Mental Pause Support

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ABSTRACT

In this column, a childbirth educator humorously discusses a strategy for coping with mental lapses during prenatal classes.

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“It’s yellow. Kids ride it to school.”

I strained pathetically. Both children looked up from their newspapers, rolled their eyes, and took a wild guess. “A bus, Mom?” they chimed in unison.

Okay. I am a professional speaker, musician, and childbirth educator exhibiting expressive aphasia. This has been happening for a while now. I used to blame these erratic mental lapses on sustained pushing during childbirth. That 22-year-old excuse is being replaced with one that’s more fitting of my age. More and more often, I experience the “mental pauses” that accompany menopause. Sometimes, I open my mouth and never really know whether the words or lyrics will be there. Other times, I hear myself transposing words. For those of us who teach, this can be both embarrassing and humbling, to say the least.

I really didn’t mean to say, “After the Pitocin is started, Doctor *Zhivago* will be in to check for cervical *animation*.” But there it was, rolling off my tongue. I was stunned at what I heard. If it had been an option at that moment, I would have donned a Russian fur hat and draped myself in a wool blanket. I would have turned theatrically and had my animated cervix carted away in a horse-drawn sled, right then and there. Can’t you just hear “Lara’s Theme” swelling in the background?

Instead, I froze, hoped no one was paying attention, and made a note to self about looking for a perimenopausal support group. I also took comfort in the fact that most couples today have never heard of the Oscar-winning movie and think Dr. Zhivago is an actual obstetrician.

Even though I think I am clever at covering these slips, some nights the couples must think they’ve come to class to play a round of the popular 1970s television game show *\$25,000 Pyramid*.

"It does this before it opens. It's not thickening but thinning. It takes longer with primips." Ding! Ding! Ding! "Effacement!" shout my class participants. I figure it all balances. I realize they are clueless about Omar Sharif and, nowadays, the *Pyramid* prize is probably a lot more than \$25,000.

After class that night, I decided to check the television schedule to see what the *Pyramid* does pay these days. (In class, I call this "going off on a tangent.") While channel surfing, I came across a program about a woman in Arkansas who was expecting her 15th child. I watched the family load into a van and purchase nearly \$800 worth of groceries. I watched the kids do chores and be home-schooled. I watched with my mouth open as all 14 children crowded into an ultrasound exam room and listened to their mother and her midwife explain their unborn sibling's anatomy and prenatal development.

"This woman deserves an honorary degree in childbirth education," I thought, completely dismissing any further musing about Dick Clark and his *Pyramid* show. Then I noticed the white support stockings cinching the ankles of this grand multip and marveled, "Why, in addition to many labor scenarios, this woman has probably experienced every common discomfort of pregnancy and, no doubt, a few uncommon ones as well." Then it hit me. Instead of a mental-pause support group, I need to develop a special set of TED support hose to improve the circulation in my brain! Now there's an image for you.

DEB GAULDIN is a childbirth educator who travels nationally presenting keynotes and workshops. For booking information, call 800-682-2347 or visit her Web site (www.debgauldin.com). Deb's CDs and tapes contain humor and songs about pregnancy, childbirth, and the adjustment to parenthood. They are available through Lamaze International (800-368-4404).

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