



## BBL 159: What is Dad's Role in Birth?

This is the Birth Baby and Life podcast, and we are going from goofy dad to ninja birth partner in episode number one hundred and fifty-nine.

Welcome to the Birth Baby and Life podcast. The tips, tools, and straight talk. You want the pregnancy, childbirth, and bringing up baby. And now your host, Kristen Burgess.

Hi, ladies. This is Kristen from NaturalBirthandBabyCare.com. Today's episode is one that I have been asked about quite a lot.

It's something that I do talk about inside mom, a baby birthing quite a lot. But I haven't done a podcast episode directly on this and I thought that it would be a good episode to do. That's talking about what is your husband's role in birth or your birth partner's role? What's dad's role in birth? It's important because most women want their husbands involved or they want their partners involved in the birth. And I think that many husbands want to be involved. Many men want to be involved in birth, but they actually feel scared. And that can be an interesting thing to think about, especially when we think about, you know, guys and we think about macho men or that nothing scares them or on some level, many of us see a husband as more of a protector role. So, it can be interesting to think about a guy being scared.

Guys can have fears about it.

Pregnancy and birth, for many different reasons, their fears usually are different than a woman's fears, they. Well, let's come back to safety. One of the things that guys often feel fear about is finances. So that may or may not be something that you worry about or it may be something that you give some thought to. But men really, really, really worry about that. So there they have fears, but they're a little different. And then they do worry about safety. They worry about your safety. They worry about the baby's safety. And so all of these things may come together and cause a lot of stuff. And the head of a guy. So for one thing, if you want a particular birth, he's going to try and work on that from many different perspectives. So to you, cost may be something that you consider, but it's not really the driving factor. I know for me with my first baby, I knew that I wanted to have a home birth and I was dirt poor, like we were living well below the poverty level, teen pregnancy, well below the poverty level. Cassidy was born in a trailer. Right. So a little single wide trailer that it wasn't much to look at y'all. But, you know, to me, the fact that the state would have paid for my birth, had gone to the hospital was not really relevant because it wasn't the birth that I wanted to have for her.

So I busted my tail to find a way to make a home. Birth happened even though I had to pay for that out of pocket. Whereas for a dad that that may not compute because he's worried about things from more of a financial perspective. And so that can be something to consider. And especially when you think about things that you want that



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may be outside of the norm or outside of what insurance might cover. For example, if you want to do law to attend you at the hospital or if you choose a home birth or a home birth with a doula, you know, all of those costs are racking up. And some guys have differing perspectives on that sort of thing. If you decide to have a doula, for example, and we'll revisit this a little bit later in the episode as well, talking specifically about why you might want to do even if you have a great birth partner, but they may they can take things in a couple different ways. In some ways, a

doula may seem like a relief to them, help relieve some pressure. And that's what we'll talk about. But sometimes they might feel like, well, I'm not enough or I'm I'm not necessarily welcome or I'm not needed, or that to use an expression, a fifth wheel.

So, you know, when you think about a car driving, I don't know. I know we have lots of international listeners, so I'm not sure how common that expression is around the world. But if you think of a car driving his four wheels on the ground, a fifth wheel would be not necessary. It's not needed because you've already got the four wheels. So I think a guy might feel somewhat like that, especially if you're investing in your both to the point where you've got this skilled birth team with you and a doula. So when a guy is thinking about birth, he can be scared for many different things. He can be scared for financial reasons, just for the cost of having a child, plus the thought of birth on top of that. And he may be literally intimidated by the birth process. It's not something that he's ever going to go through. Men's bodies do not give birth to babies. Men's bodies do not grow babies. Men's bodies do not even menstruate. You know, women are you know, they're just a whole nother animal. And guys already feel confused by women. And then this birth process, which is this really intimate, very much a woman coming into her power type thing, can be another level of overwhelm.

And again, guys might be on different levels. So I don't know what level your husband or your partner is on. You may be able to think about this, but some guys are going to be really intimidated and some guys are going to feel like this is something where you do step into your power. And again, maybe they're that fifth wheel. Some guys who don't who don't have the healthiest self perception might feel threatened by that might be might feel threatened by a woman coming into our power. And some guys are going to look past that or they're going to look at that and see a woman who's really vulnerable. And there is validity to that, ladies, because in pregnancy and birth, you are vulnerable to a certain extent. You're very powerful, but you're also vulnerable because when you are pregnant and and birthing and have a newborn, if you just look at it from, you know, from a survival perspective, you are more vulnerable than, say, a woman who doesn't have that. You know, a woman who doesn't have who is not pregnant, who doesn't have a baby or small children would be much more able to, quote unquote, provide for herself, so to speak. And I mentioned these things even though. I sound kind of silly and primitive or even sexist, because these are still interplays that happen in our society and they happen on varying levels.



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Like, for example, you have women who don't want to be vulnerable at all. They may have been hurt by men in the past or seen people that they loved hurt. And so they don't want to be beholden to a man in any way or lean on a man in any way. And so all of these are things that can come into play in a relationship and during birth. So one thing, if you read some birth stories, you will see that things about a relationship came into play, or sometimes a woman gives birth and things come up around. And after that, because it's just a fundamental shift on many levels, not just the level. I mean, this is one level where a woman becomes a mother and it changes her focus, especially with the first baby from perhaps the marriage or the relationship to this child in some relationships don't withstand that transition. And a lot of this all comes down to communication. Right. So that's what I really want to encourage you. First thing is, if you want your husband to be a vital part of your baby's birth and he wants that, which probably that's what both of you want, really talk and really communicate during during your pregnancy.

There's a lot to work through. I'll put it in the show notes. But the the documentary birth into being, which was done by the Russian midwives, it talks some about relationship during pregnancy. So that might be one that it's got beautiful births, of course, beautiful births, really inspirational video. But that might be one that you could watch if this is something in particular that, you know, that is a thing for you that's coming up for you. So definitely.

Realize that.

Pregnancy represents a time for you to do a lot of personal growth, personal development, introspection, that kind of thing, it's really a gift to moms and it can also be a gift for your relationship to be really intentional and to dig into these things. And some of it may work in you figuring out how do you view that husband wife role or how does he view that role or those roles and looking at these things and just exploring them and then thinking about how might these things play into birth and how how how they might not. But it is something to spend some time and and to do some thinking about. And I'm not saying that there's any sort of right or wrong.

I'm just talking about this because I've been through eight pregnancies myself and I have helped a whole lot of women. I've been to a lot of prenatal appointments and I've talked to a lot of students on live Q&A calls. And I've done some one on one work, mentoring and guiding women.

And this is stuff that comes up and it's important stuff to look through and to work through and, you know, how to communicate with a husband. And that sort of thing is outside of like talking about birth, which I do. I do talk about that mama baby birthing pretty extensively. But, you know, that's that's beyond me. I can tell you somebody that I've enjoyed listening to is Rory Ray. So she might be somebody to listen to if you're



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looking for how to effectively talk to a man. So that's just and I'll put her information in the show notes. But yeah, that's just a suggestion because it's a way out of my league. But I would encourage you to look to healthy communication, especially if you don't feel like you have it. And even if you do feel like you have a really strong relationship, this is a

new thing. And expectations for the delivery room, so to speak, can be a big thing, can be a strain on a relationship. And so it's important to work on that communication and to keep it healthy and to keep it strong and just to work out what the two of you want and make sure you're on the same page. And again, as far as a unified language and that sort of thing, a good birthing course will help you. But the foundation of communication and starting to talk about some of these areas, like money and feelings of vulnerability, can be important for both of you to feel like you're clear and you understand each other and what the other expects and what the other wants and even getting vulnerable with each other and talking about those fears, that can be a really good thing to do.

So let's let's move on and shift a little bit to practical. So what roles could a husband take during birth? What roles could a dad take? So first you have the out of it, dad. You know, the dad who's sleeping or and I'm not talking about sleeping after a long labor. And he falls out from sheer exhaustion because I've seen that happen. But you have the dad who's sleeping or the dad who's watching the television or the dad who's staring intently at the fetal monitoring strip and not paying any attention to the mom who's birthing the baby so that dad exists. And again, I've been to over two dozen births. I've sat in on a lot of prenatal appointments. I've done a lot of cuneyst calls. And I definitely have seen this dad more often than I would probably like. Sometimes I do feel like that dad feels incompetent.

So it's not it's not that he because, you know, when you think about it, when you joke, oh my gosh, he was watching the ball game or he fell asleep, you don't you know, you might think negatively. Oh, he just doesn't care or he's just selfish. And that might be the case sometimes. But from what I've seen, especially from the births that I've attended, it's not that it's really that the dad feels incompetent. And, you know, a man can't admit that. He doesn't want to admit that. And so he just bails out and he lets the quote unquote, experts handle things. So, of course, all the births that I've attended have been in a home birth setting. So, you know, the midwives there and she's got a student or even two students and maybe mom has a doula. So, you know, what's my purpose? I can just I can just bow out because she doesn't she doesn't need me or I don't have any idea how to help her or I tried to help her and I got snapped at. So you have these sorts of situations that cause a dad to feel that level of incompetence or inadequacy. And so he bails out. So we have that out of it, Dad. Then you have Dad who is in the coach position, who he's really there. He's active. And this dad can look a couple different ways. Most of us want the dad that is in this position and is confident, but also really tuned in to what you need.



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Then there's the dad who really does feel like he's playing fantasy football here and he's going to armchair quarterback the entire thing and he's going to give all these commands and bark all these commands. But he's not really in tune. So he may know something because the two of you have gone through prepared both classes, but he just isn't really applying it or he isn't being really intuitive or even observant.

And so he's not helping a lot. So that's two different variations of the dad as coach and then you have the dad as protector and this dad tends to be more hands off, he's not right there helping you. He may be somewhat like the out of it dad and that he is letting others be right there supporting you. But he's still very active in the space and his energy can be felt. He hasn't decided to check out. Instead, he's more protecting.

So he may be right there with you or he may let Abdullah be right there with you or whatever, but he's more protecting. So he's the one who's keeping people out of the space. He's safeguarding the space. He's making sure that you're comfortable, but he's doing it more from the less from the perspective of a coach who's right there actively helping you through the contractions and more.

He wants to make sure that the environment stays safe and secure for you. And this is a role that naturally, I believe many dads assume. Pam England talks about this in her book, *Birthing from Within*. I think I'm going to be able to do an interview with her really soon, which I'm really excited about. But I'll let you have you'll you'll get more details on that in future podcast episodes. But Pam talks about this in her book, *Birthing with From Within*, which is one of my favorite books, a treasured book. I read it while I had started reading it in my second pregnancy and I didn't get finished with it. But I remember Alex, one of my the student midwives there. She was acting as a student midwife doula for me, and she actually read to me out loud from the book. But Pam talks about this in her book. This dad is a protector and that it's a role that many dads it fits for many dads.

And this may be what you want for your husband or what feels most comfortable for both of you. But again, it's the kind of thing that you talk about and that you explore during pregnancy. I really want excuse me. I really want to encourage you to explore this during pregnancy by talking about this with your husband or with your with your partner, the thing that you want the most, in my opinion.

So my honest opinion is dad is a protector, definitely works for many. But but in my experience, the skilled a skilled dad who can play the role of coach if needed and protector as needed is the best, and that that's a skilled dad. So that's a dad who has done some birth preparation with you. I have moms who go through mom baby birthing and they ask me what a typical question I get at the start is, should my husband go through all of



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this with me? And my answer is no, because it's it's extensive. Right. And most guys are going to get bored.

They just don't need to hear at all. And a lot of what they need they what they may not need to know, but what you may want them to know to support you, for example, understanding the importance of nutrition. So I have I have found that dads are some of the best at helping a mom make sure that she's getting nutrition she needs, especially a mom who feels guilty. Here we go with finances again, especially a mom who feels guilty about the cost of nutrition. I had a one on one student who was really struggling with this, just feeling guilty about the cost because their grocery bill was up and this mom had struggle before. She had had a baby who was really small before and this baby looked like this. He or she was going to be really small as well. And the mom was being raced out of a home birth because of it.

And when I looked at her food logs, which is one of my favorite things to do, ladies, I definitely will be looking at your food journal if you if you come on board and let me help, you know, serve as your guide through your pregnancy.

I could tell she was not eating anywhere near enough calories, but she was really hesitant. And so this dad came alongside and said because she shared with him, OK, this is what I'm going over with Kristen and my sessions. And he said, it doesn't matter. This this is my wife. This is my child. You're priceless. Whatever it costs. If I need to work extra to be able to afford this, I will do that. And it gave this mom permission to really eat the full pregnancy diet that she needed.

I share that as an example that there may be some things in, say, mama baby birthing or any course that you go through that you share information with your husband, for example, why it's so important to make sure that you're eating high quality foods or why it's helpful for him to give a little bit of space for you to have, you know, to take a warm bath once a week and have some space from all the other little kids around you or to be able to. Go out on a walk every day or to have a 30 minute nap in the afternoon, whatever, you may want to communicate that from him, but that's the kind of information that can be shared with him. He doesn't necessarily have to go through that. What you want your husband to go through, and this is what I tell students who ask me, is the information that talks about roles during birth and the practical skills, and especially if this is your first baby, you probably do want him to go through the information on exactly what happens during birth, what is birth look like, what's happening to mom, what's happening to baby.

That information is is knowledge, information that will be really helpful to him.

And then then you want him to go through the information on skills and techniques like breathing and position changes and that sort of thing can all be really important to him. And anything that you want his buy in on another one that I might think about having a



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dad listen to with you, this one wouldn't be one he would have to take action on. But more listen to it would be on the hormonal flow of birth because that understanding that helps amplify his skill as a protector, because one of the things that he can protect is your environment, helping you keep an environment that feels safe to you, which is a primary thing that facilitates a strong hormonal flow and labor, which is going to help you have a quicker labor and easier labor, a safer labor.

So you want to have him listen to or learn with you some focus things, but not necessarily everything. And that can make it easier for a dad to stay on target with something. And it can also help with that feeling of inadequacy that he may be struggling with because it empowers him. It gives him information. And especially if you go through those practical things in the class together, it helps him practice. And this is what we're going to talk about next week is practicing for birth. Can you, quote unquote, practice for birth?

But when he goes through those practical things, he develops the skills to really be able to to help you, number one. And number two, to help protect that environment. So my opinion is that a skilled dad is the best that dad can adapt to what he needs to be.

He can be a coach. And if you if you guys have gone through learning the skills together, it that communication is vital for him to start to understand and into to it. Because you you don't want the dad who is a quote unquote birth coach, who treats you as if you're a member of, like his peewee football team and and balls at you the entire time telling you what to do or that sort of thing. You want somebody who can look at you, who can listen to you and who can figure out what what you need. So I can say that for me, Scott will tell you that he feels like he wasn't all that important to the birth because I did everything and I you know, I had it down. And I mean, when he and I married and we already had the oldest three kids. And so I our first baby together was my fourth baby. And there is truth to the fact that I definitely knew how to have a baby, but. Having him as a birth partner was a huge game changer for me, and it's one of the reasons why I feel like my last five births were easier on some levels than the previous three births because I had a

partner who was intuitive and who was fully supportive, who didn't check out at all, so to speak, and who was just on board and who was able to listen to me and understand what I needed.

And even if I didn't need a lot, quote unquote, what I did need was a vital for example, those births all went went fast. And in my fourth birth and Galen's birth, I had a lot of self-doubt and he helped to reinforce me, listening to myself and being in tune with myself and trusting my body and what was going on. And then in the other birth, as things got intense, he was really a rock for me, being able to look at him and have him breathe and breathe after him and being able to squeeze his squeeze all the blood out of



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his hands kind of thing that, you know, that was vital for me, just that that moral support.

He was strength for me in his presence was vital for me. So he he really was something that I needed, even if he would say that he wasn't, quote unquote, very active. He also helped make sure that the environment was what I needed it to be. And we were having home births. But he still made sure that the lighting was right and he made sure that the playlist that I had created for the birth was playing. And he made sure that the bathtub was ready. He I shiver in labor because of the hormones, like when the hormones of labor get get really rolling. A lot of women shiver and shake because of that as an adrenaline rush. And that happens to me.

And so he's you know, he's sitting there bumping up the heat in the house because he sees his wife is shivering.

So let's get it warmer. It's probably also good for a baby to come out, of course. But you know, that kind of protector. And I so I really value that he was that he was willing to go through all the preparation because we did a lot of preparation together before Galen's birth and even again, lightly before the other baby's births and was able to be what I needed during those births. Whatever that happened to look like was really important to me. And I feel like that, you know, that's really helpful.

I told you at the beginning of the episode that we would come back to talking about droolers. And I do want to mention or really emphasize that sometimes a doula can be a great help. Not only is she a skilled, professional labor support person who is proven by empirical studies to make a huge difference in birth outcomes and in women satisfaction of birth and in the safety of birth and and just having better outcomes overall. A doula can also help take some of the pressure off of a dad, especially a dad who's really nervous. Or if you're really nervous, then the doula can be helpful sometimes, too. When laborers go long, a dad can get really tired and a doula can help to relieve him and give him a bit of a break because it is intense and you may feel like, well, I don't get a break, so why does he get it right? That's not fair. But you want him to be present and able to support you and you would probably rather he stepped out of the room, went to the bathroom, grabbed a bite to eat, was able to take a minute to relax and can come back into the room relaxed and ready to support you.

And you know that your doula is being supported, supportive in that interval rather than having him fall asleep or totally check out and watch TV because he's overwhelmed or he feels like he can't help.

In addition, a doula can support him in supporting you. So even a dad who lacks confidence or feels like he may not know what to do but really wants to be present for you, a doula has a doula, has assisted many women in birth. And though every birth is



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unique and every woman is unique, really a lot of labor support measures are universal because birthing is universal in a sense. And so she's seen a lot of births and she's seen women who labor like you do and can make suggestions to him to be able to support you. So I'm sorry I got a little one who's excited about a new water bottle.

So just consider that a doula can be really helpful for the both of you and be a blessing to you and to him as you're preparing for your baby's birth. And she can also usually a doula will stay for a little bit postpartum and can really help again. She knows birthing women and she knows the needs of birthing women. And so she can really help in that regard while you and he are enjoying you're enjoying your newborn together.

So some practical things just to end on, ways that you can help get down on board and get down involved, because sometimes, you know, especially if you are considering a natural birth and your husband's like, why aren't we just going to go to the hospital? Don't you just going to get medicine? They have it available. He may not understand or have ever probably it's not that he doesn't understand. It's just that he's never considered anything different.

And so some dads and again, you you know, your husband or your partner, some dads are going to respond well to things like articles or studies or book chapters. So you can email him an article or text him a study or something, or ask that he read a select chapter in a book, for example, and that might be helpful to him. Watching documentaries, for example. The business of being born is one that a lot of people like to watch with their husband or partner. So watching something like that can be helpful. The one that I mentioned earlier, birth into being might be a good one.

I feel like orgasmic birth, which has kind of that shocking title, but that is also a great one. So that one might be one that you might consider watching with him and your midwife. If you're if you're seeing a midwife, she may have a lending library with video. So I'm not necessarily saying that you watch birth videos with him, but watching documentaries that talk about natural birth and the whys of natural birth. And of course, they show some birth as well.

But they can be really helpful in shifting your husbands or partners perception of things or introducing something that he's never considered and therefore may feel skeptical of at first. And of course, like I said, he doesn't necessarily have to watch or listen to everything. If you guys are doing a birthing course together, he doesn't necessarily have to watch or listen to every single lesson because some of them may not be geared towards him. I know. Like I said, mama, baby birthing is extensive because it's meant to take you from having a healthy pregnancy to all the physical, all the emotional, all the mental preparation, all the spiritual preparation for birth and then get you to to the skills that you need for that birth and then get you through clearing fears and all of that. It just is extensive. And a lot of it is meant for that inner journey of the mom. But there



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are some lessons that are really meant for dad to go through, too. So those are the ones that you share with him. And I think many courses are done the same way. OK, so with that, we're going to wrap up now. Phoenix singing He loves he loves this song, Prince Ali from the movie Aladdin. So this little three year old, he's so he's so cute singing it. So he's you're being serenaded in the background.

I don't know if y'all can hear that, but I do want to share with you that I am super excited about the master class. It's coming up in just a couple of weeks, about a week and a half, actually, from the time this podcast will go live. I want to encourage you to jump on and register for that. It's [birthbabylife.com/Masterclass](http://birthbabylife.com/Masterclass). We're going to talk about the three keys of natural birth. I'm going to go into detail and share a lot of secrets about birth with you. We're going to talk about the physical. We're going to talk about the practical. We're going to talk about the fear. We're going to talk about the pain. We're going to cover it all. And we're going to talk about how this is totally something that you can do. I'm really excited because I've been working really hard on it and I'm super, super thrilled to be sharing it with you. So, again, go to [birthbabylife.com/Masterclass](http://birthbabylife.com/Masterclass). It's totally free to register. Go ahead and check it out. I'll do it live and then I'm hoping to do it a few more times. So head over there and check it out. Birth baby, live dotcom master class. And definitely if this podcast has helped you, I get I get feedback from moms all the time that the podcast has helped them. Please definitely go to iTunes or your podcast service and give it a read up. Leave a comment that says how much you are helped by this, because that's really.

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