

A LINE ON LIFE

9/29/96

Should You Have A Child? *

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Rather than leaving childbearing to chance, many people are making conscious decisions about having children. Since raising a child is essentially a lifetime commitment, it is an important decision – one that should be made wisely. Below we have reasons for having or not having children. Both you and your partner can check the items that apply to *your* situation.

Reasons to Have Children

_____ 1. **Personal experience.** This is a unique life experience – to love children, to be loved by them, to shape their lives, to watch them develop.

_____ 2. **Personal pleasure.** It is fun to play with children, to take them places like the zoo or circus, to view the world again through their fresh, innocent eyes.

_____ 3. **Personal extension.** Hopefully, our children will live beyond us. They will carry our family heritage and carry on some of our dreams. They are extensions of us. We identify with their achievements.

_____ 4. **Loving relationships.** As parents, we can establish close, loving relationships with our children.

_____ 5. **Personal status.** In our Judeo-Christian culture, the mere status of parents is respected. Remember the commandment of "*Honor thy father and thy mother.*"

_____ 6. **Personal competence.** It is a challenge to be a parent. It is gratifying to many people as they become competent to fulfill the role of a mother or father.

_____ 7. **Personal responsibility.** Some people find it fulfilling to be responsible for the welfare and training of their children.

_____ 8. **Companionship for the later years.** In their later years, many parents expect their children to provide them with comfort, companionship, and important aid.

_____ 9. **Moral worth.** Some people view having children as a moral, selfless act. The needs of their children are placed above their own.

_____ 10. **Religious beliefs.** Many religious groups believe in some version of the statement, "*Be fruitful and multiply.*"

"To be or not to be?" **That is the question.**

Reasons Not to Have Children

_____ 1. **Strain on Earth's resources.** With our current overpopulation, we should not further strain our limited resources. More children will add to the overpopulation problem.

_____ 2. **Time together.** Without children, couples will have more time for each other. They can develop a more intimate relationship.

_____ 3. **Freedom.** Children monopolize your leisure time and make it difficult to plan for educational or occupational advancement. Childless couples are freer to do as they please. They can live more spontaneously.

_____ 4. **Dual careers.** Without children, it is easier for both members of the couple to pursue their careers without distractions.

_____ 5. **Financial drain.** With the increasing costs of childcare and education, children are an economic hardship.

_____ 6. **Difficulty.** Parenthood requires sacrifices of time, money, and energy. Parenthood is demanding. With these demands, some people will not be capable parents.

_____ 7. **Unalterable decision.** Once you have a child, it is too late to change your mind.

_____ 8. **Failure.** As children, some people had poor relationships with their parents. These people, fearing they will repeat the same mistakes with their own children, think they will not be adequate parents.

_____ 9. **Other children.** There are ways to relate to children other than assuming the full burden of having your own. You can be close to nephews and nieces or become a "*Big Brother*" or "*Big Sister*."

_____ 10. **Sense of danger.** With its crime, pollution, and threat of nuclear war, it is better not to bring children into such a dangerous world.

The way you have checked the above alternatives will give you and your partner some insight into your attitudes about having children. The various items are not given any relative weight. Likewise, the total score – either for or against – should not be the only thing to govern your decision. You must determine the relative importance of each of your choices.

Your answers to this questionnaire need to be discussed. They will give you insight into your motives. You are the judge. It's your life and your decision. However, if you both make the decision to have a child, that child is more likely to be wanted and loved – even before it is born.

* Adapted from Spencer Rathus, et al., *Human Sexuality in a World of Diversity*, Allyn and Bacon, 1997, pages 302-303.