

11 Steps to Planning Ahead to “Have It All!”



The 20-Something's Mini-Guide to Mastering Maternity and Building a Life That Includes Career, Family, Learning and Personal Fulfillment

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INTRODUCTION

Do you want to “Have it All” in life?

***Do you want to finish school, have a great career, have a wonderful life partnership,
and have kids?***

Do you wonder how you will make it all happen and fit it all in?

The prevailing belief now is that yes, you can have it all! *But, it may not be all at the same time.* That means you will have to plan ahead and make some important decisions about how you will prioritize your life goals for education, career, family, and achieving your dreams. That will require some knowledge to do well.

In terms of family, there are some important pieces of information that, as a young woman, you should keep in mind about your fertility even if you are not planning to get pregnant for years, or even decades. Since we can't read the future and mark exact dates on our calendars for things like “meet my future life partner” or “conceive my first child,” planning ahead is really about gaining knowledge and self-awareness so you can use them in your decision-making processes along your life path. With that in mind, there are a few areas where knowing the facts and knowing what you want in life can give you a greater sense of control over your future. This can help you preserve your fertility for future pregnancy and achieve healthier, more empowering outcomes in terms of your preconception health, pregnancy and birth when you are ready to have children.

1. LEARN THE BASICS ABOUT FERTILITY.

According to the book *“What to Expect Before You’re Expecting,”* a woman in her early 20’s has a 20-25% chance of conceiving each month, while a woman in her late 30’s has only an 8-10% monthly chance of conceiving, and the number of eggs and fertile quality cervical mucus both diminish with age. While about 70% of women are able to conceive in their 30’s, and 40% of women who have passed their 40th birthday conceive naturally, you may be pushing your biological boundaries by putting off childbearing towards the end of your 30’s or later.

2. TRACK YOUR MENSTRUAL CYCLES MONTHLY.

By taking your basal body temperature daily and recording other physical indicators of your menstrual cycle, you learn an incredible amount of information about how your body works. By charting monthly you will learn your personal cycle, and you can pick up early warning signs of problems that might arise with your fertility or reproduction.

3. MANAGE YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH.

Control your weight and exercise regularly to avoid obesity, diabetes and heart disease, all of which can affect your ability to have a healthy pregnancy. Trying to get weight and chronic illnesses under control is much more challenging than preventing them in the first place. Establish healthy habits for yourself early on, and they will serve you well throughout your life.

4. REDUCE YOUR CHEMICAL LOAD.

We are exposed to hundreds of chemicals on a daily basis, some of which are known estrogen-mimicking or hormonally active substances which can alter our fertility over the short- and long-term. This is true for men too, as their ability to produce healthy sperm is affected by the chemicals. Eat organic fruits and vegetables, avoid pesticide use around your home, avoid contamination from plastics and cash register receipts, and use health and beauty products that are chemical-free. Learn what industrial chemicals may be present in your local environment and take steps to limit your personal exposure.

5. DO LIFE IN THE RIGHT ORDER FOR YOU.

Understand how the facts of biology will affect your life goals, including work and family, and adjust accordingly. Reassess your long-term life goals on a regular basis. If you want kids at some point in the future, make sure your choices will lead you to that goal. Our society’s expectation of building career first and having family later may work well for some women, but not for others. Family and friends may pressure you to make choices that aren’t in line with what you want for yourself. Figure out what is right for you, and go for it!

6. FIND FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES.

Being a working mother is much easier when your workplace supports your roles both at work and at home. Seek out employers who value everything you bring to the table as a working woman, which includes your experience as a parent. This is one area where actions speak louder than words – workplaces that support parents have policies, procedures and supports in place that working parents are already accessing with ease while still moving up the corporate ladder, and they should be in use by both women and men.



7. SURROUND YOURSELF WITH SUPPORTIVE PEOPLE.

Relationships are important to both parents and children. Surround yourself with positive, supportive people who will help you achieve your goals and desires. Particularly if you plan to have a full-time career, your choice of a mate will be a major factor in whether or not you will have the support and the resources to facilitate your success while maintaining your love relationship. Ask the “big questions” early in your relationships to make sure you see eye to eye on major life expectations. Talk through the issues and don’t make assumptions. Choose wisely.

8. TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR SEX LIFE.

Nothing permanently alters a woman’s life course faster than an unexpected pregnancy, and half of the pregnancies annually in the United States are unplanned. If you are not ready to have kids yet, or if you are just enjoying being with someone without any long-term plans, make sure you are protecting yourself from pregnancy and always protect yourself from sexually transmitted diseases.



9. LEARN ABOUT PREGNANCY, BIRTH, BREASTFEEDING, HEALTHCARE CHOICES, AND THE CONTROVERSIES SURROUNDING MATERNITY CARE IN THE UNITED STATES WELL BEFORE YOU PLAN TO START HAVING KIDS.

The day you give birth will be a day you remember for the rest of your life. Learning about women’s healthcare before you get pregnant will help set you on a course towards a healthy, empowering maternity experience. Sadly, American maternity care does not always deliver what it promises. Pregnancy and birth are normal biological processes that women’s bodies are designed to perform, but our healthcare system does not usually treat it that way. There are many health and maternity care options available which most women never learn about. Midwives, doulas, birth centers, home birth, and independent childbirth education are excellent care options for many expectant women and are worth exploring. Women who are healthy, knowledgeable, well-informed, and well-prepared are more likely to have better outcomes.

Maintaining an attitude of curiosity about what lies ahead can allow you to become familiar with the experiences that await you and provide knowledge and preparation in an unstressed, unhurried way.

10. HAVE A PLAN.

“Going with the flow” in life can lead to great adventures, but if you want to “Have It All,” you will need a plan to guide you so you can reach all your goals instead of leaving it up to chance. Knowing the options available to you, and knowing your needs and desires are necessities for creating your plan. At least once or twice a year write down your short-term and long-term goals and revisit the ones you wrote previously to see if you are making life choices that will support your ability to achieve your desires. Seek support where you need it to work in a nurturing, goal-oriented community.

11. FIND A MENTOR.

Do you know what questions you should be asking in order to get everything you want out of life? Do you know what steps you should be taking to master a full, rewarding life that includes work, family, and self-fulfillment? Connecting with an experienced guide means you don't have to figure everything out by yourself. In business and in life, mentors provide knowledge about what lies on the path ahead of you, and they share their experience to help you succeed. Often, meeting a “gatekeeper” opens the doors to new opportunities that were previously unknown to you. Search out people who have more knowledge and experience than you and view yourself as a life-long learner.

The choices you made in the past have led to your life today. The choices you make today will create your life in the future. “Having It All” requires thought and planning in order to find your personal balance between career, family and children, your education, and the fulfillment of your unique hopes and dreams. Today is the first day of the rest of your life! Live it to its fullest!

ABOUT AUTHOR



As a birth professional and a mother, I have spoken with hundreds of women about their life experiences, from their choices starting out to how things have worked for them over the years. My Mastering Maternity System™ can provide a roadmap to help you acquire the knowledge you need to plan ahead for healthy future pregnancy and birth and help you advocate for yourself through the healthcare system. Even if you are not planning to start your family for a while, you can begin to put it to use today to learn important information about preserving your fertility and to give yourself a great start as a future mom.

As a maternity consultant I offer private and group coaching and educational experiences for women to help them prepare for future pregnancy, and to support them throughout pregnancy into early parenting. How can I help you?

*Michal Klau-Stevens is **The Birth Lady**. She is a maternity consultant, pregnancy coach, consumer expert on maternity care issues, Past President of BirthNetwork National, Lamaze Certified Childbirth Educator, and mother. Her website is TheBirthLady.Info. Find her on Facebook at [The Birth Lady](https://www.facebook.com/TheBirthLady) page!*

Visit www.TheBirthLady.INFO to learn more about planning ahead to “Have It All!”

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