

The Good Indian Daughter and Abortion: Punjabi and Pregnant Anonymous

Content warning: this piece is about abortion



Abortion is a difficult topic, but I composed a piece of artwork about it. I am not in a place in my life right now where I can share all the little details about the process. For myself, that is a private part of the story. The emotional part of this story belongs to my partner and I. What I would like to share is how the internet played a massive role in assisting me in finding abortion information and where and how I could receive one.

It was a few days before our anniversary in February 2015. We were sitting on his bed and we were a bit panicked. Deep down in my gut, I knew I was pregnant, but we needed to be sure. The night before, I had stayed up searching pregnancy symptoms on Google. Last month, my period was unusually light and this month it did not come at all. Later, I realized that it was actually pregnancy spotting and that I actually did miss my period. Google told me that I could have tender swollen breasts, nausea, headaches, mood swings, fatigue, and much more - Yup, I had all of it.

My anxiety was through the roof, thinking to myself how a baby is just not what I wanted right now. I wanted to focus on school, travelling the world, and I wasn't interested in having a baby when I still was one. I was freaking out in my mind, but I remained calm for my boyfriend. I knew he was also freaking out inside but was remaining calm on the surface for me.





My boyfriend is the type of man you read and see about in fairy tales and romantic comedy movies. Yes, he is real, and he is mine. He was also a student at this time and we both lived with our parents. I knew having a baby was not in his plan right then, but I know he would have done whatever I wanted. He was just always so supportive as he has always been.

We googled where to buy a pregnancy test and after reading so many blogs online, many mentioned you need at least 4 to fully make sure you are pregnant. I don't know if this is true. He bought four pregnancy tests and I used all of them - all came back positive. This is the emotional stuff that I am going to leave out of the story. The emotions belong to my partner and I. Maybe one day, we will share but right now we will not.

I am a Punjabi woman that comes from a traditional conservative background. I knew my parents would be disappointed and I would have made their worst nightmare come to life. No Punjabi parent wants their daughter to get pregnant before marriage as it is looked down upon in our community. Within the Punjabi community, there is still a strong stigma about premarital sex and becoming pregnant out of wedlock. I did not feel comfortable going to my family doctor because his entire staff, and himself, are Indian. I was worried they would judge me. Although patient confidentiality exists, I was terrified someone in the Indian community would somehow find out and tell my parents. What I actually ended up doing was searching online for clinics in Vancouver, and the first link that popped up was the Elizabeth Bagshaw Women's Clinic. I felt some relief that there was actually information



out there. I felt so much more relief when I was able to book my ultrasound and abortion procedure all online through email. It was discrete and all digital; I didn't need to go to my family doctor.

When I was pregnant, I searched the shit out of everything on Google.

What does a fetus look like at nine weeks? Can it feel pain? What will happen during the abortion? Why didn't Plan-B work? How effective are condoms? Are abortions painful? How depressed will I feel afterwards? Reproductive justice? Will I regret this? Can I get pregnant again? I have to see a counsellor before the procedure? WHY DID PEOPLE USE COAT HANGERS!!! Use black cohosh to help induce a miscarriage. Is this covered under MSP? What the fuck... no contraceptive is 100% effective? There are people out there who say I'm going to hell? Who's Elizabeth Bagshaw?

Yeah... I came across a lot of negative, positive and absolute bullshit on the internet when it came to abortion information. This piece showcases my journey starting from my room, to pro-life discussions online, then pro-choice and reproductive justice information. It then leads into actually finding out about the Elizabeth Bagshaw clinic, having the abortion and ending back in my room.

