

About the Women in the 3Rs **by Penny Simkin**

Here is a thumbnail description of each of the 24 scenes in the 3Rs. The women are identified by an initial. Most appear more than once as the video progresses. Some details of their birth experiences are included, along with mention of the many comfort measures and supportive techniques shown.

- 1) J, with her 4th baby, is in early labor. She is squatting and leaning on partner's thighs. She is relaxing beautifully, breathing slowly and rhythm talk. Doula is using her labor voice to reassure and encourage woman. We see her again in scenes 15 and 22.
- 2) B is in early labor at home with her 1st baby, just before leaving for the birth center. Notice the woman's ritual, swaying on the ball, breathing in this pattern: 'in-in-out, in-in-out'. The woman's mother and partner hover close by, anxious to leave for the birth center! We see her again in scenes 5 and 23.
- 3) H, having her first baby, is having back pain and very slow labor progress. The hands and knees position, an ice pack on her back, and her partner pressing hard on the sides of her hips keeps the back pain tolerable. She and her doula are counting her breaths through the contraction.
- 4) K, in early labor with her first child, is slow dancing with her partner. She has an ice pack strapped on her back. He is quietly counting her breaths, "1,2,3,4; 1,2,3,4;" the doula stands by, encouraging them and swaying to their rhythm.
- 5) B is now in active labor at the birth center. She is sitting on the bed, rocking forward and back, breathing and moaning. She has a thermometer in her mouth. She has her own ritual and her partner is sitting close by.
- 6) L is still at home in early labor. She is standing with her arm around her partner who is stroking rhythmically in 2 circles on her belly and her back. They called this ritual the "choo-choo" and did it for many contractions.
- 7) M, a third time mother (who has had a vaginal, then a cesarean birth) now is working for a vaginal birth. She is sitting on the toilet, moaning and tapping her leg while her nurse holds the fetal monitor on her belly and her partner and doula match her rhythm with hand or head movements and encouraging words. You can hear the baby's heart beat.
- 8) H is now leaning over the side of in a large portable tub with her partner doing the double-hip squeeze and applying an ice pack. She struggles to maintain her rhythm during these intense contractions and her doula is helping her as they chant together, "I can do it" with every breath.

9) M is now kneeling in the tub with the doula directing the hand-held shower head to her back. The woman moans in the rhythm of her breathing and partner matches her rhythm with hand movements. Note the doula moves the shower stream to a different place on her back, in the rhythm of the woman's moaning.

10) M is in active labor with her first child. She is lying on her side in bed focusing on her partner's face and rhythmically vocalizing with every out breath. Her partner is guiding her rhythm with his head movements. The doula stands behind her, holding her hand and encouraging her.

11) K, now in transition, is lying on her side with her partner behind her, pressing on her aching back, and their doula facing her reflecting and reinforcing the woman's vocal breathing rhythm, with hand movements and soothing words. K was focusing on the ring on the doula's right hand. The midwife is also there and she grasps the woman's hand.

12) H is on her side in bed, facing her partner, with a blood pressure cuff on her arm. She chants, "I can, I can" with every breath and slaps him (harder and harder!) on the shoulder in rhythm. He shields her eyes from the bright ceiling lights. The doula is behind her, applying back pressure. Shortly after this she decided to have an epidural to relieve her back pain and allow her to rest.

13) A, a first time mother is in active labor and is lying in the tub breathing and vocalizing while her partner uses his voice and head movement to match and reinforce her rhythm.

14) M, standing in the tub, leans back on tub rail. Doula moves the shower spray over her abdomen in the same rhythm as the woman's moaning. After many hours of contractions with no change in dilation, she had a cesarean. Later, she said she does not regret the long hours of labor or the cesarean. She felt good about her efforts, but recognized the cesarean was necessary.

15) J, now in transition, is lying down breathing in a light quick rhythm. She is very restless, clutching her partner's shirt and her doula's hand. She is very close to delivery as she says, "It's gonna come. I want to get up!" In fact, she is only a few contractions from delivery. She did get up but quickly returned to bed for a very rapid birth.

16) C is in transition with her first baby and has lost her rhythm. She cries out, "Oh, this hurts!" Her partner goes into the 'take charge' routine, firmly and kindly guiding her into a rhythmic breathing pattern. She responds beautifully. He tells her, "It's getting easier" (he can tell from changes in the sounds of her breathing).

17) M is in transition -- in bed with a cool cloth on her forehead. Her doulas are talking rhythmically as she makes rather strange sounds with her out breaths. Her sounds seem distressing until she says, "I'm yodeling!" She truly was not as distressed as she looked and sounded. In fact, this woman is a blue-grass singer who had been trying, without success, to learn to yodel! She hadn't lost her sense of humor, even though she was stressed.

18) A is now sitting on the toilet, wrapped in a blanket, with her partner kneeling in front of her and her sister in law holding her head. The woman is just beginning to catch her breath and bear down gently with the urge to push she feels with her contractions. This is the beginning of the second stage, when maintaining a rhythm is no longer needed for coping. The woman's own sensations now guide her behavior.

19) W, having her third child after 2 cesareans is squatting, supported by the bar on the bed. Her partner is beside her, quietly encouraging her with bearing down. After pushing silently for many seconds, the woman yells, "Don't talk!" After that, even the doctor, kneeling on the floor in front of the woman, doesn't dare talk to the nurse! Later, the woman explained, "I was concentrating so hard on getting my baby out that any sound, even encouraging words, broke my concentration. It's like when you're trying to park in a tight space, and the radio is on. You have to turn the radio off, so you can concentrate on parking. Her first cesarean had been done after she had pushed for 3 hours and the doctor attempted unsuccessfully to deliver the baby with a vacuum extractor. When we see her in this contraction, she was not at all confident that this baby would come vaginally. The baby girl, the largest of the three, was born vaginally, much to her parents' joy and relief.

20) L, now very close to birth is squatting, supported by the bar, surrounded by her midwife, 2 doulas and her partner. The woman bellows very loud as she pushes. This sounds very alarming, but she said later that it felt good when she let all that sound out. She said she was not scared or in anguish.

21) Here is L, who was just bellowing 2 contractions later with her baby crowning. Notice her serene facial expression as she touched her baby's head and says, "Is he crowning?" Notice how relaxed she is as her partner strokes her cheek.

22) J pushed for less than 10 minutes. For the birth, she lay in bed. Her partner, doula and nurse are close by as well as the midwife, who was actually not her caregiver, but the baby came so fast that the doctor didn't get there in time. She rushed in just in time to catch the baby. She said to the doula, "Tell her to blow!" in hopes of slowing the birth. It didn't work. The mother said, "It hurt, it hurts!" Then the baby came out all at once. You see some rather aggressive suctioning of the baby's nose and mouth by the midwife because there was meconium in the amniotic fluid and the midwife wanted to suction any meconium from the baby's nose or mouth so she wouldn't inhale it. The mother is overjoyed that it is a girl; she has 3 sons at home!

23) B gives birth. She is on her hands and knees, panting, not pushing as her baby crowns. She lets out a yell as her baby tumbles out (after about one hour of second stage). Notice that there is no blood on the baby and how the mother, in order to hold her baby girl rotates herself around the baby's cord, which is still attached to the unborn placenta. This is a joyful moment! Her perineum was intact.

24) Birth for L who bellowed earlier but stopped when her baby crowned. She is panting as the head comes out, a 10 lbs, 1 oz first baby! She lets out a yell as the baby is born. The baby is placed immediately on her chest. She instinctively lifts her gown to place her baby skin to skin. She had a small tear and needed a few stitches. There's much joy in the room.