

# Bonding for that perfect birth

Modern dads-to-be see pregnancy and childbirth issues as much their responsibility as their wives. For them, pre-natal classes and Lamaze are a great way to bond

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The room is filled with posters of rosy-cheeked babies, pregnant women and lost-in-the-woods husbands. The men are huffing and puffing and so are the women. They are here to learn how to breathe – during labour. It's the first day at a Lamaze (see box) class!

The instructor tells the men how to give the necessary assurances. But, it looks like the men themselves need some assurance to continue in the room. They seem quite out-of-their-league here, surrounded by women in varying stages of pregnancy. But the overwhelmed men haven't slipped into their running shoes yet because something has changed among urban males. They want to be participants, not spectators in the whole birth process. They want to share the ups and downs of pregnancy with their wives and also want to be educated on the whole process of labour and childbirth. They want to be prepared for the time when the wife's water breaks and D-day arrives.

## LEARNING EXPERIENCE

For Mrinal Banerjee, it's been a great learning experience. He says that in the beginning, he was clueless about the classes and didn't know what to expect. "I wanted to go because I felt that childbirth and pregnancy was the responsibility of both parents, not just the mother. I want to share the experience with her. I noticed that a lot of husbands who had come to the classes were hesitant initially

and would just sit around and not participate. But over time, they seemed to warm up. In our case, it was a planned pregnancy and both of us wanted to be well-prepared.

Through Lamaze, I have also learnt to be there for her emotionally," he says.

Mrinal is gung-ho about being in the labour room on D-day. "If I am allowed, I want to take her through the breathing and relax her myself," he says.

## THE LAMAZE TECHNIQUE

THE LAMAZE Technique is a childbirth technique developed in the 1940s by French obstetrician Dr Fernand Lamaze as an alternative to the use of medical intervention during childbirth and to promote normal childbirth. The goal of Lamaze is to help women understand their

According to Lamaze International, techniques include allowing labour to begin on its own, movement and positions, massage, aromatherapy, hot and cold packs, informed consent and informed refusal, breathing techniques, the use of a "birth ball" (exercise

For wife Suromita, attending Lamaze classes with her husband was a boon as she has no one else who can take care of her. "We are just the two of us and if not for my husband, I have no one to look after my needs. That is one reason we decided to enrol for the classes. The advice on diet, massage and the labour process was really helpful. Now, he is the one who takes care of my diet needs, reminds me about what to eat when and when I am not in the mood to get into the kitchen, he prepares healthy food for me."

"I am amazed at the amount of interest some of the husbands show when they come for the classes. They are very serious about helping their wives to do these exercises, and want to know everything about what their wives should eat during pregnancy, the different massage techniques, how they can help them for a comfortable pregnancy and what is their role during childbirth. They are the ones asking all the questions," says Siby Mathew, physiotherapist and Lamaze educator who conducts the Nine Month Miracle programme at Asha Foundation.

According to Siby, a man's role is very important as Lamaze teaches breathing and relaxation exercises that help during natural childbirth. Lamaze classes also teach the pregnant woman how to reduce pain during childbirth, including the use of hot and / or cold packs, alternating positions, the benefits of remaining in an upright position and ways to promote labour.

Unlike earlier times when a pregnant woman had many elders to fall back on for advice and help, women now have mostly husbands to turn to.

## CLASSES TO SENSITISE

Dr Renu Arora, lifestyle and exercise physician, says these classes make

Mrinal and Suromita Banerjee: Getting ready for B-day



A thought seconded by Abhishek. "Attending Lamaze classes was my wife's idea and I was a little scared. I didn't want to be there to cut the umbilical cord in the labour room," he jokes.

He adds, "I supervise when she practises the breathing exercises. Based on Lamaze, I am going to time her contractions with a stopwatch and make her breathe accordingly."

Abhishek's wife Priyanka says she is pleasantly surprised at the change. "I wanted him to know about the dif-