth to a baby, I was extremely vulnerable. That night I decided that, seeing how things were going on, it would have been better for me and Bo to go back home, avoiding to be troubled by the need to give the usual information at each work shift of the personnel.

I understood that doctors were worried about the health of the child and I was not judging them, but they seemed excessive to me. I stuck to my conviction because I was aware that a child is born only once. What happens before, during and after birth leaves its mark for the rest of the baby's life.

In the morning I informed the doctors that I wanted to be discharged from hospital but the head physician himself insisted on clamping the umbilical cord of Bo before leaving the hospital; I refused and they made me sign another document of assumption of responsibility that I considered by now love letters to my child. Finally, at midday, the head midwife discharged us.

I admire midwives who work all day in contact with such doctors because they commit themselves completely to respect woman and child whereas doctors seem to be interested mainly in observing hospital rules. Most of the midwives were not worried by the fact that Bo was attached to her placenta: even if they did not know Lotus Birth, they respected it.

I was wondering if doctors were aware of the wonderful women they worked with.

It is time to go home...

I had not been able to breast-feed Kim, maybe due to a breast operation I had undergone in 1992. This time I wanted to make it. Before leaving the hospital I made sure with a phone call that a Leche League consultant would come to my house as a support. I was happy to go back home where I could look after my child, her placenta and myself. The trip by car was a real liberation...

Once home, round the cosy fireside, with my baby girl suckling, I felt free to let go my emotions that I had restrained until then.....

Breastfeeding

In the following days I concentrated on breastfeeding and the help of the midwife and of the Leche League consultant were very precious also for preventing complications related to breastfeeding. I was breastfeeding for the first time in my life and this made me feel an all-round woman both physically and emotionally. Strangely enough the umbilical cord detached the day on which the consultant came to visit us.

It was as if the placenta had made room for a new feeding channel: the breast.

However.....at the beginning, breastfeeding was not all roses for me. Bo, born with a weight of 2,760 kg, suckled very slowly and not with great zeal; she took a couple of sips and stopped, and this continued for a few hours and then she fell asleep for an hour. This continued for the first month, night and day. Only after a month she returned to her birth weight. I was in pieces, also emotionally, but I wanted to hold on.



By now I knew that after the operation twelve years ago my breasts were working normally and that I could 'technically' breast-feed very well. I had to unblock and overcome my own psychological traumas....

I tried to pump the milk from my breast but I find it hard to do so and therefore not fit for me.

At two months, I unwillingly started to give her a powder milk addition (a German biodynamic milk that had been very good for Kim years ago), but I was not convinced at all. Moreover, Bo started to have a cold in those days that worried me. In search of valid alternatives, I learned that goat milk was the most digestible and the most similar to mother's milk.

To understand what was the best solution for Bo, we had some kinesiology tests and this milk turned out to be the best one for her. I was lucky because a friend of mine who lived in my area had some goats and she could give me some fresh milk. From then on, only in the evening, I started to give Bo an addition of this milk, without using a teat but a syringe that released the milk slowly in her mouth while she suckled my breast.

In a few days, things improved, my milk increased and Bo's cold disappeared...incredible!

We continued like this until she was six months. Afterwards I continued breastfeeding but I also started to give her some fruit and the feeding bottle. When she was seven months, we decided to widen our family with two goats, including the one who gave her milk to Bo from the start; we milk them every day and we are very happy to have these new family members.

Up to now, Bo is 8 months old, I still breast-feed her on request, I give her baby food for lunch and I still give her fresh goat milk in the evening.

The placenta

Once back from hospital, I immediately started to take care of Bo's placenta: I removed the placenta from the disposable diaper, I washed it with fresh water, I covered it with coarse salt and I wrapped it in a cotton cloth, arranging it in a plastic bowl near her. Every day, I sprinkled salt over it and replaced the cloth with a clean one.

It slowly reduced in size and became a hard and dry disk with a cord attached - this too was very similar to a small dry branch. Due to breastfeeding I had to move the placenta very often fearing that these movements may affect the healing of the umbilicus. Once I saw a small drop of blood around Bo's umbilicus, where it intersects the cord, but the skin around was not red or irritated, so I deduced that there was nothing to worry about. I used a powder containing Echinacea, calendula and arnica to heal it, specific for the umbilicus of newborn babies. These were very intense days.



On the third day after birth, the umbilical cord was partially detached and looked like a thread as thin as hair. Since I did not know what was the best thing to do, I left it attached, but the next morning, it detached when I touched it. Bo jumped, I burst into tears and she did the same. Bo started her life at exactly three days and a half from birth...

When Bo was still attached to the placenta, she could not bear being separated from me.

If I went to the bathroom when she was sleeping, she immediately woke up crying. After the detachment of the umbilical cord, things changed. She started to sleep peacefully for a longer period of time, even when I was busy somewhere else in the house.



A week after her birth, on a freezing and dark evening and with Bo in my baby carrier we buried the placenta in our forest under an old magical pine-tree. Bo was sleeping calmly in the cosiness of her contact with my body, but when the placenta was placed in the hole in the ground, she started to "chatter" to herself. It seemed as if she was aware of what was going on ...

One month later we had a call from a midwife who had been present at birth. She told us that after my delivery there had been a certain outcry at the hospital and that several persons of the staff were making researches on Lotus Birth on the Internet: they wanted to offer this possibility also to other mothers. She expressed their gratitude for what they had experienced through us.

It seems that this has been the first Lotus Birth in an Italian hospital...

Jacqueline Jimmink, Zavattarello, September 2006

As from August 2008, the protocol at the hospital of Asola (MN) where Bo was born has been changed. Women who wish to have a Lotus Birth may request it at this hospital...

Jacqueline Jimmink, Zavattarello, January 2008

For further information on Lotus Birth:

- You can contact me: Jacqueline Jimmink (Italy) - Tel.(+39)0383.589875 : www.bambigioi.it or www.jacquelinejimmink.com
- The book (in Italian): "Lotus Birth: il parto integrale Nati con...la placenta!" (Lotus Birth: integral birth Born with ...the placenta!) by Shivam Rachana publisher Amrita: www.amrita-edizioni.com
- www.lotusbirth.it - Points of reference Lotus Birth Italia - Associazione GAP (global awareness people) in Milan. Susanna Swapana Hinnawi and Indalecia Rohita Zirit - info@lotusbirth.it
- Lotus Birth Registry in Australia. Write to: Shivam Rachana, PO Box 233, Yarra Glen, Victoria 3775 - email: golden@xtreme.net.au
- International College of Spiritual Midwifery : www.womenofspirit.asn.au
- "Lotus Birth information packet" available at: Jeannine Parvati Baker, 40 No State Street, Joseph UT 84739-1207 USA , www.freestone.org
- Mango Mama the parents' web site: www.mangomama.org or www.naturalparenting.org founded by Jennifer VanLaanen-Smit; information on natural birth.

These web sites give information, from a natural viewpoint, on themes concerning childhood and offer support to parents who carry out their role out of the accepted custom. This is a good address to refer to when we sense that ordinary advice is not what we are looking for and does not suit you.

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