

BfW Skills Course: Building a Coping Mindset: practices for labor, birth, and beyond

Learn 3 of our foundational pain coping practices to offer parents in preparation for the intensity of labor, birth, and parenting. Class time will include opportunities to practice leading and being led by others.

In this class you will learn ways to help parents:

- Reduce suffering by shifting attention away from the stories their minds are telling.
- Move away from trying to think their way through labor.
- Notice their responses to sensation.
- Notice their internal dialogue.
- Build a coping mindset.

2 hours/2 part class- \$125

Aug 23 & 30th 10-12 pm PST

BA, NFA, Finding the Center

Class one:

I. Build a framework

- a. Why pain-coping? Why ice?
- b. Coping in labor- what does it look like? Helping to expand the understanding for ourselves and parents.
- c. Rooted in a trust that the body will breathe itself just right. (Just as the body regulates heart rate and digestion.)
- d. Even when practicing “perfectly,” you may still feel the ice, or labor pains, etc. You may also experience continuous distraction/mind-wandering. All of that is normal. The practice simply gives you a different way to relate to your sensations and state of mind, and a way to step away - even if only momentarily - from any suffering stories that your mind is creating.

II. Baseline without ice

- a. Lead participants through an experience of holding ice through one ice contraction before guiding them through BA. (give the same instructions as you would to parents- they can do whatever they need to get through it etc.)
- b. Explore what they noticed, how they moved through it, what “rules” came up, etc.

III. Introduce Breath Awareness with ice

- a. Introduce the purpose of BA- reduce suffering by shifting attention away from the stories their minds are telling, move away from trying to think their way through labor, notice their responses to sensation, notice their internal dialogues, build a coping mindset.
- b. Guide them through one round of BA with ice, check in after- “what are you noticing?”
- c. Validate participants' experiences with the ice and help them make the connections to labor for parents.
- d. Internal dialogue-the difference between pain vs suffering. Invite them to notice what they were telling themselves about the ice and how they moved through the intensity.
- e. Guide them through two ice contractions in a row. Check in with them after- “what are you noticing?”, “how did you get through it”...

IV. How to lead this for parents

- a. Offer a few beginner level tips for how to lead this with parents, such as, ideal to start with BA before moving onto other PC practices, can be taught at a prenatal session on in the moment of labor, what to have in advance for set up.
- b. Ideas for when BA might be helpful for parents- first intense cx, orienting to a new space, car ride to birth location, etc.
- c. Can offer ideas for variations, such as inviting parents to use the in-between time to practice relaxing/softening/doing nothing extra, partners holding ice too vs offering support to pregnant person, idea for phrases they may say etc.
- d. Give examples of how they can validate parents' experience, no matter what it may be.

V. Introduce Non-Focused Awareness- Build a Framework

- a. Use distractions, or notice other sensations in labor to deepen trance and concentration.
- b. Enter into a “Quiet Mind” and overcome the downward spiraling of negative thinking.
- c. Reframe sensation in labor by shifting the focus away from pain or other negative/overwhelming stimuli.

- d. Incorporates the senses of sight, sound, and touch with breath.
- e. Can be especially helpful during times where there are multiple distractions or sensations, or for people who tend to cope better by noticing things externally.
- f. It's best to introduce NFA any time after introducing Breath Awareness. In a class series, this may be in the second class, after reviewing Breath Awareness. It can also be taught at a prenatal appointment or in labor without previous training.

VI. Practice NFA

- a. Lead participants through one ice contraction. Check in after to explore what they are noticing.
- b. Lead them through two ice contractions in a row. During the rest periods, offer invitations to sink in, soften, or do nothing extra. For the last contraction, add in distractions in the room to demonstrate how they may react to the unknown surprises.
- c. Check in after two ice contractions in a row, "what are you noticing", "what was helpful", "how did you get through it", etc

VII. How to Lead for Parents

- a. What supplies to have in advance.
- b. Describe the profound practice of equanimity: Being equally aware of all sensations, giving no more attention to one over another. In doing so, one's experience and relationship to the pain will change.
- c. If you are working with multiple parents at once, it is common that this practice works well for some people and not as well for others. This is a good opportunity to validate each parent's experience and talk about how some people cope better by focusing internally and some cope better by focusing externally. Introduce the understanding that their current coping preferences are not necessarily what their coping preferences will be in labor.
- d. Remind parents that they are trying something new and are stretching a new muscle, so it may take a few times to find their rhythm and get the hang of it. Practicing a series of ice contractions in a row (see below) often helps people find their rhythm.

VIII. Next Steps

- a. Talk about the importance of practicing ourselves so we can better understand how it works for others. This allows us to be able to bring more confidence and authenticity to our work with parents.

- b. Try it one time this week! Do three ice contractions in a row one time this week (one minute on, one minute in between) and notice how you move through it, your internal dialogue etc.

Class Two

I. Finding the Center-Building a Framework

- a. Finding the Center is a process that asks parents to dive directly into the center of the sensation. This is different from Breath Awareness or Non-Focused Awareness, where they are bringing their attention to their breath or noticing the other sensations happening around or within them.
- b. The intensity of active labor may challenge the effectiveness of pain coping practices that focus on distraction. Because it deals with these later parts of labor, we usually save Finding The Center for use in the later parts of our work with parents. (In other words, generally not in the first session.)
- c. This practice incorporates the use of imagination and visualization in leading parents. The suggestions below include a variety of images that illustrate “the center.” You can choose one from this list, or find another image to introduce.

- A hurricane, where the sensation is the force swirling around them and they are within the calm, safe center.

- A rock thrown into a pond and the concentric circles that ripple out.

- An arrow releasing straight towards the center of a target.

II. Practice Finding the Center- lead them through several rounds of this practice. Stop to check in with them after the first round, what are they noticing? Keep going!

III. How to Lead for Parents

- a. What to have in advance
- b. Encourage the parent(s) to sit in a forward-leaning position. This helps them to be more alert and to embody the feeling of having to cope actively, leaning into the sensation and their labor.
- c. After picking up the ice, you can suggest for them to imagine “seeing” their breath as they breathe directly toward the center of the sensation and

- “through” the sensation. Breathe down into the center of the pain, or breathe “through” by sending your breath strongly to the “other side.”
- d. In between contractions, guide them in resting their mind and body.

IV. Tips for Leading Visualizations

- a. Offer parents suggestions for two or three images/visualizations that they use during the process. You do not need to lead them through one specific image, allow them to navigate to what works best for them.
- b. Use pacing of your voice, spacing, and repetition of phrases to help people move into a trance-like state (right brain vs left brain).
- c. If there's time and it seems like people are ready to add more, you can talk about the variations to this practice, Edges and Spiraling.

V. Breakout rooms to practice

- a. You can use this time to allow them to practice leading/being led in any of the practices they learned in the workshop.

VI. Troubleshooting- what questions do they have?

VII. Next Steps

- a. Offer suggestions for how they, as mentors, can practice pain-coping at home to get a better understanding of how it works for them.
- b. They may want to keep a journal to track their learning and experiences.
- c. Remind them that the “maps” for each practice with more details can be found in their Thinkific Dashboard.
- d. Continue learning with BfW- become a member or join us for another workshop or training! View our schedule at <https://birthingfromwithin.com/schedule/>

Continued learning resources for pain coping can be found in Thinific course in their dashboard.

