

Deciding to have / not have children

Sanctuary Boston, MA, October 27, 2015

Gathering, Welcoming (2 minutes)

Chalice lighting & Opening words (1 minute)

I'll never know and neither will you of the life you don't choose. We'll only know that whatever that sister life was, it was important and beautiful and not ours. It was the ghost ship that didn't carry us. There's nothing to do but salute it from the shore.

—*Cheryl Strayed*

Covenant (1 minute)

- confidentiality
- respect our time together, beginning and ending on time
- keep discussion focused on topic
- invitation but not expectation to share
- speak from your own experience
- assume good intentions
- commitment to 5 weeks
- address conflict directly and in the group
- refrain from talking at people

Check-in (2–3 minutes each @ 20 minutes)

Reading (2 minutes)

Steve: Sit on a bench and think “What are the sacred places and wonder that I want in my life?”

...

Cheryl: Whatever path you choose it will be a good one. If you decide to become a parent, being a parent will be one of the most important, meaningful and profound experiences of your life. You'll learn a lot. You'll see yourself in a new way. You'll love in a new way. And if you don't become a parent, we can't predict what else it will be, life is full of all kinds of things. Parenthood takes up a lot of space and something has to go. There are things that I have missed in the last 10 years because I was so focused on being a mother. I did a whole bunch of other things in the last 10 years too and they were important to me. Take a deep breath and trust yourself. Trust your gut on this.

Steve: Find your desire, that most amazing thing. For some people that most amazing thing is having kids and being a parent; for you, it might be something else.

— *Steve Almond and Cheryl Strayed*

Dear Sugar, Episode 5: The Family We Carry

The determination that I've come to is that there are three kinds of women in the world: There are women who are born to be mothers. There are women who are born to be aunts. And there are women who should not be allowed to be within 10 feet of a child. It is very important that you figure out which one of those camps you belong in, because tragedy and sorrow results from ending up in the wrong category.

— *Elizabeth Gilbert*

When we decide to have a child, we cut ourselves off from the freedom and other satisfactions of child-free living. Similarly, the decision to remain child-free means that we must give up the intimacy and joys of parenting. By not deciding, we hold onto the illusion that we can have it both ways — that we don't have to give up anything. Nor do we face the risk of discovering that we've made the wrong decision.

— *Merle Bombardieri, The Baby Decision*

We are one of the first generations in the history of the world that, as long as we are careful, can have almost 100 percent control over our reproductive system. Think of how many women in history who would have chosen not to reproduce, if they had a choice, but ended up having 10 kids.

— *Kathy Benjamin*

http://www.cracked.com/blog/6-weird-lessons-you-learn-when-deciding-to-not-have-kids_p2/

First response (20 minutes)

Take a moment of silence and consider these questions.

Do you want to have children?

What has influenced this decision?

Has your perspective on this decision changed over time?

What are the thoughts and images that come to mind when you picture yourself at twice the age you are now?

Please respond to whichever question or questions you feel moved to answer. It is not necessary to respond to all of the questions. You may also respond to any of the readings that you find to be particularly meaningful.

Snack break (5 minutes)

Cross-conversation (30 minutes)

This time is for you to respond to what other shared previously.

Business / Feedback (5 minutes)

Closing (1 minute)

What every path you choose, it will be a good one.

—*Thich Nhat Hanh*