

## New prepared childbirth technique is explained

By NEIL DICKIE

"Childbirth is the most fantastic thing". And she really looks as if she means it.

"It's great to think of it that way when you've heard all sorts of weird stories, and the pain and suffering women must endure in childbirth. That's what our reconditioning programme is about. We recondition because people have been conditioned in one way by society to expect childbirth to be a painful, suffering experience."

"We train parents to know exactly what is happening to the body during delivery. If the medical people keep them informed then they know exactly where they're at. This awareness reduces anxiety, tension, and therefore pain."

Barb Reid is the Atlantic provinces co-ordinator of the International Childbirth Education Association (ICEA). She and another registered nurse, Marie Ferguson, co-teach the Lamaze

share. Fathers are becoming as interested as mothers; this

technique can bring couples together at birth. The father is, essential in the use of the method. He is trained as his wife's coach; during labour he assists by timing her contractions, helping her relax between contractions and helping her concentrate on breathing techniques. He learns tools to ease labour — how to massage in the case of back labour, and how to support the neck and shoulders if the mother is trying to push the child out.

The course runs over a period of six weeks — one per week. It is recommended that couples take the course during the last three months of pregnancy. The course costs ten dollars. However the fee can be waived if parents are not able to afford it. Specific information can be had by contacting Barb at 455-3215, or Marie at 454-6221.

Lamaze does not guarantee a painless childbirth, and does not

which blocks out old, conditioned responses of pain."

The Fredericton group is the first in the Atlantic provinces, and the fifth in Canada. "We have been met with a favorable response from the medical and nursing profession here," Barb says. Apparently there is no problem in having a child in Fredericton by this method.

The technique, some argue, makes labour better not only for the mother — but also for the child. Lamaze deliveries tend to be faster deliveries; thus lessening the physical ordeal, and the mental trauma of birth for the baby.

Reid also took pains to point out that Lamaze is not a 'natural' childbirth technique — the things the method conditions do not 'naturally' happen she says.

"Even with the tools provided childbirth is still hard work" she says. "It's about like a twelve mile hike, something that an untrained person would find very hard."

The course includes an excellent film detailing intimately the experience of a couple learning, and ultimately using this technique in childbirth.

Body building exercises are employed, concentrating on those muscles to be used during delivery. Relaxation is taught to facilitate a controlled and comfortable delivery. Technically, this aspect of the method is called "neuromuscular control drill". The mother learns to isolate and control muscle groups within her body, she learns to be more in tune with her body in terms of muscle control and relaxation.

"After six weeks of daily practise the mother is so in tune with her body that during labour contractions she can relax the rest of her body completely."

The breathing exercises serve the purpose of providing a "new focus of activity for the brain" — other than being aware of pain. Three types of breathing tools are involved, corresponding to three major stages in labour.

Reid emphasized that it is essential for couples to practise

diligently right up until childbirth.

She also cited the fast growth of the technique's popularity as evidence of its effectiveness. John Webster, a father experienced in the technique says: "it seems like the only sane way to have a baby,

my wife and I were just extremely happy with it; I can't say enough good about it."

"We think of childbirth not so much in terms of the birth of a child," Reid said "but in terms of the birth of a family."



Marie Ferguson and her children, Amy and Julie

Photo by Ron Ward



Barb Reid

technique of prepared childbirth. They have been holding classes locally since last July. About 25 couples have completed the course of instruction they teach as of January 31, 1974.

The technique incorporates breathing exercises, body building, and techniques of relaxation into a childbirth preparation programme in which the husband is a vital participant — and not merely a spectator.

Barb Reid said she wanted to start classes in Fredericton because she was aware of a desire, and need, for more togetherness at birth.

"Couples are now looking at childbirth as an experience to

advocate medicationless delivery. Lamaze does give a couple effective tools to work with to make delivery a more comfortable and fulfilling experience.

The technique originates in Russia. A french doctor named Fernan Lamaze travelled in Russia and became acquainted with the method 1950. When he returned to France, he developed a similar method of his own. Both are based on Pavlovian conditioning theory.

Technically speaking Lamaze is a method of psychoprophylaxis. The sum of the physical and mental conditioning involved in Lamaze "creates a new focus of activity in the brain that is surrounded by an area of inhibition

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