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Let's talk about Hemorrhoids and Other Fun Stuff

My client was complaining that he had to have his annual prostate exam. I'm a therapist. I have empathy for anyone having body parts invaded. But seriously, the non-therapist side of me thought. You want something to complain about? No one really writes much about the psychological aspects of this and some great comedians touch upon this at times, but being a woman is rough. It is not for the faint of heart. Some of it is downright unattractive. But let's dig in – really in, starting with a gynecological exam. To the neophyte, it looks like stage one of electrocution. My brother, an attorney representing a gynecologist in a case, had to get up in the stirrups in the humiliating position of a spread eagle. I'll leave it to your imagination as to why he had to do this. He now gets it. OK, so you are in your stirrups and a freezing cold speculum is your next big surprise. It's that metal or plastic device dilates -or in laymen's terms, stretches your insides for a good look. Mr. "prostate", are you still with me?

How would you like to try menses, or as it is more popularly known as having your period once a month. Cramps, bleeding, bloating, the blues. It seriously is a drag. Any woman can tell you their worst period experience from pain to predicament. But that's all just in preparation for the real fun. Pregnancy. As a therapist I often work with those who have a pre-partum disorder as well as postpartum disorder. Pre, I define as pure fear. A person is growing in your body. Is that weird or what? Pregnancy: not only do you get the speculum torture once or more a month, you gain weight, your breasts feel like they belong to someone else, you can't sleep, you are nauseous, if you cough or sneeze you pee, you do not feel "glowing". You feel fat. Period. And your feet have swollen and no shoes except those ugly, fuzzy slippers fit. And you despair that you will never possibly shrink back to size. Mr. Prostate – how's that exam coming? And oh, the joy of giving birth. If there is ever a woman who has not shouted, "get that out of here" in the ninth month, please let me meet her.

When I was pregnant, I personally found it interesting that not one person warned me about the pain of one's milk coming in – for the uninitiated, as in coming into the breast for feeding. Seriously, I rather give birth again. Now that really hurts – for about the first week if you are lucky and don't get some kind of infection or paralyzing soreness. Nor was I warned that milk flow has its own schedule – like while you are giving speech to a room full of people or shopping and hear another baby cry. My sisters, you know what I'm talking about! Mr. Prostate – not so sure. I visualize him checking out his breasts right about now.

Postpartum depression is a syndrome that as many as 15% of women endure. Postpartum depression is a type of depression that happens after having a baby. People with postpartum depression experience emotional highs and lows, frequent crying, fatigue, guilt, anxiety and may have trouble caring for their baby. It is a serious psychological issue, so I am not making light of that. But, Mr. Prostate, stay with me. Often accompanying postpartum is the un-talked about hemorrhoids. **The word, hemorrhoids, is kind of funny, and thanks to my dear friend and talented writer, Alison Whitney's short film, "The Hole Truth" hemorrhoids are funny. 40% of women get hemorrhoids after giving birth.** That's not funny. It's one other joyful experience no one warns you about; carrying around a set of golf balls you didn't I know you had. Trying to complete your daily elimination is close to impossible. You are sure you will never poop again, or given the pain, will never want to. And unless they shrink on their own, enjoy one more little bitty surgery that has you sitting on a donut pillow for a month or two following.

Oh, I see your prostate exam is over. One gloved finger in your butt and all is well. And I sincerely am happy for you. So, I won't bother you with talking about uterine fibroids or cystitis or – here's a biggie, menopause. And my favorite, the mammogram. Pick your favorite body part and have it squished between two metal plates.

There are many joys to being a woman. Those are not the ones. **Alison Whitney, you inspire me.** While my pregnant days are far behind me, the memories, mammaries, 'rhoids, and leaky boobs are still vividly in my mind. Keep writing and keep reminding all of us that sharing our stories and bodily dysfunctions allows one to know, you are not alone.

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