

A top-down view of a pregnant woman sitting at a wooden desk. She is wearing a light-colored, long-sleeved, ribbed top. Her hands are resting on a silver laptop. To the left of the laptop is a white smartphone. To the right is a teal notebook with a pen resting on it. The background is a wooden desk surface.

How to write an assertive and
empowering

Birth Plan

Mandy Millar - Assertive Birth

How to write an assertive and empowering birth plan

Introduction

Before we start thinking about your birth plan, it is important to understand all decisions about your pregnancy or birth belong to you. From the AIMS Guide: Your Rights in Pregnancy and Birth:

"You are the only person who can make decisions about what happens to your body. Being pregnant does NOT change that. If you are told that "you have to" have a test, check or intervention, whether that's when you're pregnant, while you're giving birth or after your birth, please know that it's up to you to accept or decline it"

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What is a Birth Plan?

In very simple terms a birth plan is a written document that sets out your plans and preferences for birth. It is used to communicate these to whoever looks after you in your labour and birth.

But in reality, it is so much more than that. A birth plan is actually quite the journey of self discovery. Understanding and exploring your intentions and wishes as well as any fears or barriers that you might come up against.

Read on to find out how to write an assertive and empowering birth plan and prepare to give birth on your terms!

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Planning for all eventualities

There is a school of thought that planning for your 'dream birth' is setting yourself up to fail, because you are likely to be disappointed if things don't go to plan.

My view on this is that if you don't plan for your 'dream birth' there is probably no chance of it happening, however if you have planned for it and stated your wishes it is much more likely.

But this is not about toxic positivity or ignoring that birth can take unexpected twists and turns, so I highly encourage you to also prepare a 'plan b' and 'plan c' in case you need it. You can then park those only to be brought out again if needed.

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Your Birth Partner

Your birth partner has a really important role here, so make sure they are involved in the whole process.

- Talk about your intentions.
- Share your fears and allow them to share theirs, they are better spoken about and addressed than ignored.
- Get them involved in the research.
- Write the plan together, they need to know exactly what is in there.
- On the day, allow your birth partner to advocate for you.

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Your Midwife, Consultant or Other

Leading up to your birth it is important to discuss your plans with those responsible for your care.

This is even more important if your plan includes anything that is outwith guidelines or standard procedure.

Make sure that all of those involved in your care know your intentions, wants and boundaries. Ask them directly if they are confident these will be accommodated.

If you have any concerns based on those discussions that your plan will not be accommodated, you should raise those concerns or escalate if needed.

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Step 1: Intention Setting

Before getting into the actual writing of the plan, I want you to really think about your intentions for birth.

- What does your ideal birth look like?

Really think carefully about this and be honest with yourself – there is no right answer, this is not about what you think you 'should' want or even about 'being realistic' at this stage, its about what you would want in an ideal world!

This is the birth you are going to start planning for!

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Step 2: Fears, Limiting Beliefs and Barriers

So now you have thought about your intentions for birth and what your 'dream birth' looks like, I want you to consider the following:

- What are your fears about your 'dream birth'? Where are those coming from?
- Are there any limiting beliefs that need to be addressed?
- Are there any barriers, for example do you have any risk factors, history or medical conditions that could affect your 'dream birth'?

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Step 3: Do Your Research

Firstly, bear in mind that you do not need to become a medical expert to give birth to your baby (or to write your birth plan).

Thinking about the first two steps above will help guide your research. Consider:

- What are the things that need to happen to make the 'dream birth' possible?
- What are the barriers and are those real or perceived, can they be overcome?
- What are the main interventions you might you be offered and why?

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Step 4: Write a 'long list'

Before you write your full plan in detail, write a list of things that are important to you:

- What do you want in your birth?
- What do you not want in your birth?

This list can be as long as you like, just write some bullet points that capture your thoughts, feelings, priorities and boundaries.

You don't have to go into too much detail at this stage, this can be captured when it comes to writing the plan.

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Step 5: Write the Plan

Now you have done a lot of the thinking and feeling, its time to write your plan.

- Use your 'long list' as a starting point to help you put your plan into writing.
- Make sure you clearly state your intention for your 'dream birth'.
- Think about all stages of labour, including the stage after baby is born.
- Remember - this is YOUR birth plan, so only include things that matter to you.

There is no set structure it has to follow, the most important thing is it clearly explains your wants, needs and boundaries.

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Some things you may want to consider:

Who: who will you have there to support you in your birth? What do you need from them?

Where: where do you want to give birth? What do you want the space to be like?

Monitoring and Interventions: how do you feel about monitoring and interventions? What will you accept? Anything you decline?

Comfort Measures: how do you feel about pain relief? Natural methods? Drugs?

Birth: hands on/hands off? Who will catch the baby? Finding out the gender?

After: the placenta, cutting the cord, skin to skin, baby checks, maternal checks.

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Where to find information

Here are some ways to find information to help you with your birth plan:

- Speak to your midwife or consultant
- An antenatal course (like hypnobirthing)
- Podcasts, Books and Studies
- Links to relevant information
- Question everything, ask for evidence
- Use BRAIN:

Benefits
Risks
Alternatives
Intuition
Do Nothing

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Don't forget your plan B and C

Plan B and plan C look different for everyone and will depend on plan A.

For example - some people will plan a 'natural' intervention free birth then make a plan for induction and caesarean. If your original plan is a caesarean, you might want to consider an plan for if you go into labour before that date. As with everything, this is all about you and your individual needs.

This is not about giving up on your 'dream birth', it just means you have thought about what you want if your birth takes a different turn. It also means you can consider any elements you can still have or important boundaries that still apply.

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Did you find this guide helpful?

Thank you so much for downloading this guide, I hope you found it helpful.



Keep an eye out for more hints, tips and updates coming to your mailbox soon!

In the meantime, check my website for details of the services I have to offer or get in touch for a **FREE** chat!

www.assertivebirth.com