

select simpler...

respect the body...



Be Choosy! News, Events and Tips

DEAR DIARY,

I admit, I was anxious this morning. I woke at 5 am to practice my presentation in the silence of our garage. Bisphenol a's story was ingrained in me - how it was created as a synthetic estrogen eighty years ago, how we find it as a highly leachable ingredient in some plastics, how once it is in our bodies, receptors view it as additional hormones causing links and fluctuation in reproductive disorders, obesity, developmental problems. Yes, I was passionate about the subject, but testifying to the Department of Public Health of Massachusetts was going to be out of my comfort zone.

The Department of Public Health was proposing a phase out of the chemical Bisphenol-A in "reusable food and beverage containers" used by children under three.

On a crooked narrow street in the epicenter of Boston, a stone's throw from the Old South Church and the Freedom Trail, the government building was decorated in putty-colored walls, flooring, and trim, and lined with metal file cabinets. Sixty some folding metal chairs faced the front of the library-quiet conference room. I gave a friendly nod to fellow dedicated advocates. Seventeen of them would state why Massachusetts's proposed ban **was needed, but not enough**. Adamantly, they would state, "We need to join ranks of other progressive states like Vermont and Connecticut," or "go beyond that, to the role of a leader and be the guardian of our citizen's health." In the audience was also a small group of women and men, professionally dressed poised to **defend** the place of BPA in our economy.



Two facilitators sat at the head of the room, stoic behind a folding table decorated with three microphones and a quaint tape cassette player. I realized my presentation was not going to be standing, exuberant, and interacting with the audience, but instead, sitting down with my back to the audience and 3 feet in front of the panel. My mind scrambled, replayed my presentation, and made adjustments.

Because I brought my three kids to watch government in action, they "kindly" bumped me up to "first to present." My son stood to my left and recorded my presentation so one day I can share it with you. Reviewing the video this evening, I must say, I did well. Pat pat pat. A five-minute journey shared my gratefulness to businesses that provide alternatives, (showing that BPA is not necessary) and my pride in Massachusetts for when they stepped forward advising BPA may compromise chemotherapy. (Little positive reinforcement never hurts.) My presentation traveled from passionate to angry and then solemn.

I was painfully aware of the silence at the end. No clapping in this public sector venue. In my seat, I let the adrenalin run its course as another mom took the stand. I turned to my kids and asked them if they were ready to tip toe out of the room to the promised walking around Boston. All three of them - 12, 9, and 7 - shook their heads no. They wanted to watch this unravel. I stared at them and a slow smile came to my face. Now I was **proud**.

Within minutes, tears welled in my eyes. The next woman pleaded with anguish for our state to ban BPA, to protect other families from what she endured. Her baby son was born with hypospadias. A result of BPA in consumer products reacting during a small window 8 - 12 weeks during gestation and alter the urinary tract.

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Leaving the baby to pee out of a hold in the side of the penis and requiring hours of reconstructive surgery. Data shows hypospadias increased almost 20% between 1990 and 2000.

I was **humbled**. What am I doing here? She has a real reason to fight. I felt **helpless**. Next wave of emotions hit, *what else could I do to change things?* And the next. I became **FURIOUS**.

Then, a man took the stage, a representative of an association of businesses claiming the proposed ban would affect the economy. I became agitated, personally emotionally charged. While I would have been mesmerized over the next two hours, I decided to escort my wee ones to the summer air where I could breathe.

It was interesting that they wanted to sit on a bench and people watch. Almost as if they needed the time to reflect as I did. Listening to soft coo-ing of pigeons and peeling an orange in the sun, I wondered, "Would the "Pro BPA" testifiers one day experience with heartbreak their first-born peeing out the side of his penis and subsequent surgeries? Would one of the two men in the panel be diagnosed with cancer (in US, probability for invasive cancers in men is **1 in 2 so I wasn't so far off**) and have hours at Dana Farber Cancer Institute, to mull over the effectiveness of chemotherapy dripping into his veins? There was not anything left I could do that afternoon except love my children.

Yes, I was wide-eyed and nervous this morning. I am convinced things WILL change. It is just up to us to decide when. Now? Ten Years? Another generation's efforts? After today, I will never miss an opportunity to make my voice be heard. No more sitting behind my computer screen. No more being sheepish or consider it an 'inconvenience' in my day – a glorious summer vacation day. This was a learning experience and a responsibility.

Love Always,

Me

Until next time, **Congratulations** on your journey to choosing wiser, selecting simpler and respecting the body.

Take care,

Kristi Marsh

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