

BAJA NEWS

Thinking About Natural Childbirth... Bilingual birth doula services available By Christine Wenzel

One of the perks of being a writer is the opportunity to interview people passionate about what they do. Kelli Castineiras is one such person. She lights up when talking about her role as a Birth Doula. It is clear she is passionate about what she does. Her words spill out fast and breathless. Her gestures are animated, rendering it easy to picture her as the cheerleader she describes herself to be—a cheerleader for pregnant women. According to Dona International, the organization that trains and certifies Birth Doulas, the word “doula” stems from the times of ancient Greece, meaning, “a woman who serves.” Today, a Birth Doula is known to be an experienced professional. A woman prepared to provide informational, emotional and physical (non-medical) support to expectant mothers and fathers, before, during and after the birth.

Castineiras’s journey to becoming a Birth Doula started with her own maternity experiences. She is the mother of four. Her first child was delivered by cesarean and in her words, “I felt robbed. It was like an out of body experience.”

When Castineiras moved to Cabo, she was six and a half months pregnant with her second child.

She was determined to be an active participant throughout labor, giving birth naturally. She also had dreams of a home birth. Having already had one cesarean, her search to find a professional to support her objective was not met with the willingness she hoped for. Her quest was resolved with a decision to return to the States until the baby’s birth.

While there, Castineiras enrolled in childbirth education classes taught by a doula. Clinical studies have shown that a doula’s presence at birth can result in shorter labor, reduce the need for pitocin (labor-

inducing drug), forceps and caesareans. The techniques taught by a certified doula lessen the mother’s need to request pain medication or epidurals. Castineiras’ second daughter arrived after three hours of labor, without drugs. She experienced immediate bonding with her baby, and recovery time was fast.

Castineiras started meeting other women in Cabo, who like herself, wanted the experience of natural childbirth. Her personal knowledge of delivering with and without intervention had her wanting to help others achieve their goal to deliver healthy babies naturally. Equipped with her motherly instincts, she trained under the tutelage of Dona International and earned her certification. “Everyone is afraid of the pain,” says Castineiras at the start of the five week course she conducts for moms-to-be, who are between six and eight months pregnant. She tells them about the time she stubbed her toe and cut it in half. “It was far worse than any labor pain I’ve had.” She instills confidence that the joys far out-weigh any pain.

Castineiras is enthusiastic in her goal for moms and dads to have a positive lasting memory of their child’s birth. She encourages women to bring their partners to classes. “It’s about having a healthy mom and healthy baby.” She teaches couples relaxation, breathing and massage techniques that will fade the pain. There are comfort positions for fast labor and positions for slow labor. Couples learn about the 4-1-1 guideline. That is, you are not in active labor until the pains are four minutes apart, they last one minute and this has been happening for one hour.

Then you go to the hospital. Castineiras considers that in Los Cabos, a hospital is still the best choice for delivery, but as your doula, she makes sure the labor room has a relaxed spa environment, including candles and lavender scented oils.

She never tells a couple what they should do. She explains the various options and respects their personal choice and comfort level. Her belief is, “It is good to have a plan, but be open to all possibilities.” Castineiras knows that good preparation and the best laid plans don’t always result in natural birth. Her third child was delivered with a C-section, a decision made with her doctor when complications arose. Undaunted by the experience, her fourth child arrived after nine hours of labor, without intervention, weighing a healthy 9.9 pounds.

Castineiras has taught bilingual birth education classes to more than 200 perspective parents. She holds the classes Friday evenings from 6 - 8 p.m., referring to them as “date nights.” She has attended forty-six births, seven of which have been cesareans. Doctors, like Dr. Pedro Velderrain welcome her reassuring, non-medical, supportive approach in the labor and delivery room. With her love of babies and motherhood, Kelli Castineiras is a natural cheerleader.

For more information, Moms to be can contact Kelli Castineiras on her Cell at: (624)355-5490 or at Mexsun Day Spa and Beauty Salon 14 26 801. **BP**



Birth Doula and mother of four Kelli Castineiras with her youngest child Nicolaus. Photo courtesy www.sabrinalear.com

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