

Role Play I: Communicating about a Woman’s Right to Adopt an Alternative Position for Birth

Directions

The teacher will select three learners to perform the following roles: a skilled provider, a woman in labor, and the woman’s sister-in-law. The three learners participating in the role play should take a few minutes to read the background information provided below and to prepare for the role play. The observers in the group also should read the background information so that they can participate in the small group discussion following the role play.

The purpose of the role play is to provide an opportunity for learners to appreciate the importance of good communication and respectful care when providing information and supporting women in their rights and choices in childbirth.

Participant Roles

Rose: Rose is an experienced community midwife at the primary health care center who has good communication skills, and is supportive and kind to the women she cares for.

Jane: Jane is a 28-year-old woman; she has four living children and she is now 8 months pregnant.

Jane’s sister-in-law: Jane’s sister-in-law is 36 years old and a traditional birth attendant.

Situation

Jane has come to the health center with her sister-in-law for her second antenatal visit. Jane’s sister-in-law helped her to deliver each of her four babies at home. Jane has been to the health center only once for antenatal care with Rose and is planning to go to the health center to give birth. She is doing well in this pregnancy and after Rose has completed her assessment she asks Jane if she has any questions. Jane mentions that she has heard that all women who deliver at the facility are forced to lie down to deliver and she considers this an uncomfortable and humiliating position. Jane explains that in her previous labors at home she walked around and her sister-in-law assisted the last birth while Jane knelt beside a low bed. She asks Rose if this will be an option at the health center—to give birth in the positions of her choice and have a companion of her choice with her? Rose explains that it is an option and there is a corner area in the delivery room with a mattress and a chair that she can use. She explains that all of the staff at the health center are committed to supporting and respecting women’s choices to improve their labor and birth experiences at the facility. Rose then offers to show Jane and her sister-in-law around the maternity section.

Focus of the Role Play

The focus of the role play is the interaction among Rose, the midwife, Jane, and Jane’s sister-in-law.

The midwife should:

- Have excellent interpersonal skills.
- Be friendly and reassuring that giving birth at the health center is a good plan.
- Be respectful and supportive of Jane's choice for her preferred labor and birth position as well as having a companion with her
- Assist Jane to be comfortable in discussing her preferences and encourage Jane's sister-in-law to be involved in supporting her.
- Provide emotional support and demonstrate that she is a caring, sensitive midwife who wishes to work alongside women and their families to listen, advise, facilitate choice, and respond to individual needs.

Discussion Questions

The teacher should use the following questions to facilitate discussion after the role play:

1. How did Rose, the midwife, approach Jane and her sister-in-law?
2. Did Rose give Jane and her sister-in-law enough information about her request? About the health center? About her right to choose the position she wishes? And having her companion of choice with her?
3. How did Jane and her sister-in-law respond to Rose?
4. What did Rose do to demonstrate respect for Jane's choice about her preferred birth position? Were the midwife's explanations and reassurance effective?

Discussion Questions (Answer Key)

The following answers should be used by the teacher to guide the class discussion after the role play. Although these are "likely" answers, other answers provided by the learners during the discussion may be equally acceptable.

1. The midwife, Rose, should welcome Jane and her sister-in-law by name. She should speak in a calm and reassuring manner, using words that the women will easily understand. She should thank them for coming to the antenatal clinic and when the assessment is finished she should ask them if they have any questions.
2. Sufficient information should be provided about the role of the midwife and other skilled birth attendants including supportive, respectful care during labor and birth. The midwife should explain that the facility aims to meet women's choices in labor and birth, emphasizing Jane's right to receive the care that she chooses in childbirth. She should reassure Jane and her sister-in-law that as long as the labor is progressing normally, she can adopt the position in which she feels most comfortable. She should share some pictures or illustrations, as available.
3. Jane and her sister-in-law should ask questions and express concerns until Rose has provided them with enough information so that they understand the care and choices available. Rose should use locally recognized supportive, nonverbal behaviors, such as nodding and smiling, to let Jane know that she is being listened to and understood.
4. Midwife Rose should listen to the questions and concerns that Jane and her sister-in-law express. She should address each of their questions with respect, ensuring that the women fully understand the supportive care and choices that are available. Nonverbal behaviors, such as touching or squeezing Jane's hand or a look of concern, may be enormously helpful in providing emotional support and reassurance. When they visit the maternity section, Rose should show any resources and explain where Jane will give birth and how her sister-in-law can assist her.