

Positions

by Marann Mincey

It seems they train medical professionals not to disagree with a patient's position. This year's annual check-up included a clumsy conversation full of euphemisms: "of age" not old, "best health" rather than health risk. The doctor was attempting to tell me my days were numbered without contradicting my choice not to have babies.

Position is everything. The Karma Sutra, the Braille alphabet, the number of Vice Presidents at your company. We begin the education of this concept early. Ask any elementary school teacher the most frequent infraction: cutting in line.

A tech at my orthodontist's office told me missionary-style sex is optimal for conception, especially if it includes pillows and leg lifting. What this woman knows about me is that my bite is now corrected. I know that she and her husband have been TTC for years now. (It's a real term, complete with a website tryingtoconceive.com.) I know they assign days of the week and double up sex on ovulation weekends.

When you are one of 46 million Americans without health care you find yourself in awkward positions like when the public health center at which you've scheduled your annual turns out to be a clinic. The lobby is filled with at least thirty women, about five of them have a ride home. Behind the closed doors it is all blue caps, paper night gowns and elastic booties. Staggering, the number of babies that will be sucked down evacuation tubes just in the hour I am there.

How many times have you not been in the position to tell? A cheating spouse, a diagnosis, a teenager's secret. One's undisguised confidence in you becomes a weight on your conscience. My neighbor expanded her house and doubled her mortgage to accommodate her one, tiny baby boy. She's aged ten years in nine months and

complains of the strenuous schedule of up early for day care, working late, feeling guilty about having only one hour per evening with her child. She finishes our sidewalk chat asking, “When it is that you’ll be having one?”

I’m not prepared for the evolving positions of motherhood: from protector, to caretaker, to confidant, to chauffeur, to an embarrassment, to evil, to forgotten, then, sometimes, to friend. People treat it like something I’ll outgrow, or snap out of. I think my Hungarian aunt is having a harder time dealing with the end of my child bearing years than I am. She gifts me subscriptions to cooking magazines full of homemaker ideas. It’s not that I think having babies is bad. I just don’t think one should get stuck in an obligatory position. I have yet to find a support group for the non-wanting.

All of my mother’s “grandkids” have fur. We tease her that she was too good a mother, setting such a high standard her children are afraid to try. So maybe it’s a question of role models. I dedicated my entire third grade project to Amelia Earhart. If childless means incomplete are we not to admire the voice of Billie Holiday, the words of Jane Austen, the paintings of Frida Kahlo? While today there is scarcely a child who has not delighted in his books, Dr. Seuss had not a child of his own.

A simple matter of choice then, a right that has become one dimensional in this country, skewed by the politics of life. Lost are countless sufferings it took for women to be in a position to contemplate their fate. Options weren’t an available train of thought when the whole of a woman’s worth was based on her ability to bear an heir. We live in a time of luxury, able to question much more than whether a seed lives or dies, but whether we want to produce one at all.

When you google bouncer and kids, you get a range of websites renting giant, themed inflatables. Fun! Run the search with adults and you get a site promising

“access to every kind of perverted sex on the planet.” Eeww. I prefer flip-flops to sensible, weight bearing shoes. I’d rather throw away than clean the pan I left on the burner so long it’s crusted in black. Growing up can look a lot of different ways; I’ll take the jumpy toy.