



Supporting the birth that is right for you!

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## Emotional Changes in the Third Trimester

*By Rebecca Pugh*

This period of 12 weeks is a time of deep transition. During the previous weeks the woman has been gradually becoming more comfortable with her pregnant body and mind and the baby she is carrying. Now, she begins the process of getting comfortable with the notion of separating from the baby. The crucial transition from being pregnant to being ready for the baby to come out and be born. Hopefully, the normal process of bonding with the baby inside has already occurred because now the goal is to let go. The mood becomes anxious, she is exhausted of being pregnant. The mother busies herself with the work of nesting, getting the nursery set up, buying clothes, cleaning, organizing, and preparing the home. The baby is usually the foremost thought on her mind. She may be forgetful and “spacey” because of this. Daydreams can lead to thoughts of potential complications or anxiety surrounding the pain of labor. This is an intense time as the psyche can’t help but consider death and mortality in the face of birth, which can add to the concerns. If the mother is choosing a “natural” birth she may begin to pressure herself to “perform”. She feels obligated to have the perfect birth and be able to handle the unknown challenges of labor.

Physical changes may have the mother feeling “fat and ugly” as her belly is very full and she has a hard time getting around. Her sexual desires may plummet because of feeling uncomfortable and awkward or her preoccupation with her heaviness. If properly supported a mother at term can feel ripe and full, a goddess about to bring forth new life. Hopefully, this is how she feels about herself, strong and capable of labor and delivery. Practically, in the third trimester a woman needs more rest and more calories to support the rapidly growing baby who does a lot of fattening up in the last month of pregnancy. This requires diligent focus on self-care.

The midwife and the mother’s family and friends should offer lots of encouragement and support. Positive birth stories always help. She should be assured that all of her thoughts are normal ones and that her feelings of exhaustion over being pregnant are the kind of thoughts that move babies out quickly! Sometimes, women experience depression in the third trimester as a result of fears and anxieties. It is helpful to talk to other women who have experienced motherhood for support. A mother who is at her due date or “over” may feel increased anxiety and impatience. At this time it is nice to give her some distractions like fetal movement records and fun things to try to get labor going, such as orgasms, hikes or belly dancing and hoola hooping.