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Salutogenesis: The Birth of Health

In 1987, Dr. Larry Webster developed the Webster Technique, a chiropractic adjustment designed to help pregnant mothers balance their pelvis for an easier, safer birth.

Already known as the “grandfather of pediatric chiropractic,” Webster understood very well how the pregnancy and birth journey could affect the life and health of the newborn infant.

Between then and now, a surge in interest has occurred across the world, with many families seeking out Webster-certified doctors at the start of their pregnancy for an easier birth experience. Their experience of chiropractic in pregnancy has been so helpful, that it is not uncommon today to see families inviting chiropractors into the birth ceremony as well, to receive adjustments before and during birth.

For such families, Webster chiropractors—certified also in pediatric wellness—offer the infant in the very first minutes, days, and weeks of life a primary model of care, to assess and assure their neuro-biomechanical integrity for the purpose of a healthy and resilient start to the mother-baby and family bonding journey.

One of the greatest gifts of this new approach to birth is the inevitable fuse that begins to ignite within families upon their first series of visits to the chiropractor. In learning about their uterine function, pelvic balance, and the physical mother-baby relationships—sometimes referred to as the Power, Passage, and Passenger relationships in birth—they begin to gain a profound insight. The importance of what Michel Odent has revealed begins to become clear, and a pathway to a new kind of birth experience opens up.

By focusing on the reality that every birth is an active dance involving the mother’s body and the baby’s body, the family now begins to learn what it practically means to “own” the birth experience. They realize that it means engaging in the active dance of birth!

As Odent said, “The truth for women living in a modern world is that they must take increasing responsibility for the skills they bring into birth.” These words share, in principle, the essential purpose of the Webster technique in pregnancy: to prepare the body and mind for the activity of birth. And with this call to become skilled, birth achieves a major evolution for modern families, bringing the conversation to center on what may technically be called the “Salutogenic Birth Experience.”

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In this conversation, birth happens first and foremost not in a hospital, a birth center, or at home, but it happens within the family's "sense of coherence," which is understood to be the deeper foundation of their experience, regardless of setting. In this way, they can approach any birth setting or circumstance with confidence and intrinsic resourcefulness, maintaining a skillful engagement with the active process of birth.

Birth becomes more than an outcome-driven or circumstance-dependent event. With a focus on skills and preparation, it becomes the physical, emotional, and spiritual nucleus for the family's greater sense of coherence. Honored in this way, the birth of a child becomes also the arrival of "saluto-genesis" or "the birth of health" for the family. Here we understand that "health" is not merely the "absence of disease," it's something actively created from within, through our strong sense of coherence together amid life's experiences.

In a salutogenic birth, families understand their own intrinsic resourcefulness. While the medical or natural birth worker may continue to offer professional support, I believe the focus of birth-work will rapidly evolve to helping families after birth during the postpartum days and months, so families can remain free to develop the power of salutogenesis that they discovered within themselves... A generating power to create life, health, and a sense of coherence that will serve them for the rest of their lives.

By Erin Blank

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