

I never realized how wonderful healing could be

by Jodi in Ohio

My name is Jodi. I live in Ohio and I have been married to my husband, Matt for 13 years, and I have two wonderful children, Alex, age 9 and Meghan age 7. Here is my story: It was Thursday, September 23rd, 1999. I had very high expectations of the birth of my son. I dreamt of a perfect natural birth with no medication, and no complications. I went to childbirth education classes and I knew what was supposed to happen. I had no idea what was in store for me. Several hours after my water broke, there was still no progress. So the resident doctor gave me Pitocin to speed things up. An hour later I was in a lot of pain.

I began screaming, over and over again. I felt like my body was being torn in half. Then the baby's heart rate dropped below 100. The resident doctor said the words I dreaded, We're going to have to do an emergency C-section. My husband was terrified, and he was ushered out as I was prepped and taken into the operating room. A frenzy of activity was going on as they prepped me for surgery. My arms and legs were strapped to the operating table. I hope my husband is okay, he seemed really scared, I thought.

The nurse put a mask over my face and told me they were going to administer the general anesthetic. I could hear it hissing. Then, I stopped breathing. The nurse said, "Come on honey, breathe." I couldn't breathe." Jodi! Breathe!" She yelled. I was paralyzed but still conscious. "I can't breathe! I thought. I've got to tell them that I can't breathe! Oh God! I'm going to die! I'm going to see Jesus today! I'm going to die! My poor husband, how's he going to take care of a baby?"

I felt the doctor make the vertical incision in my abdomen. I was thinking, "Oh God, I'm scared! I'm so scared! I'm going to die! Oh Matt, I'll miss you. I hope you know how much I love you. How can I tell them I can't breathe? I've got to tell them I can't breathe!" All of a sudden, I felt my right hand move, then my leg, and then my head. I went into convulsions. Someone intubated me and I could see the nurse squeezing the air bag to the right of me. The last thing I remembered was one of the nurses saying "Oh God!" Then I blacked out.

When I opened my eyes I was surprised to be alive. I asked the nurse if the baby is okay. She told me he is fine and asked if I wanted to see him. "Of course," I said. "Yes!" My baby and I were alive and I was so relieved. When we got home, everything started to fall apart. The flash backs began. Several times a day, especially at night, I relived my labor experience, going over every detail in my head again and again. I couldn't go near my baby because he reminded me of what I went through. Only two weeks after the birth of my baby, I was thrust into a pit of depression. I wanted to die. I felt so empty. I was also having horrible, disturbing dreams about killing my son. I dreamed about cooking and eating him, cutting him up into pieces, drowning him, and smothering him. Dreadfully, these thoughts started to manifest themselves during the day, sometimes while I was holding my son. I would have to put him down because I was so afraid I would hurt him.

These horrific thoughts, the flashbacks, emptiness, and depression plagued me on a daily basis for about six months. I truly thought I was going insane. I began thinking about what would happen if I did kill my son, If I kill my son, my husband will be upset, so I'll kill him too, and then I'll kill myself. Then we'll all be in Heaven together and

everything will be alright. So for six months I isolated myself from the world. Every night I would go to bed, praying that I wouldn't wake up in the morning. The only reason I would get out of bed was that my son was hungry. I was a shell of the woman I used to be. I just wanted it to stop. I wanted to die. I convinced myself I was the worst mother on the planet. I didn't dare tell anyone what I was thinking or feeling, because I must be crazy and I knew for sure that they would take my baby away from me. I was paralyzed by fear, so I trudged through the months after he was born completely alone. Fortunately, as my son got older, the flash backs, nightmares and terrible thoughts slowly subsided. Years later, I did reach out to a friend from church, and I told her everything. She referred me to a psychiatrist. I was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder caused by my son's birth, and put on medication. I started Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy in February of 2008, and it has worked wonders for me. The experience had moved into normal memory, and I now have no stress when I think about what happened.

The first session we had, was distressing. I went over the memory of the moment when I thought I was going to die over and over again in my mind. Remembering that was very hard. It was difficult to do because it was like going through it all over again... remembering the sights, the smells, the sounds, the feelings, the thoughts, etc.

The second session was much different. My therapist suggested trying to think of something that would help my distress with that memory. I began going over the moment in my mind... I was lying on the operating table, and I couldn't breathe. Then all of a sudden, I imagined myself today being present with myself then, so there was two of me: the past self and the present self. The present self knows that I did not die, and that everything was going to be okay eventually. T

he past self did not know that. So I imagined my present self-comforting my past self, stroking her hair, and telling her that everything was going to be alright. I just started to cry. It was such a comforting thought. Then my therapist brought up the fact that I didn't get to hold him until after I woke up. I told her how empty I felt after he was born. I went to sleep pregnant and woke up not pregnant. I just kept thinking, Where is my baby? He's gone. I wanted him back inside me, but he was right there in my arms, I just couldn't make the connection. I felt ripped off and so incredibly empty.

She suggested that I imagine myself in the operating room again and having the doctor give the baby to my present self. So, I imagined my present self watching my son being born, then the nurses wrapping him in a blanket and handing him to me. I began to cry again. I never had that feeling of joy, it had been stolen from me, but I was able to reclaim it for myself. I kept imagining my present self holding my newborn son and crying, and I let myself heal. Then, in my mind, I brought my present self and my past self back together at the moment when I woke up in the recovery room, when I got to hold him for real... Oh my, what closure. The tears I cried that session were tears of healing, joy, and release. I never realized how wonderful healing could be. I can truly say that I have brought joy to the memory of my son's birth that was never there before.