

My name is Cosette Boone and I am an ARNP, CNM, Certified Nurse-Midwife in the state of Iowa. I have provided out of hospital birth in our community for the last 23 years as a local business owner caring for women through life. What most do not know about me is what led me to become a midwife in the first place — the 4 & 1/2 years I spent at what was then known as Planned Parenthood of Greater Iowa.

For me, the issue of abortion has never been about Pro-Life vs Anti-Life or even when life begins — but about Choice (the innate right of each human being to have autonomy over our body).

A model of care integral to my work with women throughout my career — the Shared Decision Making Model — is where the client's right to autonomy trumps a pillar of medical ethics, *to do no harm*. In this model, the provider is the expert with knowledge of the health situation while the client is the expert in their unique body, values, & history. I am ethically bound to hold space, without judgement, ego, arrogance, anger, fear or coercion as she grapples with the all the complexities of deciding which path to follow. Is it easy? No. The decisions before us — whether to have a child, do a surgery, donate an organ, take a medication or receive an injection, turn off life support — are so very intimate, often complicated and messy, sometimes excruciating as we deliberate; for they are not seen through a pinhole focal point within a vacuum, but rather through multiple angles or vantage points.

Do we make mistakes? Yes. That is the nature of being human. But to have the ability to play through every option there is, ultimately allowing ourselves to settle into a decision provides space to step into our power, our truth, to accept responsibility, to live without resentment, without fear, without trauma, to live free and ultimately to heal.

Take away this freedom to choose, and that all disappears. In its place, we are chained, bound to the values and wishes of another who knows not our story. We scream in panic & fear. So I ask pull the lens back from the pinhole focal point, take in the world view and feel the far reaching reverberations. Find your heart space and be still, without judgement, arrogance, anger, fear or coercion. What do you see? What do you feel? What do you choose? Or do you have a choice?