

## Real Birth: Women Share Their Stories

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Collected in this volume are the first-person narratives of thirty-six women whose childbirth experiences represent a range of real-life experiences. The mothers who reveal these intimate details answered an ad in a national publication-out of which the collected interviews emerged. Each story chronicles candid details of what every woman giving birth goes through, emotionally and physically, causing the reader to have deeper understanding and reverence for women who give birth. Although this is a telling of a rite of passage most women participate in, all expectant family members interested in the human experience will enjoy this book and find the details refreshing and engrossing.

Each narrative is diverse and the short biographies at the beginning of each story are kept brief and non-descript in terms of cultural identification, ethnic background and socioeconomic status. The author's intent was to let each story unfold naturally; her voice never intrudes, rather she draws out and edits each account, retaining the integrity of each birth history. With each page, one begins to perceive that each woman speaks from her heart, with a mental clarity that painstakingly preserves the memory of this incredible task.

Each chapter provides insight into the various concerns, fears and options to giving birth today. Traditional hospital birth is covered, as well as birthing centers, at home births and some very unusual places (in particular, an arrival in a Virginia traffic tunnel, among others). First time mothers will benefit from the additional information on alternative methods to birthing, such as underwater births, little to no medical intervention births and alternative birthing positions such as standing up and how to choose a doula or midwife. Mothers who have been through the birth experience before will benefit from the stories of those who have chosen to change elements of their birthing plan, such as asking for medication or who have delivered via C-Section the first time around and have successfully birthed vaginally thereafter. Problems in pregnancy are also covered to educate the reader as to how singular each birth experience is.

Real Birth proves to be a helpful resource for anyone interested or about to become involved with the birth experience. A helpful glossary and resource guide lends to the approachability of this volume. The book differentiates itself from the other "gospel" pregnancy books in that there is no "must" or unquestioned theory on how to experience the birth process.

AMY MCQUAID (January / February 2000)

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