Deb's Page

"How Many?"

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Note: Information about Deb's *Hormone Affirming Music and Humor* can be obtained by calling 800-682-2347. Deb would love to hear from and write about funny things that have happened to you. Please send them to her at ON251 Robbins, Winfield, IL 60190.

"Ah-he ah-he ah-he."

"Good, honey, you have 593 more contractions to go!"

Believe it or not, I had this situation come up with a couple who both happened to be—yes—accountants. There at the bedside, his wife perspiring and puffing away, this labor coach was actually tallying the completion of *each and every contraction* with the goal, of course, being a birth scheduled to occur at a specific time.

Now, I am known for being one of those "fly by the seat of her pants" kind of gals. Only on rare occasions can I get my checkbook to balance, and I try not to add three columns at a time unless absolutely necessary. A measure of flour looks "close" to half a cup, and the seam I am sewing looks "mostly" straight, if you get the picture. Okay, okay, Deb, stop yourself from being so judgmental. Lamaze-applied math was obviously working for them. They were simply adapting the principles presented in class to meet their learning and personality styles. This is a good thing, right?

Several weeks before, within minutes of my beginning to cover the stages of labor, this expectant father had crunched the numbers and announced his findings to the entire class. He began, "So what you are really saying is that if my wife has an average labor, she will have to cope with 632 contractions total. And you expect her to do this with no medication?"

Looking out at a group of totally mortified looking parents-to-be, I hoped the thoughts in my head weren't evident on my face. Ever the pleasant educator, I paused and thanked him for contributing to the class discussion. Then, in a move I deemed brilliant, I tried to shift the focus to the fact that for every 60- to 90-second contrac-

tion, there occurred an *even longer* rest period between. Therefore, I responded cheerfully, perhaps they could focus on the idea that she would in fact be doing more resting than laboring.

I'm afraid they were not comforted, and I made a mental note to tell their labor nurse to have someone from anesthesia meet them in the hospital parking lot upon their arrival. Little did I know that labor nurse would be me!

Epitomizing the question of whether the glass is half full or half empty, I spent their entire prenatal series and now their labor muttering to myself about how anxiety-

producing their attitudes were. I pictured huge white boards mounted on the walls of their nursery and diaper graphing ratios tracking flatus, as compared to the real thing.

But guess what? They did great and even delivered quite close to their ETA. This contraction countdown approach worked for them, and ultimately, that was all that mattered. Once again, I was humbly reminded to respect that each person/couple knows what works best for them. This was the 58th time I have learned this lesson. Or was it the 59th or 60th?

Solution to "Kay's Perinatal Crossword Puzzle"

(See "Kay's Perinatal Crossword Puzzle" on pg. 50.)