

Introduction

The idea for this book came to me in the shower one morning, just after I had given birth to my first child. Quite simply out of nowhere I got this idea that I should collect birth stories, and send them around to other women who were having their first babies and were unsure of what to expect. As I lathered up my hair with shampoo I became elated with this thought and rushed to finish up so I could spring into action right away.

Once dressed, I ran downstairs to my computer and hammered out a rushed and excited Facebook message to all of the women I knew who had recently become parents, asking them to share their birth stories with me for a collection. I emailed forty women and a dozen wrote back saying that it was a good idea. Yet only one submitted her story right away, and I was deflated that my rush to action only summoned one measly story.

When I was pregnant with my first child an acquaintance emailed me her birth story, and also offered to take me out for lunch during the final few weeks of my pregnancy. It was such a kind gesture, and reading the story really helped to give me an idea of what I might expect. I also realized I only had that one story to go by, and my birth may be nothing like that. Still I hung on to it, and asked her if I could use her story too, to which she happily agreed.

So now I had two, and my own birth story. In total a whopping three stories. Not exactly what I was hoping for...

Often in my life I get so excited by a project that I propel myself forward with such a force that I expect the world to catch up to my enthusiasm. It took a good long day of soul-searching thinking, “Why did I have this thought in the first place?” to accepting what it was, and finally saying to myself, “I’ll just start with three then.”

And that’s exactly what I did.

I began sending the three birth stories to a few friends who were soon to be going into labour. It seemed each time someone read the stories an email would be sent with gratitude that they felt more “prepared.” It also became a pattern that, as the stories were being shared, the women reading them would then add their story after having their own experience. I suddenly understood that this project, like labour, wasn’t going to happen instantly. It needed time to come to fruition. It grew slowly with each beautiful story, with many pains and stalls along the way. Because of this special way the book has grown, you will see that some of the names of midwives and other care providers are the same, but not all. My hope is that while the care providers may be the same, you’ll see that the stories are all so distinctive and vividly told. And while I chose midwives for my births and have such a great respect and admiration for the Midwives of Muskoka, this book is not solely endorsing midwifery care, nor discounting hospital births

or the use of an obstetrician. I hope you'll find some connection to each and every story you read, and in the end will have your own unique story to share.

I began this project in 2009. Six years later it's evolved into eleven beautiful stories woven together to tell an inspiring story of how a baby comes into our world. Inside these pages you will find home births and hospital stories, doctors and midwives (sometimes working together), medical interventions, and even an unassisted birth! But, quite possibly, the most important thing you'll read is that we all carry a *strength* so pure and vibrant it's big enough to move mountains.

Big enough to birth a human.

Big enough to catch babies.

Big enough support our partners.

Big enough to fit through a birth canal and scream until we're pink.

We are all heroes.

Enjoy!

Christina Hunter