

GETTING DOWN AND DIRTY

(From *Birthing From Within*, by Pam England, page 128)

"Soldiers are trained to give everything in battle. They expect to return from war grimy, sweaty, disheveled, and sometimes even bloody; it's their badge of honor. Likewise, a gutsy football or baseball player who ends the game wearing a uniform caked with mud is perceived as having given his all. Some cultures (but not ours) honor women in the same way when they return from battling in the trenches of labor.

Wouldn't it be great if childbirth teachers and health professionals instilled that same tough mindset in mothers and fathers? Rather than promoting the reassuring, but unlikely, illusion of being comfortable and relaxed in labor, teachers should help mothers and fathers to muster the courage and determination to get through it...

First, we help mothers experience themselves as part of a larger whole, a link in a chain of mothers throughout time...

Second, we explain that to give birth with power, without drugs, means having to go to the edge, and beyond.

Third, we point out that the hospital "battle field," in striving to be sterile and clean, inadvertently sends a confusing message to women giving birth. Birth-warriors don't stay clean, together, made-up and poised.

Finally, mothers must make a heart-felt commitment: Not to birth normally, but to **give it their all, moment-by-moment**. Once they've *done* that, to then be okay with whatever happens."