



Tips for Parents: Older Parents

While some people may find it controversial, there is no denying that more parents are waiting until their thirties, forties and even later to have children. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that the birthrate for women over 45 doubled between 1990 and 2002. Children born to this age group are at certain advantages and disadvantages compared with children born to younger parents.

Why are people waiting to have kids?

As Americans live longer and more fertility treatments become available, people are under less pressure to have children early. Here are some common reasons why singles or couples wait to have children until they are in their 30s, 40s or even later:

- A preference to spend early years building a career and financial stability.
- A feeling that their 20s and 30s are a time for self exploration and freedom.
- A new marriage or relationship in which the couple desire to have children.
- Single people unable to find a suitable partner or spouse after years of looking decide to move forward with parenting on their own.
- Years of fertility issues have delayed having a child.

Advantages of having Children at an Older Age

Becoming a parent later in life offers you and your child/children certain advantages that may not be as common to those having children earlier, such as:

- Greater career and financial stability, more financial resources.
- A better understanding of one's self and life in general—maturity.
- An established and stable marriage. After 15 or 20 years, couples have worked out many issues that plague newer relationships.
- Since education and career are established, older parents are often able to devote more time to their child.
- More patience and an understanding of priorities.
- The extra effort often required to have children at this age may demonstrate a stronger desire and commitment to parenting.

Disadvantages of having Children at an Older Age

While becoming a later in life parent has certain advantages, it also presents challenges to both you and your children:

- Older parents typically have less energy and find late night feedings and keeping up with energetic youngsters more difficult.

- The age gap may make it more difficult to relate to kids on their level. This may become more pronounced during the teen years.
- Older parents may be more serious and expect their children to act more mature for their age and may put heavier expectations for success on them.
- Older parents may feel isolated as other couples their age are empty-nesters or are approaching retirement; and other couples with children the same age as their children are focusing on finishing their education or building careers.
- Children of later in life parents are often embarrassed by their parents' ages.
- Kids of older parents are often afraid their parents are going to die sooner.
- Older parents may find themselves burdened with the double responsibility of caring for their aged parents while raising children of their own.
- Children raised by older parents may miss out on knowing their grandparents or having their own parents around when they are married or have children of their own.
- The cost of raising a child and sending them to college may put a stress on retirement savings.

Tips for Overcoming the Challenges of Older Parenting

Some difficulties associated with being an older parent are unavoidable. But many of the challenges can be overcome with advanced planning and commitment:

- Live longer by eating right, exercising regularly, and getting regular check ups to spot any health issues as early as possible. Focus on how having youngsters around keeps you active and young!
- Strive to stay on top of trends and issues important to young people so that you can better relate to your children and their concerns. Commit to being a good listener and be supportive.
- Allow kids to act their age, to spend plenty of time with others their own age, and monitor your expectations for them to make certain they are reasonable.
- Avoid feeling isolated by looking for organizations and websites for other older parents. Make connections in your community.
- While your children may be sensitive to your age, strive to put it in a positive light by focusing on the benefits your age offers your kids. Spending time with similar families will help all of you feel more accepted and normal.
- All kids worry to some extent about their parents dying. Teach your kids about life and death, and comfort their fears. Keep in mind that any parent could become ill or get in accident, regardless of their age, so all parents should make sure their financial affairs are in order, that they have a will, and that plans for the alternate care of the kids have been made.
- If you do find yourself responsible for caring for your elderly parent or parents while also raising kids, you will likely feel overwhelmed. Ask for help from other family members, hire assistance if you can possibly afford it, and make certain you take time to recharge your own batteries regularly. Connect with others in similar circumstances and offer to trade care duties so you each can get some time off.

- Having less years together may be unavoidable. Strive to make the time you have together as rewarding as possible and encourage your child to develop relationships that will help them and comfort them when you are no longer around.
- Children ARE expensive. If you have them, you must make certain they are provided for financially. However, don't sacrifice your own retirement survival on their college education. Make smart choices with your money and save as much as you can now. You may have to make the decision to travel less or work part time during retirement, or the kids may have to pay their own way through college. Identify your priorities for the kids and yourselves and plan accordingly as early as possible.

For more information:

[Ohio State University Extension's "In Praise of Older Parents"](#)

[AARP's "Oh Baby"](#)

[MothersOver40.com](#)

You may also find these related Tips for Parents helpful:

[Tips for Parents: Adoption](#)

[Tips for Parents: Having an Only Child](#)

[Tips for Parents: Listening to Your Kids](#)

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