

Teaching Tips

Using your Doll and Pelvis

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Your ACE Graphics fetal doll and pelvis models have been designed to make it easy for you to demonstrate the labour and birth process in a realistic way. You can also use the models to show other facets of pregnancy and birth, such as:

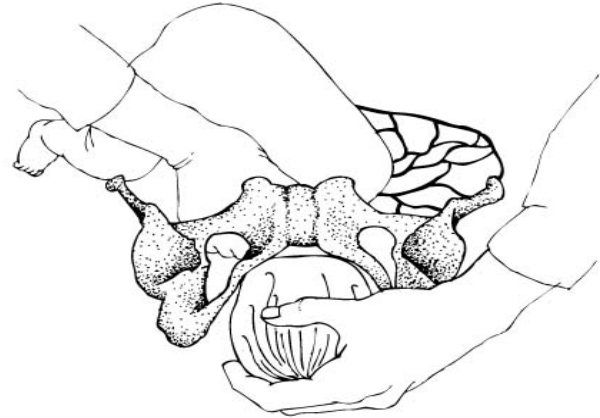
- The various landmarks of the pelvis and the way the joints move to accommodate the baby.*
- The effects of various birth positions on the capacity of the pelvis*
- The directional forces of gravity in various positions for labour and birth.
- Positions of the baby at term - anterior, posterior, transverse, breech etc.
- Optimal fetal positioning
- The reasons for backache in pregnancy and labour and ways of alleviating the pain.
- The cardinal movements of the baby in second stage.
- The third stage of labour

* (Ways of using the pelvis in this way are fully explained in "Empowering Women - Teaching active birth" by Andrea Robertson - available from Birth International.)

The main use for the doll and pelvis is to show how the baby moves through the birth canal to be born. This is an important topic in the prenatal program and class participants will enjoy seeing how the body works during second stage. You can give quite a realistic demonstration using your own body, the teaching models and descriptive language, and you'll find that class couples can get quite involved in pushing the baby out. Before giving some hints for making this demonstration easier, some general points need to be made:

- People think that the doll is "real" so always handle it with care, as though it was a live baby. By "caring" for your doll you class couples will feel that you care for babies too. Handle the pelvis carefully too.
- Excessive strain on the coccyx through vigorous bending or over-extension may cause it to break (as it will in real life!), so although there is flexibility in the plastic, avoid damage by handling it with care.
- You will find that the doll will not slip through the pelvis as easily as a real baby because there is no lubricating fluid to assist its passage. With practice, however, you can learn to make the doll slide smoothly without jerky movements or "deep transverse arrests".
- When you are demonstrating second stage use some appropriate pushing noises to add to the realism. This will help group members get an idea of the nature of the pushing urge and the need to bring the baby down slowly to avoid perineal trauma. Try to complete each contraction before you begin any explanation - it is very unsettling to leave off from "pushing" to talk about sensations - people will think that the contractions can be very long indeed!

Positioning yourself to show second stage.



Use a low stool or sit on your heels on the floor with your knees apart. Cradle the pelvis against your body, using your thighs to hold it in position. Although there is some flexibility in the plastic you will find it is rigid enough to grasp with your own legs without it collapsing, and this will leave you with your hands free to manipulate the doll.

Position the baby head down with the body curled to the right or left (use whichever side you find most comfortable). If you hold the doll by its neck, with the head inside the pelvic brim, the doll will tend to fold up naturally.

Use your other hand to simulate the perineum and to support the doll from below. You should be able to turn the head easily within the pelvis to show rotation during labour and extension as the head is born by just using firm guidance through your grip on the neck.

Tuck the placenta behind the baby, either into your shirt or under the edge of your pants or top, so that it will stay in place and not fall away.

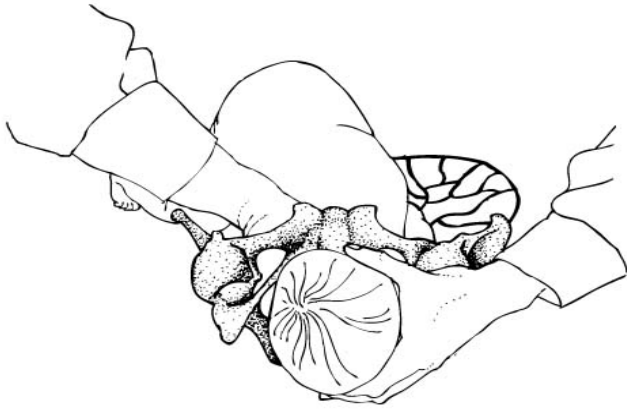
Demonstrating second stage

As you demonstrate and verbalise pushing, gradually move the doll downwards inside the pelvis and gradually open up your "perineal" hand to simulate the head coming on view. Remember that when the mother is upright the baby does not recede between pushes as it will if the mother is recumbent.

Manipulating the doll by the neck, begin to turn the doll's head to the anterior with each contraction in line with the pubic arch. As you continue with the contractions, gradually swivel the head under the pubic arch to show the extension of the head as the baby approaches crowning.

You will notice that as you turn the doll's head to the front the body tends to turn too - ignore this at this stage.

Crowning

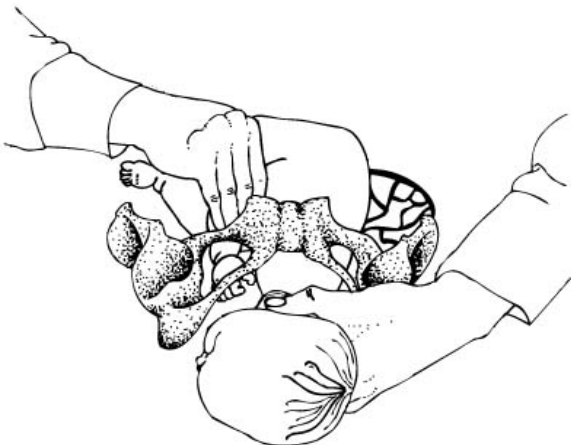


At this point the head should be angled up against the pubic bone and your “perineal” hand should be circling the doll’s head.

As you show crowning, mention the burning, stinging sensation and the need to ease the baby out slowly.

As the baby crowns, slip your “perineal” hand back behind the doll’s head and allow the head to hang a little.

Restitution

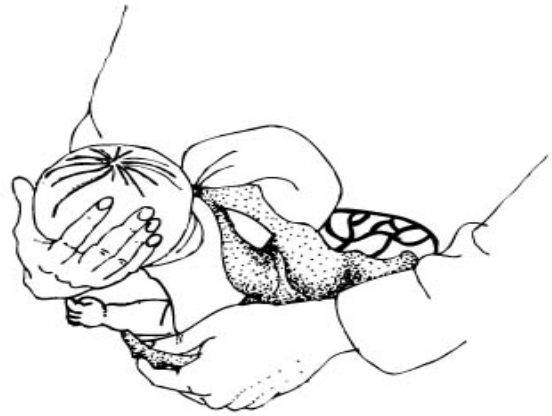


Take your hand from around the doll’s neck and turn the doll so that the shoulders line up with the public arch. Your “perineal” hand will be supporting the doll’s head as you do this.

At this point it is very important to tuck the anterior arm of the doll into the brim of the pelvis. If you forget to do this, getting the doll out will be very difficult because the arm will tend to catch on the brim as you ease the doll through to be born.

It is also important to check where the placenta and cord are to avoid a sudden detachment as you birth the doll. Check that the cord will not be caught up and that the placenta is firmly held in place. With some practice both of these manoeuvres can be accomplished smoothly without anyone noticing as you talk about restitution and the birth of the shoulders.

Birth of the shoulders



Position your “perineal” hand behind the doll’s head with your thumb inside the coccyx and sacrum. This will enable you to gently bend the sacrum back out of the way if the coccyx catches on the fabric of the doll’s body. This hand will also be supporting the pelvis as a whole at this point, as it will tend to swing up from its position resting against your legs.

With your other hand, gently push the anterior arm of the doll inside the pelvic brim. Let the doll’s head hang loose at this point, and the anterior shoulder will easily be born.

Using the same hand, now take the doll’s head as though you were lifting it up onto your own tummy. The posterior shoulder will then be born. As the whole body slips out, use your thumb on the coccyx to prevent it from catching on the doll’s body. You may need to wriggle the doll a little to ease it out.

Your “baby” is now born. Lay the doll on the floor in front of you on its side.

Put the pelvis back in position against your legs and you will have both hands free to pick the baby up, and take it to you breast. Remember that the cord is still attached and the placenta still to be born!

Third stage

Once the baby is out, talk about cord clamping. The cord can be detached either before or after the placenta is born.

Lay the doll down again while you demonstrate the placenta peeling away from the uterine wall and falling into the vagina. Show the cord getting longer as a sign that this is happening. Give a few more pushes and using one hand on the cord and the other to again simulate the perineum, gently ease out the placenta. The birth is now complete.

With practice you will be able to achieve a smooth, realistic birth using your doll and pelvis. Working in front of a mirror will help you gain confidence and let you see the demonstration from the group’s point of view.

This demonstration is usually a highlight of the birth class series, so it is worthwhile doing it well, not only because it will help parents understand birth, but also because it is fun and dynamic.