

# The most difficult question conceivable

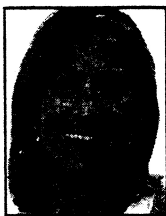
I'VE decided I'm undecided on the having-kids topic. At least that's what I'd answer today if you were to ask my official position.

I've been thinking about it more lately. Partly because I'm seeing a new guy. A guy with enough potential that I've decided not to write about him just yet (neither of us wants to jinx it). And that potential has me thinking about other potentials. Like kids.

I'm also turning 35 this year. Forty has always been the cut-off in my mind (higher medical risks aside, I'm not wild about the idea of raising teenagers in my 60s) — which leaves me roughly five years to decide.

Had I married at 25, kids would have been a no-brainer. Back then, I had the whole board game mapped out: get the career going, meet a guy, get married, buy a house, start a family — in that order (nothing went according to plan, of course). I had less of a sense of who I was at 25. I think I was more willing — perhaps more eager? — to be defined by my relationships: wife, mother.

Kids aren't a no-brainer anymore. It's not so much a biological clock thing. I've experienced — actually, I've come to *cherish* — a level of personal freedom and independence I'm not sure women who started families in their 20s understand. It's not good or bad. It's just different.



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**Parenthood  
is something  
you — and  
your spouse  
— should  
really want to  
do. But do I?**

I'LL admit: The whole thing terrifies me. The change in lifestyle. The sacrifices. Maybe most of all: the utter can't-return-it-if-it-doesn't-fit finality of it all.

I've got a great life. Do I really want to mess with it? Sometimes I think not.

Like when I notice some of my friends-who-are-moms running around like chickens with their heads cut off, their own needs met last (if ever). Women who can't remember the last time they saw a movie or read a book.

I know I'll sound selfish, but when I see their lives, I mostly think how happy I am to be living *mine*. I worry about my mind turning into a mushy glob of Cream of Wheat. Being reduced to the kind of woman whose every conversation centers around the adorable little thing Johnny did or said yesterday.

I think parenthood is something you — and your spouse — should *really* want to do. I know I'm *supposed* to want it. But *do* I?

It's not that I don't have a maternal bone in my body. Or a fear of responsibility. I've agreed to raise my two nieces were anything to happen to my sister, Lisa, and her husband, John. Occasionally, they ask me: "Are you sure?" The truth is, I'd be jealous were anyone else to have that honor. I'd put my life on the back burner for those two munchkins in a heartbeat.

I worry that were I to choose not to have kids, I might regret it when I'm 60. Regret forgoing the once-in-a-lifetime experiences of pregnancy, labor, birth. Regret not having kids and grandkids crowded around my dining room table on Christmas. And what if my husband died before I did (husbands usually do)? Who would take care of me?

But are those good enough reasons to have kids?

I'll admit, the idea of mixing a little bit of me with a little bit of the man I love and creating a new human being is mighty appealing. (Purely romantic, I know — but damn appealing.) And seeing them turn out well (assuming they do) must be deeply satisfying.

I do believe the best thing my folks ever did was create our family. To treasure family as much as I do and not carry on the legacy seems almost

blasphemous.

Were I to opt out of the parent trap, I feel as if I'd have to have something extra to show for it. A best-selling novel. A charitable foundation. Something.

Deep down, I suspect that given the right circumstances — a good marriage with a good guy, before menopause strikes — having kids is something I'd like to do. I think I'd be good at it.

Only time will tell which way I end up going. (And given the game board I'm playing on, who knows if I'd even be able to conceive if I tried?) I'm not at the point where I need to decide. I figure I'll wake up one day and want to have a kid.

Or I won't.

The thing I've come to is this: I can be happy either

way.

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