



Chiropractic Newsletter

Well-Being

Freedom for Family Wellness

Early in the 1950s, Grantly Dick-Read, Fernand Lamaze, and Robert Bradley, early obstetricians and pioneers of the natural birth movement, sought to reduce the incidence of medical births by helping families cope in labor through the use of practical skills. They developed very simple skills birthing families could use, such as breathing, relaxation, and husband-involved teamwork. Their goal was to achieve more natural births. However, they defined “natural birth” as a pain-free labor with no medical interventions—meaning no assessments, monitoring, or procedures. The concept of learning birth skills was quickly tossed out the window, because it couldn’t achieve these stated goals. Can anything achieve these goals?

It was overlooked by the natural birth advocates of that time that birth skills offer so much more beyond the hopes of a pain-free natural birth.

Birth skills empower the family. They help fathers and mothers create a lasting bond at birth, as co-adventurers and active participants in their journey. They empower the mother with confidence to be able to “run the marathon,” above and beyond the hopes of “crossing the finish line.” They evolve men into fathers, so that not only are they helpful during birth, they also become empowered to care for the baby after birth. (“If I can be helpful at birth, then I can learn to be present and helpful in child care, too.”)

No matter the political circumstances of birth, involving choices or lack of choices, the mother will always have the activity itself to focus on, using skills. Birth skills make birth more manageable and enjoyable; they make it about the journey and not the destination. And yes, skills can, by a large margin, increase the likelihood of a “natural birth” (when we define that as a vaginal delivery without extraction). This applies to all situations, and all people, regardless of a mother’s “high risk” or “low risk” status.



Why is it that birth skills—methods and techniques of “doing” the activity of birth—haven’t integrated alongside the movement for informed choices? Aside from the early, limiting definition of natural birth, which made skills appear ineffective, there was also too little focus in the birth conversation about a mother’s ability to actively support the Power and Passage—her uterine strength, her tissue and ligament softness and openness, and her pelvic balance.

When Larry Webster developed the Webster Technique for pregnancy in 1987, he saw a path for better birth experiences. One benefit of this technique is its ability to refocus on the body, creating an awareness and trust in the body’s wisdom and ability to birth. Birth skills go hand in hand with the Webster Technique’s goal of improving pregnancy and birth. Chiropractors can play a vital part in setting this new trend where birth skills exist together with informed choices.

This issue of Pathways is about another trend as well, relating to the family’s ability to achieve health and well-being in all stages of their journey. Over the past 150 years, chiropractors have worked to address the underlying physical and emotional tensions that cause dis-ease and disconnection. Chiropractors help bring individuals forward into a sense of coherence through their focus on the

balance of the nervous system. “I’m here with you” is the implicit message of every physical adjustment. The premises of chiropractic philosophy and practice have never been more important.

In the 1980s, a series of discoveries were made that demonstrate the brain’s operative role in physical diseases in the body. These discoveries provided a groundwork of understanding the deeper origin of disease. They show that the nervous system is absolutely vital to understanding the nature of health. And they remind us that no manifestation of the body occurs without an underlying adaptive intelligence.

Just as every healthy organ operates under the control and direction of the brain in accordance with biological purposes, so, too, do symptomatic organs exhibit a specific biological meaning and purpose, previously unknown in medicine.

Often, families are at a loss with the experience of disease. The more serious the disease, the more at a loss we become. The major importance of these discoveries is that they demonstrate how symptoms arise in accordance with logical laws of nature, offering us the gift of predictability in our explanation of disease, as well as a new way of approaching health holistically.

We are beginning to cross a threshold in our scientific understanding spoken of by many visionaries of the past—a shift from mechanism to vitalism. We are at the brink of uncovering a vitalistic science of life, one that can free humanity of so much fear. We are on our way to

transcending the old mechanistic models of health. Because vitalism is about seeing the human being as a whole—seeing how their perceptions and emotions (mind), biology (body), and life story are all interconnected.

This issue is about two exciting trends in family well-being. Each can replenish the roots of the chiropractic vision of life, and help unleash a greater level of freedom for family wellness.

—John Ohm

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