

Description

Better birth to the people!

Trine Dahlman. Journalist and author.

Photo Credits: Eva Rose. Birth Photographer

Eva Rose lives in Norway and has worked as a birth photographer for 20 years, photographing more than 120 births. As a birth photographer, she experienced that women's lack of knowledge made them unnecessarily scared before childbirth. She decided to use her photographs as visual communication to try to reduce women's fear of giving birth.Eva Rose noticed that when women are prepared, they have a better birth experience. 'Even if unexpected things happen and their birth doesn't end up the way they want' Rose (39) says. Women tell Eva Rose that her photographs inspire them. Instead of being afraid, they start looking forward to giving birth.

A positive environment

In 2014, Eva Rose had an exhibition at Oslo City Hall, called *Mirakler* (Miracles), followed by a TV documentary called *Fødselsfotografen* (The Birth Photographer). In November 2017, she published the book *Fødsel* (Birth) together with me, Trine Dahlman, her long-time journalist friend.



Trine and Eva Rose with the book!

Sadly, there are still taboos around childbirth. We want to create a positive environment to speak more openly about it. Instagram have removed photos and I have been banned from Facebook, several times, but I won't stop. ***Better birth to the people!***

When Eva asked me to write the book, I said yes on one condition. It had to consist of interviews with women and men who know what labour really is.

- Pioneers of the midwifery profession, doctors, doulas and last, but not least, mothers, who had given birth one, two, three and four times.
- Births at home, in hospitals and at midwifery-led units.
- From those who had a physiologic and natural birth without any interventions to those who were in need for medical pain relief, induction of labour, caesarean section or other assistance from midwives and doctors.
- We wanted to share their knowledge, wisdom and experiences, in order to provide realistic information about childbirth.

I often hear women during labour say: "Why didn't anyone tell me this?" -from having to deliver the placenta to why they get a shot of oxytocin after the baby is born. Also, I often hear: "If I only knew, I would have chosen differently,"

Eva explains:

"We wanted to give people easy access to the options available within Norwegian maternity care. When you know your options at the different birth locations, it is easier to prepare and make a birth plan that suits you. Midwives we spoke to explained that it is also easier to assist women in labour who have a plan and at the same time are prepared that birth might not be as expected. If complications occur, safety comes first".

Eva Rose and Trine's partnership is influencing childbirth in Norway, and is being being covered by the media

Check out the beautiful video!

200 Years of midwifery education



Photo Credits: Eva Rose. Birth Photographer.

Entering 2018, it is 200 years ago since the midwifery education was officially opened in Norway. It was the first formal

education allowed for women. Today, midwives all over the country give high quality care.

Maternity care in Norway is differentiated, divided into three levels: Specialised hospitals, local hospitals and midwifery-led units, either alongside or free-standing.

Women can also choose to give birth at home, attended by independent midwives. Approximately 60 000 children are born in Norway every year. Almost half of them, are born at the five biggest hospitals. The rest are born at smaller birth units or at home.

Maternity services are in governmental institutions and free of charge. If a woman wants to give birth at home, health authorities will pay for parts of the costs.

Changes and concerns – what we found

Eva and I were impressed by the highly skilled and caring midwives and doctors we met. Every day they help women give birth to their babies. Norway is one of the safest countries to give birth in. At the same time, we were surprised by the changes the Norwegian health authorities are making that, according to research, aren't for the better.

For example, closing down midwifery-led units and local hospitals, forcing women to drive for hours to get to the nearest hospital. Some of them have to give birth in their car.

Also, women who give birth at the hospital have a timeframe for their delivery. This increases the potential for stress, stalled labour and for the use of interventions to speed up the birth. It is a wonderful thing to have medical equipment when needed. It does save lives, but unnecessary interventions may cause unnecessary complications.

'I hope the health authorities reopen midwifery-led units and local hospitals. Women should be able to give birth close to their home, or at home, the way they want. With less options, women's freedom of birth choices will be limited' Rose says. – Norway is not moving in the right direction if we want to maintain a high-quality maternity care.

Women's rights

For me, as an advocate for human rights, writing the book became important. It is a woman's right to choose over her own body. Making decisions about childbirth, is a woman's right. Throughout history, midwives especially have been fighting for women's safety and needs regarding pregnancy, birth and the postpartum period. In a time of reorganisation and financial cutbacks, they still are; every single day.

Survive and thrive

In February 2018, WHO Assistant Director-General for Family, Woman, Children and Adolescents, Dr Princess Nothemba Simelela, wrote a commentary, where she points out the importance of high quality care in childbirth and what that actually mean. Survival cannot be the only focus. Mothers and children need to both *survive* and *thrive*.

"*Avoiding unnecessary medical interventions, encouraging women to move around freely during early labour, allowing them to choose their birth position and have a companion of their choice by their side. It also means ensuring privacy and confidentially and providing adequate information about pain relief.*"

A "good birth" goes beyond having a healthy baby.

Eva's next project is to spend three months on the road in Norway, in a motorhome, donating birth photographs to different birth locations and health care centres.

I want to decorate and share the beauty in childbirth. No matter where or how women want to give birth, they deserve a safe and positive birth experience.

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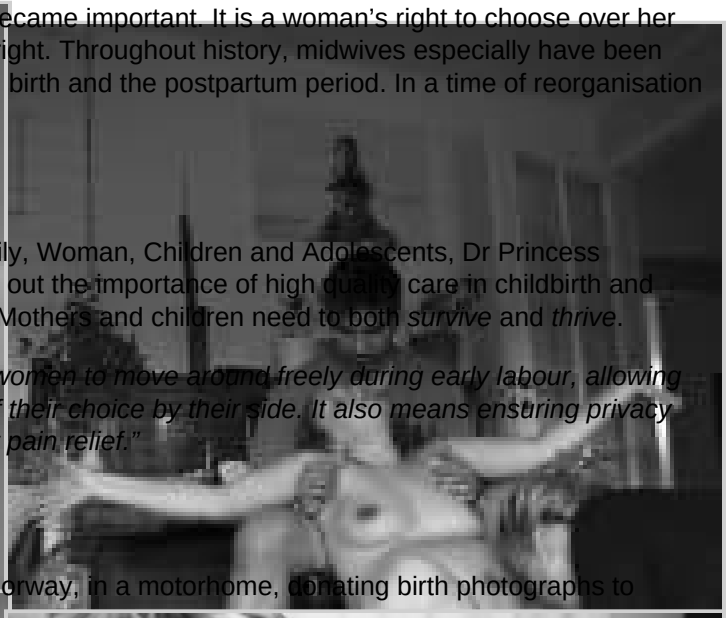
Eva Rose can be found on Instagram – @evarosebirth







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