

BECOMING A PARENT AT A LATER AGE

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- Raising kids, despite its many rewards, can be an exhausting, seemingly endless job and enough to give anyone gray hair
- Imagine starting a family when you already have gray hair at 40, 45 or 50 years old
- The birth rate among women older than 40 years old has increased by nearly 50% in the last 20 years
- Many couples have chosen to establish their careers before having children or simply did not feel ready for the responsibility
- Others did not marry until later in life or had children from an early marriage, divorced and then started a second family with a new partner.
- Improvements in treatments for infertility and the fact that most women over 40 are in excellent health have helped make middle-age parenting a greater possibility

Should You Wait?

- It's likely that older parents may be wiser, more mature and have greater patience
- They may be better focused, having achieved a lot in their careers and feel ready for the "next phase."
- They may be more stable financially and may have more flexibility in their careers that allow being home to parent
- On the other hand, they may have less energy than their younger counterparts
- If older couples have spent decades establishing careers and are accustomed to structure and predictability in their lives, they may have more trouble adjusting to the unpredictable nature of children
- Some may consider the normal frustrations of child rearing as reflections of their inability to be "successful" parents

Tips for Older Parents:

1. Ask yourself some tough questions:

- Before you decide a new baby is right for you, ask yourself if you are emotionally and physically strong enough to handle raising a child

2. *Have realistic expectations:*
 - Babies mean change
 - Be prepared for what may be a great adjustment in your lifestyle
 - Ask yourself how a baby would fit into your lifestyle and how flexible you can be

3. *Seek out a support system:*
 - Older couples may have less support from extended family because their own parents are even older (or no longer living)
 - Many friends may have already had their children
 - If you have other responsibilities -- older children, parents or relatives to care for, a business to run -- you may have even more reason to seek support from others going through similar phases in life
 - Seek out people who are willing to listen as well as offer advice

4. *Exercise, eat right, and take time for yourself:*
 - As you age, your body's ability to bounce back after being up all night with a child or working all day and then coming home to parent may change
 - It is important to balance good nutrition with exercise to increase your energy level while maintaining good health

5. *Be prepared for other people's reactions:*
 - When a 63 year old woman recently gave birth for the first time, it received a lot of attention
 - People generally have children when they are in their 20s and 30s, that's considered the "ideal" age
 - While many people feel that it is more accepting of older men to have children, they may not feel the same about women