

Reader Dilemma

My boyfriend and I recently started talking about having a baby together. But now I think about it I am not so sure. I have worked hard in my career because I always felt under pressure to achieve as I come from a relatively successful family. I also have always felt that as a woman everything I really want to achieve needs to be done before I ever decide to have a family. I'm a 28 year-old graduate that should be looking forward to a bright future. So why do I feel that if I start a family it will not be long to go before I will be thrown on the scrap heap?

Expert:

As a qualified Life Coach & NLP Practitioner, Ellen Shilling works with individuals to combat stress in their lives, realise their potential and live their best life. She holds a BSc from Trinity College Dublin and she runs her own practice in Blackrock, Co Dublin. Ellen can be contacted via her website at www.ellenshilling.com.

I can appreciate that this is a difficult decision for you. Your situation will strike a cord with many young couples today as they are faced with the decision of family life versus career, but does it have to be one or the other?

In order to answer your dilemma there are a few things that I'd like to ask you. Do you really believe that your future will no longer be "bright" or that once you start a family, you are "thrown on the scrap heap?"

I'm not trying to judge your dilemma; your choice of words to describe your situation is interesting.

You've also mentioned the words "success" and "achieve", do you believe that these words will no longer describe you once you have a baby? Can I ask you, what does success and achievement mean to you?

For some people, it's having 2.4 children, the house, the car, the money, the lifestyle, etc. For others it's having a high powered and stressful job and for others yet, it's simply getting out of bed in the morning and putting their two feet on the ground (this is actually the definition of success for a Fortune 500 CEO).

That is, is success for you when you've "achieved" all you want in your career? You mentioned that: "everything that I want to achieve...." Do you know what "everything" is? It would be worth writing this down for clarity in your own mind. Then ask yourself, "ok, if I get all this done will I be ready to start a family?"

Your life and the focus of your whole life dramatically changes once you have a baby, but that doesn't mean that you don't have success or achievement as a mother, in fact there is no bigger commitment or challenge than having your own son or daughter, but it's a very different realm to the working environment!

There is the option of going back to work after having the baby if that is what you wish. In this way you could pick up on your career goals upon your return. I know of a lot of mothers who are extremely successful in both their careers and their family lives. They've found a balance.

You have a couple of options. One is to have a baby now and to re-define how you look at your career, two is to have a baby and look at going back to work after 6 months to a year, three is to wait a few years and then discuss having children when you feel that you're in a different space.

All of these options involve sitting down with your partner and discussing them in detail. Also, have you thought of the financial side of things? Babies are very expensive, the cost of crèches are nearly the same as a mortgage! Is having a baby financially viable for you right now?

Some tough questions, I know, but if you ask yourself these questions openly and honestly they will give you the answers that you need to make your decision. I hope this has been of some help for your decision. Only you, together with your boyfriend, know what's right for your lives.