

The decision to have more children...

Contributed by Lauren Snyder
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Hello Group,

By personality, I usually like to let the drama on this list die out over time without adding fuel to the flame. However, this topic of conceiving after having a preemie or preemies has struck a raw nerve and I am feeling cowardly to just sit back and read some of the words and sentiments I have seen in recent weeks.

Plain and simple; it is my view that negative opinions and judgements around how many premature children a person is entitled to have should be entirely left off this list. That is a decision between the parents and God. The cockiness with which some judgements and comments are being passed around this list is upsetting. I say this as respectfully as I can, because I have much respect for the people who have delivered these comments. However, I question the intentions or awareness of consequences in spouting these personal views.

Apparently we've all had premature children and I know I didn't appreciate one comment, thought or negative vibe that was sent my way or perceived to have been sent my way which indicated on ANY level that my child's premature birth was due to irresponsibility, selfishness, carelessness, cluelessness or a lack of genuine concern for my child. While I was in the anguish of caring for my child in her darkest days and trying to recover emotionally from my darkest days people who threw that kind of energy on me were instantly removed from "my circle". My own judgements towards myself, my fears and concerns were devastating enough. There just wasn't room for them.

While my daughter experienced a raw and brutal trauma in her early life, her mother did too. As I think back to my experience, the number one most devastating part of the preemie experience for me was watching my daughter suffer. The second most traumatic experience was facing the fact that I may have had something to do with it.

I struggled with the guilt and uncertainty for years. However, in the midst of this struggle, I felt a strong urge to try for another child and went through another intensely personal experience I couldn't even begin to describe on this list to attempt to come to a decision on whether or not to try again. I tried to explain my feelings to my friends and family but despite good intentions my emotions fell on deaf ears because everyone ignorantly told me that everything would be fine. I visited with all of the doctors I was supposed to and nobody could guarantee anything. I was as likely to have a premature child again as I was unlikely to. Statistically, the odds were in my favor...but then statistically I should never have had a premature child in the first place. They held little value for me. So the decision came down to faith. Not faith that I would have a healthy, full term child, but faith that God would provide. Premature or not was out of my hands. I was compelled (or you could say that I decided) to take that blind leap of faith. That's what it was: blind.

Every pregnancy is a blind leap of faith.

This topic brought me back to something I said in one of my first introductions to preemie-I (which was long of course *sigh* - and a long time ago). I looked it up it just now...but this was one of the first of many lessons in my life journey with my daughter. It didn't come together for me in this way until I sat down to write the list. I can thank Brooke and her early delivery and struggles for this insight:

"You know, I've often thought: if someone were to have given me the choice between having a premature/disabled/sickly child or no child, I think I would have chosen no child. I feel like I've been learning that's an ignorant choice. I would choose my daughter and all of our experiences together to date all over again [against having no child], now that I know better. But I have to admit, it can be a slow lesson to learn (which gives me something to think about as I contemplate having another child and risking/fearing another premature child";

It's my understanding that no one chooses to have a premature child - they usually just choose to have a pregnancy (or sometimes they don't even get to choose). All there is to do at that point is to be the best parents you can be and take care of your child in the best way you can.

Part of being a good parent, is to have assembled a good support team. That is what this list is supposed to be all about. Negativity and in-your-face judgement is not appropriate or welcome in "my circle" even when it is the honest truthful opinion of the person who delivered it. Just because you think it, doesn't make it "right" and/or useful to me in my time of need or concern. My true "friends" would speak to me in a way that would add value, show caring and concern, and respect for the decisions I have made in my past and the issues I am currently working with (even when they are in disagreement).

Please, I expect more tenderness on this list and absolute acceptance for ALL preemies whether they come from 5

mothers or 1 mother of 5.

To the parents of preemies (singular or plural) and sick or high needs children (or any combination in between)…you deserve the utmost respect and reverence (& support) for the work you do on this earth everyday with your children and dare I say it, for birthing these beautiful spirits that bless the world…

Sincerely,

LaurenMom to Brooke (born 26.5wks now 2 3/4yrs old) and Brandon (born 38wks now 8months) à and we all have the flu-ugh.