

Module 3 Lesson 2

What gets really exciting here is that we know that a lot of people seek out birth preparation because they want to know about pain management, right? They've heard that birth is intense, that birth hurts, and they want to know what to do about that. They want to know how to handle it, but if they enter the pain coping conversation from the Patient archetype, they may be coming into it then from a place of avoidance, *"Show me how to have a pain free birth," or "I just need some tools so that I can not feel the pain and not freak out or lose control in that situation."*

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They may be looking for a silver bullet, magical thinking. Give me just a visualization that will allow me to leave my body, and not feel the intensity. But if we've worked with people to awaken their Parent archetype, then they can step into the pain coping foundation and the pain coping processes from a place of maturity and mindfulness, and they can then instead learn to lean in with curiosity and figure out what their inner resources are for the different moments that will arise in birth. So they aren't putting all their eggs in one basket, or they aren't just thinking, *"Get me out of this. I don't want to feel it."* Instead, they're curious, *"Hmm, what might I need to do? What would I draw on? What do I already know about coping with intense things?"*

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So this is where Birthing from Within's pain coping philosophy and pain coping practices come in, and it's tied to mindfulness. What do we mean by mindfulness, really? Mindfulness is about training the brain to come back to the present moment. It's not a trick. None of our pain coping practices are tricks. They're really not techniques, even that's why we call them practices, because it takes practice to train the brain to when it feels intensity or gets an intense signal from the body around pain that it knows what to do. It might wander and go thinking off to, you know, *"I don't want to do this anymore. How much longer?"* But if we've done the practice, then we can bring it back again to, *"What does this moment need? What do I need to do to get through this one moment?"*

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So, for example, with breath awareness, which is challenging the mind to watch the breath which is happening no matter what, even when we're sleeping, we breathe when we're eating, we breathe when we hike or run or do something really strenuous, we breathe. Our body knows what to do, so it's training the mind to pay attention to what's happening. This can be challenging and new to people in our culture, so it's not easy, but the more we practice the more we can train the brain to let it know that it has something to do. There's something for it to do when it feels pain, whether it's from holding ice cubes or the pain of a contraction. So we're training the brain to stay here, now, come back to now, come back, come back, even when the mind wanders, come back. That's what we're doing. We're training the brain to stay in the present moment.

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That's mindfulness, and mindfulness is connected to the Parent archetype, because the Parent archetype understands and can see that maybe what they thought they were going to do or they were feeling attached to, they can understand that that may shift, whereas the Patient archetype or the Child might be thinking, *"There's no way I can do what I need to do here."* Maybe they need to be loud and screaming for a minute, or moaning really loud. And the Patient archetype would be like, *"Ooh, if I do that, then people are going to think I can't handle this."* And then they go in spinning, and then they're out, not in the present moment, right? This is not mindfulness.

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So that's what's so exciting about waking the Parent archetype up in the people that we work with, is that when we wake that up then they're ready for mindfulness and then they have skills and strategies and resources to handle the intensity of labor much differently than if they enter into it from a place of fear or avoidance. When we enter into the conversation of pain coping with people that we work with, it's really important for us to have assessed internally as the mentor, *"Where is this person coming from? Are they still in their Child archetype, or have we begun to move them towards the mature, adult archetype?"*

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And one way to do that is to begin to lay the foundation for them, which is having a conversation with them around, why pain? Right? Sometimes, if we, if we are just in a place of, *"I heard it hurts, and I want to know how to avoid that"* then they're really being in a place of attachment to one thing, like, *"Just make this not hurt. Give me a*

strategy. Give me a tool. That's all I care about." But if we back them up a little bit and just have the conversation with them around, *"Why do you think, like, what's up with birth hurting? Other than, yes, that's the word on the street. But why? What's useful about the pain in birth? What's effective about it? What's the point of it?"*

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And it can be a really interesting conversation to have with the people that you work with. So sometimes in my classes, I'll just put up my board and I'll write *"Why pain?"* and just sort of start to see what comes... what they share. And you may hear answers that range from very physiological answers like, well, the uterus is a muscle, and any muscle that contracts over and over and over is going to ache. So there's that also, most times it'll come up that there's a large baby that needs to come out of a small hole. So that's the truth, and that and the stretching of skin, right? That's a reality. That's partly why it hurts.

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But then the more you dig with them, the more they may start to come up with things like, because birth is a rite of passage, and it's a transformation, and that probably hurts. And when you think about cultures that recognize rites of passage, a lot of times, there is that sense of *"I might die"* because there is a part of us that's dying. It's the old part, right? It's the *one who was* that actually dies, and then the new person can be born, not the baby but the new parent. That's part of why birth hurts. It's huge. It's a transformation. Sometimes people will comment on how it's because it's a monumental experience that helps us to bond with our babies, because we sort of went through the fire, and so we have a connection then to the baby.

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So starting there and offering them an opportunity to kind of think about, what is the point of pain, right? So the other thing that is important to talk to people about when you're talking about why pain is the hormonal interaction that's happening in the body. And this may be a review for some of you, but it's helpful a lot of times for parents to see this, because they don't really know, and when they see what the purpose of the pain is, it sometimes can help them shift around. *"Oh, so instead of getting rid of it or thinking I need to avoid it, I can actually be in a place of awareness around it and actually wanting it to do its job."*

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So I'll just quickly show you here what I show to parents. Yes, and this is it in a nutshell. I usually tell them this is a pistachio nutshell of what happens in birth, but a lot of times it is helpful for them to have a visual. So I talk to parents about how the uterus is a muscle, and when the uterus as a muscle contracts, it sends a message to the brain of pain. We'll just go ahead and use that word. It may not actually feel like pain in that moment, but it sends a message to the brain. And when the brain and body gets the message of that, it realizes, *"Oh, I think we're having a baby, I should probably release oxytocin."* And when oxytocin is released it makes the uterus contract, which sends a message to the brain, which releases more oxytocin, which makes the uterus contract.

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And this is what I tell parents. In a tiny little nutshell this is what's happening in birth. And so when the brain and the body gets the message of the uterus contracting, that signal, it releases oxytocin, which makes the uterus contract, which helps the cervix to dilate, which helps the baby to descend. So in the tiniest of ways and the biggest of ways, this is what's happening. So there's a purpose to the pain. We don't need to make that go away, right? And then, of course, you can talk to them about endorphins and adrenaline and the other hormones that are involved. But to start with, this is a beautiful thing for parents to recognize, because then they can shift from a place of avoidance to awareness. Which brings us to another really key piece of the pain coping philosophy and birthing from within, and also a piece that's really important when you consider that we are wanting to send parents on their journey in that place of having activated the adult Parent archetype, and that is a profound question for them.

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"What is the difference between pain and suffering?" So as you hear me say that you may feel into it for yourself at first. What does that bring up for you? It's pretty profound, and it's really important when you talk to people about pain coping in birth. Because again, if we're just coming from a place of avoidance, that doesn't change what's happening in the mind, right? So ultimately, pain is what I just drew there. It's a message, a signal to the brain, to the body, to react, to do what it needs to do, to send the hormones, to release the hormones that are helpful, endorphins, to release oxytocin. That's just a message, but suffering, that's a different story. Suffering is what's happening in the mind. Suffering is our story around pain.

11:48

This can go back to our unconscious preparation. Most people made some kind of arrangement in their mind around pain when they were a child. What do you do when you're in pain? What does it mean about you? Are you weak? Are you allowed to cry? Can you ask for help? So we have a lot of internal stories around pain, and it's not the signal to the brain piece of it, it's the message in the mind, the monkey mind chatter. *"What does this mean about me? Why am I strong enough? Can I do this? Why am I doing this? How much longer? I don't want to do this anymore? I'm not strong enough. I don't have enough. I should have taken another class."* All of those things, that's suffering. So it's really important when you think about the Parent archetype, the Mother/Father archetype from within, that what we want to teach them and show them how to do is to reduce the suffering, quiet the mind, give the brain something to do besides chatter at us, right? It's not actually about eliminating the pain. It's not about making that go away. It's about reducing the suffering, quieting the mind.

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The foundation for pain coping in Birthing from Within is really important. It involves starting out from a place of the adult, mature Parent archetype. It involves the framework for why pain is involved in birth, why it hurts, why it's intense, and then setting apart the difference between pain and suffering. So before you work with any parent and teach them breath awareness, for example, you need to give them the foundation. Because if they step into learning breath awareness from the Patient archetype, the child there, they may say, *"This doesn't work,"* because they're thinking that it's going to eliminate the sense they think all of a sudden they can't feel the ice. Because this is supposed to make me not feel pain, right?

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No, they need to understand it from a place of mindfulness. The big piece then in Module 2 is building this framework for pain coping, introducing breath awareness, which you may have done from your Heart of Mentoring course, but now we're really going to go deeper into it. And in fact, I even want you to begin to record yourself working with parents, setting this foundation, talking to them about pain in a solution-focused way. It's not about fear inducing or anything like that, because, of course, that's going to flip them back into their Child. So it's not saying, *"This is going to be so bad, you better figure out how you're going to avoid it."* It's like, *"This is going to be intense. What are we going to do? What works for you? What do you want to be able to tap into?"*

14:56

I understand that not everyone likes to record themselves, and that can feel awkward. But it is an important part of being able to do self-reflection, and also to get peer reflection. And when you get to the certification point, that will be how we assess your skills. So just start now. Just dive in and make sure you get permission from who you record that the recording would be used for your training purposes. You'll find written information and more guidance, both in the Ancient Maps for Modern Birth book and in the various chapters of this module that will support you with the pain coping mindset and foundation and with breath awareness.

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There are other homework assignments that I think you will find interesting and perhaps challenging, and they're both for your own growth and for you to take to the parents and people that you're working with. Again, plan to use the Facebook group for your questions, your challenges, your successes. We would love to know and be able to celebrate with you things that feel like that you've crossed over a threshold. So if you begin to work with parents in a new way, share that with us. Let us know. And if you have problems or questions or you're just feeling stuck, please let us know that too. We're here for you, and we want to support you along the way, so that each module you're learning more about yourself, and then also learning specific things that you can bring to the parents that you work with.