

**Submission  
No 1110**

## **INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA**

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

I want to tell you a story. Not a story I heard of or that someone told me. This is my own birthing story.

This is the first time in a year that I can write it. I have been wanting to do this for so long, but I still cry sometimes when I have to relive that moment. Now, I think it is my duty to all mums to come to write my story, so they don't have to go through what I did. To give my little grain of sand for things to change. For more caring and respectful births in hospitals.

Just to give you a bit of context. I had the most amazing pregnancy I could have dreamt of. I had zero complications not even once morning sickness. I thrived while I carried my little one. I was a first-time mum and enjoying every moment, every change. I was fully supported by my partner and close friends. We planned a homebirth. My mum and sister came from overseas to be with me and help around for the first month. I must mention that I am daughter of a gynaecologist obstetrician, and he had overseen the department in a public hospital for decades. So, I am aware of risks that birth could potentially bring but I am also aware of how amazing women can do, with no intervention but with the right encouragement and support. That is what my dad always proved me.

Back to my birth story. I was weirdly not so scared of birth (always acknowledging that it was going to be hell of a ride) but I feared not being able to breast feed. For that reason, I booked a little workshop around that topic. This workshop though, started with birth information and the possibilities of being bombarded with interventions (many of them unnecessary) if I had to go to the hospital and what were my rights to consent or not to these procedures. I feel the need to talk about this as it was important later.

I started labour at home the 11<sup>th</sup> of September, 2022 at 9pm with contractions that started from the beginning every 15 minutes) and continued to do so until the 12<sup>th</sup> of September at 5pm and decided that we were not doing progress and it was better to go to the hospital thinking that maybe being there respectfully supported was going to help me relax even more.

These 20 hours I did at home although painful were amazing. Supported by my partner, mum, sister, and doula. It was just as I imagined but I was always open to accept a plan B if that was going to bring my child safe and healthy to my arms.

We head to the hospital and all the beauty of the birth bubble was popped. From the moment we arrived they started bombarding with information. Instead of being able to relax into labour we had to be defending our choices. We were talked to not talked with. We had to hide in the bathroom of the room to be able to decide as when I asked for the five strangers in the bedroom to leave us alone for 5 minutes they would not. People were coming in and out the bedroom. The midwife trying to break my waters with no success and being very violent while I said that was excruciating pain. Midwives, nurses and OB forcing vaginal examination which at the third attempt I refused as they needed my consent and three different people doing these examinations did not give an accurate result. The OB offended because I did not allow her to do a vaginal examination went to get the doctor in charge. His violent language, his misogynist way (confirmed weeks later by staff that works in that hospital that this is very recurrent in him) and his way to almost ridicule our decision to home birth were the last thing I needed at that time. From a midwife that was clearly nervous because of the situation, the readings of the heartbeats of my baby were imprecise as she could not keep the monitor in place, then people coming and going, nobody really asking us much about anything but just assuming. I am not even sure they cared to ask my partner his name either. They did not respect our wishes, they bombarded us with options such as forceps, probing my baby's head, and a few options that even contradicted themselves. When the situation got out of control, I looked at my

partner and decided to go for an emergency c section as that was the only way I was going to get all this people out of my way. Being able to be in peace was not an option. 22 hours by now with intense contractions (40 without sleep) had me weak with an indescribable sorrow, fear, and rage against this people. I did not want the epidural so went to general anaesthesia. My partner had to stay outside the surgery room, crying on his own, scared for his family and completely in shock. Luckily, the women in charge of my baby's care were kind and gentle coming out to inform my partner of everything that happened. We planned a lotus birth and the head doctor said it may not be a possibility. These women reassured my partner that they would. I can remember that the man that gave me the anaesthesia was the only soothing presence in that room with me. Till this day my heart cracks every time I think that the first person that held my baby was a man that looked us down, that he was in a hurry to empty a room, which had no consideration what this moment was for a family. He just wanted to get done with it. I cannot believe this is still something in hospital. I respect every women's decision to birth they way they think is right for them but what I do not respect is how a stranger thinks is ok to take those decision for you and not really listen at any moment. When I said OK to the c-section I was in less than minute in the surgery room, that told me everything. They were never going to let my even try to birth on my own, it was an inconvenient for them. After this whole mayhem, these doctors washed their hands and got on with their lives. I was left in a room where my partner could not stay with me, with a newborn on my own. Although they tried to get her sleep in a separate bed from me, I was going to fight this, and she slept and stayed on me all the time we were in the hospital.

I discharged myself from the hospital in less than 24 hours as I did not want to spend one more second in a place where birth was a procedure, a shift in their roster. Where for me this was a life changing experience tinted by the violent ways, inconsideration, and disrespect I was treated in the most vulnerable moment of my life.

The reason I go into all these details is because the following month I was taken care by the people I love the most. I had the most amazing support post-partum and yet I still cried every single day because of the memories I had in the hospital. This made me think: If I was suffering in that way and I had loving support what happens with women that are on their own, pull into violent interventions and left with the scars to heal by themselves with a newborn in their arms? This has such a significant impact in how you bond with your baby and how you enter to this amazing (not for everyone) yet challenging path of motherhood. My child is turning 11 months today and I still feel rage and anger that the head of the maternity ward of the hospital I went to that day has zero emotional touch to respect the most amazing moment (NOT PROCEDURE or something to cure of) in the life of a woman. Birth is a moment to be honoured, the woman living it should be respected, heard. She has carried that baby for 9 months. If interventions need to be done this information should be passed with kindness in a peaceful environment with respect of the vulnerability of the woman.

I have a C-section scar. I have always loved scars. Till this day when I see my scar, I get swept away to that hospital room and the violence of those 2 hours instead of looking at it with grace. And do not get me wrong. I am immensely grateful for the health of my baby. But birth is a 2-path journey: one as a mother with a baby and second, the one you travel as a woman. And that one must be taken care for motherhood to be journeyed with love and ease.