

"Should I Become a Parent?"

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I think that a lot of us have been raised with an idea of what the "ideal life" looks like; a road with set stops like school/university, marriage, getting a house, children, etc. However, I believe it is important to take some time to reflect and think about whether that road is *your* reality. Consider what feels



right for you, knowing yourself, and try not to be led by what others tell you your life should be, particularly when it comes to deciding to be a parent.

Parenthood is a huge responsibility, and it is important to ask yourself some questions to determine whether you are ready to be a parent, or whether you want to be a parent at all! Having a child is not mandatory, nor is it for everyone, and that is perfectly okay!



For some guidance on what kind of questions that you should ask yourself, as well as some insights into preparing for parenthood that you may not have considered, I invite you to peruse two articles I found interesting and

informative: "Am I Ready to be a Parent?" from *PsychCentral.com* and "Considering Parenthood" from *PlannedParenthood.org*. Here are just three that you can use to start your self-interview.

1) Why do I want to have a child?

Parenthood is a journey centred in love and wanting to share that love. The decision to raise a child through birth or through adoption should be made once you are certain that adding to your family will be a fulfilling process that you are fully dedicated to. That being said, if you are considering having a child for any of the following reasons, it is advised that you reconsider:

- **There's a problem I need to solve**

Whether it is to patch up a failing relationship, to keep your partner from leaving you, or to satisfy the wants of your family, *having a child will not solve the problem*. Marie Hartwell-Walker, Ed.D. from PsychCentral says that when a child is conceived to solve a problem, it almost always fails. What you will end up with is the same problem (or a worse version of it) and the added burden of a child that you are not mentally or emotionally prepared to care for.

- **I'm lacking love in some part of my life, so a child will give me the love I need**

A parent's duty is to build up a child and invest love into them, not vice versa. The love of a child cannot be a substitute for the love of a partner or for an absence of love from a parent.

2) Do I have the resources and support I need?

- **Finances**

We have all heard it said that having a child is expensive. The resources you need to care for a child are not one-time purchases; they are continuous and can increase or decrease. If you realistically do your research and plan out your finances, would you be able to give your child the resources he needs?

- **Support/social resources**

If you are parenting together with a partner, it is important that communication remains open, that you are both on the same page about how you want to raise your child, and that you are there for each other. An external support system like relatives or paid help is also a great thing to have, within a reasonable and realistic amount. This is worth considering particularly if you are about to be a single parent.

Don't be afraid to consult others! Sit down with your own parents or people that you trust and who won't judge you, and talk about their experiences with parenting and whether they think parenting might be a good fit for you. Counselling is also a good resource pre- and/or post-baby.

3) Am I ready to make my child my priority?

Are you ready to let go of spontaneous socializing and doing things based on your personal desires? If you aren't, then you may not be ready for the responsibility of parenthood. Children require managed, planned time and routine, and you need to be prepared to rearrange your day at a moment's notice to accommodate your child's needs. It's important to make sure you are in a mindset where you are okay with delaying your superficial wants immediately; if you are not, it's likely that you could develop resentment towards your child for preventing you from having your wants, whether consciously or subconsciously.

If you're already asking yourself questions about how ready you are to start a family, then you're already on the right track! Be honest with yourself, and do your research to determine when (or if) you're wholly prepared to become a parent.

References:

Marie Hartwell-Walker Ed.D, "Are You Ready to be A Parent?", PsychCentral.com.

<https://psychcentral.com/lib/are-you-ready-to-be-a-parent/>

Planned Parenthood, "Considering Parenthood / What do I need to think about when raising a child?", PlannedParenthood.org

<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/pregnancy/considering-parenthood>