



My Body, My Choice: An Ongoing Dialogue

July 2022

Description: Reconciling claims of “My Body, My Choice” with respect to vaccinations, abortion, hairstyles and fashion, tattoos and piercings, sexual behavior and contraception, circumcision and genital cutting, transgendering, etc.

Estimated time: 1.5 hours

(1) Getting acquainted and comfortable

5 - 10 min.

Welcome

- Thank you for coming...
- We are a part of The Great Reset, which was born out of a shift we’re seeing in our country. We have been in a place where we don’t tend to speak ‘beyond our bubbles’ and across perspectives. The Great Reset has been opening up a grey space for such conversations since 2018. You are now part of keeping the conversation going and we thank you.

The Pillars of The Great Reset

- To share our own thoughts and perspectives with humility
- To learn from others and listen with respect

Ground Rules

- Every comment is valid and deserving of respect
- We show respect by speaking one at a time, putting our phones on silent and staying engaged, even when we are not speaking
- In the interest of time, I may cut in to ask you to ‘top-line’ something if we need to move on. This means simply offer up a synopsis of your thoughts and speak in bullets, not paragraphs

Confidentiality

I would like a verbal from everyone that you are here of your own volition and out of respect for one another I would ask you to keep what others say in this room unless they give you permission otherwise. (go around and get verbal agreement). Further, you agree to adhere to the principles outlined already: to deliver your perspectives bound to the principles of respect, to **listen with humility and offer grace to others who are sharing this space.**

Personal Introductions

Please share your name, where you live, and something else about yourself.

*****Remind everyone we’re recording but we won’t use any clips without their approval*****



2) Applications of My Body, My Choice

35 - 40 min.

- We have heard the phrase “My body, my choice” claimed by many different types of advocates to rationalize their decisions and actions. When do you think a person can rightfully say “My body, my choice?”
- And when is “My body, my choice” larger than the individual and permissible for society or an employer or a government to try to restrict?
- Probe for applying “My body, my choice” to vaccinations, abortion, hairstyles and fashion, tattoos and piercings, sexual behavior, circumcision and genital cutting, and transgendering.
- Should an abortion require the legal consent of both the mother and father, and why or why not?

(3) Potential hypocrisy

25 - 30 min.

- Do you feel that some people are being hypocritical when they claim “My body, my choice” is appropriate for some issues but not with others? Why or why not?
- If you do feel that there is some hypocrisy, please give us an example.
- How do you feel when some people claim “My body, my choice” for their particular interest, but then deny that same claim by another person or group for their own different interest?
- Do these multiple claims of “My body, my choice” dilute the impact of using the words for your own particular interest? Why or why not?

(4) Closing comments

5 - 10 min.

- Any additional comments about the use of “My body, my choice?”



Additional resources:

- Given the degree to which this claim resonates, it may be useful to include some background on the phrase, and the reason why we use it to claim agency over ourselves?
 - This phrase originates from the 60's and 70's, used by women in the US to fight for gender rights. In later decades, it has been echoed throughout the world.
 - <https://www.voicesofgenz.com/post-1/the-evolution-of-my-body-my-choice>
 - <https://www.bitchmedia.org/article/the-limits-of-my-body-my-choice>
 - In 1994, a group of African American women coined the term “Reproductive Justice” which brings the conversation of gender/reproductive rights to a systemic scale, connecting the lines between the personal (My body) and the access to health and safety (my choices)
 - <https://www.bitchmedia.org/article/the-limits-of-my-body-my-choice>
 - In the midst of the pandemic, the phrase has been co-opted by another group arguing for agency: those who oppose vaccine mandates. In various rallies in 2020 across the United States, persons protested the mask mandate, stay at home orders, and vaccine mandates, utilizing this same phrase. Some see it as a “political [gotcha](#),” a trump card (some pun intended) to their liberal counterparts.
 - <https://www.statesman.com/story/opinion/2021/12/04/goldberg-what-my-body-my-choice-means-right/8828589002/>
 - <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/covid-19-mask-mandates-wisconsin-elsewhere-spark-my-body-my-ncna1235535>
 - <https://rewirenewsgroup.com/article/2020/04/22/the-rights-desperate-attempts-to-hijack-my-body-my-choice/>
 - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/04/20/pulling-back-curtain-not-all-that-pro-life-movement/>
 - The use of this call-to-action was originally intended to claim bodily freedom and agency for womxn. As time marches on, rhetoric and



word choice has shifted.

- Amnesty International has adapted the call to “My Body, My Rights” and explains that their campaign serves to “stop the control and criminalization of sexuality and reproduction”.
- This new phrasing expands the conversation from a choice to a right (something deemed unalienable by US Constitution), as well as the inclusivity of sexuality and reproduction rights for all (womxn, men, nonbinary and queer folk)
 - <https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/my-body-my-rights/>
- Some feminist womxn argue too that the chant from the 70’s deserves to be revamped. In the framework of reproductive justice, there are calls to plug the individual back into the collective. This muddies the water for the larger conversation of biopolitical control as well: agency through individualism and/or agency through community.
 - <https://www.bitchmedia.org/article/the-limits-of-my-body-my-choice>