Relationship Building Techniques with Fathers: Prenatal Visits or Early Labor

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Step One. Start with Yourself.

Explore your attitude and beliefs that you have about fathers' role at the birth.
For an optimal experience, do you believe he must be very involved? Watch the baby being born? Cut the cord?
Can you let go of your preconceived notions and allow him/them to choose freely?

Step Two. Gently Discuss Different Possible Roles

1. Explain about coach, teammate, witness.
2. You may be the only one who explores a different idea than cultural norm.
3. Allow men to change from preconceived idea about preferred role to a different role at bedside.

Step Three. Discerning men's emotional needs

1. Ask directly.
2. Ask inquiring questions. WAIT for answers. Sensitively discourage mother from answering for him if needed.

"What would you like your experience to be?"
"What is important to you?"
"Is there any interaction that you are particularly looking forward to?"
(Catching baby, cutting cord, kissing wife, etc.)
"What are you not looking forward to?"
"In general, what things in life bring you a great deal of satisfaction?"
"What are you afraid of?"

Step Four. Do the Ideal Birth Exercise – Have everyone draw a picture of their ideal birth. (Use oil pastels or crayons and large pieces of paper.) Doula draws a picture of herself supporting the family.

Step Five. Work together at prenatal visits. Ask him about mom's cues. Touch mom at the same time – have him show you a massage technique that she likes, etc.

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