THAT'S WHAT WE SAID

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Note: A few months ago I began asking questions on my social media page. These are the results.

Someone at a yoga class asked one of us if we were pregnant, and we weren't. Others of us started sharing our most embarrassing moments, many of which were pregnancy-related.

One of us was asked by a friend's husband if she tore while giving birth.

One of us was asked if she was the baby's grandmother at the three-day checkup.

Many of us were asked if we were pregnant, and we weren't. We were at yoga, or work, or the grocery store.

One of us was asked if she was pregnant, and when she said no, the questioning woman insisted she must be lying.

One of us was asked if she was pregnant, and she burst into tears because she wanted to be, but wasn't.

Many of us were asked why we didn't want to have kids.

Or we were asked why we didn't want to have more than one.

Many were asked if we had planned our pregnancies.

One of us was asked, many times, how much her adopted child cost.

One of us was asked why she didn't want her own.

One of us was asked what happened to her adopted children's real parents, or if she was worried the children might be damaged.

One of us was asked if the birth parents were young.

One of us had six kids, and someone at the park asked her if she knew about birth control.

One of us was told by a coworker she'd better be careful, or she just might "pregnant" herself out of a job.

One of us was told she just needed to "work off" looking pregnant.

One of us was asked if she was fat or pregnant.

Then we started talking about body shaming in general.

One of us, when she stretched out her hand to introduce herself at an event, the organizer said, "Oh, I thought you'd be petite."

One of us had a stepmom who told her she had a big butt, and how everything she ate was going to go straight there.

One of us was twelve, about to go off the high dive, and a boy told her, "I've seen better legs on a cow."

One of us was nine, and two girls at the pool told her they had never met a pregnant third-grader before.

One of us ignored a catcall, and the guy yelled that her belly was bigger than her titties.

One of us ran nine miles on the treadmill at the gym, and the man on the machine next to her asked her if she was trying to lose weight.

One of us was in fifth grade and her teacher, a nun, told her she shouldn't take a size small uniform because she definitely wasn't.

One of us had a cashier at the grocery store asked her what happened to her face.

One of us had a cashier at the grocery store asked her if she had Bell's Palsy.

One of us had someone at the city pool ask us if we had Parkinson's.

One of us was asked if she was her girlfriend's mother.

Many people asked her if her wife was her sister. One person asked if they were mother and daughter, and they were never sure who he meant was the mother and who was the daughter.

One of us went to the doctor because she thought she had strep, and the nurse signed her up for obesity counseling.

One of us went to the doctor for an OB-GYN exam, and the nurse asked her why she didn't wax or shave.

One of our doctors asked how old she was, and when she told him, said she looked much older than that.

One of us was wearing a sleeveless shirt, and her friend asked her, didn't she think all women looked gross in sleeveless shirts?

One of us started thinking about makeup for some reason, so we asked: Did we wear it? How much? Why? Why not?

One of us said she wore makeup once a year.

Another said she thought it felt disgusting.

One of us said she had so much makeup she could open a drugstore, and she tried not to go anywhere without it.

One of us said that a Mary Kay representative told her that every night she didn't wash her face she added two years to her age. "Which means I must look roughly 10,000 years old," she said. She also said the representative told her about the "He'll Never Know" plan, where a payment could be split three ways (among cash, credit card, and check). "Those reps need to get with the 21st century," she said.

The woman who said she only wore makeup once a year added that she was getting married soon and had decided to have her makeup done at a department store for the wedding. Her husband would be marrying a stranger, she said.

"Any day I don't have to wear makeup is a great day," one of us said.

Someone said they used to wear crazy makeup in their twenties, and then posted a picture from *Game of Thrones* as a reference.

Someone said they were said society didn't encourage men to wear makeup.

One of us said she used to wear makeup, then stopped, then started wearing it again to keep from getting sunburned.

One of us said she didn't wear makeup unless it was Halloween.

One of us said that makeup made her happy. She said she started wearing lipstick after she got shot in the lip with a BB gun, but then a year later, after the scar had faded, she kept wearing it.

One woman said her husband thought it made her look strange.

Many of us said that if we didn't wear at least a little, we got asked if we were sick or tired, or if "Everything was O.K."

One woman said that she didn't wear much, but her daughter did, and a bad lipstick could ruin her daughter's day.

One of our dads used to say, "You know you can wear makeup, right?" on his way driving her to school.

One of us said if she was going to see any of the following, she put on a full face of makeup: in-laws, friends from high school who always have their shit together, potential future employers, or people who knew her during her toughest times so they think she has her shit together now.

Someone asked a question about buying clothes. What was frustrating about it?

One of us said she was in a values struggle—she liked to buy used clothing, but then felt bad about herself when she was around people who wore better clothes than she had.

One of us blamed her "twin skin" for clothes never fitting.

Another woman asked why we couldn't all just wear sweatpants.

Somebody said that maybe tomorrow they would comment about shopping for bathing suits, but didn't.

One of us said this was why we started sewing our own clothes, but nobody else brought that up.

There was one of us who loved our clothes. She said she chose to wear business casual (she was a dentist) because it kept her accountable for fitting into her size. No one else echoed her sentiments.

After this, we asked a few questions that didn't get very many answers, questions about bad haircuts, imposter syndrome, and vices. No one really wanted to discuss any of those. Then someone asked a question about guilt.

One of us said she wasn't sure what she didn't feel guilty about.

One of us said not spending enough time with her kids, and many of us said the same thing.

One of us said she was afraid she somehow caused her children's health issues, or that she wasn't doing enough to help them.

Somebody wrote a paragraph of all sorts of things, and then said she wasn't sure of it counted because she had a pretty good life.

One of us said sending their daughter to daycare and then binge-watching TV.

A couple of us mentioned not having more than one child.

Another said closing a business knowing people depended on them for their paychecks.

One of us said choosing to stay in an abusive relationship and exposing her daughter to it.

Someone else said time.

Somebody wondered about the voice in your head when you felt guilty. Who was it?

Lots of us said our mothers.

A few of us said our fathers.

Somebody said what a great question it was, but didn't answer it.

One of us said our twenty-something self, maybe because she was a moron.

Lots of us said it was just our own voice, except one person, who said it was his "better" self.

Some of us said we had mostly given up listening to that voice, or else blew it off.

One of us said The Holy Spirit, but nobody else did.

A lot of us agreed wasting money was the worst.

Another said guilt was probably her primary emotion.

Somebody else said they felt guilty about spending money on coffee, and somebody else commented that they agreed.

One of us said they felt guilty if they spent more than twenty dollars on makeup, clothes, or shoes.

One of us said they felt guilty about buying anything, so they always bought the best, that way when they got over it at least they had something of good quality.

Someone said they had shame over their giant student-loan balance.

One of us said we felt no guilt anymore about anything having to do with money, and it was because she was older now.

When another person mentioned feeling bad about buying fancy food, somebody else said that while they did feel guilty about plenty of things, their general thought on food spending was nutritional benefit per cost, so there was that.

It seemed natural to start talking about judgment, too.

It turns out we were judgmental about lots of things.

Some of us said the usual subjects: smokers, litterers, parents who were mean to their kids, wealthy people, political views, late people, rude people, shaming, bigotry, anti-vaxxers.

Some of us said very specific things, like one of us who didn't like people who don't pick up after themselves after eating at a fast-food restaurant, or social media image curating, or McMansions.

One of us said, people who have weird names, even though I know it's not their fault—I should be judging their parents.

A phenomenon started to happen where we realized that some of us were guilty of doing things that some others of us were saying they were judgmental of. And some of us were seeing the comments. Some of us were getting defensive in our comments. One of us said, "Nonsmokers . . . like I'm not blowing smoke in YOUR face. I don't judge your Starbucks: let me have my one vice . . . I'll quit when I'm ready."

One of us said that we were jealous of people who brunch, and that we would also like to be a person who brunched one day.

Then the question turned to why we were judgmental about certain things.

At first, nobody wanted to answer this question.

Then, a brave one of us suggested it was a mixture of insecurity and conceit.

Another one of us said it might be leftover anger from adolescence and growing up with less.
She had said she was judgy about conspicuous consumption, McMansions, that sort of thing.

Somebody said it came from family stuff.

Another one said it was from the things they struggled with the most.

One of us said that things she didn't like about herself, she really didn't like to see in others.
Nobody else commented after that.