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Excerpt from Homebirth in the Hospital:

Integrative childbirth combines the midwifery model of care with the medical model of care.

As stated by the Midwifery Task Force in 1996, "The midwifery model of care is based on the assumption that pregnancy and birth are normal life events. This model of care includes monitoring the physical, psychological, and social well-being of the mother throughout the childbearing cycle; providing the mother with individualized education, counseling, and prenatal care, continuous hands-on assistance during labor and delivery, and postpartum support; minimizing technological interventions; and identifying and referring women who require obstetrical attention. The application of this woman-centered model has been proven to reduce the incidence of birth injury, trauma, and cesarean section."

The medical model of maternity care, in its purest form, sees pregnancy and labor as abnormal physical conditions, which must be treated with medical technology. Medical intervention is an integral part of every birth, and birth is never considered a safe process. Women's labors and deliveries are expected to fit within statistical expectations and any deviation from these expectations is a cause for concern. Mind and body are seen as separate entities, and managing the physical aspects of birth with aggressive technology is considered appropriate medical care. Pain medication and anesthesia are offered and encouraged because the pains of childbirth are considered unnecessarily grueling.

If we combine the two styles, basing our initial care plan on the midwifery model and using medical technology only when necessary to save lives and to serve the needs of laboring mothers, we have a true integration, the best of both worlds.

How do you plan an integrative childbirth? It is essential to make plans ahead of time because once you go into labor your ability to control the situation is severely limited. Throughout your labor and delivery you want to feel safe, without having to negotiate the details. You can not control the natural labor process but you can control the planning and the choices you make. You have that right, and the right to deliver your child without disappointment or regrets.

There are five key elements to a successful integrative birth - I call them the Five C's: Choice, Communication, Continuity, Confidence, and Control of Protocols. These are all explored in the pages of Homebirth in the Hospital.

It is important to note that these elements are equally important when planning a home birth. Choosing a midwife for a homebirth takes research and planning. Coming Soon: Guidelines for planning a homebirth and choosing a midwife.