

# GUIDE TO FINDING YOUR DOULA



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BIRTH AND POSTPARTUM DOULA



# WELCOME

Thank you for reaching out and considering me as your doula. As much as I would love to support you, the most important thing to me is that you find the right doula for YOU. This is YOUR birth! You want to have a doula that you can feel safe, seen, and supported by. To empower you in narrowing down what you want and need from a doula, I offer you this guide to help you navigate the interview process. By the time you're done reading this 7 part guide, you'll have everything you need to confidently choose the right doula for you.

Warmly,

*Heather*

PS...Please look over the potential doulas website first, as many of the questions you want to ask may be answered there!

# THIS IS ALL ABOUT YOU!

If you're comfortable sharing, I encourage you to let your Doula know any unique things about you, your family, your pregnancy, or your birth plans. Don't be afraid to get vulnerable or to share information most might consider TMI! Your Doula is going to be right smack in the middle of the most private, intimate, and sacred moments of your life. They need to have all the relevant information to equip them to serve you in the unique ways you deserve to be supported.

While you're trying to determine if this doula is a good fit for you, she is also doing the same! Things you share with her may help the doula determine if you'd be a better fit for a different doula or if the support you need is outside of her capability and she may even have specific doulas in mind that are better equipped to support you.



# THINGS TO LET YOUR POTENTIAL DOULA KNOW...

(A reminder that you can share these things at your discretion. These are merely suggestions.)

-Do you struggle with anxiety, depression, or any other mental health issues?

-Do you have a history of sexual trauma that may impact your birth? Do you have any previous birth trauma or have you experienced any losses? (Fertility issues, miscarriage, termination, or stillbirth?)

-Do you have a high risk pregnancy or unique health complications or needs that require specialized care and attention?

Other things to consider:

Some people are best served by doulas who they have things in common with! Things that might pertain to your beliefs, religion, spirituality, sexuality, gender, identity, culture, ethnicity, disabilities, or other health issues.

For example, someone who is deaf might prefer a deaf doula. Someone who speaks Spanish as their first language may be more comfortable with a doula who also speaks Spanish. Someone who is queer might prefer a queer doula. Black or indigenous families may be concerned about medical racism and want a doula who is trained/has experience with social justice and racial disparities. Trans families may be concerned about prejudice and want a doula who has training/experience supporting trans families.

If any of this applies to you, you may want to spend some extra time checking in with what kind of a doula you feel you really need to be best supported on this journey.



# CONSULTATION PREPARATION

In the following slides there are a lot of questions, and realistically the doula may not have time to answer every single one. It's recommended that you go through each part and choose questions that feel the most important to you. Have your list of questions with you before you begin.

If there are a lot of things you want the doula to know about you, make sure you write those things down as well so as not to forget something important.

When it comes to logistics, every doula has different packages, pricing, and unique offerings they might have that set them apart from other doulas. So when choosing the right doula for you, sometimes the logistics of their business may be an important factor in your final decision. (Some examples might include how many years of experience they have, how many births they have attended, or if they have specialized offerings like massage therapy, placenta encapsulation, or postpartum specialties like cooking, belly binding, or bone closing ceremonies and other spiritual or ceremonial offerings.)

But you are encouraged to choose a doula that you FEEL good about. You may find a doula who checks off all the boxes in all of the ways you were hoping for, but maybe their personality didn't vibe with you. Or maybe your intuition told you they weren't the right fit. Whatever the case, you want to pick the doula that felt the best to talk to and be with regardless of the logistics.

Enough prep, let's get started!



# Part One: WHY ARE YOU A DOULA?

-What led you to doing birth work?

-Have you ever given birth?

-Do your own birth experiences impact your role as a doula?

-How so?



## Part Two: WHAT IS YOUR TRAINING?

-Are you a certified doula or are you self taught?

\*Doulas don't have an organization that oversees them, so technically there is no official legal certifications for doulas and one is not required to have a certification to practice as a doula.

-If you are certified, which training organization did you receive your certification from?

\*You may want to explore the website for their training organization!

-Are you a member of any doula groups? What does your involvement in the doula community look like?

\*Birth work is a community based profession, being involved in the doula community is essential for continued success and support.

-Do you pursue continuing education to keep your practice fresh and up to date?

\*New evidence is always becoming available, it's important your doula reevaluates their practices periodically to ensure they are using the most up to date information to support their clients.



# Part Three:

## WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE?

- How many births have you supported?
- What are your birth statistics? (For example, how many of the births you have supported ended in a vaginal delivery vs. a cesarean birth?)
- Do you attend home births and hospital births?
- Have you attended births where I am delivering? Are you familiar with my OB/Midwife? If so, what was your experience?
- Do you have experience with birth complications?
- Do you have any lactation training or experience?
- Do you have any reviews or testimonials you could share?



# Part Four: WHAT IS YOUR PHILOSOPHY?

- How would you describe your doula philosophy or style?
- What kind of clients do you tend to attract?
- What types of clients do you enjoying supporting the most?
- How do you support a person through labor?
- How do you work with partners?
- How do you work with nurses, midwives, and doctors?
- What coping techniques to you find most helpful?
- What are your tactics for pain management?
- How do you feel about epidurals and other pain medication options?
- How do you feel about other medical interventions?
- Is there anything in your Doula practice that you have strong opinions about? (For example, how do you feel about baby medications and vaccines? How do you feel about highly medicalized births? How do you feel about circumcision?)



# Part Five: WHAT DOES YOUR BIRTH PACKAGE INCLUDE?

-What does your birth package look like?

-What is your fee and payment schedule?

-Are there any circumstances that there may be additional fees? (For example, what if I have a long birth? What if I need to have an extra meeting with you? Who pays the back up doula if one is needed?)

-Can I reach out to you with questions or concerns? What hours can I reach you? Do you prefer text, call, or email if I need to reach you?

-What happens if you're unable to attend the birth? (For example, what if I have a fast labor and you miss it? What happens if I need an emergency cesarean birth? What happens if I end up having a breech baby and get a scheduled cesarean birth?) Do you offer refunds?

-Is there a limit for how long you will stay at my labor? How long do you stay after the birth?

-At what point in my labor do you join me in person? When should I contact you if I think I may be in labor?

-When are you on call for me?

-Do you offer postpartum support? If not, can you refer me to a postpartum doula?

-Do you have any additional or unique services you offer? (For example, placenta encapsulation, belly binding, or postpartum ceremonies?)

-Can you take pictures for us during the birth?





## Part Six:

### WHAT IS YOUR CAPACITY?

- Do you have other births near my due date? How many clients do you have near my due date? What's the maximum number of clients you take?
- Do you have a back up doula? How often do you need to call in a back up? Can I meet your back up?
- Do you have any trips or vacations planned around my due date?
- What if my birth happens on an important holiday? Will you still be there?



*Part Seven:*  
**WHY SHOULD I CHOOSE YOU?**

- What do clients compliment you about the most?
- What do you love about being a doula?
- What sets you apart from other doulas?

## NEXT STEPS

If the doula didn't offer to send you a copy of her contract, you might want to ask if you can read through it before making a final decision. That way if you have questions, need clarification, or want to discuss the contract in more detail you can do so ahead of making your decision. It's better to know ahead of time that you are in alignment with the contract rather than to hire her first and then have to back out if you couldn't come to a mutual agreement.

If you're curious about what the next steps would be if you do decide to move forward with her, ask! There may be an intake form to fill out, she may have a certain way she prefers the contract to be signed, and she may require a retainer or ask for fees up front.

When the consultation is over, let the doula know you'd like to take some time to think about it and that you'll get back to her soon. Even if you decide not to hire the doula, it's still nice to let her know that you've chosen another doula. If you'd like to share constructive feedback, go for it! But if you have none, feel free to just thank her for her time and leave it at that.



# RED FLAGS

Most doulas are prepared, professional, and passionate. But some doulas may have red flags to watch out for! Don't get stuck working with a doula who is unreliable, untrustworthy, and inconsistent. (Please note: unfortunately we have experienced a few doulas committing fraud, theft, and ghosting of clients lately. Please do your due diligence to make sure the doula you choose is not one of them! Check public reviews and ask for referrals from previous clients.) Here are some red flags to look for:

## -Promising a certain outcome or having unrealistic promises.

Any doula who promises you a certain birth outcome is a doula you should run from! In birth there are no guarantees and you are setting yourself up for disappointment and other issues that can greatly impact your birth experience when you cling to empty promises.

## -Financial transparency

Your doula should have clear financial arrangements.

## -Only supporting certain types of births

There are some doulas who do not support certain types of births, certain hospitals, and certain providers. If this is so, many times there are valid reasons why this doula has made those choices. Second hand trauma happens to birth doulas, and some may avoid these things to protect their own well being. If this doula is supportive of your birth goals, great! But if not, this may not be the right doula for you.

## -Poor communication skills

Effective communication is crucial. If a doula is unresponsive, fails to answer questions clearly, or doesn't listen to your concerns, it may be a red flag.



# RED FLAGS

## -Crossing boundaries

While it is sometimes your Doula's job to push against your boundaries to learn what your boundaries are, they shouldn't cross your boundaries. If you start to feel pressured, they may be pushing a specific agenda on to you which is coercive and not ethically in line with how a doula should operate.

## -Inflexibility

Your doula should be flexible and adaptable to your needs. If they seem rigid in their approach or unwilling to adjust their support plan, it may not be the right fit.

## -Lack of empathy

Empathy and emotional support are crucial aspects of doula care, if a doula appears disinterested, lacks compassion, or fails to validate your feelings it's a red flag.

## -Unwillingness to collaborate with care providers

A good doula works collaboratively with healthcare providers to ensure the best possible care. If a doula expresses resistance or unwillingness to cooperate with medical professionals, it may be a concern.

## -Negative reviews

Every doula has a story or two about an unhappy client. The more people you serve, the higher the chances that someone, somewhere, was unhappy or let down by the support they received. Doulas are human, things can happen! And unfortunately being a doula often means having steep learning curves. So a negative review doesn't always spell trouble, but consistently bad reviews might. It's important to ask questions and get clarification. Perhaps their answer will put you at ease, or maybe it will help you decide this doula is not for you.



# REFLECTIONS

How did you FEEL when speaking with this Doula? Was there any tension in your body, or any thoughts or observations that made you feel uncomfortable? Or did you feel excited, hopeful, and at ease?

Is this Doula in alignment with your birth vision and goals? Does this Doula seem biased or opinionated about your birth goals? Or do they seem like they will support your choices? Do you feel confident in this Doula's ability to support your partner and you?

Does this Doula seem reliable, trustworthy, and like a safe person for you?

Is this Doula educated and well equipped to support you through many possible birth outcomes and scenarios?

Can this Doula accommodate any unique needs or goals that you have?

If you answered "YES!" to many of these questions, you may have found your doula!



# Congratulations!!!



I hope you find the right doula for you. The doula that will laugh with you and cry with you. The doula who will celebrate when things go well and the doula that will mourn when things don't. The doula who will go above and beyond to be there for you when you need her most.

Wishing you all the best and a beautiful birth.

With love,

*Heather*

