

# Expectations

## From Friends, Relatives, and Peers

### *A Child Doesn't Mix with Single Non-Mom Career Women*

First of all, I have the sincerest respect for anyone raising children in today's society. Secondly, as a woman who was raised by a father, rather than a mother, I do believe that men make wonderful single parents. And, as my third disclaimer, I cannot fathom the amount of courage and patience any parent has in raising children, with all of the peer pressure kids get to own the culturally correct clothing and tennis shoes. But, there is something that has bothered me for quite some time, and that is the expectation from friends, relatives, and peers for me to have a child.

Let's get this straight. I have a good job, a nice home, and two wonderful house cats. I am heterosexual, single, in good shape, and I haven't cracked any mirrors or turned any stomachs in the last five years (at least that I am aware of). I enjoy writing, driving, singing, attending jazz concerts and poetry readings. I could spend hours talking about Henry Rollins, music as literature, Pearl Jam, and Bessie Smith. This is who I am, just as the choice not to have children is part of who I am.

This is not to say that I would not like children in my life. On the contrary, I have made a conscious decision that if I want to raise a child, I will adopt an older child, 7 years old or older. If I fall in love with a man who has children, perhaps I would help raise them.

I have seen birth first hand and had never had a desire to experience the process personally. I was pregnant twice. The first time was during a very bad marriage, and

ended in miscarriage. The second time was eight years ago, and this also ended in miscarriage. One of my tubes is scarred. But fear of another miscarriage is not my reason for not wanting to conceive.

I have had a recovery from two serious illnesses which can be passed through DNA to an embryo. I was told there would be a one in 30 chance that any child I have would have these illnesses. But, fear of passing along a curable disease is not my reason for not wanting to conceive.

I enjoy time alone. I work out for an hour a day, and have managed to go from a size 16 to a size 5. I have maintained this for nearly 10 years. But vanity is not my reason for not wanting to conceive.

My childhood was marred by a physically and emotionally abusive mother. Scars on the outside and scars on the inside have healed and continue to heal. My last conversation with my mother was when I was 27. This little chat started with a verbal barrage of all of my faults that she was not able to accept (faults like getting two degrees in art rather than in nursing, and faults such as wearing jeans instead of business suits). The talk ended with my trying to bite my way out of a strangulating choke hold. She then filed a restraining order which was rescinded by the courts once the judge had reviewed the four file folders of abuse details my mother had inflicted upon me. I had even received a written apology from the court clerk who filed my mother's claim.

It is not that I believe I would be an abusive parent. In fact, I was the only member of my family who chose to enter into therapy. I had been a day school teacher for years. I have had boyfriends with youngsters. My godson, Tyler, is the greatest 3-year-old on earth.

The illness my mother has seems to be common in her family. There is a tendency for these relatives to fly-off-the-handle at no apparent trigger, and completely forget these incidents. My father is a recovering alcoholic, and addiction seems to be a trend in his family history. These recurrent themes are half of the reason for my choice. Perhaps this is selfish, but I don't want to risk passing on these behaviors to an innocent child.

The second reason is based on my childhood as well. Growing up in a turbulent household gave me reason to bond with another family who had had adopted and foster children. I discovered the realities of these systems that were designed to protect kids. Siblings are often separated, and older children are rarely adopted. White babies are considered highly adoptable. I would choose to take in an older child who needs a stable loving home, no matter how old, or what "color" this child may be. It seems rather sad to me that there are daily adoptions of older pets in this society, yet there are so very few adoptions of older kids.

A boyfriend and I got into an argument about this. We had been seeing each other for awhile when he asked me about having

a baby. He had the idea that older kids come with too much baggage, and that you couldn't "train" them to fit in. He had watched television shows about kids who get adopted and then kill their adopted parents. To say that all adopted kids are warped is to say that all Italians are in the Mafia, and that all Hispanic kids are in gangs. It just ain't so.

When I feel I am ready to love another being and to show him/her the world I have found, then I will adopt. Perhaps I will be in a stable relationship. Perhaps I will be stable and solo. Perhaps it will be a child of color, an "AIDs Baby", or a kid from South Central. It will be my choice in my time, and it will be an older child. Just as a couple plans their family, I will plan mine.

So, to all of you who have had the experience of birth first hand, I am partly envious. To all of you who have adopted kids, I appreciate your willingness to share your love with a child who needs it most. And to all who ask married and single women when they will be having kids, stop assuming that all women would like to or are able to give birth. We all have reasons to live the lives we choose for ourselves. Our anatomy does not dictate what we must do, it only reveals what we may be capable of.

Cathé Boudreau

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—The Editor