

## WHAT IS NORMAL BIRTH?

By Lois Wilson for *Midwifery Today*

The question is disarmingly simple, like asking, “What is love?”  
I open my mouth to answer quickly, then close it again, suddenly humbled  
by the realization that the answer is complex, emotional, elusive, rich, deep and varied.

Images flash in my mind—I see beautiful, wet babies in their mothers’ arms; I smell the  
birth smell and feel the holiness that hangs in the air; and I feel the wonder that rises in  
the presence of the wise and ancient process that is beyond human design or control.

Normal birth is the mother who stands up beside her bed where she has given birth, faces  
me with her babe in arms, her eyes flashing fire and triumphantly shouts, “I did it!”

Normal birth is the woman who dances the slow birth dance and sings  
the low birth song. It is the woman who is naked and not ashamed.

Normal birth is the woman who, though she has never been there before and  
did not know she knew the way, finds her path to the deep and quiet place  
within herself where her intuition and faith lie hidden and ready to feed her soul.

Normal birth is the woman who births in her own power, dignity, beauty, grace and  
strength. It is this mama and this never-seen-before baby working it out together for  
the very first time. It is the birth that, in Harriette Hartigan’s words, “is as safe as life gets.”

Normal birth is what I trust this mom can do. It is what I believe in, cherish and humbly  
protect. It is the gift we give the mothers we serve and the gift they give their precious babies.

Normal birth is the real-life miracle I witness again and again  
with an ever-growing sense of privilege and joy.