

## Lily Radhe's Birth Story

Anticipating the home birth of our first child, Lily Radhe, our days were filled with gathering water birth supplies, prepping the pantry and enjoying winter stillness in Maine's countryside. My heart's desire was to bring Lily into the world in our home with little or no medical interventions. My pregnancy was very similar, I relied on our midwives and my body to guide the process with no need for traditional western medicine.

Lily was transverse breech with her head resting on my right side and feet low in my pelvis for most of the pregnancy. So after trying the Webster Technique with chiropractic care, acupuncture, yoga inversions and headstands in the pool, at 38 weeks I decided to have an ECV, external cephalic version. This is where an OBGYN and midwife externally rotated Lily with the use of a live ultrasound image. And without anesthesia, medication, and a whole lot of deep breathing, Lily allowed for the rotation and was now head down and in a great position for birth. This brought my husband and I much easefulness for the upcoming home birth.

Around 8:30 pm on the evening of January 19, 2023 I began to feel new sensations of expansion and relaxation in my cervix as I rested at home. I called our midwife Brenda and explained the sensations, she said "sounds like labor is starting", and asked me to call her back when the rushes came every 4 minutes and lasted 45-60 seconds each, sustained for 1 hour. I then called my husband who was repotting plants at our yoga shala, and told him that labor was starting and not to rush home! I certainly was feeling excited that it was finally the moment to call on my innate ability to birth and surrender.

And we were getting so close to meeting our little one!

After tracking the rushes for about 3 hours, and resting, I called Brenda again at 3am. She said she would be there in some time, as there was an active snow storm with a 30 mile drive to our home. Brenda heroically arrived in the snow storm a few hours later as

I was feeling active waves of contractions that called me into a deep inner presence, unable to carry on conversations or focus on much other than the sensations. I continued to labor with the contractions in many positions and especially enjoyed being in our light-filled sunroom as the snow continued to fly and cardinals visited the birdfeeder, gracing up with their presence of ancestral awareness.

My husband, and our midwives, Grace and Brenda, were all present during the labor and birthing of Lily. Brenda and Grace's guidance allowed for the perfect amount of space and groundedness for me to surrender into my body's innate wisdom, which knew how to birth. My body and baby's body were connecting and progressing very well. When I felt stalled or stagnant, I would ask Brenda "How are we doing?" and she would offer suggestions, like moving from the birth pool to the toilet or birth stool. It was just what I needed to shift my energy and continue to progress, because at times the

fear of “not being able to do it” would arise. I knew that if I let myself feel into this fear, I may shift my focus away and stall labor or become overwhelmed with the magnitude of what was actually happening. It wasn't until after the birth that I could integrate the birth process and what a miracle it truly is!

The birth pool was set up in our living room and I very much enjoyed getting into it when I needed to relax and allow for more expansion. As well as when my husband joined in the pool to sit behind me and hold some of my weight for a while. Our midwives were maintaining hot water on the stove top with a big canning pot and continually adding more when it cooled down, they did this for hours! I remember feeling so nourished by the rushes of warm water. I began to feel the urges to push in the pool and allowed for my body to push and release sounds. The sounds helped me to shed layer upon layer of emotional and mental stuff, fears that arose and any hesitations that I had.

When the pressure felt too intense on my pelvic floor and cervix, I would bear the weight on my hands. This really fatigued my upper body. So when it came time to get out of the birth pool and continue pushing, I chose to rest for a bit on the couch. A big urge to push came on and as I pushed, the water sac broke...all over our couch and floor! I remember the sound ‘pop!’ and my husband yelled “Brenda!” who was in the next room giving us space to rest. My instinct was to roll off of the couch and onto the floor, guess I was concerned about ruining the couch we had just got 4 days before the birth!

Some time after the water sac broke, Brenda checked to see if the cervix was fully dilated and discovered there was an area that was pinched closed between Lily's head and my pelvis (I think, honestly, I just trusted what Brenda was suggesting). So, as Brenda held the cervix open, I pushed to keep it open. This was quite an intense sensation to experience, no part of me wanted to push as she held the cervix open. And I did it anyways, because that is what would create the full dilation and get us closer to meeting our daughter!

The next hour or so of pushing until Lily was born felt like minutes only, in my memory. I was laying on my side on the couch, pushing with everything I had while keeping my body as restful as possible. Brenda asked me to push from the lowest area of my body possible, this was very helpful because where I needed to push felt very different than where I thought pushing happens. I was able to feel where Lily's head was in the passage and pretty quickly she was crowning. Feeling her head really motivated me to give the next few pushes everything that I had, we were so close to birth! My husband was sitting next to me, on the edge of his seat, able to see Lily as she began to emerge. I remember hearing his excitement at seeing her head and he continued to encourage me with the final few pushes. It was only 3 minutes later that she was born, after a quick position flip onto hands and knees after Brenda assisted to push Lily's little hand back in when it started to emerge with her head. Very quickly, I was sitting down and Lily was

brought onto my stomach where she rested and we adored her, amazed with the miracle of her! My husband and I were both shocked at how big she was when she was born and how the whole birthing unfolded. We waited a while until checking to make sure she was a girl, as we not certain of her gender. We asked Grace to cut her chord when it stopped pulsing around 25 minutes after birth. The Golden Hour was such a gift of lightness and awe as we stared into her eyes and loved on her.