

12/11

Hi - ok, take a look. Any thoughts on the last paragraph? Can't tell if the last sentence is good repetition or too much. And if the rambliness of the second to last paragraph is good or too much?

Throughout, put in better words if they are apparent to you!

It was a hot, dry afternoon, and my colleagues and I had taken a taxi to an artisans market in Accra, Ghana. We had been in the vibrant capital city of this West African country for nearly a week, leading a training on financial management for non-profit healthcare clinics. We split up and agreed to meet back at the entrance an hour later. I walked on a windy, narrow dusty lane with tin stalls crammed together on both sides of me. I admired the fabrics, beads, woodwork and handicrafts that I saw and returned the calls of the shopkeepers with a polite smile.

One woman's shop caught my eye. She sold wood sculptures and intricately carved stools. As I walked in, she greeted me with a warm smile and invited me to look around. It was crowded in the small space and as I backed up to get a better look at an item high on the wall, we accidentally bumped into each other. As I stumbled, the tip of my cigarette touched her hand. She said "Ow!" and quickly pulled her hand back. Once I realized what had happened, I apologized profusely. "It's okay," she assured me, putting her hand on my arm. "We're women," she said complicitly. I paused. I didn't understand what she meant, which must have shown on my face, because she then said, "You know, from cooking. Over the fire."

It suddenly became so clear to me how different our lives were. I didn't have that shared experience that she alluded to. And I didn't relate to the strength she implied – we're women, what's a little burn? I felt a world apart.

That was 10 years ago. It wasn't until I was in labor with my first child that I felt this connection she insinuated. It was two in the morning and I was in my apartment in New York City, in labor. The sparkling city skyline, dotted with lights from other people's apartments, surrounded me. I sat on the floor stunned and breathless after a particularly painful contraction. As the next contraction started to rise, I imagined all the women around the world who were laboring at that same moment. At that moment, we were there together – rising to meet the contraction, letting it rip through our bodies, and then resting together, softly panting an encouraging "We did it. We did it" until the next one came. They were me and I was them. It was as real as anything I have ever touched.

After I delivered my son, I couldn't shake what I knew – that of this group of women that labored while I did, so many of them died, were seriously injured, or lost their babies. While I knew the statistics (in Sierra Leone, for example, 1 in 8 women die in childbirth), it was in giving birth myself that their meaning became real to me. I knew the pain, the fear, the vulnerability, the joy. During my labor, I felt like I was fighting for my life. But I knew that I would live, and I knew that my baby would too. It became untenable to me that hundreds of thousands of women were going through what I had just been through, but without access to the safe and clean healthcare services I had received, and were suffering and dying as a result.

Commented [MN1]: I'd replace with "attention" to avoid the cliché

Commented [MN2]: what about "almost conspiratorially"

Commented [S3]: Awkward? Is there a better word than insinuated? Or a better way to tie that experience into this next one?

Commented [MN4]: can use "implied" can use "had felt" or maybe "invoked" I agree that insinuated is not right and plus it has a negative connotation

Commented [MN5]: the phrasing here is awkward too though it's not too bad and you can keep it for an effect you might be going for, but it should be "that SO MANY of this group of women WHO labored while I did either died, were seriously injured..."

Commented [MN6]: maybe "While I had known the statistics – that in Sierra Leone for example... -- it was only by giving birth myself that the meaning of those and so many other numbers became real to me." I like the em dash better than parentheses because then you can say those numbers and it's clear what you're referring to

Commented [MN7]: this is wrong. Wasn't this unacceptable before? I think that's better. Untenable means unworkable in a really like insignificant practical type of way. Like: it's just not going to be tenable to have a sit down lunch for five hundred people given our budget. Even intolerable works I think. Unbearable is more feely but very powerful.

And so, Kangu was born. Kangu is a crowdfunding site for safe births that aims to reduce the number of women and children who die or are disabled in pregnancy and childbirth. Hundreds of thousands of women die preventable deaths each year, with 20 times as many being severely injured or disabled. If women had access to basic health services and emergency care, 80% of these needless deaths could be reduced. On our website, www.kangu.org, you can search profiles of pregnant women around the world – in India, Uganda, Burundi – and contribute \$10 or more so that she and her baby receive access to high-quality, respectful healthcare services. We anticipate our biggest users will be women – particularly pregnant moms, new moms, and grandmothers, who are eager to connect with each other and help other moms have safe births and healthy babies. After months of building the website, finding, vetting and signing up healthcare partners, creating the organization, and testing the concept with our target customers, Kangu is one week away from launching.

Commented [MN8]: anticipate that or expect that

Within the space of two years, I had two children and founded Kangu. Throughout the process of bringing into being both my kiddos and Kangu, I couldn't help comparing the two. No sleep? Check! Emptied bank accounts? Check! Lack of a social life? Check! Fake it till you make it? Check! Fear of failing? Check!

Commented [MN9]: Absent social life?

When I first took my son home from the hospital, I tried to do everything right: I read every book I could get my hands on, I meticulously tracked my son's actions, I took copious notes at doctors appointments. I was trying desperately to control something that was overwhelming and ultimately uncontrollable. After 2 weeks of only sleeping in 20 minute chunks every 2 or 3 hours, I was so exhausted that I was forced to focus on only the most essential tasks. My mantra became "Feed baby, heal mama." Anything that detracted from that – be it my own insecurities, discomfort with not knowing how to do something, bothersome family dynamics – I gave myself permission to let go of. I had no other choice. This was the first time I'd stopped trying to control, to plan head, to get it right. It was a tremendous relief.

Commented [S10]: Is bothersome ok? Dysfunctional sounds too harsh. Any thoughts on a good word?

Commented [MN11]: challenging/difficult and I would consider adding "extended" because it sort of implies that the problem is with your husband and I don't think you want to give that impression

Commented [MN12]: Either delete "of" or reverse the sentence to I gave myself permission to let go of anything that detracted..."

Commented [MN13]: control "everything"?

Commented [MN14]: a

This lesson, that there isn't a right way, that I need only take one moment at a time and act in the way that I think best in that moment, has been extremely useful to me as an entrepreneur. Kangu is many things – a technology company, a non-profit organization, a grant-making institution, and mom-oriented life-style brand. I couldn't build Kangu if I expected myself to know all of the answers; I don't even know all of the questions. When I think of everything that has to be done, I become paralyzed. When I think of one thing I need to do, I start. And I generally keep going for hours. Like parenthood, or life for that matter, there is no manual. As we close in on the beta development cycle, my new mantra is "Build and ship." Anything that detracts from that – be it my own insecurities, less urgent tasks, unread emails – I gently put aside. This has freed me to work much more calmly and productively.

For parents and entrepreneurs, things change constantly. This is both a huge struggle and a tremendous relief. I have come to understand that my job is not to do everything right and right now. Instead, my job is to do my best and to constantly push things forward, little by little. I need to be present, try, fail fast, learn. Repeat. There is an amazing relief in building "fail" into your process from the beginning. Some days I feel like we are almost at the finish line. Some days I feel like we are miles away. I am comforted by the fact that it will continue to change and that I will continue to bring my best self to the task at hand.

Commented [MN15]: This is absolutely not rambling. What are you talking about?! This is really tight. I think it's one of the tightest paragraphs actually. I

Over the years, I've thought about the Ghanaian woman in the market. If I could talk to her now, I would say: I finally understand! Yes, we are women. Yes, we are strong. Yes, we feed our kids and we run our businesses and we love our friends and we nurture our men and we care for our parents and we strive for more. It is my deepest desire that Kangu will not only expand life-saving health services to pregnant women and newborns, but also allow women from very different worlds to connect, to stumble into each other, to become visible to each other and recognizable in each other.

Commented [MN16]: CHILLS CHILS CHILLS and small lump in the throat. NAILED IT. I'm taking total credit for stumble into each other but you pulled off the whole sentence and I love this idea of becoming recognizable in each other. F***ING NAILED IT GIRLFRIEND.