

Traumatic Birth

My husband and I had tried for a long time to get and stay pregnant. We lost four babies in the year prior to the birth of our daughter.

The labour with my first child, in 2005, was the worst of the three labours I've experienced.

I went into early labour at 36 weeks due to a traumatic event the night before my waters broke.

I woke up as my waters broke and went straight to hospital. I had to travel to one much further away as my baby had an abnormality picked up on a scan and there was talk of her needing an operation at birth.

I often find it hard to remember all the details of the labour, some of it still seems a blur, but I remember going into hospital on the Sunday and my daughter not being born until the Wednesday.

I remember being so full of excitement and anticipations and that within 7 days those feelings seemed a lifetime ago.

My husband and sister accompanied me but weren't allowed to stay overnight. I remember feeling really alone because they weren't allowed to stay with me for long, as labour hadn't started and the time it took for them to drive to and from the hospital made visiting times difficult.

I was terrified when I was there alone... I went into hospital young and naive and came out a different woman altogether.

I remember needing to be induced and given pessaries in the first few days of my arrival, and that the experience of the internal examination caused me great distress. I was raped as a child but my mind had blocked this event out until this labour. Being internally examined and needing stitches after the labour brought that memory hurtling back.

The pessaries did not work and my labour was started via the hormone drip. I went from no contractions to full blown agonising ones within minutes. I was terrified and in excruciating pain. I could not understand why it hurt so much, when I had watched my 16 year old sister give birth with no pain relief only months before.

I asked for gas and air but this did not seem to affect the pain or help how I was feeling as the severity of the contractions increased. After several hours I asked for an epidural but had to wait another three hours before I was given one as there was no available anaesthetist.

When the epidural was inserted the pain stopped, but I was given a catheter before I was numb and always remember how painful I found that.

Because the labour lasted for so long, the staff shifts seemed to constantly change and I never saw the same midwife twice. I felt like there was no one professional I could talk to.

I remember the delivery room being swarmed with doctors and nurses. It felt like there were hundreds of people around me. By the time my daughter was ready to be born, I was utterly exhausted from the labour and did not have the energy to push.

Forceps were used and I needed stitches, and again, I felt myself being tortured like in my new found memories.

She was placed on me for mere seconds before they took her away to see if she needed to be operated on. She was born with a large cyst on her neck, but because of it being so close to her jugular vein they did not operate.

I did not know it at the time, but I had lost a huge amount of blood. I was weak and practically passed out as soon as she was born. I remember having luminous green vomit and wires connected all over me.

When I woke up I felt drained, dizzy and scared. The epidural had not worn off and I had to be lifted from one bed to another.

The woman lifting me did not realise I had had an epidural and applied all her pressure to the area the needle had gone in. It was excruciating and made me sick.

I was taken to a post-natal ward and the curtains were closed around me and my baby. I remember her first night of life so well. She cried for her milk but I did not have the energy or ability to lift her from her crib. My husband and sister had been asked to leave and I remember just lying there crying.

I rang my buzzer and asked for help. The midwife handed her to me but then I was left to feed her alone. I had to bottle feed as I was too weak to breast feed and her tiny body in my arms felt ridiculously heavy. I cried the whole way through her feed. I kept staring at her cyst, wondering if it hurt her, or what it was. I didn't understand why she had it, or how I could help her.

I think it was the following day that I was told I needed a blood transfusion due to the amount of blood loss I had during the labour. I had a phobia of needles, as after my first miscarriage blood had been taken and my mind seemed to connect the two. I found having it inserted really traumatic, and I just kept staring at the bag of blood.

I couldn't understand why I felt so weak when other women that had had C-Sections were recovering and going home with their babies.

When I had to use the toilet I had to take the drip alongside me. I attempted to shower on the second day after she was born but collapsed. I managed to get back to my bed, but began shaking to the extent of my teeth chattering and my body convulsing. I remember another lady asking if I was ok. I thought I was just really cold and pressed my buzzer to ask for blankets.

A midwife came and sounded an alarm. Suddenly there were several women around me and an oxygen mask on my face. I remember thinking this was how I was going to die. I literally saw my life and all my memories flash before my eyes. I squeezed my eyes shut and remembered my wedding day. They kept telling me to breathe and the needle for the blood was ripped from my arm. I heard someone say they were calling my next of kin and that I had had a reaction to the blood given. I later found out the blood was infected.

I was taken to a different room and was given a new drip to flush out the blood... I remember asking where my baby was and seeing her being wheeled alongside me. I was so afraid and felt so alone. It took hours for my family to arrive and I remember how my Dad burst in, threatening the midwives and crying about if I died.. I kept thinking I don't want to die, but part of me was beginning to welcome it..

I felt so hot and so tender that I couldn't even have a thin sheet across me. I had fans blowing at me and was still sweating. I was completely naked and felt humiliated and violated but could not fight that need. Every part of my body hurt. The movement in my legs was back, but when I tried to stand to use the bedpan I collapsed and wet myself.

I felt the girl I had been slipping away from me that day.

It took me days to recover from the reaction and at no point during this, was I able to hold or feed my baby. What had happened, caused my husband and family great distress and I felt a distance between us growing as I suffered alone. Eventually I had recovered enough to be transferred back to the post natal ward but was put in a private room. I lay there looking at my tiny baby, wondering who she was, and if she knew me.

I felt we'd been torn from each other and I didn't know how to get back to her.

My husband and sister visited but every time they came I would cry. I was desperate to go home, to get away from the pain and the confusion. I saw them for an hour a day but couldn't find any words to say to them when they were there.

I found the strength to change and feed my baby but began to feel like a zombie. I cried before, during and after the labour and couldn't remember the smile I'd left at the door on my arrival.

I'd spent so much time, lovingly packing her hospital bag. She had beautiful dresses and rose pink sleepsuits. She looked exactly like my husband and I wondered if she'd even come from me.

Within ten days of her birth I knew I had Post Natal Depression but suffered in silence for six weeks before seeing my GP. Everything seemed to remind me of the labour. I had to take iron tablets for my blood, but began flushing them away as if I could also flush away the memory of what happened. I was still weak and didn't eat and retreated in to myself.

I began to hide away from the world; shutting myself and the baby in the bedroom for 12 hours a day. I lay in bed obsessing over what had happened. I grieved for the babies I had lost, and for the one I now permanently stared at.

She felt like a stranger, and yet the only one that had shared the horrific experience with me.

I'd whisper to her in the dark, ask her if she remembered, if I'd failed her, if she loved me. I didn't want to look in to her knowing eyes, or stroke her soft dark hair. I thought about it constantly though. I thought about kissing her and lovingly talking to her, but an evil had grown inside me that suffocated those desires.

I pushed every one I knew away and became fanatical about having the baby beside me, untouchable. Nobody could talk to her, hold her, touch her. She was too fragile to me.

I was prescribed medication for Post Natal Depression but suffered for two years. It took nearly that long to build the now unshakable bond my daughter and I have.

I honestly believe it was that week I spent in hospital, that labour, that torture, that started the rollercoaster of the next four years of my life, in which I attempted suicide on several occasions and my once happy marriage ended in divorce.

I have had two normal labours since then, and given birth to two gorgeous boys, but it is my daughters labour that sticks in my mind and haunts me to this day.