

Get paid to work with moms and babies!

FabJob Guide to
**Become a
Doula**



RACHEL GUREVICH

Visit www.FabJob.com

Contents

About the Author	12
1. Introduction.....	14
1.1 What is a Doula?.....	14
1.1.1 Birth Doula	16
1.1.2 Postpartum Doula.....	18
1.1.3 Antepartum Doula.....	19
1.2 Benefits of Being a Doula.....	21
1.3 Stories of Doula Life	23
2. Certification	26
2.1 To Certify or Not to Certify; That is the Question	26
2.1.1 What to Look for in Certification Programs	28
2.1.2 The Non-Certification Path	30
2.2 Doula Organizations.....	34
2.2.1 DONA – Doulas of North America.....	36
2.2.2 CAPP – Childbirth And Postpartum Professional Association.....	42
2.2.3 ALACE – Association of Labor Assistants and Childbirth Educators.....	48
2.2.4 ICEA – The International Childbirth Education Association.....	52
2.2.5 Birth Works®	56
2.2.6 Other Doula Certification Programs.....	60
3. Developing Your Skills	62
3.1 What to Look for in Doula Training	62
3.1.1 How Do You Find the Workshop for You?	62
3.1.2 Getting the Most Out of Your Attendance	65

3.2	Required Reading.....	66
3.3	Education: Birth, Infant, CPR, and Breastfeeding Education.....	69
3.3.1	What Sorts of Benefits are Involved?.....	69
3.3.2	Find Classes and Sign Up.....	70
3.3.3	Your Place as an Observer.....	72
3.3.4	Breastfeeding Groups and Resources.....	73
3.4	Gaining Experience.....	76
3.4.1	Mentoring.....	76
3.4.2	Volunteer.....	79
3.4.3	Friends and Family.....	80
3.4.4	College Health Centers and Teenage Crisis Centers.....	82
3.4.5	Networking: Using Past Connections and Finding New Associates.....	84
3.4.6	What Not to Say.....	85
3.4.7	Should You Charge?.....	87
3.4.8	Recommendations and Signatures.....	89
3.5	Networking.....	90
4.	What a Birth Doula Does.....	93
4.1	When Do You Meet Your Clients?.....	93
4.2	Prenatal Meetings.....	94
4.2.1	Pre-Birth Meetings.....	94
4.2.2	Helping with Birth Plans.....	98
4.2.3	Reliability.....	106
4.3	Birth Attendance.....	109
4.3.1	Your First Birth.....	109
4.3.2	What to Bring and What to Wear.....	110
4.3.3	Comfort Tool Box.....	114

4.3.4	Know Your Client	124
4.3.5	Empowerment.....	125
4.3.6	Assertiveness During Birth	127
4.3.7	When Tragedy Strikes	128
4.4	Picture Taking and Birth Stories.....	130
4.5	After Birth Follow-up	138
5.	What Postpartum and Antepartum Doulas Do.....	141
5.1	Your First Meeting.....	142
5.2	The Essence of Postpartum Doula Care	146
5.2.1	Breastfeeding.....	146
5.2.2	Infant Care	149
5.2.3	Mother Care.....	151
5.3	The Essence of Antepartum Doula Care	153
5.3.1	Understanding the Need of High-Risk Mothers	153
5.3.2	Prenatal Mother Care	154
5.3.3	Empowerment.....	158
5.3.4	Extra Advice	160
5.4	Household Management and Meal Preparation	160
5.5	Organizing Your Time	165
5.6	When Depression Strikes	167
6.	Setting up a Doula Business.....	172
6.1	Business Licensing	172
6.1.1	Business License	173
6.1.2	DBA — Choosing Your Business Name	174
6.1.3	Protecting Your Name Across State Borders	175
6.1.4	Unregistered Business Names	176

6.2	Business Cards and Stationery	176
6.2.1	Business Cards	176
6.2.2	Stationery	180
6.3	Insurance	181
6.4	Getting a Business Phone Number	181
6.5	Cell Phones and Pagers	183
6.5.1	Cell Phone.....	183
6.5.2	Pager	184
6.6	Criminal Background Checks.....	185
6.7	Invoices and Receipts.....	185
6.7.1	Invoices	185
6.7.2	Receipts	186
6.8	Organization: Keeping Your Records Up to Date.....	187
6.8.1	Keeping Track of Client Information	189
6.8.2	Birth Outcomes and Experiences	190
6.8.3	Loaning Things Out	190
6.8.4	Your Receipts and Invoices	192
6.8.5	Your Business Expenses: Including Mileage, Phone Bills, etc.....	192
6.8.6	Tax Deductions.....	192
6.8.7	Telephone Calls Made and Received	193
6.8.8	Marketing Plan.....	194
6.9	Working with Employees and Contractors	194
7.	Getting Hired	196
7.1	Who Do Doulas Work For?	196
7.2	Understanding the Fears of New and Expectant Parents	198
7.2.1	Dads and Doulas	199
7.2.2	Other Concerns	201

7.3	How to Approach Potential Clients.....	203
7.3.1	How to Approach Individuals.....	203
7.3.2	How to Approach Agencies and Corporations.....	207
7.4	Know Your Product!	212
7.4.1	Birth Doula: What Are You Offering?.....	212
7.4.2	Postpartum and Antepartum Doula: What Are You Offering?	214
7.4.3	The Personal Touch: What Makes You Different	216
7.5	The Professional Look: Preparing Information Packets.....	217
7.5.1	Flyers with a Punch.....	218
7.5.2	“Introduction to My Services” Packet	219
7.5.3	Your Parent Notebook.....	226
7.6	Marketing: Getting Clients to Approach You!.....	229
7.6.1	Word of Mouth: Increase Your Recommendations	229
7.6.2	Educating the Public	233
7.6.3	How to Get Media Coverage	241
7.6.4	Baby Fairs	242
7.6.5	Lists You Must Get On.....	243
7.6.6	Your Website: Why, Where, What and How.....	244
7.7	Surviving Interviews	250
7.7.1	The Phone Interview	250
7.7.2	Your Free Consultation Meeting: The Real Interview	252
7.7.3	When Clients Say No and When to Say No to a Client	258
7.8	An Interview with a Doula Teacher.....	260

7.9 Working for an Agency.....	263
7.9.1 What They Look For.....	263
7.9.2 How to Find Them	265
7.9.3 Increasing Your Odds of Getting Hired	266
7.10 Working in Hospitals and Birth Centers.....	267
7.10.1 What They Look For.....	268
7.10.2 How to Find Them	269
7.10.3 Increase Your Odds of Being Hired	270
7.10.4 Starting a Doula Program.....	270
7.11 Working with Midwives.....	271
7.11.1 What They Look For.....	271
7.11.2 How to Find Them	272
8. Rates	273
8.1 The Range of Doula Fees.....	273
8.2 How Much Should You Charge?.....	274
8.3 Should Payment be Negotiable? Bartering and Sliding Scale Fees	277
8.3.1 Fears Around Asking for Money.....	278
8.3.2 Sliding Scale	280
8.3.3 Charity Work.....	281
8.3.4 Negotiating.....	281
8.3.5 Bartering	283
8.4 Payment Plans.....	283
8.4.1 Retainer Fee	284
8.4.2 Additional Payments	284
8.5 Third-Party Reimbursement.....	285
8.6 Contracts and Upfront Fees: Getting Paid	288

9. Living the Doula Life.....	290
9.1 Full-time Doula.....	290
9.2 Avoiding Doula Burnout.....	291
9.3 Child Care Options	293
9.4 Taking Care of Your Family	293
10. Additional Resources	296
10.1 Websites of Interest.....	296
10.1.1 Childbirth and Breastfeeding Sites	296
10.1.2 Parenting Sites.....	298
10.1.3 Business Sites	298
10.2 Books	299
10.2.1 DONA Reading List for Birth Doulas.....	299
10.2.2 DONA Reading List for Postpartum Doulas	300
10.2.3 ICEA Reading List	304
10.2.4 ALACE Reading List.....	304
10.2.5 CAPP A Reading List	305
10.2.6 Birth Works Reading List	310
Appendices.....	312
Appendix 1: DONA Birth Doula Certification Checklist.....	312
Appendix 2: DONA Postpartum Doula Certification Checklist.....	313
Appendix 3: ICEA Certification Checklist	315
Appendix 4: ALACE Certification Checklist.....	316
Appendix 5: CAPP A Certification Checklist – Traditional Birth Doula	317

Appendix 6:
CAPPA Certification Checklist – Distance Birth Doula317

Appendix 7:
CAPPA Certification Checklist – Traditional Postpartum Doula...319

Appendix 8:
CAPPA Certification Checklist – Distance Postpartum Doula.....320

Appendix 9:
CAPPA Certification Checklist – Antepartum Doula.....321

Appendix 10:
CAPPA Certification Checklist – Distance Antepartum Doula....322

Appendix 11:
Birth Works Certification Checklist323



1. Introduction

1.1 What is a Doula?

“Working as a doula is truly wonderful, exhilarating, exhausting, stressful and magical work. We have the honor of seeing some of life’s most miraculous and devastating moments on a day-to-day basis. We also have the responsibility and opportunity to help improve the support of birthing families, one birth at a time. What a privilege!”

- Anna Hurty, CCBE, CD* (DONA)
Founding Director of Blossom Birth Services
www.blossombirth.com

(*Note: CCBE stands for “Certified Child Birth Educator”; CD stands for “Certified Doula”)

Doula is a Greek word meaning “servant.” In the world of labor and delivery, a doula is a part of the birth team who supports the mother emotionally and physically during birth or helps the new mother adjust to her new role after the birth. There are three types of doulas: birth doulas, postpartum doulas, and antepartum doulas.

A birth doula is a professional, non-medical labor assistant whose role is to comfort the mother and father during birth, act as a liaison between the hospital staff and the birthing family, and provide one-to-one care that the hospital staff, midwife or doctor may be unable to provide.

A postpartum doula cares for the mother and infant after the birth. She helps the new mother cope with her new role, performs light house-keeping, guides the parents in newborn care, and runs errands.

Antepartum doulas provide support for mothers who need extra help during pregnancy, like women with high-risk pregnancies on bed rest or severe morning sickness. An antepartum doula may provide education, household help, bed rest assistance, meal preparation, and help with errands.

A birth doula may work independently, alongside a midwife, or for a hospital or birth center. She may attend as many as four or five births per month or as few as one every other month. Doulas who work for hospitals may work with families more often, especially if they are working in shifts and are not tied to particular clients. Doulas may be certified childbirth educators or volunteers.

A postpartum or antepartum doula may work independently or for an agency. She may work four hours per week or forty hours per week, depending on the number of clients she assists. Sometimes, birth doulas offer antepartum or postpartum services to select clients, and vice versa, antepartum or postpartum doulas may offer birth doula services in certain situations.

The different roles a doula plays will be explained in Chapter 7, "Getting Hired."

Being a doula is one of the most rewarding careers there is. In what other career do you have the opportunity to regularly witness the miracle of creation? How many people touch lives as deeply as doulas do? Many clients keep in touch with their doulas, sending them pictures of their children as they grow.

There is a wide range of fees for doula services, which we will talk about in Chapter 8. Few people become doulas intending to get rich financially — attending births and empowering women feeds their souls.

Many are avidly interested in birth, reading every book on the subject and watching any birth video that comes their way. A doula will be the first person to stand up for the rights of women and children. A doula does her work because that is her calling.

All different types of people become doulas, such as mothers, grandmothers, the childless, writers, nurses and stay-at-home mothers. Although the majority of doulas are women, some men choose this as a profession as well (we'll talk about male doulas in Section 9.4). The reasons people become doulas are just as varied as the individuals themselves.

"I started out as a social worker and always had a desire to work with women. When I discovered the work of doulas, I knew it was for me."

— Julie Keon, CD (DONA)

"I became a doula because I was called to it. I have been on a path to do this work my entire life."

— Lucky J. Tomaszek, CD (DONA)

"I love birth — I love to try to ensure a safe passage for baby, as 'interventionless' as possible, and I love to help ensure that moms have the gentle birth experience that every woman deserves."

— Teresa Howard, CD (DONA) and childbirth educator

"I became a doula because I recognized what was missing from my own first birth — and birth in general: other women who are there for MOM."

— Candace Robinson, CD (DONA)

1.1.1 Birth Doula

"I also feel a loving bond between myself and pregnant women. I understand their excitement and their worries as well as their discomforts and joy. I feel every emotion with them as they go on this incredible journey. For me, being a doula is a blessing and a job that I feel is my calling."

— Tracey Dahlen, CD

Birth doulas improve the overall outcome and experience of mothers giving birth. Studies have shown that when mothers use a doula dur-

ing labor, there are many benefits (from [The Doula Advantage](#), by Rachel Gurevich). Doulas...

- Help women have positive birth experiences.
- Decrease the need for pain medication.
- Improve breastfeeding success.
- Reduce the need for C-sections and other invasive procedures.

Also, studies have shown that mothers who use a doula have a lower incidence of postpartum depression, breastfeed longer, and are closer with their infants.

What Do Moms Have to Say About Doulas?

"I will definitely use a doula again because it was a great confidence builder... for my husband and myself. My doula was able to take our fears and put them at ease in a matter of seconds, even during delivery."

— Katherine Bohler

"I thought a doula would reduce the privacy and intimacy of birth. Boy, was I wrong on that one! I used a doula for both of my births, and in the very unlikely event that I have another child I would definitely have a doula. She added to the birth experience. She helped to make labor more efficient."

— Mary P. Walker, author of "The Christian Family's Guide to Breastfeeding"

"I think one of the greatest... parts of having a doula is how much it helped my husband... He didn't have to worry about trying to tell me which way to breathe or guess when we should get in the car and go... I think that doulas don't in any way detract from Dad's role—rather they enhance it and help them to be able to experience the birth."

— Kira Smith, MEd, ICCE*
(*Note: ICCE stands for "ICEA Certified Childbirth Educator")

Mothers who use a doula are happier about their birth experiences, no matter what the outcome, because a doula's job is to empower her during birth and support her unconditionally.

How does a doula do this? By meeting with the mother before the birth, educating her, and discussing her options — something her primary care provider may not have time for. A birth doula practices comfort techniques and brings the experience and specialized training needed to carry out these special comfort measures. A birth doula is available for questions 24 hours a day. The doula will help the mother labor at home until she is ready to go to the hospital or birthing center, or until the midwife arrives if the mother is planning a home birth.

Doulas provide many other services as well, which we'll discuss throughout this guide.

1.1.2 Postpartum Doula

"Some Greek people have told me that "doula" means "servant", but I prefer to think of it as one Greek obstetrician told me — that "doulas" is a verb meaning "to serve." It is not beneath me to do a postpartum woman's laundry, and I expect the same attitude from my doulas. As a midwife and a doula, I am honored to serve women, and I think our clients feel that respect."

— Alice Gilgoff,
Director of Mother Nurture Doula Service
<http://mothernurture.com>

Postpartum doulas care for the mother after the birth. They are not baby nurses, tending only to the newborn's needs, nor are they maids, cleaning the new mother's home. They are there to support the new mother. They may do light housekeeping, care for younger siblings, and help prepare meals. They may help the mother care for her newborn, teach the new mother how to bathe a newborn or care for the stump from the umbilical cord.

A postpartum doula's main concern is caring for mom: helping her to establish breastfeeding, answering her questions, and talking about the birth or any anxieties surrounding her new role. A postpartum doula may watch the baby so that the mother can relax and shower. She may stay overnight to help with feedings and calm a crying baby so mom can

sleep. She may visit for several hours every day for six weeks, or only a few hours every other day, depending on the new mother's need.

Postpartum doulas can attend workshops to develop their skills, or they can work based solely on personal experience as a mother. They may work independently or for an agency.

"I find many women want to do this work while their children are young because they can say "Yes" or "No" to a job, depending on school schedules. (Some want to be off for the summers or holiday breaks.) And also many jobs are 4–5 hours a day, so they can be home for their children after school."

— Alice Gilgoff,
Director of Mother Nurture Doula Service

Postpartum doulas are in high demand, and many of the birth doulas I interviewed told me that mothers are always asking for recommendations. They are paid by the hour, and a postpartum doula who takes on a few clients per month can contribute nicely to a family's income. We'll talk more about rates in Chapter 8.

1.1.3 Antepartum Doula

"You develop a very special bond with these families as you help them, not just for hours as a labor doula does, but for weeks, sometimes months! Over a year later, I sometimes get calls, emails, and photos of the baby or family. You really do hold a special place in the family's heart, and they do for you too."

— Wendy Middleton, CD, CPD, CLE, ICPE

Every year over 700,000 women are put on bed rest. In a research study on bed rest cited in CAPP Position Paper: Antepartum Doula Support for High-Risk Pregnancies, only 18 percent of women felt they were coping well emotionally and did not feel they needed outside help. Even more revealing of the great need for antepartum doulas, around 50 percent of women did not follow their doctor's orders regarding bed rest, either because they needed to take care of themselves or their families, or they mistakenly assumed their condition was better.

Antepartum doulas care for the mother during pregnancy. Usually, antepartum doulas support mothers with high-risk pregnancies whom may or may not be on bed rest. They also support teenage mothers,

women suffering from severe morning sickness, or anyone else who needs extra help during pregnancy. Antepartum doulas, like postpartum doulas, do light housekeeping, care for younger siblings and help prepare meals when the mother may be in bed all or most of the day by doctor's orders.

An important role of the antepartum doula is providing her client with emotional support, during what may be one of the most frightening and confusing times of her life, and providing information and resources to help the mother feel more in control of her situation to encourage her to take active steps in her care. A mother who feels more in control of her situation, feels supported and reassured that she is doing the best for her family by resting and staying off her feet, and has practical help around the house will be more likely to follow doctor's orders and thus, possibly improve the birth outcome.

An antepartum doula may visit her client for several hours every day until the baby's birth, or only a few hours every other day, depending on the mother's need. Some antepartum doulas also provide postpartum doula services after the baby is born, and others provide birth doula support as well.

"As a birth doula who has supported a large number of high risk pregnancies and who specializes in multiples, the antepartum doula was the natural service addition I needed for my business. I also felt that there is a large need for this in my community and no one filling the void."

— Tracey Ruiz CLD, CD (DONA), CPD, CCCE

Antepartum doulas can attend workshops to develop their skills, and certification is available, but optional. They can work based solely on personal experience, having experienced a high-risk pregnancy or been a teen mother themselves, but education through workshops and extensive reading is usually needed to better serve clients who are experiencing different difficulties in their pregnancy. They may work independently or for an agency.

"I was very drawn to the 'high risk' woman because of my own birth history and when I found out that there was a certification that really focused on this subject, I pursued it immediately."

— Laura Dana, Founding Member of the Central Florida Birth Network

Antepartum doulas are new to the doula scene and there's little or no competition in most areas. Because antepartum doulas are so new, educating the public of the services provided by this special type of doula is a big part of becoming an antepartum doula.

They are paid by the hour, and an antepartum doula who takes on a few clients per month can contribute nicely to a family's income. We'll talk more about rates in Chapter 8.

1.2 Benefits of Being a Doula

"[A benefit to being a doula is] the good feeling I get when I lay my head on a pillow — moms and babies that love me!"

— Teresa Howard, CD (DONA)

As I mentioned earlier, doula work is a calling for most men and women (yes, there are male doulas!). Their lives are enriched by their work, and they glow knowing that they have touched lives of new mothers in ways no one else has. Here are more benefits to becoming a doula...

Witnessing the Miracle of Life

Who else is involved with life on a daily basis? Doulas, whether birth or postpartum, work with new mothers and newborns on a daily basis. They are not doctors or nurses, whose contact with the mother and child may be minimal. Doulas are truly involved with the new family, helping them make informed decisions and strengthening their family ties.

Learning Something New with Every Client

"[A benefit to being a doula is] being able to satisfy my need for learning about pregnancy and birth, because no matter how much you know, every birth is different."

— Jennifer Rush CD (DONA)

Every birth and every mother is different. No matter how many births you attend, and no matter how many families you help, you'll never become bored. Doula work is never stagnant, and I have yet to meet a doula who has become numb to the tears of happiness shed by a new mother or father.

Being Trusted and Needed

During the birth, the mother depends on her doula more than anyone else in the room. The following words from Brandy DeLuca, a doula working on her certification, illustrate the trust mothers have in their doulas...

“All of a sudden there were six nurses and the OB in the room... and they were racing to birth this baby. At this time, I was the only person that my client would listen to and it took everything that I had to keep her focused on the task at hand. Our eyes never lost each other... I don’t know how many times that night I heard her sincere thanks for me being there.”

Empowering Women in Birth and Motherhood

Mothers have lost their voice in birth and motherhood. At one time, if a mother wondered how to raise her child, she’d ask other women or follow her instincts. Today, many women have stopped listening to their inner mothering voice, turning to parenting “experts” instead.

Doulas help the mother listen to that voice inside. A doula reassures the mother that she can birth this baby naturally, like billions of mothers before her, or for the mother that needs medical support; a doula is there to reassure her that her cesarean birth is just as precious as a vaginal birth. Doulas also help new mothers establish breastfeeding, a job that once belonged to grandmothers and community elders.

Flexibility

While doulas are on call almost 24 hours a day whenever they have clients, they can decide to not take any new clients for months if they wish. Doulas may serve five mothers every month, or only take on a client or two every other month. Postpartum doulas have even more flexibility, deciding how many clients and how many hours they have to commit to new mothers.

Some birth doulas take a year or more off in order to care for their own children, while others work out childcare arrangements so they can still take on new clients. Whatever your commitments may be, there exists a way to fit at least some doula work into your life.

These are just a few of the many benefits to becoming a doula. So, what do you think? Are you ready to begin a career that will change not just your life, but others' lives as well?

1.3 Stories of Doula Life

The best way to decide if doula work is for you is to go out there and try it! The second best way is to ask doulas to share their stories about doula life...

"I had a VBAC [Vaginal Birth After Cesarean] mom who had worked very hard to prepare for her labor and delivery. She was [a] super-star! She claimed that with doula support it never even occurred to her to request pain [medication]. She labored all day and pushed for well over an hour in a squat! As the baby was crowning, we helped her back into a semi-sit so she could pull the baby out herself. She pulled the baby up onto her chest and said, "Oh Baby! It was so worth it!" And covered the baby with kisses."

— Lucky Tomaszek, CD (DONA)

"My most exciting experience as a doula was the time I had a client who was in labor and went to the hospital to get checked; she was about 2 cm dilated. The doctor told her to go home because it would be awhile. We labored at home for an hour and she wanted to get into the tub. Once she got in, she felt like she had to push and me and her husband had to try to get her out of the tub and into the car — not an easy task by any means. She thought there was no way she could be that far along in dilation, so she panicked and thought something was wrong. We spent the whole ride doing HEE-HEE breathing. [We] got to the hospital and she was 8 cm. [dilated]! We were all shocked — she delivered a healthy 9 pound girl 30 minutes later."

— Jennifer Rush, CD (DONA)

"I had a mother recently who wanted a home birth, but she was an insulin-dependent diabetic. She saw a 'high-risk' OB team during pregnancy, and we knew that the deck seemed stacked against her. Two of the [three] doctors felt she might be better off with an induction and/or cesarean at 37-38 weeks. She wanted a very natural birth with no intervention. Thank goodness the other doctor was flexible and felt that as long as certain bases were covered, she could do whatever she wanted. I helped her to decide when to compromise and get what she wanted in the long run. At 38 1/2 weeks, she went into labor naturally and had a "natural," drug-free labor and birthed in an upright,

squatting position. I think the staff was shocked. It was my most challenging doula case so far, but definitely very fulfilling!”

— Candace Robinson, CD (DONA)

“I had [a] single mom once who had chosen to be supported by several other women while she labored. She listened to her body, moving from rocker to ball to shower. She was amazing at pushing and we rounded up the rest of [the] women she wanted present at the time of the birth. As the baby was born, this mom was in a semi-sit on the bed, with her mom, the doula (me), her massage therapist, two friends from school, a lifelong friend, the midwife, and the L&D nurse in a circle around her. We broke into applause when the baby was born and served birthday cake!”

— Lucky J. Tomaszek, CD (DONA)

The following birth story was written by Brandy DeLuca, a doula who is currently seeking certification through ALACE, The Association of Labor Assistants and Childbirth Educators. Her story has a lesson for all doulas, new and old. The lesson is so important, I feel that every person considering entering the doula profession should read and ponder its message.

Tuesday evening I arrived at the hospital just after the pitocin [a medication used to speed labor] was started. My client was in bed and surrounded by her husband, sister and a good friend. I thought to myself, “Great, a room full of people, what the heck am I going to do? Why am I here?” She started complaining of painful contractions, but nothing was registering on the [external fetal monitor]. The nurse even felt her abdomen during contractions, and there was no hardening. I believed that she was having them, and worked through them with her. We were up every twenty minutes to use the bathroom, and she was becoming increasingly uncomfortable and asking for some narcotic pain relief. She was so petrified of how much worse the contractions would get, so it took a lot to get her focused on dealing with one contraction at a time. My hands didn’t leave her body once during this time and she stared intently into my eyes like a helpless little girl.

After about an hour the doctor checked her and said she was 3-4 cm and could have her epidural if she wished. Being that it was her plan all along, this news made her very happy. She really had done a beautiful job so far and had underestimated herself tremendously. The nurse however, didn’t call the anesthesiologist for about a half-hour and it was another half-hour after that before he arrived... The dad

decided to step out of the room and I was left alone to support my client during the placement of the epidural. She buried her head in my chest and I stroked her hair while I talked about her new baby that would be arriving.

Things progressed fairly quickly from there and the entire time I was by her side. I didn't open my birth bag one single time. I knew that I was there for other reasons. Although she had by this time, four friends, her sister and her husband, she never took her focus off of me. The epidural was patchy and she didn't receive full pain relief until about an hour after the placement. About six hours after the [induction] was started, she was complete, but not quite ready to push. They decided to give the baby some time to rotate and descend first. She was an expert pusher, taking the baby down a station with each set of pushes. Unfortunately, the baby wasn't tolerating the pushing and the fetal heart tones were not recovering.... All of a sudden there were six nurses and the [doctor] in the room (And we didn't know until later, but they were also all set up for a crash C-section.) and they were racing to birth this baby. At this time, I was the only person that my client would listen to and it took everything that I had to keep her focused on the task at hand. Our eyes never lost each other. Baby was vacuum extracted and was pink and crying in no time at all. [Baby] latched on [to breastfeed] with no help too!

I don't know how many times that night I heard her sincere thanks for me being there. I realized after this birth that this is exactly what being a doula is all about. I did more emotional support on this birth than the other six [certifying natural births] put together. I truly think she needed me more than any of my other clients [did]. I learned that I can have a completely different philosophy about birth, but that doesn't mean that I am any less needed. I learned that my desire to birth naturally at home is not shared by everyone, and their desires and choices are just as important and as valid as mine. I learned that everyone handles things in their own way, and there's absolutely nothing wrong with that. I learned that I shouldn't judge a situation before I'm actually in it. Although just twelve hours prior I was dreading this birth, I walked away with more lessons in my pocket than I could have asked for. During this birth, I was truly mothering the mother."