

Opening to Birth, Opening to Self: A Journey of Transformation

by Anne Ethier

"The basic work of health professionals in general, and of psychotherapists in particular, is to become full human beings and to inspire full human-beingness in other people who feel starved about their lives." --

Chogyam Trungpa, Becoming a Full Human Being

Giving Birth

I have given birth to a lot in my life, including a successful business and a Masters thesis. But recently is the first time that I have given physical birth to my own baby. Little did I know I would also be birthing myself as Mother during labor.

Just before my baby was born, my midwife became an instrument of a life-changing moment for me. She was kneeling in front of me next to the birthing pool that my husband and I were in. I had been in active labor for over 20 hours and I had been awake well over 30 hours. Needless to say I was exhausted and I felt like giving up. I was questioning everything. Fear had taken hold and I had lost my trust in the process and in myself. It was at this time that my midwife looked deep into my eyes with an angelic expression and smiled. She simply said, "We're gonna get this baby out. Just push beyond that point."

She was holding the space of trust when I was unable to. Her belief in me and in the birth process enabled me to pull upon my resources that I didn't know I had and I was able to push "beyond that point" and birth my beautiful baby girl. The gift that she gave me is one I will carry into my new role as mother and will pass on to my daughter—a belief and trust in the process of birth and ultimately life itself. Only seconds before I opened for my baby to be birthed into the gentle water of the birthing pool, I opened to myself as a mother who can trust in life's process. It was a profound moment of birth indeed.

Psychotherapist as midwife - the safety to go deeper. I see my role as psychotherapist very similar to the role my midwife played at my birth. My intention is to help hold compassionate space

with an attitude of curiosity to see what unfolds. My job is to trust in the process for my clients—to trust, as my midwife did, that opening and birthing will happen at just the right time.

I needed so much support and space for my own birthing process while my body and heart discovered how to give birth during each phase of my labor, uncovering layers of fears—learning that it was ok to make primal noise, it was ok to lean into my husband, or ask my midwife for help. All of this built the safety for the next moment of labor—the next opening and dilation for my baby to drop deeper into my pelvis.

As a body-mind therapist, I help build a container for my clients' fears or emotions, or needs so that they too can feel safe enough to "dilate" and open

"There's a part of every living thing that wants to become itself. The tadpole into the frog, the chrysalis into the butterfly, a damaged human being into a whole one. That is spirituality." -Ellen Bass, writer

more deeply into their process. Most of what happens in the therapeutic relationship is building trust and safety.

Like my midwife who trusted more than I knew how so that I could ultimately trust in my own body, I help guide my clients to connect with their own inner wisdom and trust.

The space I offer is about relationship and safety, which takes time and patience. This space is important so that one can open to trust and go deep, opening more to self. What a person gives birth to and how deeply one opens is where the mystery of grace and spirituality flow freely with the therapeutic journey inward.

Currently employed by Pathways Counseling, Anne Ethier, MA Psychology is a Mother, a yoga instructor, dancer, and practitioner who embraces the wisdom of the body. She helps her clients expand their awareness to integrate body and mind. The methods Anne uses are gentle, experiential, often playful, and always revealing. Nothing is imposed.