

THROWN IN AT THE DEEP END

A HANDBOOK FOR CHILDBIRTH EDUCATORS

Bronny Handfield

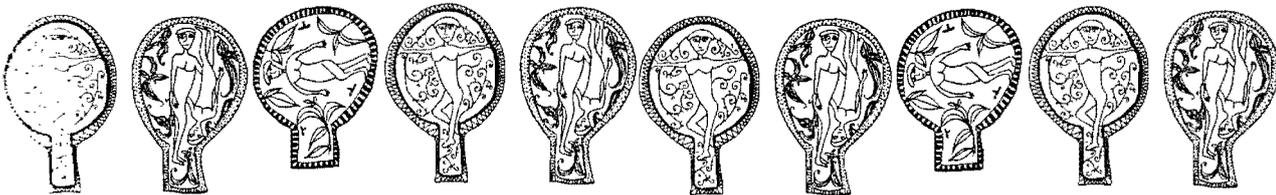


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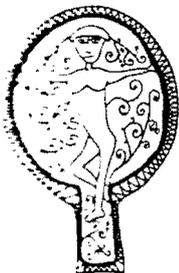
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PREFACE

Many midwives and obstetric physiotherapists are asked to start teaching a childbirth education class without any previous experience. Thrown in at the deep end, you are asked to entertain, and educate. This handbook is written for you.

The best teacher is experience. Use this handbook, but don't read from it or you will sound very boring. Clearly there is a great deal of background information not included in these class plans. I have assumed that those asked to teach will have extensive knowledge and clinical experience. My class notes are written in a simplified manner to demonstrate how to pitch your information to a typical group of hospital childbirth education clients. Describing clients as 'typical' or 'average' is the antithesis of sensitive childbirth education but we need a starting point.

The essence of good teaching is enjoyment, responsiveness and flexibility. Use this handbook to get started, but as your own ideas and confidence grow you will be able to discard it. The diversity of childbirth education clients means that the emphasis of each class will change. Some groups are thirsty for knowledge, while others are looking for shared experience. Sensitivity to cultural differences will also dictate the way many subjects are approached, especially nudity, sexuality, or death.

This handbook has been designed so that the educator's instructions (printed in italics), precede the actual lecture notes, teaching overheads and handouts (printed in plain text). In other words, you could read the chapter, prepare the teaching aids and then, with the book close at hand, teach! You will find a thumbnail version of all printed teaching aids beside the text with a page reference for the full size copy at the end.

Many of the teaching ideas included in this handbook have evolved from working with other educators and I have tried to acknowledge their ideas within the text rather than footnotes or references. Childbirth education is a fledgling profession struggling to define a place in maternity care without false claims to effecting obstetric outcome. Women and their partners want to know something about the risks, benefits and alternatives to conventional care and they want skills to deal with labour and the transition to parenthood. Childbirth is a significant life event and childbirth educators have the privileged position of sharing some of the discoveries that women and their partners make as they start their journey.

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