

A Young Father Takes Part in the Miracle of Birth

As Yuri and Lena prepared for the birth of their first child, the young couple began contemplating the idea of being together for this happiest of moments. “We made this baby together and we both wanted to be there when he came into the world,” Yuri says, looking proudly down at 11-month-old Daniel playing contentedly nearby. Agreeing with her husband, Lena notes, “We both decided early on that we wanted to do this together . . . We thought it would help us build a strong foundation for our family.”



Yuri and Lena—with Daniel—say being together for the birth of their son will always be one of their most precious and unforgettable memories.

But as the couple began their search for a maternity house that would accommodate their wish, Yuri and Lena discovered that it was not as easy as they had hoped. “We went to a number of facilities in Kiev, but the doctors all tried to discourage us, saying that the delivery room was no place for a man, maybe he would faint at the moment of birth, or spread some sort of infection to the mother and newborn, or maybe by seeing how much women suffer during birth, he would not want to have other children,” Lena explains, counting off the laundry list of explanations she and Yuri were given about why their decision was not a wise one.

Doctors were not the only ones who questioned the couple’s decision; friends and family also tried to dissuade them. “As we were trying to make our decision, we spoke to a number of people—parents, friends, and other family members—and obtained as much information as we could. I even wrote to a friend in the United States who told me that it was common practice there for fathers not only to be present during the birth, but also to play an active role in the delivery,” Yuri explains. But that was one of the few positive and encouraging responses they received, Lena says. “While we found some maternity houses that do allow husbands to be present, none of them would allow the fathers to take part in the process. Everyone was against it at first, even our parents, but I believed that there was no good reason why Yuri should not be able to participate in the greatest and finest moment of our lives—the birth of our child.”

So Yuri and Lena continued their search until someone suggested they try the Kiev WWC. It was there that they learned about the School for Young Parents, a series of classes that helps prepare couples for family births. “This was our first child so, really, the courses proved to be our introduction to the entire process,” Lena admits, saying both she and Yuri were eager to learn as much as they could. Yuri agrees, noting, “After seeing videos of live births, I have to say that it was not at all what I expected, but that didn’t cause either of us to change our minds about being together for the birth. In fact, the classes were a key factor in our final decision—they provided important psychological preparation and practical instruction.”

That preparation and instruction proved useful during the delivery, according to Lena. “Having Yuri with me made me feel very comfortable. It was easier for me to deal with the pain because I was able to draw on his physical and emotional support.” Explaining that the birth felt like a team effort, Yuri laughingly concurs. “I kept remembering that some of the other doctors said I might faint during the birth, but I didn’t have time to faint because I was completely involved in the process,” he

“Partners in Birth,” a program offered by many AIHA Women’s Wellness Centers (WWCs), prepares couples for pregnancy and parenthood by providing information on topics such as proper prenatal and post-partum nutrition and exercise, pain management during labor through relaxation and measured breathing, breastfeeding, and infant care. One of the important aspects of Partners in Birth is that it encourages partners—fathers, family members, or friends—to take an active role during birth, a concept that is still foreign in the NIS and CEE. The program seeks to create a positive psychological and emotional climate among prospective parents and staff in maternity hospitals. Another goal is to make the pregnancy, labor, and delivery as pleasant and free from stress and uncertainty as possible by increasing patient knowledge. This is the story of one couple’s experience surrounding the birth of their first child; the story of the midwife who helped prepare them appears on the other side.

states. He was even the first person to hold Daniel after the delivery, according to Lena.

“During the course of our lives, we experience so many feelings and emotions, but nothing can compare to this,” Yuri concludes. “I believe that it was very important for me to be present during Daniel’s delivery to support my wife and to be there when he entered this world. For me, these moments were unforgettable and only serve to strengthen our love and our family.”

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