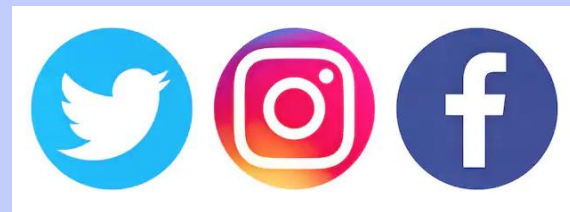
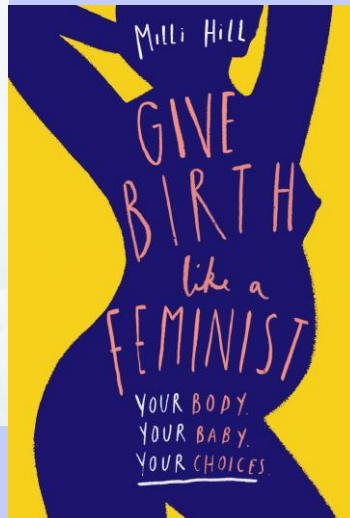
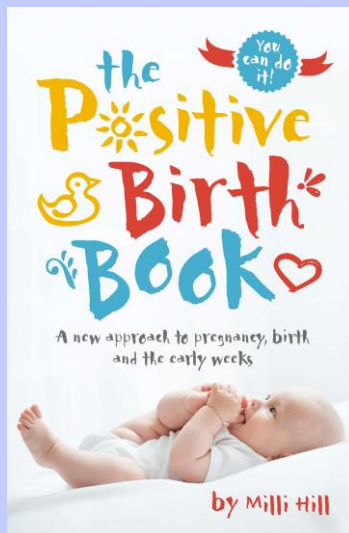


# ENSURING CHOICE FOR A POSITIVE BIRTH

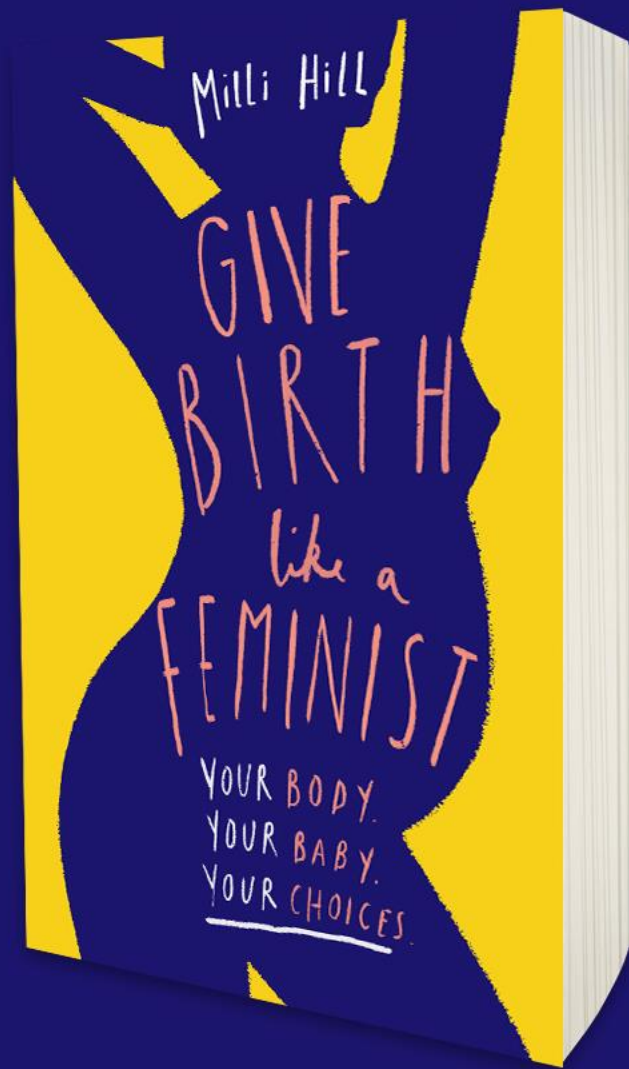
Milli Hill

Founder of the Positive Birth Movement

Author of The Positive Birth Book & Give Birth Like a Feminist



[www.positivebirthmovement.org](http://www.positivebirthmovement.org)



YOUR BODY. YOUR BABY. YOUR CHOICES.

# What is the Positive Birth Movement?



- Free to attend antenatal discussion groups
- Over 200 in the UK
- Another 100+ in the rest of the world
- Meet other pregnant women, share thoughts, ideas, information
- Hear positive birth stories
- Learn about your options and rights
- Learning that you have CHOICES

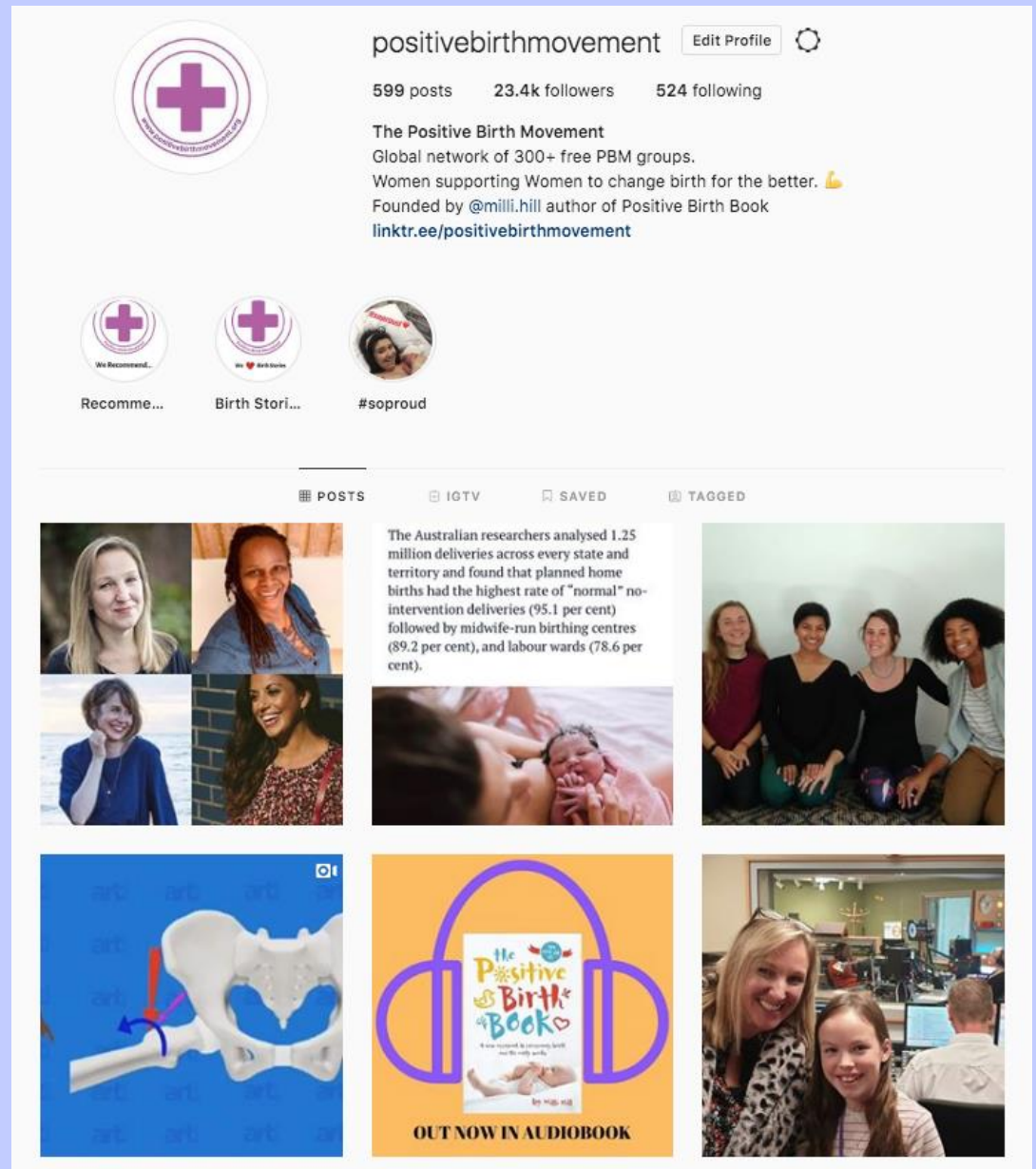


# The Positive Birth Movement!



## Big Online Presence

- 52k Facebook followers
- 13.6k Twitter followers
- 23.5k Instagram followers
- Several facebook groups



# What is Positive Birth?

- Women are where they want to be
- Choices are informed by reality not fear
- Women are listened to and treated with respect and dignity
- Mothers are empowered and enriched
- Memories are warm and proud

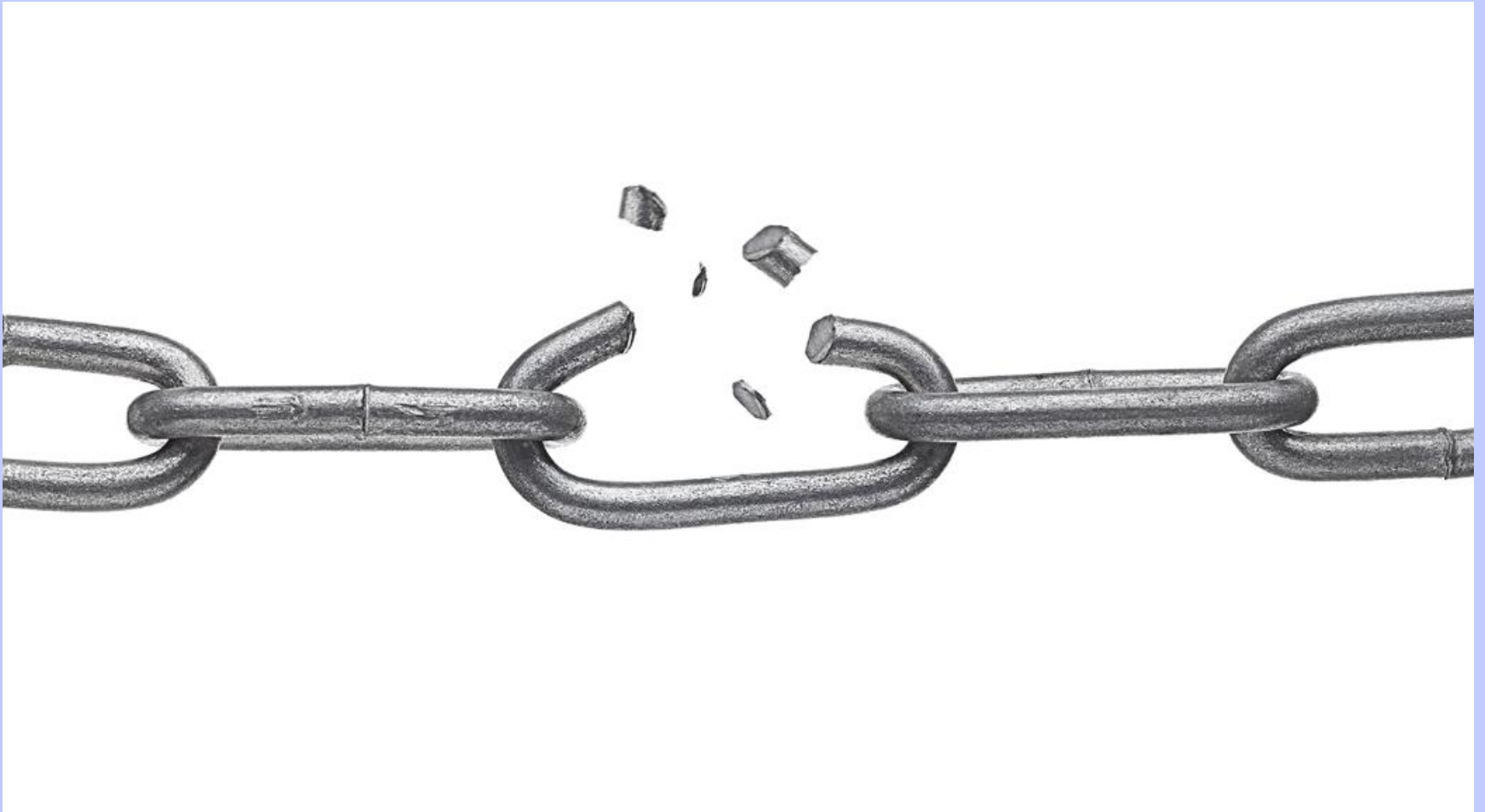
*A healthy baby is not 'all that matters' – women and their experience, and their partners experience, matters too.*



“I didn’t know I had a choice”



# The broken chain of wisdom





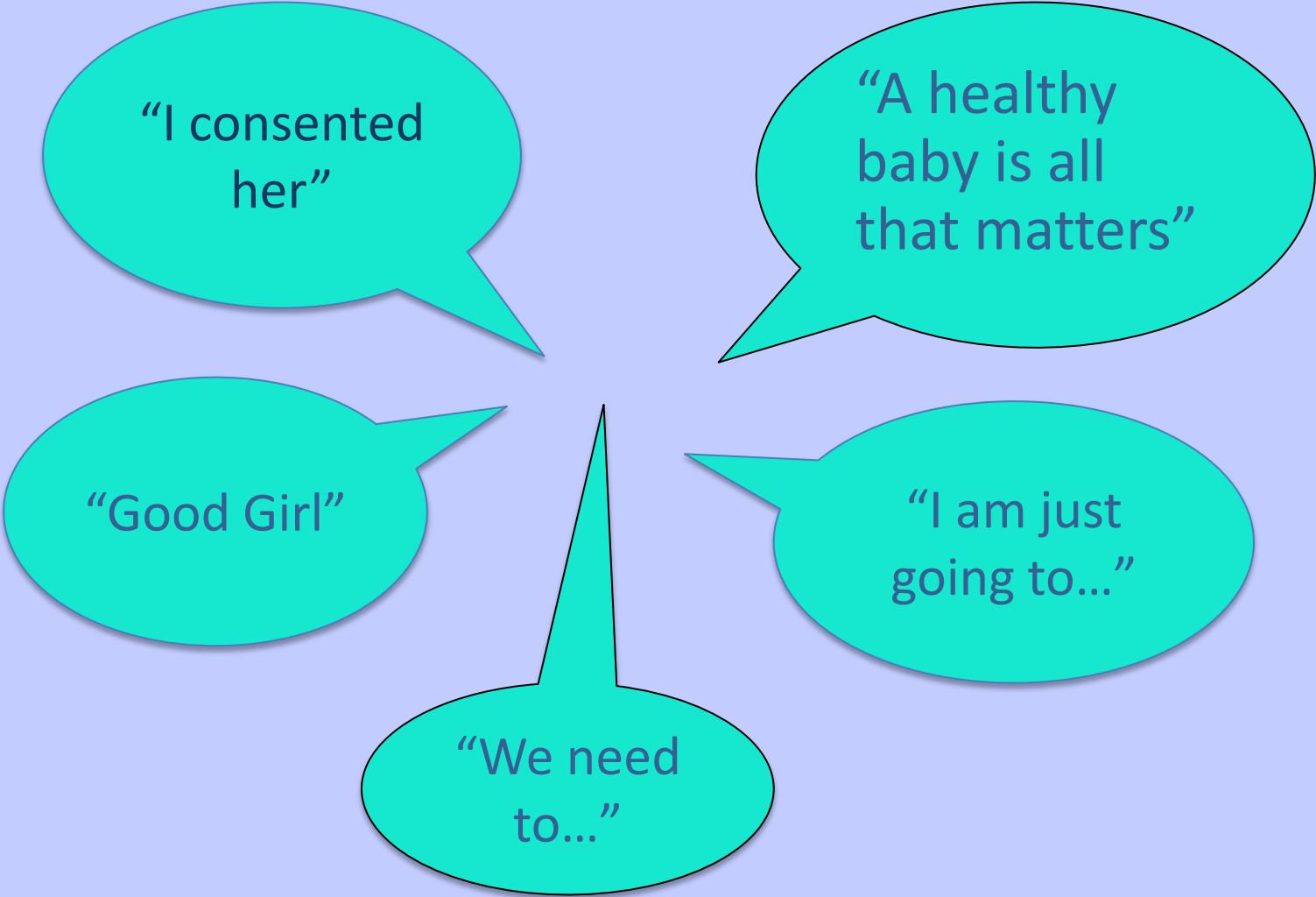
# Seeds in the dark



# One Born Every Minute

- “Watching old episodes of One Born Every Minute to mentally prepare myself for torture. I am terrified even though I know what to expect.” (Twitter)
- Professor of Psychosocial Theory at Birkbeck, Lisa Baraitser, and Sociology Professor Imogen Tyler, wrote a paper in 2013 in *Studies in the Maternal* that concluded that OBEM , like many other childbirth TV shows, portrays women as ‘largely passive subjects’, and that the programme encourages a very limited view of the possibilities for birth, ‘outside of dominant systems of control and surveillance that characterise obstetric practices in the Global North.’ On top of this, OBEM creates fear which, ‘feeds into and reproduces ideas of birth as a “crisis” which needs to be managed to a successful conclusion by medical experts’.
- Wellcome Trust funded project called Televising Childbirth: not only does the programme over-represent white, heterosexual couples, it also shows a, ‘...medicalization of birth through the routinization of supposedly minor birth interventions, and **the absence of the representation of women’s choice over such interventions.**’
- Jackson et al, at the University of York published a paper in 2016 entitled, ‘Healthcare professionals’ assertions and women’s responses during labour: a conversation analytic study of data from *One born every minute*’. Through transcribing and studying 26 conversations, they found that the midwives on One Born frequently used what they term, ‘assertions’, which affected the sense of actual choice experienced by the women. Midwives on the programme would often say, ‘We need to...’, or ‘We’re going to...’, for example, ‘We need to put you on a monitor now’, or, ‘We’re just going to break your waters’.

# The language of 'choice'?



"I consented  
her"

"A healthy  
baby is all  
that matters"

"Good Girl"

"I am just  
going to..."

"We need  
to..."

# Consent and Coercion:

## “It needed to be finished”

*‘A competent woman, who has the capacity to decide, may, for religious reasons, other reasons, for rational or irrational reasons or for no reason at all, choose not to have medical intervention, even though the consequence may be the death or serious handicap of the child she bears, or her own death.’*

- Court of Appeal, Re MB (1997)

# Women Talking to Women



Are you sure that's safe?

*"Who is the Captain of this ship?"  
"I am the expert here."  
"I have delivered hundreds of babies,  
you haven't delivered any."*



# “Authoritative Knowledge”

- “For any particular domain, several knowledge systems exist, some of which, by consensus, come to carry more weight than others, either because they explain the state of the world better for the purposes at hand...or because they are associated with a stronger power base, and usually both.”

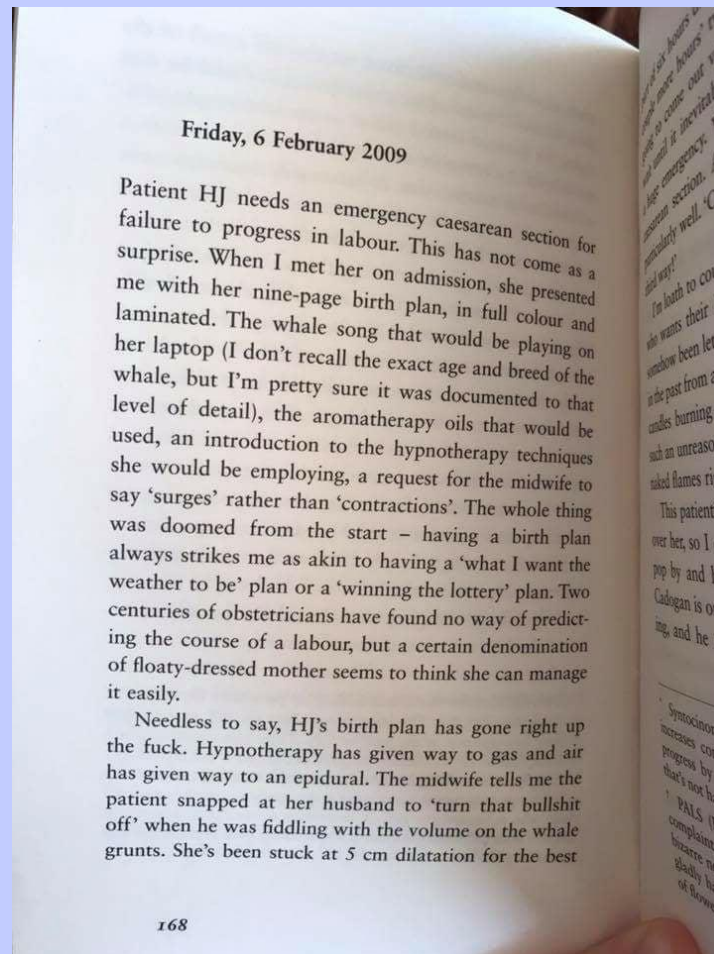
Brigitte Jordan *in* *Childbirth and Authoritative Knowledge*

# Birth Plans

“Birth plans are the closest expression of informed consent that a woman can offer her caregiver prior to commencing labour.”

*Bashi Hazard, lawyer and board member of Human Right in Childbirth*

From Sunday Times Bestseller  
'This is going to Hurt: Confessions of Junior Doctor' by Adam Kay





**Lord Sedge** @LordSedge · 7 Nov

Replying to @GongGasGirl and @drbobphillips

In my experience, if the birth plan is laminated, might as well start preparing theatre for an emergency section.



**Eóin Harty** @tupelo81 · 7 Nov

That's why it's laminated-it will survive the massive obstetric haemorrhage it presages.



**Jennifer Lim** @jenstockbridge · 3d

Replying to @GongGasGirl and @ruralgreengp

Isn't there that joke - the length of the birth plan directly correlates w the length of the caesarean scar? 😄



**Tanya Selak** @GongGasGirl · 3d

I'll be using that one!

# “Let’s see how that goes!”

THE SUN, A NEWS UK COMPANY

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## PLAN SLAM Top docs doubt ‘geriatric parent’ Meghan will be able to have natural ‘doula and willow tree’ birth

‘Overdue’ Meghan may soon need to abandon her home birth plan

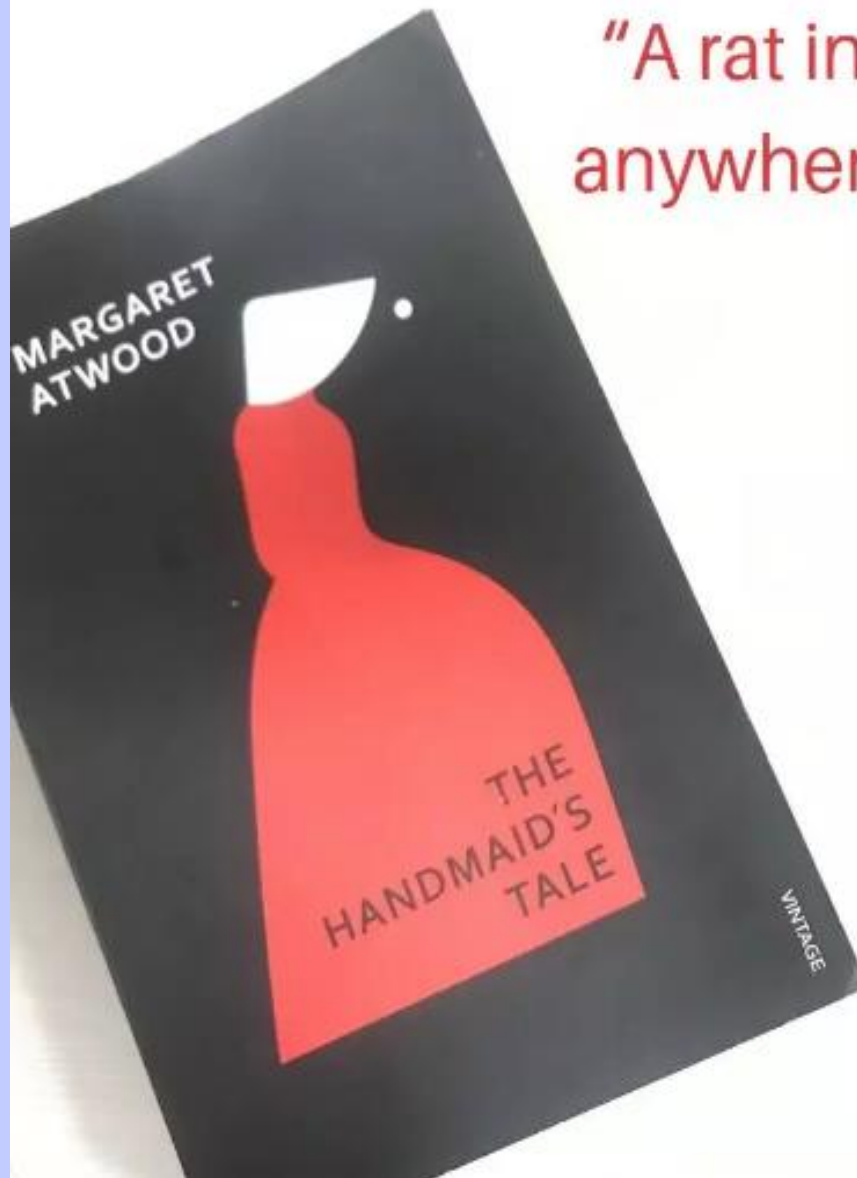
Jenny Awford  
6 May 2019, 7:30 | Updated: 11 May 2019, 16:28

WATCH THE VIDEO





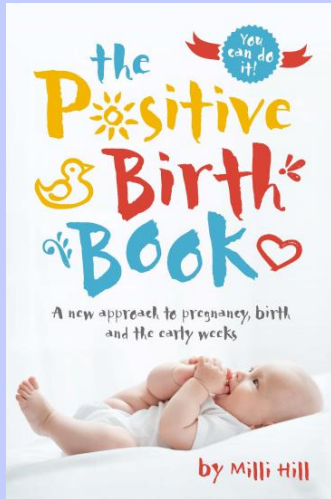
"A rat in a maze is free to go anywhere, as long as it stays inside the maze."



# To truly ensure choice we need to:

- Listen to women
- Understand consent
- Check our language
- Contemplate the power dynamics of the birth room
- Consider what choices are already made for the women in our care (the maze)
- Support women in choices we would not make ourselves
- Understand that safety and health extend beyond simply surviving birth

# Thank you for listening!



Twitter  
@millihill  
@birthpositive

Instagram  
@positivebirthmovement  
@milli.hill

Facebook  
/positivebirthmovement  
/millihill

[www.positivebirthmovement.org](http://www.positivebirthmovement.org)



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