



LIONHEART  
HYPNOBIRTHING

*the*  
LIONHEART  
HYPNOBIRTHING  
MANUAL

BY RACHEL AKEHURST



YOUR STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE  
TO A CALM AND CONFIDENT BIRTH





*The Akehursts enjoying their hols. I'm a "one woman band" here at Lionheart HQ, so every new client, every referral means the world to us.*

## WELCOME TO LIONHEART HYPNOBIRTHING

Firstly, thank you so much for choosing Lionheart Hypnobirthing for your antenatal education. I am a small but mighty local business and I absolutely adore what I do. It means the world to me when people trust me with their antenatal education at such a significant time in their lives. I know there are a lot of choices, and it can be overwhelming to decide on your antenatal support, but you have chosen to be a Lionheart.

A little about me, my previous working background is as a midwife and then a health visitor, and of course I am a hypnobirthing mum too. During your Lionheart Hypnobirthing course, I will bring together all of my knowledge and experience to support you in preparing for a positive birth experience.

I truly hope that you love what you learn on your course with me and find this manual a helpful accompaniment. I aim to open your eyes to how amazing and empowering labour and birth can be with some knowledge, preparation and support behind you.

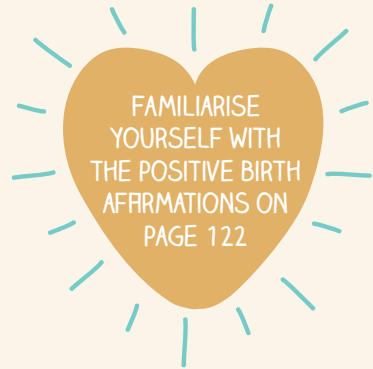
It means so much to my family too, that I have a career that is flexible and enjoyable, so once again, from the bottom of my (lion)heart, THANK YOU!

*Love Rachel x*

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## HOW THIS MANUAL WORKS

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I have designed this manual to be a step-by-step guide. It is divided into four distinct chapters to make everything we learn together face to face more digestible, easier to understand and to remind you of the most important parts. Some topics that are of most importance are mentioned more than once within this manual – it never hurts to learn something by repetition!

At the end of each chapter, is a “Practice Sheet” to make it very clear what your at-home hypnobirthing practice is. Don’t worry...it should not be more than 20 minutes per day (although, if you can do more, then this is great).

As you advance through each of the chapters, each Practice Sheet is updated; it details everything from the previous practice sheet plus more.

Scattered within this manual are some of my client’s photos, “top tips” and experiences – I really think this helps bring to life the enormous strength and courage of women and how they have used their hypnobirthing skills within various scenarios. Most are very positive experiences – examples and testaments to the strength of women and the power that hypnobirthing has brought them. I have also included some more difficult examples from my clients. These might not make for the easiest of reading, but – with consent from these women – we can learn from their experiences.

It is important that I point out to you that I cannot promise you a “perfect” birth. I wish I could say that if you did “XYZ” everything will go perfectly. I wish I could, but I can’t. I do want you to know these two things:

1) Birth doesn’t have to be perfect to be positive. Some of my clients are thrown “birth curve balls” (as I like to call them), myself included, and have used their Lionheart Hypnobirthing skills to perfection. Which leads me to the next point...

2) If you are thrown a birth curve ball, your hypnobirthing skills will not desert you. In fact, they come in to their own even more, helping you to stay positive during trickier situations should you encounter them. This will help you to feel safe, strong and remain calm whatever path your birth takes.

## WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL WITH PREPARING FOR BIRTH ANYWAY? "IT'S JUST ONE DAY ISN'T IT?"

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Now, if you follow me on social media, you have probably already gathered that I am a pretty big birth enthusiast. Of course I am. I wouldn't do this job if I didn't love everything about labour and birth. I love supporting women and their birth partners at the most monumental time in their life.

I don't buy into the whole "birth is just one day" mindset. Yes, the actual labour and birth part might just be one day – but the anticipation, all the emotions that come beforehand, the lifetime of memories and everything else afterwards spans way more than just one day.

American midwife Ina May Gaskin (and basically Yoda of the birth world) sums this up perfectly:

"WHENEVER AND HOWEVER YOU GIVE BIRTH, YOUR EXPERIENCE  
WILL IMPACT YOUR EMOTIONS, YOUR MIND, YOUR BODY,  
AND YOUR SPIRIT FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE"

This is why I am genuinely delighted that you have stepped up and are doing hypnobirthing with me; you will remember your baby's birth for the rest of your life. So, let's make this the most positive experience it can be.

So, to begin, I will talk you through what hypnobirthing is, how it came to be, and what you can expect to gain from a Lionheart Hypnobirthing course.



## WHAT ACTUALLY IS HYPNOBIRTHING?

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The worst thing about hypnobirthing is its name. It can conjure up images of being put in a trance or something very bizarre and “hippy-ish”, but this is not true...well, certainly not true for a Lionheart Hypnobirthing course.

Hypnobirthing is based on the work of Doctor Grantly Dick-Read, an obstetrician in the early 1900's. Back then, it was common to anaesthetise women in labour with chloroform – the women would essentially be “knocked out” for labour. They would labour and give birth while they were unconscious, and then wake up with a baby in their arms. This may appeal to some, but it's not very empowering!

At the end of one of his shifts, this Doctor saw a destitute woman giving birth in the slums. He went over and offered her chloroform for free, however to his surprise, she declined. She gave birth to her baby without difficulty and after the birth the doctor asked her why she had declined pain relief. Her response was: “it wasn't supposed to hurt, was it?”

This chance remark was a bit of a landmark statement – this woman had not expected labour and birth to be painful. She had expected to be able to cope. She had a firm belief that her body would do this role unassisted. Therefore, she was not afraid, so she was relaxed in mind and body. As a result, she was not in pain - so why should she need pain relief?

Doctor Dick-Read deduced that in the absence of fear, the mind and body relaxes and produces endorphins (natural painkillers) that can replace the stress hormones that cause pain. The doctor ultimately concluded that 95 per cent of labour pain is actually caused by tension in the muscles (your uterus being the strongest muscle in the human body) and fear in the mind.

I'll say that again, 95% of labour pain is thought to be caused by tension and fear. He came up with the theory that **FEAR** in the mind, leads to **TENSION** in the body, causing **PAIN**. We will discuss this theory again in Chapter One.





I LOVE THIS "LIFE" PHOTOGRAPH, TITLED 'THE WHITECHAPEL WOMAN' WHERE NATALIE LENNARD\* RECREATES THE SCENE OF DR GRANTLY DICK-REID AND THE BIRTHING WOMAN BEAUTIFULLY.

## WHY I DON'T SHY AWAY FROM THE WORD "PAIN"

In my opinion, most antenatal education can be split into two camps when it comes to discussing pain:

- 1) The first camp would say – there should be a total avoidance of there being any pain during labour whatsoever. This approach might compliment the notion that if a woman is not afraid she will not feel pain.
- 2) Whereas the second camp would tell women about ALL the drugs and epidurals they can have; basically to mask over as many birth sensations as we can, as quickly as we can.

I don't believe either of these approaches are helpful or empowering to women. I think it would be unfair to set women up for a pain free birth because what if they don't get that? I myself didn't get a totally pain free birth. I was doing everything that I will teach

you to cope with each and every surge, before that surge inevitably came to an end and a lovely rest period came along. But yes, I did feel some pain. We will talk about the concept of "pain" more in chapter two.

I won't shy away from using the word pain but I do prefer to use the phrase "birth sensations" to keep things neutral.

How this Lionheart Hypnobirthing course works is that I will teach you all the physical things (and trust me, there are loads of things) that you and your birth partner can do to keep you as comfortable as possible, combined with psychological coping tools to manage other aspects. Make sense? Basically:

WITH HYPNOBIRTHING - WE MAKE LABOUR AND BIRTH AS PHYSICALLY COMFORTABLE AS WE CAN. THEN WE USE MINDSET STRATEGIES TO COPE WITH THE REST.

*\*Natalie's Instagram account is incredible by the way. Follow her @natalielennard*

## FEAR FREE BIRTHING

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The focus of a Lionheart Hypnobirthing course is ALWAYS fear free birthing. That is why we are called Lionhearts! When I was in labour, the key for me was that I was not remotely afraid. I felt safe. And that makes the surges (contractions) more comfortable immediately.

### Lionheart:

[lahy-uhn-hahrt] *noun*

A person who is brave and determined.

**synonyms:** brave, courageous, valiant, fearless, bold, daring, heroic, assertive, undaunted.

## LIONHEART HYPNOBIRTHING COMBINES THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS:

- ♥ Deep relaxation tools to stay calm and focused. This is the “hypno” side of hypnobirthing.
- ♥ Understanding the labour and birth process, all the different stages and knowing what to expect. This builds your trust and confidence, helping you to feel “safe” and reassured when it’s happening for real. And alongside this, learning ALL THE THINGS you can do to cope with each and every surge.
- ♥ Practical tools to keep birth as simple and straightforward as possible. Very simply (we will do a full chapter on this later - Chapter Three), our maternity system in the UK is incredibly medicalised. You will likely be offered a host of interventions (things like “sweeps”, induction of labour [to start labour off in the first place], augmentation of labour [to speed labour up], vaginal examinations to “time” labour, drugs and epidurals to name just a few). All of these things change the normal and most straightforward path of labour. Sometimes these things are needed, but sometimes, they are not. I will walk you through how YOU make decisions around all of these things.

# GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR HYPNOBIRTHING COURSE

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Whilst it is great that you are learning hypnobirthing with me, “just” learning hypnobirthing might not be enough. To get maximum benefit from your course requires three steps:

**1) LEARN:** Within this manual and on your course with me, I am going to be bringing you lots and lots of fascinating knowledge. All about labour and birth, the maternity system, how your body works etc. With knowledge comes confidence and empowerment. Please read and re-read your notes so that it is fresh in your mind and you start to trust in it more and more, and you can draw upon it much more easily during labour. Use me and your fellow Lionhearts for guidance and support.

**2) PRACTICE:** You need to practice what I am teaching you. This is where your at-home practice comes in. Not everything will appeal to you initially. I would strongly encourage you to give

EVERYTHING within this manual a go, even if it doesn't appeal to you at first. Try it a few times before you decide if it's for you or not.

**3) APPLY:** Now...this might sound obvious, but you actually need to USE what you have learnt with me when you are approaching, and in, labour. I have tried to make this as easy as possible by giving you loads of visuals that you can pin up as reminders. But, really and truly, this is the most important step.



LEARN. PRACTICE. APPLY.  
YOU ARE MUCH MORE  
LIKELY TO REAP THE  
BENEFITS WHEN YOU  
DO ALL THREE  
STAGES.

## WHAT SOME OF YOUR FELLOW LIONHEARTS HAVE GAINED FROM HYPNOBIRTHING WITH ME

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### ELLEN

*Hypnobirthing made such a huge difference to my labour and birth experience. Throughout the whole 19 hours I was calm, in control and had this quiet self-belief that I could do it. It was a totally different experience to my first labour where I felt scared and totally out of control. Without the hypnobirthing tools, techniques and knowledge that I got from Rachel, I honestly believe my birth would have been very different.*



### HELEN

*Hypnobirthing helped me overcome my anxieties not just to do with birth, but in life in general too. It gave me a deep sense of relaxation throughout my pregnancy as well as for birth. I learnt that my natural instincts know what to do, my body is working in harmony with my baby and knows how to give birth. Lastly, I also loved the quote "once you change the way you view birth, the way you give birth will change". It's so true!!!*



## SARAH

*Knowledge is power. I felt calm, confident and relaxed. Even though my labour was very fast with [my second baby] Everyn – I didn't panic as I knew what my body was doing to birth her safely. I loved that my body was telling me the opposite to the midwives (who weren't listening to me sadly, or trusting my instincts) and that I was able to trust that my baby would be born soon. I've had two fast natural births with zero tearing or grazes – I really don't think I know many people who can say that. I put it down to hypnobirthing and allowing my body to birth my babies all by itself.*



## JEROME

*When my wife first booked our hypnobirthing sessions I'll admit I was going with the flow at first as the course was her idea. But our labour and birth were the most magical experience using Lionheart Hypnobirthing and we use some of the techniques in everyday life too.*



## DISCLAIMER...(THE SERIOUS BIT)

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This manual and any other materials that come with it, is intended for use alongside a face to face Lionheart Hypnobirthing course. It is not for resale.

Whilst hypnobirthing techniques increase the likelihood of a more straightforward and comfortable labour and birth, this is not a certainty.

Hypnobirthing techniques are not a substitute for the advice of, or the presence during birth or any part of pregnancy or labour, of a qualified medical practitioner, midwife or obstetrician. It does not represent fact and is not an alternative to appropriate medical care or advice in any way.

Any questions or doubts that you have about the using hypnobirthing should be discussed with your medical caregivers.

The information given is up to date as of March 2020. Practice, laws and guidance all change, so please keep yourself updated. Indeed, it is always wise to gather information from various sources and do your own research before making decisions.

As the author of this manual, I disclaim – as far as the law allows – any liability arising directly or indirectly from the use, misuse or misunderstanding of the information contained within this manual.

And finally, as a small standalone business I always welcome any feedback, positive reviews and recommendations. I would be happy for you to share my name and details with friends and family, but would request that this manual be kept to yourselves and not passed on to any third parties, thank you.

**Right....let's delve in and get your confidence bubbling!**

