



L'association Doulas de France organised the 4th French Doulas Convention last May in Paris. Parents, doulas, midwives and health professionals got together around the theme : 'Passing on Childbirth Tales'.

Pregnancy and childbirth carry so many tales, words, secrets and advices. Women's tales, life stories, olden days tales and conflicting ones....

The opening session was a singing workshop with Agnès Keller, antenatal and family singing teacher.



You could then choose to attend two workshops :

- ❖ A presentation of the different doulas training courses given by Oceane Marot, *Doula and Chair of the association « naturellement Bébé »*.





- ❖ Techniques and rituals from around the world. Charlotte Fajardo et Valérie Dupin, *both doulas*, reminded us that childbirth is a special time that we should celebrate, and honour with our own rituals.



Mexican rebozo



Childbirth and story telling quilts

- ❖ The breastfeeding workshop : sharing about the very first feeds with Pascale Gendreau, *Doula and La Leche League counsellor*.
- ❖ Geneviève Treille, *Doula, coach and consultant* ran a workshop on using listening skills while supporting parents.



- ❖ Gaëlle Buteau, *Doula* and Elsa Pastor, youth worker, proposed non violent and systemic communication skills to listen to and to communicate with health professionals.



- ❖ Practical information on how to start up as a doula, how to advertise your services and working with the "Collectif des Doulas de France". Workshop ran by Geneviève Treille, *Doula, coach and consultant*.



- ❖ Practical skills during labour a workshop with Pascale Gendreau, *Doula* and Sabine Benamarra, *thérapeute AMA*. Different positions, massage for the labouring woman and her partner to try out.





- ❖ Charlotte Fajardo and Océane Marot, *Doulas*, during the discussion around the first few days with a new born baby to help everyone to find their place around the brand new human being.



- ❖ A workshop on Maternal difficulty, PND and Post Traumatic Shock Disorder with Valérie Dupin, *Doula*, childbirth educator, trained with Sheila Kitzinger « Birth Crisis », et Dolores Fernandez, *psychologist specialised in childbirth, certificate of Maternologie Clinique*.





Friday and Saturday afternoons « Open Space » Time! Each participant could propose and then choose a topic around childbirth.



Shopping for a topic at the Open Space

15 discussion topics were chosen and covered during the two days :

- ❖ Doula work and family life : How do to cope ?
- ❖ Coping with Perinatal death
- ❖ Non violent communication
- ❖ The very first experience as a doula
- ❖ How to help a mother feel confident about herself
- ❖ Giving out information to parents : when, what and how?
- ❖ What about the father?
- ❖ Money, payment for doulas services
- ❖ Maternal difficulty.
- ❖ The labouring women's rights
- ❖ The 'Godmothering' system of the Association Doulas de France
- ❖ Supporting women in need
- ❖ Sensitive touch, massages
- ❖ European doulas network
- ❖ Childbirth rituals

At the end of the two days, 4 topics were chosen to take further actions and to be used as base for projects.

- ❖ The labouring woman's rights
- ❖ How to help a mother feel confident about herself
- ❖ Maternal difficulty
- ❖ The very first experience as a doula



"What is a Doula ?" was the topic of the round table discussion of Saturday morning. All could share their experience of doulas, parent, midwife ... The importance of passing on, woman to woman, our knowledge and experiences was highlighted. The doula is a woman by the pregnant woman's side (and those close to her), the doula listens to her wishes, needs and follows her in her choices. The doula gives continuous support to the woman and establishes a trusting, close and caring relationship with the women.



Bridget Baker, Doulas UK

At the European Doulas round table discussion the group shared their experience of what was available in each country. Bridget Baker of Doula.uk told us that nowadays in Britain the doula was "part of the picture" on the childbirth scene. In Switzerland and Italy the situation was similar to the one in France: very little acknowledgement and support from the medical profession.

In her closing speech Beverley Beech, Chair of AIMS in the UK, told us about the campaigning of AIMS for women's rights in childbirth and stated that we, in France, were 25 years behind Britain. But she also said that we shouldn't lose hope, we had to keep on believing, and getting together to act for women, children and couples ... She gave her support to the French Doulas and encouragement in their path. Her speech and amazing energy gave everyone a lot of hope in the future...



Valérie Dupin et Beverley Beech (chair of AIMS UK)

The days ended with a singing session with Agnes Keller and a human chain where each one of us had to give one word summing up how they felt; courage, love, women, joy, friendship, support, link, strength,



During the two days there was a lot of chatting, networking ...



...listening...





... and babies.



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Many thanks to all participants who made this event so special with beautiful sharing times, real communication and friendship ... And thanks to made the two days possible. participated to this event.