

and her book as one of our most respectful, insightful, and trustworthy guides along the way.

Jane Pincus
P.O. Box 72
Roxbury, Vermont, 05669, USA
Co-founder, co-author, and co-editor of
Our Bodies, Ourselves

**Pain Management
 in Childbirth—Volume 1:
 Comfort Techniques**

InJoy Birth & Parenting Education
InJoy Productions, Longmont, CO, USA 2011
\$199.95, 29-minute DVD
(English or Spanish)

**Penny Simkin's Comfort Measures
 for Childbirth**

Penny Simkin, PT
Penny Simkin Products
Seattle, WA, USA 2008
\$60.00, 91-minute DVD

Nonpharmacological comfort measures are useful tools for the birthing woman and her support team during any childbirth. Because out-of-hospital births are on the rise and childbirth class attendance remains lower than in past decades, it is important that expectant parents have access to dependable information to help them gain skills to cope with childbirth. InJoy's *Pain Management in Childbirth—Volume 1: Comfort Techniques* is a two-DVD set. *Comfort Techniques* is the first DVD of the set and covers nonpharmacological ways of coping with childbirth, whereas the second DVD, *Analgesic and Epidurals*, educates the viewer about medication choices. In this review I compare the first DVD with *Penny Simkin's Comfort Measures for Childbirth*. Both are empowering to women and their partners and outline concrete tools for them to use in childbirth.

InJoy's *Comfort Techniques* DVD follows three women and their birth partners through childbirth and uses their experiences to highlight the helpful techniques they present. The DVD has three sections: Pain, Mental Strategies, and Physical Strategies, as well as a bonus birth story of one of the couples. Throughout, they pose statements about commonly held beliefs and

ask an experienced doula if each statement is indeed a “Myth or Fact?” The labor partners are advised about what helpful things for labor they can pack in their “Bag of Tricks.” This DVD is engaging and personal as we see how these comfort techniques are applied in actual birth scenes of these three parents and additional couples. It is touching to see all three babies being born, which implies to the viewer that, whatever strategies were necessary to cope with the intense sensations of labor, it is all worth it in the end. The babies are treated gently, with no routine suctioning, and the mothers (and later the fathers) are always holding them. All but one of the births take place in a hospital setting. Showing some births in a home setting would further reinforce the normalcy of unmedicated birth because the hospital shots subtly reinforce the medical model of birth. To provide balance, the midwifery model of birth is represented by showing midwives in attendance for several of the births. A great bonus to this DVD is that it is available in both Spanish and English.

Penny Simkin’s *Comfort Measures for Childbirth* DVD has a format and feel that are different from those of InJoy’s DVD. It is 91 minutes in length, considerably longer than InJoy’s 29-minute DVD, and it is a third of the cost. This DVD plays more like the practice portions of a childbirth class that participants always want more of. The bonus here is that the instructor is the highly experienced childbirth instructor, doula, and birth expert Penny Simkin. Penny teaches an expectant couple about a comfort technique—when to use it and how to do it—then the couple practices it with her guidance. She begins by covering the foundational relaxation and rhythmic/patterned

breathing, then progresses to first stage comfort measures including positions, back labor, and help with labor progress. She ends with second stage labor positions and techniques for pushing. Simkin, also a physical therapist, uses a pelvis model to demonstrate what effect the position has on the woman’s pelvis and baby, which helps the viewer understand how the technique works. What sets this DVD apart is that the viewer not only can learn the techniques, but can also follow along and practice them alone or with her partner. Because this DVD is more instructional, it would be useful for both expectant parents and the spectrum of birth professionals to watch. People who teach parents how to cope in labor, certainly childbirth educators, birth doulas, nurses, midwives, and doctors, could learn exactly how they might instruct mothers and their partners in the use of these tools.

Expectant parents are lucky to have a choice of these two quality DVDs as they prepare themselves for childbirth. Parents who have learned nonpharmacological coping techniques will be better able to move through their births with confidence, whether or not they ultimately choose to use medications. Those of us who work in the birth realm would do well to be familiar with these comfort techniques and how and when to apply them. Both DVDs teach these valuable tools in accessible and personalized formats to help parents have the most successful, normal birth experience possible.

April Bolding DPT, CCE, CD
Seattle, Washington, USA
Co-author
Pregnancy, Childbirth and the Newborn