

# Birth Art Map

## Seeing Yourself Strong in Labor



This birth art process helps parents build a mindset of coping by asking them to consider what “being strong” might mean or look like in a variety of different settings or situations.

### Materials:

Plain white paper and pencil for each person, one piece of paper to demo, and a timer.

Begin with a mindful discussion with the parent(s).

*“What does it mean to be strong?”*

Elicit a few ideas and then discuss other examples, including:

- Trees that sway and bend in high winds. Their strength comes from being flexible, moveable, from being able to give in to the

force pushing against them, and still be standing.

- Spider webs that look delicate and fragile, but are made up of one of the strongest substances on Earth.
- Pillows that are soft and fluffy, but sometimes are exactly the support and comfort we need.

### Introduce the Art Process

*“We are going to do a quick, easy art process to awaken our “strength” muscle when facing challenging situations. This is an intuitive process, so try not to overthink it. I will prompt you for each drawing and the series of four drawings will be done in quick succession. Afterward we will explore what we learned.”*

Next, pass out a piece of paper and pencil to each person and then give the following instructions simply and directly. Be careful to avoid over-explaining.

- Fold your paper in half twice (once horizontally, once vertically) so the fold-lines make four quadrants. Like this (hold up demo). For each prompt you give, they will use a different quadrant for their drawing.
- You’ll have about one and a half to two minutes to make each of the four small, prompted drawings.
- Stick figures are fine. This exercise is not about the art itself. Allow your pencil to surprise you with what comes out.

- The purpose of this art practice is to invite you to see yourself doing the thing(s) you may fear you cannot. Don't hesitate. Just allow your pencil to keep moving and see what happens.
1. "Draw the first image that comes to mind when you think of being strong in labor. Go!" Click the timer on. After one and a half to two minutes tell them "Time's up" and without delay give the next prompt.
  2. "Draw being strong in a long, prolonged labor. Go!" After the time's up, give them the next prompt without delay.
  3. "Draw being strong in a Cesarean birth. Go!" After the time's up, give them the next prompt without delay.
  4. For this last prompt, choose a situation in advance that would be relevant to the parents in that class or session. "Draw yourself being strong in... (soothing a fussy baby, adapting to postpartum life at home, ...). Go!"

After the time's up, if you are working with the birthing person and their partner, invite them to share their drawings with each other for a few minutes. Afterwards, inquire if there was anywhere they felt stuck, or wishing to avoid drawing a particular scenario. Follow up that inquiry with further solution focused questions.

**For example:**

- "And what did you do then?"
- "How did you know to do that?"
- "Do any of your images of being "strong" surprise you?"
- "What has shifted in the way you think of "being strong in labor"?"
- "What's one small thing you could start doing today to remember

and foster that kind of strength?”

**Note to mentor**

You can choose any three labor, birth, or postpartum scenarios. Tune into what the parents you are working with are wanting to dodge or to avoid.



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