

Fourteen Minutes: Emilie's Speedy Birth


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ABSTRACT

A second-time mother shares the story of the very fast birth of her child at home.

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 Do you have a birth story that illustrates the power of childbirth and encourages women to give birth with confidence? We invite you to submit your story for possible publication in *The Journal of Perinatal Education* (JPE). Please send your story or query to Judith Lothian, Associate Editor (Jalothian@aol.com).

I loved being pregnant with my second child, rediscovering this incredible feeling of carrying a little person inside me. Toward the end of this pregnancy, I had sciatica symptoms, which forced me to slow down a tad. I was still enjoying going to work as I got closer to 37 weeks; but because the pain made it hard for me to walk, I went to see my chiropractor who laughed and said that everything was fine, that I was just getting loose and ready to give birth. And, indeed, 2 days later, my baby decided to be born! And here I had thought that I had another 3 weeks or so to chill out.

The day before my second child was born, I remember I had a huge laugh at the office with my friend Kelly. She often makes me laugh; but that day, it was uncontrollable. Little did I know that this was bringing me one step closer to meet my baby. Back at home that evening, I put Charlotte, my daughter, to bed and then I just had a little snack instead of dinner because, in the day, Kelly and I had eaten so much dark chocolate. I went to bed early and had a good rest.

My water broke in three gushes, which woke me up. It was 3:05 a.m. I felt no contractions. I thought,

Next thing I knew, I was sitting on the bath rug on the floor, feeling immensely happy with my new baby in my arms.

“Oh no! I wanted to enjoy my pregnancy 3 more weeks. And anyway, I haven't had a proper dinner last night for the hard work that lies ahead.” Then I thought, “Well, here you go, we're going to meet that new baby today.” And then I thought, “Okay, I'll just go back to sleep and ignore the beginning, as my midwife had told me.” But then a few minutes later, I felt I needed to go to the bathroom, where I had my first contractions. During what felt like perhaps the third contraction, I thought, “Okay, I couldn't speak through this one; time to wake up my husband to have him call my midwife and my doula.”

Jonathan spoke with my midwife Marcy and she asked to speak with me to get a sense of how far along in labor I was. She asked me if I wanted her to come. I told her, “But Marcy, I've only had a few contractions. I do feel like going to the bathroom, but I'm speaking to you, so I can't be very far along.” Then I had a contraction through which I could not speak, and Marcy said, “I'm coming.” That phone conversation had started at 3:27 a.m.

I was still in the bathroom, and Jonathan went to the living room to call Milon, my doula. While doing so, he later told me he realized that I sounded like I was pushing. He could recognize the sounds I had made when I had my first daughter. So at 3:34 a.m., he called Marcy back to tell her I was pushing. He

then came to help me in the bathroom but realized he could not open the door. In the bathroom, I was coping in the all-fours position with my forehead wedged into the corner where the door hinges, which prevented Jonathan from entering. I remember that in this position, my forehead was providing me with great support to push. I could feel that the birthing energy was going all the way from my forehead up to my vagina. Retrospectively, I know I felt what Michel Odent calls the *fetal ejection reflex*. I also thought, “Damn, this is hard. I didn’t remember this to be as painful last time. I’m not sure I can do this for long.” I also thought, “Open, open, you’re going to get huge,” as I had read in *Ina May’s Guide to Childbirth*. One woman had avoided tearing by asking her perineum to open up. All this was going on, and yet I never realized that my baby was actually being born. I had thought that I was going to labor for some time. Next thing I knew, I was sitting on the bath rug on the floor, feeling immensely happy with my new baby in my arms.

Jonathan entered the room. I seem to remember he looked quite shaken. We wrapped the baby in a towel, and I put her right to my breast. Jonathan then said, “So, what do we have?” And we found out we had a baby girl. Then he said, “Well, since you did all the work by yourself, you get to choose the name.” I had always liked the name Alice, but Jonathan



preferred my second choice, Emilie. I said to him, “You would prefer her to be named Emilie, right?” He acknowledged. So I said, “Emilie it is, then.”

At 3:57 a.m., Jonathan called Marcy again to tell her that our baby was born at 3:35 a.m. A total of 14 minutes after I felt my first contraction, we later worked out. Marcy spoke with me to find out how the baby was doing. I knew she was fine because she had a good color, a good tone; she had cried, so she was breathing fine, and she was nursing really well.

At 4:05 a.m., Marcy arrived. I was still sitting on the toilet nursing my baby and waiting for the placenta to fall out. Milon, my doula, arrived at the same time. She fetched a bowl for the placenta, and Marcy did controlled traction on the cord (which felt wrong, I remember telling her) and the placenta came out. They then assisted me to my bed with my baby. Moments later, Jonathan woke up Charlotte, who was now a big sister. With her sleepy head, she said, “C’est la bébé soeur, celle-là (It’s the baby sister, that one).”



LAURE SINNHUBER-GILES *initiated the Healthy Birth Choices workshops at the advocacy group Choices in Childbirth (www.choicesinchildbirth.org) in 2007 after the pivotal experience of giving birth at home to her first child in 2006. She currently practices in New York City as a certified doula and childbirth educator, striving to support women in tapping into their inner strength during this wondrous life transition.*