

## **Kate's Birth Story**

I woke up to a clamping down just before midnight. I felt excited, anticipatory, like "OK, this is finally it." I was in a sleepy haze and knew that I should try to sleep as long as possible. The contractions had me in the bathroom every 10 minutes, violently cleaning out my body. They were powerful right from the start, some coming 6 or 8 minutes apart. I wanted to let Alden sleep as long as possible, but after a couple hours things were really picking up and I started to get scared. I needed another human.

The bed felt too soft so we moved out to the living room. I laid on the couch on my side and with each cresting wave I breathed deeply into my body to "open, open, open". Alden was on the floor next to me, keeping time and talking to me in between. Mostly my attention was on my breath - slow and deep. I felt calm and focused.

We called Brenda and Kate (my dear friend and doula) around 3:30 am and told them to head over slowly, not knowing how fast things would change. Sometime shortly after, the couch became too soft and the cresting waves were too much for my slow, equal breaths. I needed a new rhythm but I didn't know how to find it. I rolled onto the floor and pushed up to my hands and knees. For a few moments I was completely lost. I didn't know how I was going to rest between contractions and everything felt utterly impossible. How were things this sensational so quickly? How was I going to get through this if it were just the beginning? A sudden realization - "this must be what they call transition." And just like that - I named it and let it go.

I wound up on my knees with my elbows resting on the couch. The waves were crashing faster and faster. I focused on riding each one with my breath, not letting it get ahead of me. We called Brenda around 5:15 am to let her know that things had really picked up. She was 20 minutes away. Sometime shortly after that, every fiber of my body told me it was time to push. There was no stopping, no question - I would PUSH. My breath turned to sound. The upheaval of the core of the earth was inside me and I was moving mountains of old granite, spewing lava out of my cavities, calling up the deepest depths of existence.

My water broke at 5:30 am and a pulse of fear washed over me as I realized that I was just Alden and I. It didn't matter, there was no choice - I was going to push out this baby. A few minutes later, Brenda and Kate swooped in like superheroes. Kate pulled back my hair and placed a cool washcloth on my neck, told me to relax my mouth and make deeper sounds. Brenda checked my cervix and called to Alden to stop filling the tub - it was too late.

With each push, the stinging felt more intense - I wasn't sure how much more I could take. "Feel your baby's head," said Brenda. "Look at Alden," said Brenda. "The birds are singing our baby into the world", said Alden. They were.

Our baby was born at 6:25 am on his dad's favorite rug - which remained unharmed! He weighed 7 lb 8 oz and was passed through my legs into my arms after he took his first breath.