The Roving Body Check by Penny Simkin, PT

The Roving Body Check is a relaxation technique that combines patterned breathing with touch relaxation and guided imagery. You ask the woman to release tension from only one body part at a time, to use her exhalations for tension release, and to focus on the decrease in the pressure of your touch. This technique may be used with either slow or light breathing.

- Body parts to focus on:
  1. Brow and jaw
  2. Back of the neck
  3. Shoulders and arms
  4. One or both hands
  5. Back of the chest
  6. Small of the back
  7. Hips, buttocks and perineum
  8. One or both thighs and legs

Introduce the technique as follows:
Ask her to hold her breath for a few seconds. Ask her to notice the feeling of tension when her lungs are full. As she breathes out, point out the release of tension that comes with the release of air. “Every out-breath is a relaxing breath.”

The technique itself (with slow breathing):
- Note the rhythm of her breathing. Match your breathing to hers, so that you are in synchrony with her.
- While she is breathing in, ask her (in a soothing tone of voice) to focus on a particular body part (for example, the brow or neck) and find any tension. Place your hands firmly on the part, molding them comfortably and creating pressure (it should feel good to the woman).
- While she is breathing out, ask her to release any tension from that part only, and simultaneously relax your hands while keeping them in place.
- Repeat, focusing on a different body part with each breath or two until you have gone through her whole body. Slide your hands from one body part to another; do not remove and replace your hands.

Alternatives:
- She may prefer you to focus on only her “tension spots,” those body parts that are particularly tense (for example, neck, shoulders and back; or buttocks, perineum and legs).
- She may want only your verbal directions, or only your touch. Adapt the technique to suit her.

If using the Roving Body Check with light breathing:
- Have her imagine releasing tension, a bit at a time, or step-by-step down the body part (for example, from the shoulders down the back) with each light breath out.
- You can move your hands down in rhythm with her out breaths.
- Try to use your voice in a rhythm that reflects and reinforces the rhythm of her breathing.

Taken from Penny Simkin’s “Childbirth Class Handouts” CD, 1995
# Checklist of Comfort Measures for Labor by Penny Simkin, PT

## Relaxation/Tension Release
- Relaxation
- Roving Body Check

## Patterned Breathing
- Slow
- Light
- Variable

## Bearing Down
- Avoid bearing down (Blow, blow, blow)
- Spontaneous
- Directed ("Purple" pushing)

## Massage
- Acupressure
- Hand
- Foot
- Effleurage (Happy massager)
- Firm pressure

## Hydrotherapy
- Bath/warm pool
- Shower

## Attention-focusing
- Visual focal point, music, voice, touch
- Visualization

## Mental Activity
- Count off 10 second intervals in contractions
- Count breaths
- Chant, mantra, song, counting, prayer
- Guided imagery
- Other

## Body Positions/Movements
- Standing, leaning, slow dancing
- Walking
- The lunge
- Kneeling leaning forward, beanbag
- Kneeling on one knee
- Sitting up
- Birth ball (sitting, leaning)
- Lying down
- Sidelying
- Semireclining
- Supine with tilt to side
- Squatting
- Supported squat
- Lap squatting

## Hot Packs
- To low abdomen/groin
- To perineum

## Cold Packs
- To low back
- To perineum after birth

## Specific Backache Measures
- Counterpressure
- Double hip squeeze
- Knee press
- Knee-chest position
- Hands and knees with or without birth ball
- Pelvic rocking
- The lunge
- Walking
- Slow dancing
- Abdominal lifting
- Cold pack
- Hot pack
- Rolling pressure
- Shower to back
- Bathtub

## Help from Birth Partner
- Feedback/verbal reminders
- Encouragement/reassurance
- Compliments
- Patience/confidence in woman
- Immediate response to contractions
- Undivided attention
- Eye contact
- Take Charge Routine
- Expressions of love
- Tight embrace/kiss