



## Effective Interviewing

The first interview is more than the words that are exchanged. Your client is actually “reading” your energy, perhaps without realizing it. This is called the Meta Message – what is learned without words. She is sensing how she likes being with you and how she feels as you are talking. She is listening to the sound of your voice and sensing if it feels reassuring. She is deciding if she can have trust and faith in you and whether you help her feel good about herself. The following are suggestions on how to conduct a more effective interview.

- Establish eye contact. It makes the other person know that you have their complete attention. To maintain eye contact, refrain from taking notes. You will be a better listener.
- Look for facial and bodily expressions that express feelings i.e. a frown, watering eyes, fidgeting in the chair, fingers in a grasp, breathing rate.
- Convey the feeling that you are genuinely interested in anything the person has to say and that everything he/she says is important to you.
- Read between the lines. This means that when the person is talking, think to yourself, “What is it that he/she is really trying to say?” Help her express her fears.
- Take leads from what the person is saying, and continue with that train of thought. ~~Keep~~ your own thoughts calm and quiet so you can enter his/her world and be in the moment.
- Be a good listener. Don’t try to make things better. Instead, acknowledge feelings such as, “You have a lot of pain,” or “You feel angry.” Validation of feelings is comforting and healing.
- Always think of larger systems and the energy available in the larger system. Examples of larger systems are behavioral patterns, beliefs (body, baby, parenting, pain), emotions (fears, desires), family history (births in the extended family), nutrition, stress, coping styles, and medical history.
- Remember that change does not happen when a person feels attacked, but rather when she feels accepted and supported. Always seek a balance and reframe towards the positive, any learning that can come from expressing fears and emotions from her birth. When fears and emotions are not able to be expressed, they stay locked inside and create tension in body tissues. If this tension is strong enough, it can actually inhibit breastfeeding.
- When interviewing, you are entwined in each other’s energy fields. Your emotions are likely to be her emotions. Be conscious of feelings surfacing through you, use them as cues for questions, and allow them to pass through you.

## Two Interviews

As a BirthWorks Postpartum Doula, potential clients will be interviewing you. They are looking for someone who will fit into their family, who shows compassion and caring, and who is knowledgeable about her needs in the postpartum period. Learning effective

interviewing techniques will give you an opportunity to learn more about each other. The following are examples of two interviews of a pregnant woman realizing she needs to have help at home after her baby is born. She is looking into hiring a postpartum doula. Which one would be more insightful for you?

### **First interview:**

“Hi, how are you?”  
“It’s going pretty well. Just can’t wait for this to be over.”  
“What do you think it will be like having a new baby in the home?”  
“I’ll probably be tired since I’m scheduled for a cesarean.”  
“How do you think a postpartum doula will be of help to you?”  
“Oh, she can take the baby so I can get some rest.”  
“How are you planning on feeding your baby?”  
“Oh, I’ll just give him a bottle of formula since I have to go back to work and this way my partner can help feed him.  
“I would be happy to be your postpartum doula. Would you like to look over the contract and get back to me?  
“Yes, that would be fine.”

### **Second Interview:**

“Hi, How are you feeling?”  
“Pretty good – just can’t wait for this to be over.  
“What do you mean by “be over?”  
“The doctor has scheduled a cesarean because the ultrasound shows a big baby. The baby is pretty low right now so I’m feeling a lot of pressure.”  
“I’m excited for you and hope it all goes well. What are some reasons you are looking into having a postpartum doula with you after you give birth?”  
“I think I’ll be pretty tired and the incision will hurt. I will need help with someone to watch the baby so I can shower and get some sleep.”  
“Will your partner be home some of the time?”  
“He has a few days off but then has to go back to work and he travels a lot.”  
“Do you have other family in the area?”  
“My mom lives an hour away but we don’t have a great relationship.”  
“How are you planning on feeding your baby?”  
“I think I’ll use formula so others can help me with feedings.”  
“Have you considered breastfeeding?”  
“Well, I’m not sure. Maybe if someone can help me learn how.”  
“Your body undergoes a big change to grow a baby and then needs time to get back to normal again after birth. My job as your postpartum doula is to help this change be a positive one. I am someone who can help with positioning, talk to, and ask questions but I don’t make decisions for you or do anything medical. Would you like me to leave my contract and then you can talk it over with your partner and get back to me.?”  
“Yes, that would be great. Thank you.”

Here it can be seen how much valuable information is obtained about the woman in the second interview as compared to the first. In the second interview the postpartum doula learns more about the woman’s family and support system, and that she may be open to breastfeeding. She also learns more about the postpartum doula’s scope of practice. More effective interviews means using your interview time wisely.

## Effective Interview Questions

- Do you have any fears or concerns about your upcoming birth?
- What are your expectations of the first weeks at home with your new baby?
- If you could draw a picture of your first weeks at home with your baby, what would it look like?
- How does your family feel about this upcoming birth?
- Do you take time to take care of yourself?
- How do you believe others perceive you? Do you agree?
- How do you perceive the role of a postpartum doula?
- How do you feel about becoming a mother? (Or mothering more than one child?)
- What is your deepest fear about parenting?
- Is there anything you plan to do differently than how your parents raised you?
- What is the biggest difference this child will make in your life?
- What is your idea of being a good parent? Does your spouse/partner agree with you?
- What are some things you like about how your parents raised you? Is there anything you want to do differently?
- How is your relationship with your mother?
- What do you like best about yourself?
- Are there any traditions you have in your family concerning early parenting?

## Philosophies for Interviewing

- Every day there is something new to learn.
- God is always finding ways to help us - each way is a gift. None of us are perfect.
- Every moment is one of learning more about ourselves.
- Feel the beauty in the heart. There is much love there. That fire of love in the heart can burn away fears and anger.
- When under stress, it's hard to keep all the details straight. A new mother may feel this stress.
- You don't have to believe... the deeper you go, the safer you'll feel - you can learn that yourself. Fear often comes just before you go deeper. Go anyway - breathe your way there.
- It's unhealthy to be out of touch with what you feel. Make peace with your parents or anyone who needs to be forgiven.
- Love for oneself means knowing that at any given moment we've done the best we could.

*Where there is great love, there are always miracles.*

*To an infant, time exists as a never ending now, with no past or future.*