

Understanding Pain



According to research, there are four aspects to what we feel when we feel pain. In any painful event, one or more of these elements is present. When all four are present in high levels, the pain is highest.

Factors that influence injury

- Any discernable physical issue--*the 'owie'*
- Not all bad: i.e. muscle fibers when body building
- *Possible labor elements: stretching tissues, extreme muscle ctx (uterus), muscle fatigue, dehydration, caloric depletion, internal pressure/stress from descending baby*

Factors that influence intensity

- Severity or acuteness of the pain on a scale
- Late labor is naturally more intense than early labor
- *In labor: stage of labor, position of baby*

Factors that influence behavior

- Messages you got about your own pain from childhood--how did people treat you or react to you when you were in pain?
- Cultural conditioning about appropriate ways to think about, respond to, or deal with pain
- Personal expectation of pain at the time
- What you typically do/think when you're in pain
- Social reactions to pain: How do you get needs met through it?
- Personality elements: Do you think of yourself as tough? Capable?
- *In labor: how the people around you react to and assist you; if you feel safe expressing yourself; what you believe about birth experience and your strength*

Factors that influence suffering

- What you believe about the reason people feel pain in birth
- Judgements you make about the experience or yourself
- Fears--physical, social, emotional
- Your mind's determination to see it as unpleasant
- *In labor: It's possible to remove suffering entirely by preparing--unlearning fear and learning birth skills.*

