



What Your Doula Wants You to Know

You Have Hired Me To Attend Your Birth...

and I'm really looking forward to that. It's important that you know that a big part of the support that I am able to offer you begins long before labor does ...

Keep me in the loop.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me. I'm here to be your "walking birth wiki". I'm way less scary than Dr. Google, and I love to talk about birthy stuff. Pick my brain. Ask me questions. I will offer you information, share my resources, give you encouragement, and lend an empathetic ear to your concerns. It's good for me to know what's on your mind as you prepare for your baby, because this might come into play with your birth experience. It's never "bothering me" to call. No apologies or guilt necessary. I'm going to let you set the pace for our communication; call me once a day, or call me once in pregnancy – that's up to you. Everybody's needs are different. I'm going to trust that you know that I'm here, and that you are reaching out as much as you need to.

Understand my role.

You are the boss of this birth, and you have hired me as your doula. This means that I don't get to tell you what to do. You tell me what's right for you. As an experienced doula, I might have relationships with your doctor, midwife, nurses, or hospital. With any luck, they are good relationships, and our being on a birth team together is something that will enhance your experience. Providing non-medical labor support is my role on the team. I will do all I can to help you give birth the way you want to, while respecting the medical professionals and the rules of the birthplace

you have chosen. I am not there as a bodyguard or a bouncer. I don't arrive prepared for combat. I cannot throw myself between a woman and the doctor who is about to break her water. If I tried that, they would throw me out and never let me or any other doula



come back. I want to support your birth, and I also want to be able to show up for the next mama who plans to birth there. I won't speak to your doctor on your behalf. I don't get to tell them what you will do. You certainly may, though. What I will do is remind you of your goals and encourage you to ask questions that help you gather information, so that you have clarity to make your own decisions. I stand behind you in exercising your right to use

your own voice to speak up about what you will accept or refuse.

Set yourself up for success.

Make sure that your birthplace and your birth attendant are a good fit for what you have in mind. You, as the consumer, have a choice. Look into the facilities that are available to you. Ask what options they provide, and find out what they offer to support you in creating the kind of birth you want to have. The same is true for choosing your doctor or midwife. Take personal responsibility for learning the rules of your attendant and your birthplace. My being present will not protect you from factors that come with the territory of the location or practitioner you have chosen. (And remember - it's never too late to change.)

Prepare yourself for your birth.

It is up to you to take charge of readying yourself as fully as you can for birth in body, mind, and spirit. Participate in good classes, educate yourself about birth options and coping skills, and take excellent care of your body and your mental and emotional health. Seek out the support that you need to do this.

I know a lot about having a baby, but I am not having your baby. I can make suggestions for positioning or comfort measures, and help you remember all of the ways that you have learned to cope with the intensity of labor. I can encourage you to ask for what you want. I cannot guarantee you that your birth will be easy or uncomplicated. Labor is hard work, whether you have a doula or not. Birth is unpredictable, even when you're well-prepared. When all is said and done, you are the one responsible for your choices. You are the one who will go through this process to become your child's mother. Prepare yourself to Relax, Release and Rejoice, and let your mind, your heart, and your body surrender to the work of birth.

You have my unconditional support.

This is your birth, not mine. My priority is to see that you know what your options are, and that you are informed in making your own best choice. I want to understand your hopes, fears, and goals for this birth, so that you feel seen and heard. When I ask about these things, I want your deeply honest answer. Please don't concern yourself about the "right" answer, or what you think I want to hear. I will offer comfort in whatever way I can to help your experience happen in the way that you hope for. I will remind you of the wishes you have shared with me, and give you encouraging words and hands-on support if you want to have a drug-free birth. I believe in you, and I know you can do this. I will not judge you for the choices that you make. This is your body, your baby, and your birth. I trust you to make the best decisions for yourself. If something happens differently than what you had hoped or planned for, please don't apologize to me. You have

my support when you are scared. You have my support when you think you can't do it anymore. You have my support when you are crying. You have my support when you are angry, or irreverent, or unglued, or unlovely. You have my support in your joy. This is your birth. I'm here for you.

Our relationship will change.

I love being your doula. I love the whirlwind courtship of getting to know you well in a short time. I love hearing your stories about your life, the births of your children before this one. I ask intimate questions that perhaps you hadn't even thought about before, about your hopes and fears, and how you cope with overwhelm, and what makes you feel

safe. More than anything, I listen. By the time your baby is born, we have forged a bond that is close, and real, and beautiful. Then, after your baby is here and you are settled in as a new mother, I don't see you much anymore, and we hardly ever talk. Please don't take it personally. Know that I still care very much, even if I probably won't make it to your child's birthday party. Our relationship as doula and mama happens for a finite period of time. I miss you. I still love you. I cherish the memory of the time I have shared with you, and

now I'm offering that same support to my next mama. I'm just as busy with her as I was with you. This is what doulas do.

I will always be grateful.

Thank you for allowing me to serve as your doula. I would say thank you every day, if I could. Thank you for inviting me into your life, your home, your birth space. Thank you for trusting me to witness the birth of your child. Thank you for the honor and the privilege of caring for you through this part of your life. Every birth touches my heart. Every birth brings a lesson, and I am grateful for the learning that comes from your birth. I am grateful for this place where our paths crossed, and our life stories are woven together for this short while. Thank you always.

from an essay by jodithedoula.com

