

Even the most informed parents may find an unfamiliar medical setting intimidating. Some people report “freezing up” when faced with a decision or pressure from care providers. To help you prepare, here are some suggestions for communication in the hospital.

**Practice, practice, practice.** Make a plan about communicating and collaborating in the birth room, and practice by role-playing with your doula, if you have one, and partner or support person. There are many ways to say, “No, thank you,” respectfully and politely. Practice saying “No,” “What other options are there?” and “Please give us some time to discuss and decide,” in a way that feels good to you and your partner. Practice what you and your partner will say in different possible scenarios. A partner who is empowered to use their voice can be a very effective advocate for the birthing person.

**Set the tone with love and humanity.** Immediately set up a rapport with your care team with a basket of snacks or chocolates. Introduce yourself to and make a human connection with every person who enters the room. Make it clear that you are on the same team, and you give respect and expect it.

### Try this:

No, thank you! (Say this in every possible combination there is!)

Thank you. Could my partner and I have a minute or two alone to discuss our options?

I promise I’m not trying to make your job difficult, but is there any way we could \_\_\_\_\_?

Thank you so much! We just need a little bit of time to talk.

Thanks again for your help--we are happy to sign a waiver that we’ve declined that procedure.

My partner is scared and I don’t want them to be upset. What can we do?

My wife really needs some help right now. Can you help us?

### If the situation is becoming urgent, or you are not being heard:

We’d like to see that policy in writing, please.

I do not consent./She does not consent.

Please do not touch me/her. (Only the laboring person has the right to accept to or refuse treatment, but the partner may help by affirming their wishes.)

Please ask the patient advocate/liaison/chaplain to join us for this conversation.

Please document in the medical record that you intend to force me/my partner to have an intervention I have/she has declined.

Please notify your legal department immediately about this situation.

Cut and tape to  
back of partner's  
drivers license or  
phone



B - What are the Benefits?  
R - What are the Risks?  
A - What are the Alternatives?  
N - What if we do Nothing?  
D - Discuss and Decide.