

CHILD FREE

M A G A Z I N E

ISSUE 2

AUGUST 2021

FREEDOM,
ADVENTURE AND
POSSIBILITIES

The background of the cover is a vibrant, abstract composition of purple and blue brushstrokes. The strokes vary in thickness and direction, creating a sense of movement and energy. The colors transition from deep purple to bright blue, with some white highlights where the strokes overlap. The overall effect is a dynamic and artistic backdrop for the text.

CHILDFREE

M A G A Z I N E

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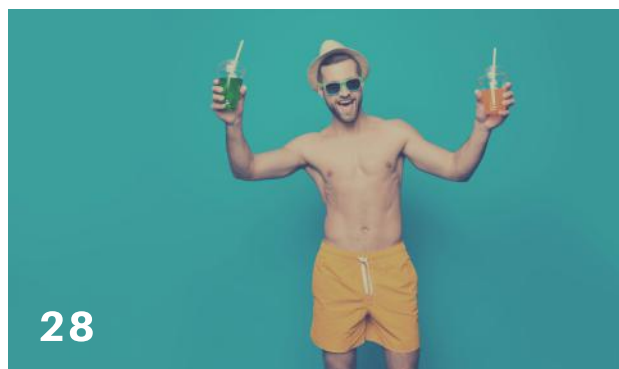
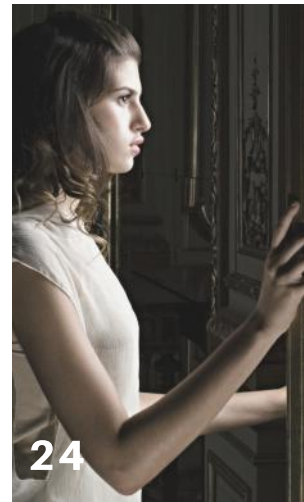




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NB: The magazine is global and the spelling is set to British/Australian English, so you may notice some words that look different from how you spell them in your country. These are not errors, just spelling differences.



PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Mention the world childfree in a conversation and it is still often met with condemnation, criticism and even contempt. We have all experienced the looks of shock, disgust and surprise. We have probably also given out our fair share of sassy responses in return. But it is not enough.

I love being part of the global childfree community, however it is time we took these conversations further afield. My goal with my work as a choice advocate is to create real change in the world. I believe in order to do this, we need to be having conversations with the broader community – with parents, with government, with schools, within traditional pronatalist communities.

We need to focus on educating children about choice, influencing change of policy in the workplace, speaking to parents and having healthy respectful conversations and finding opportunities to have a positive influence in the media, church and government.

This is where I plan to focus moving forward. How am I personally planning on doing this?

- By working with schools to educate young adults about choice
- By encouraging parents to allow their children to make choices based on what is right for the child, not what they want and provide resources to help
- By working with employers and workplaces to change policy, including how family is defined
- By working with workplaces to educate on the issues being faced by childfree people and providing practical resources to create healthier conversations
- By providing tools and support for all childfree people to access as needed
- By writing for parent magazines and blogs to create respectful conversation and show it is not an 'us v them' scenario
- By running a series of online events and panels that include people outside the childfree community to specifically address these issues

- By creating a global online community and Choice Movement that provides resources and information to help address practical issues
- By creating an app that can help the childfree community as we age, allowing us to have a community that can help us when needed
- I even have ideas for a children's book, a fictional book and one for workplaces.

Are these big hairy audacious goals – absolutely!! I have no idea where I will find the time to make it all happen, especially given this is a side hustle but one that I am passionately dedicated to.

Every person in the community, childfree or not, can play a role in creating change. The next step in the childfree revolution is to stop whining about the situation and do something to change it. I'd love for you to be part of that change and the journey to making the world a more accepting place for us all.

**MAKE YOUR OWN
RULES IN LIFE AND
NEVER LET ANYONE
DULL YOUR SPARKLE.**

Tanya Williams

CHILDFREE MAGAZINE PUBLISHER

CONTRIBUTOR CREDITS

Like most big projects it is impossible to make them a reality without the help of amazing, passionate, and generous people. I am sending a massive thank you to my chief sub-editor, designer, feature writers, and contributors who have made this magazine come alive with their talent. I am forever grateful x

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WELCOME TO CHILDFREE MAGAZINE

Like any magazine, we start planning, writing and creating months in advance. I thought the perfect date to launch Issue 2 of *Childfree Magazine* would be international Childfree Day, August 1. Many hours have been put into creating this magazine for you. We'd love it if you can help spread the word on your social channels, groups, and networks. More people knowing about CHILDFREE Magazine equals more support for future editions that give the childfree community a 100% childfree focused media platform.

Here's a little Welcome message just for you.

#childfreemagazine



WHO DO I TALK TO IF I **DON'T** WANT KIDS?

Written by Lucia France

IT'S IMPORTANT TO THINK ABOUT THE LANGUAGE WE USE AROUND CHILDREN, PARTICULARLY GIRLS, WITH REGARDS TO POTENTIAL PARENTHOOD, LUCIA FRANCE WRITES.

I honestly can't remember if I knew for sure from a young age that I didn't want to have kids. What I do know is that I could never truly picture it in my head and, to this day, I still can't.

My own parents never put any pressure on my sister or me to have children. (My sister has, and I haven't - it's all good - I love my two nieces to bits.) Despite this, I'd often feel uncomfortable bringing up my feelings about not wanting children in front of my mother. This wasn't because I expected any sort of adverse reaction from her, but because I was worried about hurting her feelings or even offending her, due to the fact she was inescapably a mother herself.



Perhaps things have changed now, but when I was growing up, there were certain conversations about the potential of having my own children one day. These conversations were generally directed towards females and fell into a few different categories (below) :

1. The Assumption, "How many children do you want?"
2. The Omniscient, "You'll change your mind when you get older."
3. The Let's All Wish Our Lives Away, "I'll ask you again when you're married" (usually directed at single women over 30, doubling the already mounting pressure).
4. Or, my personal favourite: The Warning, "You'll regret it when you're older if you don't." (Well, Auntie Hilda, I already am older and deeply regret not going into a career of ballroom dancing, given the overwhelming success of Strictly, so them's the breaks huh?)

I remember these conversations leaving me feeling somewhat awkward, a bit confused, or just plain weird and like an outsider. As a result, I feel that it's important to think about the language we use around children, particularly girls, with regards to potential parenthood.

As Orna Donath's 2015 book, *Regretting Motherhood: A Study* concludes, there are many women spanning various cultures and three different generations who were brought up to think that having kids was just what you did, a 'fait accompli', without having the

choice or even the concept, language, questions or framework to know there were perhaps other options.

Although there is still some way to go, we are lucky now in most Western societies to have far more acceptance for the choice to not have children. In many other cultures around the world, women and men do not have this luxury, and my heart aches for those who feel the way I do but essentially have no choice, due to culture, societal pressure, religion or politics.

I hope that mothers and fathers choose to give their children options in the way they talk and explain things to them about what may or may not be in their futures. I also hope that they lean on their childfree friends and family members, who might be the alternative opinion a young person needs to hear. (I am thinking of setting up a charity to help with this and would love any feedback or advice.) Life is a glorious mix of different people with different lives, who can enrich, help, enhance and most importantly, raise each other up.

Sadly though, I get the sense that sometimes there is an "us and them" vibe between parents and non-parents. This is a divide I would love to dismantle. I'm absolutely convinced that in the future there will be more people who choose to be non-parents and, of course, many who choose to be parents. Both of these options are awesome, but neither is to be applauded any more than the other. (Let's be honest, we need each other.) Parenthood or non-parenthood shouldn't define the individual,

but the patriarchy has had a massive role to play in this arbitrary divide.

Another thing I believe we need to dismantle is the idea that we need to do something big, clever or award winning to justify not being a parent. We don't! Not choosing parenthood is a choice that's just as valid as choosing parenthood (if desired by the individual/couple) - but usually no-one is questioned on the parenthood decision.

The message I would most like to pass down to the next generation is that it's not parenthood or nothing! And, no matter who you are or where you are from in the world, you need to live life on your terms via your own choices if you are to thrive and become the person you were meant to be.



Lucia is an actor, presenter and voice artist who has lived and worked all over the world. She is currently based in the UK and lives with her husband and rescue dog Skipper, they plan to rescue many more animals as soon as they have a bigger garden! She can be found on Insta @luciapicstory

READER SPOTLIGHT

ASHLEE KOLLER

Location: NSW, Australia
Age: 30
Marital Status: Married
Occupation: High School Teacher



Who inspires you:

I am inspired by strong women who defy social convention like my mum and sister.

Hobbies:

I enjoy reading (particularly Jane Austen and Shakespeare), watching movies (especially classics and musicals), travelling and going to theatre, opera and ballet productions. I thoroughly enjoy going to Zumba classes three times a week. I also enjoy gaming with my friends and spending quality time with my family and friends, particularly my husband, two cats, Mum, Uncle and sister.

Fave toy growing up:

I loved to design house and outfits for my Barbie dolls, and loved playing dress-ups.

Do your parents accept your choice?

It was hardest on my Mum at first; we are very close and I think she would have loved to be a Grandmother to my children. She did take some time to process it but and supports me with astounding love, respect and kindness.

Most offensive thing someone has said to you?

I have had colleagues say that because I am succeeding at work, that I clearly don't have

children and I must have a lot of spare time on my hands (which couldn't be further from the truth!)

Your story / childfree why:

I've often been described by the people closest to me as independent and unique, someone who forges their own path, even if it isn't a popular choice. I knew from around 14 years old that although I had nothing against children (I am a proud Auntie) but I didn't want to become a parent myself. I am often asked why that is, but I don't have only one main reason - other than to simply say that I enjoy my freedom and believe that as a 21st century woman, that I have choices.

My husband of 5 years and I were fortunate enough to find each other, and have very similar goals in life, one of which is to remain child-free and enjoy pursuing our hobbies and interests. We have been lucky enough to own our home and cars, and we have adopted two beautiful rescue cats that are the centre of our world.

We spend lots of quality time with each other and our family and friends, travel the world and devote a lot of time, care, and energy to our education and careers. We are both teachers and do what makes us happy not what society dictates of us.

A young couple is shown from the waist up, holding hands. The woman on the left has dark curly hair and is wearing a light blue button-down shirt, a pink cardigan, a yellow skirt, and a yellow belt. She is also wearing patterned high-heeled shoes. The man on the right has dark curly hair and is wearing a blue blazer, a pink shirt, a blue and white striped tie, and white trousers. He is also wearing brown sneakers. The background is split vertically into a blue left half and a pink right half. The text "YOU DON'T NEED TO HAVE A CHILD TO LEAVE A LEGACY" is centered in the middle of the image.

**YOU DON'T NEED
TO HAVE A CHILD
TO LEAVE A
LEGACY**



PAWRENTS OVER PARENTS

THERE ARE INCREASING NUMBERS OF PEOPLE WORLDWIDE WHO ARE ADOPTING PETS RATHER THAN HAVING KIDS, WITH THE OXFORD DICTIONARY ADDING THE TERM 'FUR BABY' TO ITS OFFICIAL LEXICON IN 2015. TANYA WILLIAMS INVESTIGATES THIS MAJOR GLOBAL TREND.

Written by Tanya Williams

In its 2016 survey of Australian pet owners, Animal Medicines Australia (AMA - the peak body representing manufacturers of veterinary medicines), found more and more people regard their dog as a member of the family (64 per cent, up from 59 per cent in 2013), rather than just a companion (23 per cent). I include myself in the former.

Another AMA report shows that Australian households spent

more than \$12 billion on pets and pet products in 2016. Nearly 44 per cent of pet owners said their pet substituted for having a partner or children. And about 60 per cent said owning a pet was less stressful than having children.

The trend is not just in Australia. In the United States, data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2014 showed that a big drop in the number of

There is talk of naming the next generation of youngsters 'Generation Rex' with playgrounds in NYC being quiet while dogs runs are packed

babies born to women aged 15 to 29 corresponded with a huge increase in the number of dogs owned by young American women.

There is even talk of naming the next generation of youngsters 'Generation Rex', with playgrounds around New York City being quiet while dog runs are packed. Ladies in NYC told *The New York Post* newspaper in 2014 that they weren't surprised by the findings – and they happily gave up nappy changes, tantrums and university funds for the easy affection of their dog 'child'.

Meanwhile, as Japan's birth rate plummets, the estimated worth of its pet industry has risen to more than \$17 billion in 2021, with pampered pooches enjoying holidays at hot spring resorts, yoga classes and designer clothes. The country reportedly has more than 22 million pets, compared with about 15 million children under the age of 15 (in 2021).

In 2012, *The Guardian* newspaper spoke with Tokyo eye surgeon Toshiko Horikoshi, who had a private clinic, a stylish apartment, a Porsche and two pet pooches. "Japanese dog owners think a dog is like a child," she told *The Guardian*. "I have no children, so I really love my two dogs."

Many women with dogs are spending crazy amounts of money on designer dog clothes, pet jewellery and even tiny shoes. Horikoshi said she shopped for her dogs most weekends and gave them new clothes each season. According to *The Guardian*, it's easier to buy clothes for dogs than for

children in many parts of Tokyo. Boutiques sell everything from dresses and designer jeans to nappies, organic nibbles, 'doggie bags' and buggies to transport dogs.

Over in Britain, *The Express* newspaper reported in 2015 that three in 10 couples were choosing to raise a dog rather than a child. Animal charity Blue Cross commissioned a study of 2,000 Brits to show the role pets play in their lives. It created the term 'generation pet' to describe the trend for choosing pets over children, and its research revealed that 61 per cent of Brits believe that getting a dog before having children puts you into the right mindset for becoming a parent.

Some forward-thinking businesses in the UK are also giving employees time off when they get a new pet. Yes, paw-ternity leave is a thing! In 2016, it was widely reported that almost one in 20 new pet owners in the UK had been offered 'paw-ternity' leave by their employers, according to pet insurance provider Petplan.

The leave is said to range from a few hours to as much as several weeks of paid time off, which is in addition to employees' standard holiday allowance. The leave can be used to carry out training, attend vet appointments or simply spend more time with a new animal.

The first company in the US to offer paw-ternity benefits was beer-maker BrewDog, a Scottish brewery that opened in Ohio in 2017. They offer a week of paid leave for employees with new puppies or rescued dogs, and the benefit is available to all of



its nearly 1,000 employees across the world.

Although the US Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment said it did not know how many companies were currently offering pet leave, Aidan Burch, its acting manager of employment standards, told the *New Zealand Herald* newspaper in 2017 that it encouraged firms to think of new ways to attract staff.

HarperCollins India has also been offering paw-ternity leave since 2017, according to *The New York Post*, and grants five days of paid leave for staffers who have just adopted a pet. This gives them a week to bond and help the fur babies adjust to their new homes. It's all part of keeping workers happy and also encouraging responsible pet adoption.

So, why pawrenting over parenting? What's sparking the trend?

Research shows that looking at a dog can give you the same rush of emotion as looking at a baby. The hormone oxytocin (aka the 'love' hormone) is released while breast-feeding and during loving physical contact, and scientists at Azabu University in Japan discovered in 2015 that dog owners also experience a rush of this feel-good hormone when they interact with their dogs.

According to a 2011 study by *Psychology Today*, pet owners have better self-esteem, fitness, sociability and happiness than non-pet-owners. They also have lower blood pressure and cholesterol.

Cost is also a major factor. According to the AMP.NATSEM Income and Wealth Report from 2013, for a middle-income family in Australia, the cost of raising two kids, from birth to age 24 is \$812,000. If you're a higher income family, this figure increases to \$1.09 million, whereas a lower income family can look to spend \$474,000. As the cost of living has increased since this report was released eight years ago, you can expect these figures to be much higher in 2021. Compare this with the cost of raising a dog, which might be \$2,000 to 3,000 a year, and you can see why pet owners are far better off financially.

Personally, I have always chosen puppies over parenthood. My three fur babies – Tia, Latte and Neo – were all fostered and then adopted from the RSPCA. We are classified as failed foster parents, which is a term I can happily live with knowing that I have given a fur-ever home to my three dogs!

My dogs love me unconditionally, they never answer back, and they don't ask for money or for me to drop them at a friend's house on Saturday night when I'm relaxing with a few wines. My dogs allow me so much more freedom than a child could. I don't have to decline invitations because it's puppy nap time, and they are happy to sit and watch a movie of my choice with me. My dogs are also far better behaved than many kids I see racing around shopping centres and screaming on planes.

Just because I'm not a mum doesn't mean I can't be maternal. I feel maternal about my fur kids and want to love and protect them, just like people do with human kids. Does it matter where your love comes from? Dog or child? Perhaps you choose neither, and that is okay too. Love is love! So, find the love that's right for you.



*Tanya Williams is author of #1 Amazon Best Seller **Childfree Happily Ever After** and founder of **Childfree Magazine**. Her mission is to change the dialogue in society from judgement and criticism to support and acceptance for all childfree people.*

READER SPOTLIGHT

DHARUN

Location: India
Age: 23
Marital Status: Unmarried
Occupation: Student



Are you able to be vocal about your choice to be childfree?

No, I couldn't able to be vocal about my choice of childfree as I live in a conservative country like India.

But, surely trying to be vocal about my choice.

What do your parents think about your choice?

My parents accepted my choice of being childfree.

Biggest challenges you have being childfree in India:

People in India look at childfree people like they are aliens. When compared to other countries, [more] Indians should be childfree due to the alarming population growth of more than 1.3 billion.

Most offensive thing someone has said to you:

A man is not accepted as a man in our society unless he makes his partner pregnant

Your story / childfree why:

My story is pretty simple. I chose to be childfree because most of the people cannot live well in our country.

And population is the major problem in India.

I don't want to bring a new life to this country when already many people are dying in our country without basic needs like food, clothes and shelter. Due to the ecological imbalance our environment is being destroyed day by day and as a human beings we should be responsible for the problems we create in our environment.



CHILDFREE

Poetry

Written by Live Kidfree

**MORE
THAN
WOMAN**

Is Mother more than woman?
Does a child make her worthy?
She gives herself away
tearing pieces from her fabric, she is bare
exposed
Now, she is good
Now, She is gone
and only Mother remains.
Sacrifice and servitude
disguised as purpose
revered as divine
applauded and adored
peddled by the masses,
rejected by the brave.

TAKE

Revere her
Reduce her

Worship her
Worry her

Exult her
Exhaust her

Cherish her
Consume her

If he gave to her
what he takes from her,
he might be worthy of her.

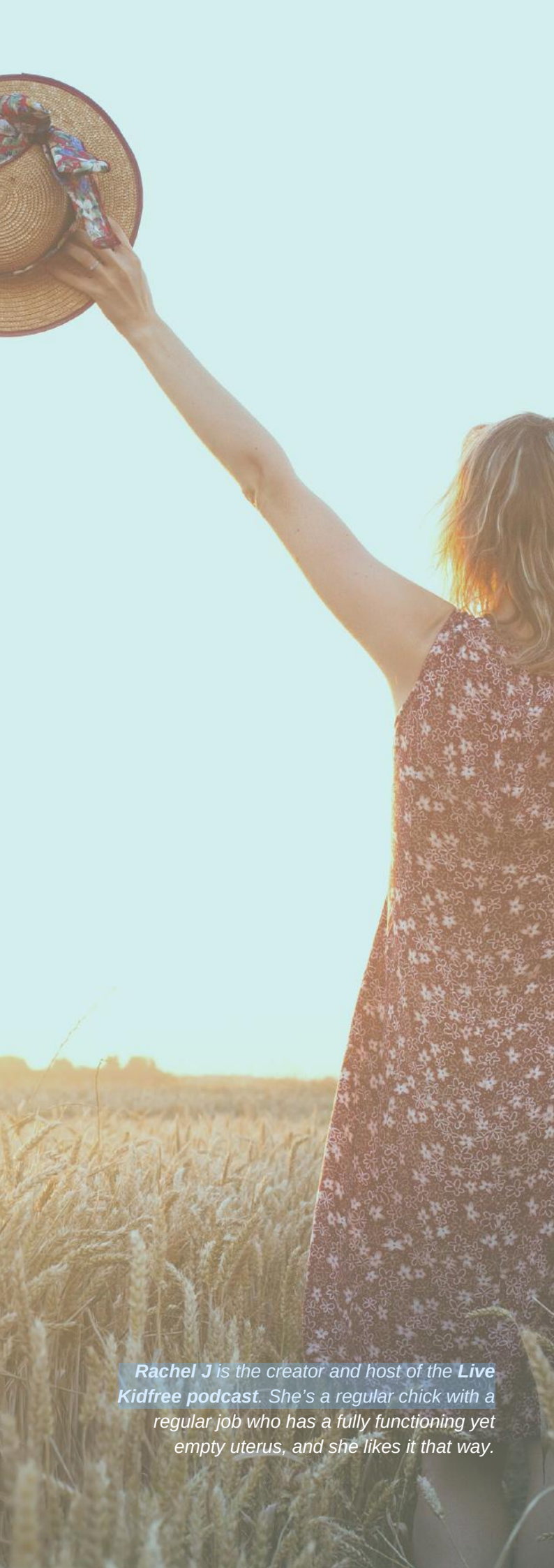
BARRENNESS

Am I barren
or am I free?
To me, they are the same.

Am I cursed
or am I blessed?
To you, I am a threat.

Barrenness
She is who you want to be
She is who you could have been
She breaks your fragile contract, inner patchwork
colors, patterns, bold and fraying
beautiful and wretched.
She will not apologize,
nor will she comply.
She belongs to no one.





Rachel J is the creator and host of the Live Kidfree podcast. She's a regular chick with a regular job who has a fully functioning yet empty uterus, and she likes it that way.

CHILDFREE POETRY

BEAUTIFUL FRIEND

To know a mother is to lose a friend.
Now she belongs to him.
I hope he is good to her, for
she deserves the world,
now he is her world.
I hope he treats her well,
gives her what she wants, so
she can blossom for him,
now he is her light.
I hope he appreciates her, for
she would die for him
kill for him.
I hope he loves her like I do.

SELFISH GIRL

You can't help yourself,
can you?
We have met before, a hundred times.
Rather I have met a hundred of you,
the same look in your eyes.
Indignant disbelief
have I wronged you?
Obvious disgust
do I offend you?
You don't even know my name.
To you, I am nameless, unworthy of naming
To you, I am only
Selfish girl.
My purpose, wasted
My womb, vacant
My defiance, profane
My breath, wasted
My life, unworthy
How dare I take up space?

I dare.

IT'S NOT US V THEM

Some conversations are uncomfortable and awkward but equally necessary. For bigger change to happen we need to open up the conversation between parents and the childfree community. It doesn't need to be an 'Us v Them' situation.

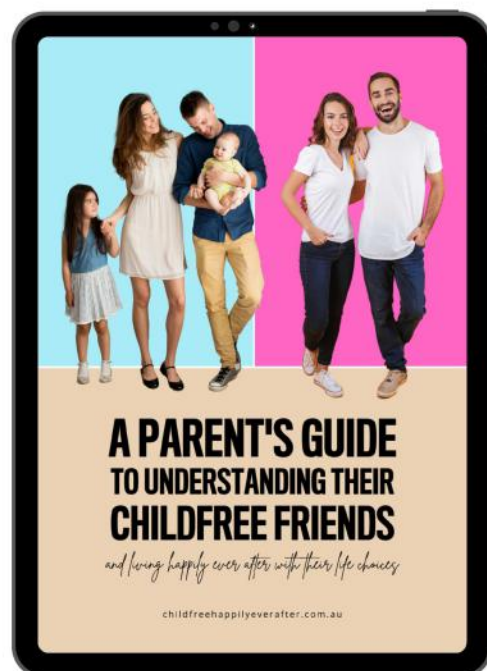
As a childfree woman I have many friends that have kids. I am happy for them and whatever they want for their life. Real friends respect each others choices. I think it is important for our friends with kids to understand our life choice, how to better communicate with us and also what not to say.

The key is mutual respect for each other's choices!

We don't have to be each others enemies. We have simply made a different life choice. One if not better than the other. One is not right and the other wrong. There is only what is right or wrong for each of you in your personal life.

If you are feeling like your friends don't get your choice or they keep trying to convince you to be a parent, then I created a free resource that might help you both. So, if you want to stay friends, consider the following as a mini rule book. Trust me you will both be happier and have a healthier friendship because of it.

Share this free resource with your friends with kids.



GET THE GUIDE

CHILDFREE TEACHERS

Written by Lynne Ormonde

LYNNE ORMONDE REVEALS HER UNIQUE EXPERIENCE AS A TEACHER WHO HAS DECIDED WITH HER HUSBAND (ALSO A TEACHER) THAT THEY - GASP - DON'T WANT KIDS THEMSELVES.

"How do you know you don't want to have kids, you haven't done it?" This is a question childfree folks are often asked. Well, it's the same way I know I don't want to become an astronaut, move to Peru or do a skydive. Unlike heading into space or jumping out of a plane, however, I feel I already have a unique glimpse into what being a parent is like, because I'm a teacher.

Yes, I know it's not the same thing. But it has given me a real insight into parenting and all that it brings: the highs, the lows and the very, very bad. It's opened my eyes to the realities of motherhood and it is largely due to our experience as teachers that my husband and I have decided to remain childfree.

I met my husband while at university, both of us studying to be teachers. It sounds cliched, but I'm not exaggerating when I say that I've wanted to teach since I was in primary school myself.



Teaching is hard work because kids are hard work. They require energy - and lots of it - whether they're wide-eyed five-year-olds or sulky teenagers. But I enjoy my job. I give it my all. There are those who say that we get well-paid for our hours and have long holidays, and I can't deny these elements are perks of the job.

I confessed to a friend of mine (a teaching assistant and mum of three) that I don't have any intention of having kids. A few weeks later, we were in a group talking about our favourite age groups to work with. I recalled a particularly lovely class of five-year-olds that I'd taught a few years before. They were so innocently honest, vivacious and entertaining - I loved it. My friend responded, "If you loved that little class then you have to have kids! That's what it's like all the time!" All. The. Time. Yes, I enjoyed teaching that class but, wow, was I exhausted at the end of each day. It takes a whole new level of dedication to commit to that 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. I'm not sure I have that in me, and I'm not willing to risk the wellbeing of myself or any potential child to find out.

To me, kids are all or nothing. If you're not 100 per cent sure that you want to give it your all, it's better not to go into it. There are no "take backs". People say "you'll never regret having a child once you have one", but what if you do? Children deserve to come from homes where they're cared for, encouraged and supported. I've witnessed firsthand the outcome for those who aren't: children who suffer extreme emotional and/or physical abuse, or neglect at the hands of their parents. It's that

old quip that you need a licence to get a dog, yet people don't have to pass any test to have a child.

A few years ago, I moved into special education. Even my years training to be a teacher didn't prepare me for the challenge that was to come. I was working in a school for students with severe and profound intellectual disabilities, as well as medical and care needs. While rewarding, it was physically and emotionally exhausting. Working with these students completely altered my outlook. It taught me to appreciate the simple things in life that we often take for granted, like good health or the ability to independently care for yourself. I'm not for one second suggesting that those with special educational needs can't live happy, fulfilled lives, but they constantly face barriers that make things so much more difficult.

One particularly exhausted mum was grappling with the challenge of a teenage son who was displaying extreme aggression

towards both himself and others. She was an amazing woman, completely dedicated to her son and the reality that he was most likely going to be dependent on her for the rest of her life. On my last day of school before getting married, she looked at me with tears in her eyes and whispered, "I love my son more than anything else in this world, but I hope that your life doesn't turn out like mine has." Those words stuck with me and prompted my careful consideration into whether or not to have children.

When you contemplate having kids, you have to be willing to accept that life with them might not take the course you expected or hoped it would. You may not be taking care of them for 18 years, you may be taking care of them for much, much longer. It may sound selfish, but I know I'm not willing to roll the dice on this.

I don't admit to many that my husband and I have chosen not to have children. But, because we've been married three years and are in our early 30s, we're asked a lot. If I'm honest, I'm a



bit embarrassed. I have a lot of teacher friends and they all look shocked when we mention that we don't want kids. We get a lot of, "Of course you'll have kids - you're both teachers!" But how many people do you know enjoy bringing their work home with them?

I'll admit that I'm quite worried about how I'll be perceived in my role when I tell people we are childfree by choice. I feel that there's a stereotype that people who choose not to have children are cold, unloving or un-nurturing. It's something I believe couldn't be further from the truth. I like kids - I don't think anyone would become a teacher if they didn't. At the same time, I can completely understand why someone else might want to tear their hair out at the thought of spending time with children. Everyone is different and has a right to choose how they want to live their lives and find fulfilment.

Recently, a very irate parent told me and my colleague, "How could you possibly understand what you're doing - neither of you have kids!" To me, that's like telling an oncologist that just because they've never had cancer themselves, their training and professional experience means they're not fit to treat a patient. If anything, I feel my lack of parental obligations makes me a better teacher. I have time to dedicate to lesson planning, upskilling and extra-curricular activities. Yes, there are thoughts, emotions and anxieties that I have not experienced from a parent's perspective. That doesn't mean I can't offer professional advice so that we can work collaboratively to support your child.

Collaboratively is a key word. I'm not a replacement mummy, nanny or babysitter, despite what some parents think. The Covid-19 pandemic saw the closure of many schools across the globe. This was an interesting experience for me - witnessing parents across social media platforms complaining about how difficult it was to home-school their kids, and how eager they were to re-open schools.

In my country, Ireland, at the height of the pandemic, there was a particularly tense campaign to reopen special education only. I no longer live or work there, but was glued from afar. While everyone else worked from home, parents declared that children with special educational needs were a priority, that school was an essential service and their children were regressing at a faster pace than their peers. I don't dispute this claim - nor did a lot of teachers - however, parents and teachers were pitted against each other in the media. Teachers were reporting that cramped classrooms and a lack of masks and hygiene standards made it unsafe to return to school, and they wanted those in charge to address these concerns prior to reopening.

Setting the value of Covid-19 restrictions to one side, my attention here turned to parents' attitudes to education. One mother was plastered all over national news channels declaring that special education isn't really about education and that her son doesn't really "learn" in school. Her entire argument centred on not having any time to go about her day, rather than

her son's wellbeing. Don't get me wrong, I get it, but I hope her child's teacher didn't see that clip. I felt so disheartened and belittled by her comments and I wondered if other parents thought the same of me: just a glorified babysitter.

I completely understand why someone would question my choice of career. My own mother said that there is no job she would rather do less. Parents who love their children don't necessarily want to be teachers, but those who enjoy teaching don't necessarily want to be parents either. I consider it quite a nice job for someone like myself who wants to remain childfree, spend time with loved ones and travel the world (have I mentioned the holidays?).

My very wise aunt once told me that on the day you have a child, their eyes open and yours never shut again. Well, I am more than happy to continue greeting other people's children every morning feeling well-rested and energised, following a good night's sleep with my eyes firmly shut.



Lynne Ormonde is a happily married primary school teacher, originally from Ireland but travelling the world and teaching internationally.

LIVING YOUR CHILDFREE HAPPILY EVER AFTER

I am living my childfree happily ever after and I want to share with you how I have done it. From my vision for life, to the exact steps I took, tips to finance it, managing the pressure and providing insights you might not have thought of before.

Living your best childfree life should not be left up to chance. My current reality was no accident although it took me a while to figure it out. My only regret was that I didn't work it out and create it sooner.

Living your Childfree Happily Ever After is a short online program about making the most of your childfree choice and designing your own life following your own rules.

Some of the areas it covers:



How to manage the pressure and expectation from family & friends



How to fully celebrate your childfree choice



Designing your best life based on your goals



Practical tips to help you in the workplace



Making the most of your childfree income



Planning for Retirement

It will help you manage some of the practical day to day issues you face as a childfree person – the pressure, the expectation, the rude statements, all that crap we have to deal with as we navigate and live our choice.

Don't live with regrets or live an inauthentic life. You only get one life, so make it the best it can be.

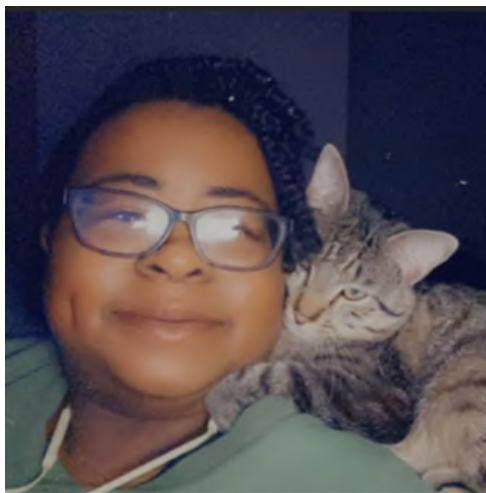
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OUR 'CHILDFREE HAPPILY EVER AFTER' LIVES

HERE ARE A FEW PEOPLE FROM OUR CHILDFREE COMMUNITY LIVING THEIR BEST LIVES AND DOING WHAT THEY LOVE. NEVER APOLOGIZE FOR LIVING LIFE ON YOUR OWN TERMS AND BY YOUR OWN RULES!







LET'S TALK ABOUT: LIMINALITY

YOU MAY NOT HAVE HEARD OF LIMINALITY BEFORE, BUT IT'S A USEFUL AND IMPORTANT CONCEPT FOR THE CHILDFREE COMMUNITY. PSYCHOTHERAPIST MARGARET O'CONNOR EXPLAINS.

Written by Margaret O'Connor

Liminality “refers to the transitional space in between well-defined structures” and is a process people pass through to achieve a new status (Boland & Griffin, 2015, p.39). During this process “liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are between” (Turner, 1969, p.359). This is in contrast to someone who has completed their transition, who “has rights and obligations...of a clearly defined and ‘structural’ type”. We see this process in everyday life. For example, there are clearly defined stages and requirements for moving from being a non-

driver to a learner driver to a fully qualified driver.

This process caused me to think about women as, traditionally, childbirth has been regarded as the full achievement of womanhood (Russo, 1979). While this liminal process is available to women who become mothers, what happens to women who, by choice or circumstances, do not do so? Is it possible to have other liminal experiences, or are we stuck, due to the lack of legitimised alternatives?

This is an isolating and lonely place to be – “to be seen and invisible ... to exist within a community but not necessarily be part of it”

Liminality in conversation

The often-used phrases “you wouldn’t understand” and “wait until you have your own” are clear examples of being stuck in this liminal space by a pronatalist society. These phrases disregard the professional expertise or personal experience a woman may have regarding children or family issues because you don’t have children. There’s a sense that your knowledge and life experience are on hold until you become a parent, and whatever else you achieve is only a compensation for this. In my work as a psychotherapist, I frequently hear from women about how it feels that, whatever else they do in their lives, it’s never enough, and is frequently accompanied by the attitude “but she never had children”.

Liminality in the workplace

There’s a strong and practical interaction between liminality and work. Women who aren’t

mothers often feel they aren’t taken as seriously in the workplace. There’s a sense of parental authority on child-related matters, and parents often get preference for annual leave etc. However, being a parent can also be seen as a hindrance to progressing in the workplace, as there’s an assumption that a mother’s priority is her children at all times and that she cannot be as flexible or dedicated as childfree workers. So, motherhood is valued symbolically but not practically. This means women feel like they cannot win no matter what they do, and all of this is unspoken but heavily implied.

Liminality in the media

Liminality also influences the media through the lack of representation of childfree people on television and in film.


Despite the fact approximately 20 per cent of women won’t have children, either by choice or not,

we aren’t seeing this in the TV shows and films we watch. Film director Maxine Trump explores this and the often disappointing representation when it is included (e.g. the frequent change of mind, the lonely life of regret etc) in her 2019 documentary *To Kid or Not To Kid*. The lack of representation of other life decisions apart from biological motherhood compounds the sense of isolation some childfree women feel. As Trump says, “We’re out there, so hold up that media mirror and let us see ourselves” (2019,

www.talkhouse.com/notes-from-a-childfree-tv-and-film-lover/).

The destructive effect of pronatalist views on women who do not become mothers is very clear: they are “burdened with damaged identities that can leave them personally ‘othered’ and socially liminal” (Gotlib, 2016, p.328.). This is reinforced by the lack of recognition of any





"...women feel like they cannot win no matter what they do, and all of this is unspoken but heavily implied."

other life choice or achievement as an alternative liminal experience. This is an isolating and lonely place to be – “to be seen and invisible ... to exist within a community but not necessarily be part of it” (Gotlib, 2016, p.342). It’s clear that there’s a large “gap of perception” (Maher & Saugeres, 2007, p.19) between societal views and how some women want to live their lives.

Creating our own liminal spaces

I hope that being aware of the concept of liminality might help to make sense of some of these experiences for childfree people. Despite all this, there is so much positivity stemming from the childfree community that we can draw on. It’s a basic human need to feel that we belong to a group of like-minded people, and there are amazing groups of childfree people around the world.

These groups and friendships allow our values and passions to be validated and acknowledged. They allow us to be ourselves without having to explain or defend our choices. They also help us acknowledge and celebrate our achievements and move through that liminal process on our own terms. These achievements can include many aspects of our lives e.g. work, relationships, hobbies, travel, education, creativity and mindfully enjoying the lives we are purposefully living.

The childfree have International Childfree Day on August 1 each year, and an increasing range of books, podcasts and now this magazine to highlight our existence and achievements. So, keep on celebrating and sharing your achievements - you are helping to create liminal spaces for yourself and each other.



Margaret O'Connor is a counsellor and psychotherapist in Ireland. She runs the 'Are Kids For Me' specialist service, for people who need support making the decision to have children or not, and to live their best childfree life. She also creates the 'Are Kids For Me' podcast, to share stories of people's experience of answering this question. Please see www.arekidsforme.ie for more information.



love
yourself

BACHELORS VS SPINSTERS

UNRIPE PODCAST HOST JO VRACA HIGHLIGHTS THE STARK DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO TERMS FOR UNMARRIED WOMEN AND MEN, AND LOOKS BACK AT SOME FAMOUS SPINSTERS THROUGHOUT HISTORY.

Written by By Jo Vraca

When you think of “spinster”, what comes to mind? An old, sad, crazy cat lady, who is bitter, lonely, lacking empathy and yelling at the kids making noise on the street - is that what you picture? What about someone like Jennifer Aniston? Poor Jen, perpetually single, childless and sad, the tabloids suggest.

Now I challenge you to think of a bachelor. What comes to mind? Carefree, on the loose, worldly, self-aware, with unlimited options, perhaps? Do actors George Clooney and maybe Hugh Grant (pre-wives) pop into your head? Sure, we may now have the bachelorette, but the term spinster remains and there’s no equivalent term for men.

A quick Google search of “famous bachelors” will return results such as “The most eligible single male celebrities”, “Hollywood’s 40 hottest unmarried guys”, “Every bachelor star ranked”. Search for





“famous spinsters” on the other hand, and you get “25 famous women on being alone”, “7 women who had very full lives and never married”. It’s a different vibe, isn’t it?

Spinsters and bachelors relate to the same type of person – single and childless - so why do people scrunch up their noses at spinsters, but give a nod and a wink to bachelors? I asked the unRipe community on Instagram what they thought.

Rosiethenonriveter’s Rosie had this to say: “Spinster makes me think of [an] old woman thinking of what could have been; societal FOMO in order to emotionally pressure women into having relationships/children. It’s mostly ‘you’ll be all alone with your cat’.”

“It’s a male construct,” says Nicole from the mums.the.word_blog. “To soothe the [male] ego, these women needed to be shown as lacking somehow. I want to claim the word back. It should not be shameful!”

Back in 1855, author Herman Melville (Moby Dick) wrote a

very telling short story in Harper’s Magazine. Named The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids, he wrote that bachelors can “take your pleasure, sip your leisure, in the garden waterward; go linger in the ancient library, go worship in the sculptured chapel: but little have you seen, just nothing do you know, not the sweet kernel have you tasted, till you dine among the banded bachelors, and see their convivial eyes and glasses sparkle.”

On the other hand, for the maids, he warned of “bleak hills [that] gradually close in upon a dusky pass, which, from the violent Gulf Stream of air unceasingly driving between its cloven walls of haggard rock, as well as from the tradition of a crazy spinster’s hut having long ago stood somewhere hereabouts, is called the Mad Maid’s Bellows’-pipe.”

The original spinster, Queen Elizabeth I (the daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn), was known by many monikers, including - most famously - The Virgin Queen. She was the last of the monarchs of the House of

Tudor and reigned from the age of 25 until her death at 69 in 1603. She never married and had no children. Elizabeth’s reign is legendary, not just because she was a spinster but because she was no ordinary woman and even went off to battle! Naturally, the Catholic Church did not like her life choices one single bit and accused her of engaging in “filthy lust”.

Let’s not forget the quintessential spinster of the past two centuries: Charles Dickens’ Miss Havisham from his 1861 novel Great Expectations. A bitter, wealthy woman, Amelia Havisham was jilted at the altar, lived in a ruined mansion, and wore her wedding dress every day for the rest of her life. Does it get any worse?

We are now well into the 21st century but judging by the way the word is used by some, “spinster” still commands the same level of shame and burden as it did in past centuries. Believe it or not, until 2005, unmarried people in England and Wales were still described in official documents as “bachelor” and “spinster”. Thankfully, the Civil Partnership Act of 2004 made way for a modern catch-all term, “single”.

According to the American Merriam-Webster dictionary, the term spinster refers to a single, childless woman who is old enough to be married but is not, and is not likely to get married. But, at the start, a spinster was something entirely different.

During the late Middle Ages, long before Rosie the Riveter and Queen Elizabeth I, married tradeswomen had an easier time

finding higher-status, higher-income work (through their husbands) than unmarried women. They were able to work as seamstresses, artisans and widowed business owners (ever wondered how the champagne Veuve Clicquot got its name?).

Meanwhile, unmarried women ended up with lower-status, lower-income jobs, such as combing, carding, and spinning wool. These jobs did not require access to expensive tools like looms, so they could be done at home. These women were, literally, spinners, also known as spinsters. They performed tasks that sustained their homes. Spinster was yet to achieve the level of disapproval it found in later years.

By the 17th century, the word was being used in legal documents to refer to unmarried women. Two historical facts led to the word's evolution: the fact that most spinners in the Middle Ages were women, and the fact that it was common in legal documents to use one's occupation as a sort of surname (which is why we have Cooks and Bakers and Tanners and so on). Women who spun yarn or thread were given the title Spinster in legal documents.

By the time the Industrial Revolution shook the world to its coal-stained core, the roles of governess, nurse, fine seamstress and companion became the domain of the spinster – and they were always known to be stern and mildewing.

Donna Ward, the Australian author of the memoir *She I Dare Not Name: A spinster's meditations on life*, reflects on



the meaning and purpose she has discovered living entirely without a partner and children. “Unlike a lot of women, I didn't have the biological clock effect,” she said. “In fact, I was a bit surprised that I didn't. I must admit, around my 40s, I was starting to get weird periods and I was starting to think, ‘oh, wait a minute, my womb hasn't done something’! I remember when I turned 50, I didn't actually know how to be 50, because I didn't have children who were about to get married - or those sorts of markers.”

The fictional character Bridget Jones referred to herself as a spinster, but we all know how that ended. Meanwhile, the lead character Liz Lemon in American TV series *30 Rock* was always considered to have unrealistically high expectations of men, remaining a spinster into her 40s. On the other hand, *Sex and the City's* Samantha Jones was a spinster like no other - a refreshing and fun character portrayal that perhaps paved the way to the term *bachelorette*. Alas, we will not know what became of sexy Sam, judging from the first photos released of the next film.

What about the bachelor? The word was first recorded in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1386 and meant an unmarried man, nothing more - nothing less. It was English author Geoffrey Chaucer who gave the term its current meaning. The young squire in *The Canterbury Tales* is “a lover and a lusty bachelor, with locks well curled... Wondrously active.” He parties, sings, dances, goes to war, hardly sleeps and has a right merry old time of it – and nobody bats an eye. Even if he is “of a certain age”, a bachelor is seen as “eligible”, while a spinster is an “old maid”.

Interestingly, back in Sparta, hundreds of years before the Common Era, unmarried men over a certain age were subject to penalties. They were forbidden to watch women's gymnastics (fair enough) and were made to march around the town square naked, in winter, singing of their dishonour as unmarried men. Likewise, bachelors in ancient Rome were heavily fined and lacked the privileges of married men. How times have changed!

Intolerance towards single

women is a well-recognised theme. In the US, the Puritans herded girls into marriage to grow the country's population, viewing unmarried women with great suspicion. Remember the Salem witch trials of the late 1600s? The state of Massachusetts was home to an extraordinary number of spinsters during that time, and they were viewed as unfortunate and not to be trusted. These were the original feminists – autonomous, independent and active in reform movements. The spinster was a challenge to the norms of the family, and completely at odds with a civilised society, especially a religious one. On top of this, many were healers, and this led to their classification as witches.

The numbers of bachelors and spinsters have grown since they bottomed out around 6 per cent post World War I. The numbers picked up again in the 1990s, when Gen X-ers began to steer away from the norms of family, and the number of unmarried and unpartnered has been growing ever since. According to the 2010 US Census, the second-most-common household type in America was a person living alone (31.2 million). Based on census data,



America's Pew Research Center projected that by the time 2014's young adults reach their mid-40s and mid-50s, 25 per cent are likely to have never been married.

These days, in most Western cities, we tend not to tarnish women with the title of spinster. Although some, like the aforementioned author Donna Ward, have reclaimed it. Living in a multicultural suburb of Melbourne, Australia, Donna recalls the time when her books were published and a neighbour happened upon her on the street. "He said, 'I heard you on the radio.' I never thought of you as a spinster. And I said, 'what did you think of me as?' He said 'a modern, accomplished woman'."

And that is exactly what a spinster is: a woman who is not married, who doesn't have children, who is accomplished and living a perfectly ordinary or extraordinary life.

"That old-maid myth is garbage," actress Diane Keaton once famously said. Judging by the spinsters that surround us in our neighbourhoods and in entertainment, she's right.

So, who are today's spinsters? Well, we have Stevie Nicks, Katharine Hepburn, Florence Nightingale, Jane Austen, Harper Lee, Greta Garbo, Jane Goodall, Fran Lebowitz, Julie Delpy, Gertrude Stein... and plenty more. And, from this side of the fence, they look mighty fine.



Jo Vraca is an award-winning author, coach, journalist, businesswoman, traveller, chef-in-training, one-time roller derby wanna-be, wife and fur mum. Jo is on a mission to get women talking, to create a supportive environment & community for childless and childfree women to share our stories and experiences.

READER SPOTLIGHT

JODY O'BRIEN

Location: Regional Victoria, Australia
Age: 40s
Marital Status: Complicated
Occupation: Head of Communication & Marketing



Who inspires you:

Anyone who steps out of their comfort zone to follow their dreams, particularly Brene Brown.

Hobbies:

Sunrise standup Paddle Boarding, Crossfit, designing a dream home to go on my waterfront block.

Fave toy growing up:

I grew up on a farm on the mid north coast of NSW, so my toys were exploring the great outdoors, riding bikes, climbing trees, looking after animals, swimming in creeks and helping Dad around the farm.

Do your parents accept your choice?

My dad passed away when I was 30 in 2002 and my Mum only recently passed away from dementia. There was never really any pressure from either of them about having kids when they were both alive. They always said to me that I needed to chase my own dreams and do what was right for me. They said that having kids should be a measured decision and not something to be entered into lightly.

I am adopted, so I was always reminded of how wanted I was. Our family was definitely one that

encouraging individual development rather than following a bouncing ball of life instructions to do certain things by a certain time to satisfy the needs and wants of others.

Most offensive thing someone has said to you?

Oh, there's been a few:

- If you didn't pursue IVF then you really didn't try hard enough (ummm duh, I was in freakin' menopause you muppet!!)
- Don't you wish you'd tried harder?
- (In front of a whole lot of people at a party) How does it feel to be the only one here without kids?

Your story / childfree why:

I'm Jody, a 40-something sunrise loving sparkling embracer of life. I'm childlessly childfree, largely due to early menopause at age 38. Sure, I'd have loved to have had a child, but when that door shut, I just opened another one. My philosophy is life is way too short to be looking backwards at all the things you think you've missed. My favourite saying is the best is always ahead of us, but right now...is awesome.

THE **VOTES** ARE IN

We asked the question
“Do you think the dialogue is changing in society to be
more positive towards the childfree choice?”

This is what the childfree community thought...

YES, I think so!
55%

NO, a long way to go!
45%



HERE COMES SUCCESS

Written by Tanya Williams

TANYA WILLIAMS LOOKS AT HOW THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF CHILDFREE WOMEN NOTICEABLY LACK THE CELEBRATION CONSISTENTLY SHOWERED UPON MOTHERS AND THEIR CHILDREN.

Celebrations for children are everywhere. Not only are there traditional baby showers but parents now have gender reveal parties and naming soirees. Many babies have three celebrations in their honour before they are even one year old! Surely this is an overkill?

For many - and indeed society in general - parenthood equates to prosperity and hence success. It is put on a pedestal and treated like the holy grail. Nothing else seems to be as important.

Well, I challenge that notion - that status quo - and question what sort of achievement parenthood is. After all, it doesn't take skill, years of education, training or discipline to become a parent. Anyone can do it - regardless! So why does a woman's life seem to only have recognised value if she is having babies?

I know that my success is not defined by motherhood in any way, and nor would I want it to be. I am the eldest child of two.





I am childfree by choice, while my sister has three children. My sister and I are total opposites in every single way: looks, personality, character traits, personal dreams, you name it. The only thing we have in common is our parents.

My parents have always accepted my life choice. They told me that they only want me to be happy and have never pressured me to have children – ever! But I still feel the sting from the lack of celebration of my successes. None of the big milestones in my life have ever really been celebrated by them, including:

- Promotions in my career
- Starting my own business
- Writing and publishing a book
- TV and media appearances
- Travelling the world

I have heard the “that’s great, we’re proud of you” speech, but that’s about as far as it goes. I wonder if my parents skite to their friends about these achievements of mine? I doubt it! And I am not alone, as many of my childfree friends can attest. There have typically been no formal celebrations to acknowledge their achievements in life.

But the same cannot be said for when my sister fell pregnant with babies one, two and three, or any time one of my nieces or nephews has since received an award, won at sport, started high school - the list goes on. Instead, these events are all shouted from the rooftop and shared with the world with great fanfare. “Our clever grandkids” etc.

What’s the difference? Well, my sister has done what is expected by her parents and society - continued the tradition of generation after generation. Society says that the best thing you can do, and the only role a woman really has, is to be a mother.

On the other hand, I have rebelled and lifted a big middle finger to motherhood and the notion that success is only really linked to having babies. I think this notion of putting motherhood on a pedestal is outdated and does nothing to help the women’s movement or civil rights. In fact, I think it sets us back. Women should be able to be defined by - and celebrated for - more than one life choice.

The book I wrote, *My Childfree Happily Ever After*, took nine months (ironic much?) from idea to launch. It was nine months of

hard work, tears, self doubt and triumph. And yet it wasn’t celebrated in the way that having a child is. What’s the difference? The difference is that motherhood is viewed as the ultimate success and anything else women achieve gets a runner-up prize. It’s so deeply ingrained that people don’t even notice that it’s happening. It feels like the world is on autopilot.

It’s time for a change - and you can be part of that change. When you have achieved something that is important to you, shout it out, ask your family and friends to celebrate it with you, and explain why it is just as important as having a child. Through dialogue and conversations we can make people see that a change is needed. I plan to make celebrating my non-motherhood-related successes a much bigger part of normal life.




Tanya Williams is author of #1 Amazon Best Seller *Childfree Happily Ever After* and founder of Childfree Magazine. Her mission is to change the dialogue in society from judgement and criticism to support and acceptance for all childfree people.

ON THE LINE

WHAT WE'RE HEARTING ONLINE 


We love seeing the abundance of childfree memes, quotes, articles, support and fun cartoons across our screens. We selected a few we think are pretty cool. Check out the feeds of these accounts yourself for more childfree content on your screen.

 Jessica Miles



 childfreemillennial




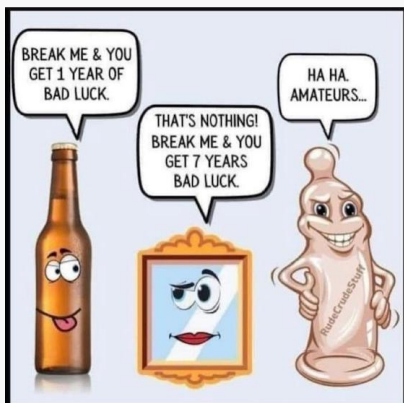
 Kathryn Mcleod

Friend: "Me and my kids are coming to visit you but they don't like dogs. Do you mind locking them up?"

Me: "Of course not!"



 renebester




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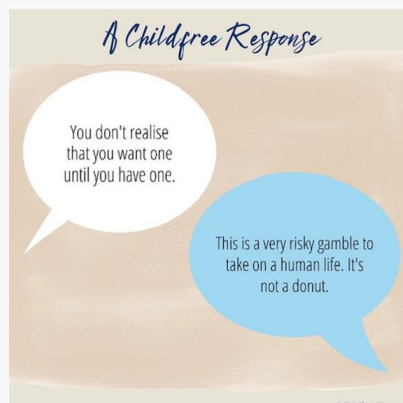
 Rai Bose



 Cameron Root



 childfreechats



 childfreeindia





WHAT POPULATION PROBLEM?

Written by Dr. Amy Blackstone

WE DO HAVE A POPULATION PROBLEM, BUT IT ISN'T ONE OF TOO FEW PEOPLE, IT'S A PROBLEM OF TOO MANY, ALONG WITH THE UNWILLINGNESS OF NATIONS TO CHANGE THEIR COMPLEXION, DR AMY BLACKSTONE EXPLAINS.

We've all seen the headlines. In the United States, Americans are warned that "Population decline is going to hit us hard." In Spain, citizens are told they're facing the "biggest demographic crisis since the Spanish civil war." Even China, once known for its harsh limits on family size, raised its two-child policy (only recently changed in 2016 from a one-child policy) to a three-child policy in an effort to stem the tide of an ageing population outnumbering younger generations.

Countries across the globe have a population problem, and the solution, they say, is to get more women to have more babies.

Their tactics would be funny if they weren't so tragic. Italy tried **shame**, reminding women that "Beauty has no age. Fertility does." Denmark, where one company urged Danes to "Do It for Mum," tried **humour**. Australia and other nations have gone old school, enticing women to give up their uteri for the good of the country, with offers of **cold, hard cash**.

Look, I get it. I'm not in favour of the collapse of the global economy any more than the next person, and economies rely on the production of new humans to run smoothly. We need people in the labour force. We need younger people to care for those of us who are ageing.

"Our survival as a species, it seems, is not at risk due to any lack of reproducing ourselves."



Historically, those problems have been solved by encouraging women to do it for their countries and (to borrow from the film classic, *Grease 2*) get busy making babies.

But what if there were a solution that didn't rely on the reproductive organs of women who might not be keen on sharing theirs? And if such a solution exists (spoiler alert: it does), why aren't more nations taking it seriously? There's a reason, and it's one that most policy makers are reticent to admit: racism.

The truth is, we do have a population problem but it isn't one of too few people, it's a problem of too many. As of June 2021, the [world population](#) is 7.9 billion. Projections are that we'll reach 9.7 billion by 2050. Our survival as a species, it seems, is not at risk due to any lack of reproducing ourselves.

If nations struggling with dwindling fertility rates within

their national borders simply liberalise their immigration policies and welcome in more of the countless numbers of folks seeking refuge, they could quickly solve any worker shortage crisis. But to do so, nation states must be willing to change their complexion.

The Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom [observed](#) that the top five most common nationalities of people seeking asylum in 2020 were Iran, Iraq, Albania, Eritrea and Sudan. At the US' southern border, it's people from Central and South America seeking refuge. These populations differ in race, ethnicity and religion from those who hold the power in the nations where they seek refuge.

The solution to Western nations' so-called population problem is right in front of us, yet we refuse to address it. If welcoming immigrants because it is the right thing to do is not a compelling enough reason to do so,

supporting the continued health and growth of the economy should surely appeal.

In my book [Childfree by Choice](#), I describe Italy's disastrous 2016 public health campaign urging women of childbearing age to have more kids for the sake of their nation. One ad depicts a dripping faucet with the caption, "Fertility is a public good." If that's not a tagline straight out of the [Republic of Gilead's](#) playbook, I don't know what is!

Supporting immigration not only solves the population problem so many Western nations claim to have, it honours the reproductive autonomy of the women these nation states are trying to convince to have kids. Our fertility is not a public good, but you know what should be? The right to work, grow and thrive in a nation that protects people from persecution, poverty, violence, and reproductive extortion.



Dr Amy Blackstone is Professor of Sociology at the Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center at the University of Maine, USA. Her book [Childfree by Choice](#) (Dutton, 2019) offers a definitive investigation into the history and growing movement of adults choosing to forgo parenthood: what it means for our society, economy, environment, perceived gender roles, and legacies. When not writing about the childfree choice, you're most likely to find Amy scuba diving, skiing, or cross stitching something sassy.

9 ZINGERS YOU CAN USE

TO RESPOND TO THOSE CHILDFREE CRITICS AT WORK

NEXT TIME YOU GET A RUDE OR INAPPROPRIATE QUESTION OR STATEMENT RELATED TO YOUR CHILDFREE CHOICE IN THE WORKPLACE, SELECT ONE OF THESE AND HIT THEM WITH A ZINGER!!

"Wow we are getting personal. Shall we talk about your sex life now?"

"Is being pregnant part of my job description?"

"How is having a child relevant to my ability to do my job? Did I miss a memo on that?"

"I didn't read that having kids was a pre-requisite to this role on the job description. Can you show it to me again?"

"Sure, I'll remember that I don't know much (because I am not a mum) when you ask me to work back for you next time."

"Yes, I can work back for you tonight if you can do the same for me tomorrow, when I need to pick up my new pet snake."

"So glad you are giving priority to families these holidays. My hubby & dogs will be so happy (after all they are my family)."

"Feel free to ask me anything as long as it isn't something inappropriate about my uterus or extremely personal."

"If you'll forgive me for not answering, I'll forgive you for asking."



DOES BEING CHILDFREE CHANGE AS WE GET OLDER?

PENNY RABARTS REVIEWS WHAT CHILDFREE LIVES LOOK AND FEEL LIKE IN OUR 20S, 30S, 40S, 50S AND BEYOND.

Written by Penny Rabarts

How we see ourselves - and how the world sees us - changes quite significantly over time. Friends come and go and, in some cases, family members come and go, too. But how does the childfree experience change for us as we transition through our 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s and beyond? I decided to investigate

THE 20s

As a Kiwi girl in my 20s, the world beckoned me. I wanted to see and do everything. I had a steady boyfriend at university but he wanted to settle into a career

at home and I was itching to get out and experience everything life had to offer. My backpack included a mix tape and writing material. Children were the last thing on my mind and I was as far away as I could be from any family pressure to remind me otherwise. I was living my best life.

Women in their 20s now have more options than 50 years ago, heck, even 10 years ago! And many are choosing to be childfree very openly. As I started writing this article, I had my thoughts and my conditioned

"Life is truly
awesome, and I
haven't regretted
our decision for
even one minute."

thinking on how life must be for the childfree in their 20s, but - like everything - it's different for each person.

Many know they want to live a childfree life from childhood or the onset of puberty. Others see how motherhood has changed their friends' lives and subsequently choose not to take that path. And now, more than ever before, people are choosing not to have children because of the environmental impacts.

Jana from rural Germany knew from a very young age that she would remain childfree. At 25, she is awaiting her sterilisation surgery. "Around 14, I asked my mum if there was any possibility like a surgery to permanently stop my periods (which caused me a lot of issues and still does), because I didn't want children," she recalls. "She told me about a hysterectomy, so I wanted to get that done at 18."

Jana went on to share that, in Germany, there is an organisation that has been set up to support self-determined sterilisation. The group says, "We are committed to ensuring that adult, responsible individuals with a uterus and a desire for sterilisation can find gynaecologists in their area who will perform a sterilisation as independently as possible of the age, number of children born [previously] or medical indication of the interested person."

Even though she lives in rural Germany and felt (until recently) that there were few childfree women around her, support was available to her. At 25, Jana also gets plenty of less-supportive

feedback on her decision to not have children, including being told by her brother (or any relative) that even though they didn't like kids earlier in life, they now absolutely love their two children.

What do we also know? That women across the globe are having fewer children. Nothing shows this better than a graph reflecting "Children per woman vs population growth" by countries between the years of 1950 and 2020 (ourworldindata.org). Developed countries' populations are projected to decline.

I wondered if this was reflected in our younger cohorts. Adrienne, 22, lives in the South of the United States, and feels there are more childfree people her age despite the pressures of a culture where "procreation is hailed - and you're deemed a lousy woman if you don't have kids". So, pressure is still well and truly alive for people in their 20s who don't want children.

THE 30s

According to the OECD ([SF4: oecd.org](https://sf4.oecd.org)), the mean age for women having children in 2017 across the globe was 30. Personally, my 30s were a merry-go-round of boyfriends, engagement parties, weddings, first births, first birthdays, house warmings and career successes. I was buying gifts for every event, but where was the celebration of my extraordinary life!

Once I moved back near my family and saw my brother's brood growing, I received



constant questions from family members on my dating status and why I was being so picky. As my 30s passed, I began to see how I was being treated differently from my partnered and parenting friends. I was seen as lesser and it made me angry that my life achievements could be reduced to very little against another who had given birth to a human. I'm not diminishing the experience for them, I'm sure it is life changing, but I was being diminished for my choices and that wasn't right!

When I recently reached out to other 30-year-olds, I was overwhelmed with people who have embraced their choice, whether that's by pouring energies into their success or being content with a more simple life. Despite this, the 30s is still the most common age for engagements, weddings and baby showers.

When asked about baby showers, Danielle, 37, from Canada said, "I did feel pressure to go to these events but I was pretty honest when I told them I had no interest in spending money on kids that were not mine. I've lost friends over it but I'm okay with that. My friendship circle has definitely changed over the years. As some had kids, I found myself moving away from them and spending more time with the childfree friends."

Another 32-year-old woman said, "I was a fence sitter. I turned 30 and still wasn't ready. Then I realised I actually didn't want them. It was just society and family telling me I should. As soon as I realised this and made the decision, it became so freeing. Now we live our best life knowing we don't have to save



or plan for a child. We realised that our relationship was perfect as is."

THE 40s

And then - just like that - it's your naughty 40s! The childfree in their 40s have been working for 20-30 years and are hearing a lot about acquiring assets, home renovations, preparing for (an early) retirement and enjoying holidays. Most of my 40-something friends with children are dealing with expensive teenagers now, while at 47 I'm making travel plans or taking last-minute trips because I can.

I'm also perimenopausal. Dr Google doesn't have much to tell me, so I think we need to talk about this more. Women are dealing with changes to their bodies and hormones, and each story I've stumbled across has been about how hard it is for women to juggle work, a family and a household while being a hot mess. If this were a man's

issue there'd be a global understanding of this natural event and support available. But, like periods, fibroids and endometriosis, menopause just doesn't get the attention it deserves.

Despite this, I think the 40s are the best decade. I'm financially stable, I have the physical health to do what I want and I feel empowered to speak my mind. I'm a crone apprentice if you like. No, not the Merriam-Webster version of a crone, which is "a cruel or ugly old woman", but this version I discovered online (croneconfidence.com/2019/10/16/7-signs-you-might-becoming-a-crone/): "A crone takes everything she has learnt over her lifetime - all her experiences, her loves, her losses, her triumphs and her failures - and synergises them into her own unique wisdom. But it's not enough to be intuitive, confident and knowledgeable, the truly wise crone understands that she has a new role in life."



THE 50s AND BEYOND

So, what happens to the childfree after 50? Will I embrace my inner crone? I spoke to some childfree friends to find out and - as far as I can see - it's only good news.

Kelti, 51, in Canada, says, "Unless there is even the slightest chance you want children, be vigilant with birth control. During perimenopause, my hormones went wild and sometimes I craved sex like food!"

Elise, 55, from the United States said, "Remember that most of the messages you're getting about BREED BREED BREED are attached to the other big message: BUY BUY BUY. Don't feel the pressure to have children because the government encourages it. There's nothing you can do to cut your carbon footprint more than not having a child."

Ysabel is from Switzerland and feels much younger than her 54

years, as she's surrounded by friends in their 30s and 40s. "I think I've become quite assertively childfree," she says. "I think in my 20-30s I might not even have put a name on it. I would say people my age act like they're older. They seem to lack freedom."

Chris, 61, from Australia, has always embraced being childfree. He says, "My experience has been positive. Despite a modest income, I've travelled a lot and I paid off my own home by 35. My wife is retired and I'm now part time. This wouldn't have been possible with children. I can indulge my hobbies: motor sport, model building and my hobby car."

I think Kathy, 55, from New South Wales, Australia, should have the last word here. She says, "I was born and raised in New Jersey in the USA. My hubby is an Aussie. When I was 35 and he was 41 we took a trip with friends and, unexpectedly, their five-year-old and 18-month-

old kids joined us. It was torture. That sealed the deal. No kids for us.

"Now, 20 years later, we're living the best life! We own three properties, three collectable cars, and do whatever we want. I had all the time in the world to build a successful career as an architect, and I'm planning retirement in about three years, when all our loans will be paid off.

"I think one of the best things about being childfree is that my husband and I are best friends. So many of our friends are divorced or barely tolerating each other, devoting their lives to every whim of their children. Some are even tied up looking after grandchildren! But our core group of best friends are almost without exception also childfree. Life is truly awesome, and I haven't regretted our decision for even one minute."



Penny Rabarts is a lover of travel, adventures, trekking, feijoas, my dog Livi, my cat Gus, water in all forms, enduring friendships, netball, fresh flowers and lemon meringue pie! I am a proud New Zealander who left Aotearoa in the 90's, to travel the world. Twenty-five years later I'm still adventuring living my best life without children, now based in Melbourne, Australia.

ESCAPING THE EXPECTED

AN ANONYMOUS CHILDFREE STORY

Being childfree by choice is something that I've always wanted. I never had a reason, I just knew how much I enjoyed my life just the way it was and wouldn't want to have it any other way. I am 28 in a relationship but not married.

I was born and raised in southern USA, so having children is kind of a requirement. I've never wanted to be a birth mum, so it's hard for people in the south to understand that. People think that you're speaking alien or something once you become vocal about not wanting children.

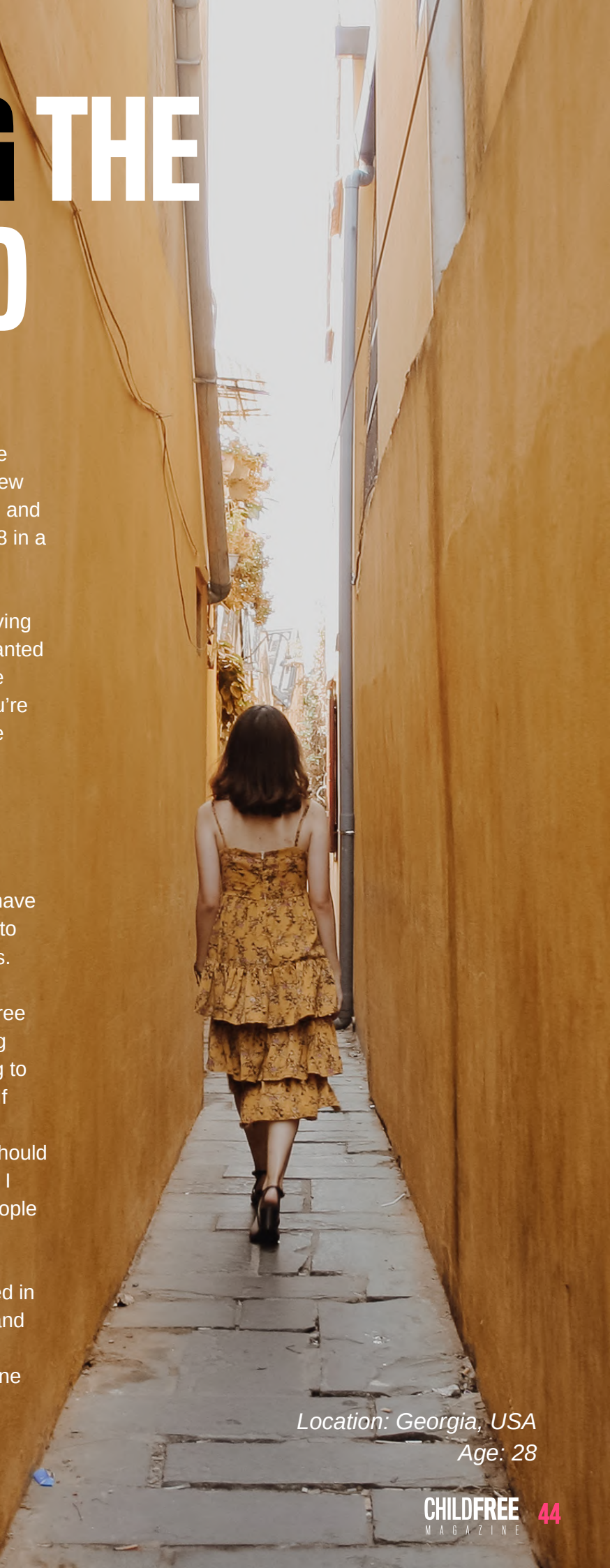
People have tried to make me feel bad for not wanting a child by constantly bringing up the statement "Oh, you're going to have one, just watch." It's very disturbing and exhausting to have to hear that comment being made and having to kind of laugh it off after hearing it several times.

I cannot be vocal about my choice to be childfree because of the expectations of my surrounding environment. People judge you for not wanting to have kids so I usually just don't say anything. If they don't judge, they will try to twist and manipulate me into thinking that their choice should be my choice and it triggers my mental health. I prefer to be quiet and surround myself with people who can keep their noses out of my uterus.

I have anxiety and depression. I was diagnosed in 2019. Some days I struggle to get out of bed and take a shower. I am in no way, shape, or form mentally capable of being in control over anyone except myself.

Location: Georgia, USA

Age: 28





REDEFINING FAMILY

THE CONCEPT OF 'FAMILY' NEEDS A REFRAME IN 2021, FOR THE SAKE OF THE CHILDFREE AND A MORE EVOLVED WORKPLACE. TANYA WILLIAMS EXPLAINS.

Written by Tanya Williams

The traditional definition of family is something along the lines of: a group of one or more parents and their children, living together as a unit. The issue with this definition is that it no longer reflects our modern world. We all know that families look very different in 2021.

Why does this definition of family matter? It matters as it impacts the lives of millions of employees who don't have children and are unable to access the same leave and flexibility that parents get.

Most workplaces have policies (such as Carer's Leave) that define family as having children. According to the Fair Work Ombudsman in Australia, Carer's

Leave allows an employee to take time off to care for an immediate family or household member who is sick, injured or in need of help during a family emergency.

In the United States, the Family and Medical Leave Act allows up to 12 weeks per year of unpaid, job-protected leave. However, in its definition, the reasons enabling you to use this leave are predominantly centred on children and other immediate family members, such as a spouse.

But, in 2021, family is no longer just mum, dad and 2.5 kids or other blood relatives. We have moved beyond that. If the past

Family is no longer just mum, dad and 2.5 kids or other blood relatives.

18 months have not proven that your carer circle extends beyond your immediate family, then we have a bigger issue to address. When in quarantine or lockdown and unable to see family, many people have relied on close friends, community members and even the kindness of strangers to help them survive. Caring for people outside our immediate family is very common and has been for centuries.

So, shouldn't Carer's Leave extend further than just immediate family? Why should it matter who the person needing care is if we feel an undeniable need to help them? We can all be carers with a role to play in our communities and society - care-giving is not restricted to mothers and fathers.

Redefining the word family is a key part of this issue in workplace policy. I'd prefer to see a definition that is broader. Personally, I have what I call a 'family' (a blending of the words friends and family). My family is a group of people who want - as well as choose - to be together, embraced by a bond so strong and powerful that a test of trials or troubles cannot break it.

Now is the time for real change in our workplaces. The emphasis needs to be taken off motherhood when it comes to flexible hours, leave, priority with holidays etc. The notion of work-life balance being about allowing mothers to spend adequate time with their children while holding jobs needs to be expanded to include the non-parents in the workplace.

I recently conducted a survey of childfree people across the

world. More than 1,000 people responded to The Childfree at Work Survey within days. Judging by this figure, it's clear that it's a hot topic and it continues to get a lot of engagement and comments. As a childfree woman in the workplace, I shouldn't have been surprised by the response or the types of bullying, harassment and inappropriate comments that are reportedly being made by bosses, HR managers and co-workers alike.

The notion that normal = motherhood for women is a long-held and deeply ingrained view in the world we live in, and the workplace is no exception. There continues to be a stigma if you choose to do otherwise, and it often makes parents uncomfortable in conversation. If we examine this in the context of workplace policies, it shouldn't be a surprise then that policies such as Carer's Leave are really just for mums and dads.

Let me share a real-life example:

Lucy (name changed for privacy reasons) had a female colleague who was also a close friend. The friend had been ill and needed to go to the emergency department on a day that happened to be a workday. When Lucy asked her boss if she could accompany her colleague to hospital, she was directed to ask the COO if he could approve Carer's Leave. However, the COO said that according to the Employee Handbook, "Carer's Leave is only for family members."

Lucy was outraged. Not only was the issue with a colleague, but Lucy considered her friend her family (she has no family members in Australia, except for

her husband). Lucy uses a lot less leave compared with her colleagues with kids. And, what's more, her sick friend is also from overseas and has no family to care for her in Australia.

These types of workplace policies are far too restrictive and should be challenged. Your family should be who you choose it to be. For some, family includes children, while, for others, it includes their pets and friends. I have close friends I class as family and who mean more to me than some blood relatives. Blood isn't the only thing that makes you family. Family includes the people who will be there for you when you need them most - through good and bad - no matter what.

It's time society and workplace policies evolved and redefined the word family to be more inclusive. I'd like to see workplaces across the globe change policies from 'family friendly' to 'family friendly'. That would be a real step forward for everyone in the global workforce, and one that is well overdue.



Tanya Williams is author of #1 Amazon Best Seller *Childfree Happily Ever After* and founder of *Childfree Magazine*. One of her focuses is on making the workplace a fairer place for all childfree people by educating employers and bosses about the issues childfree people currently face.

**BEING CHILDFREE
ALLOWS YOU TO DESIGN
THE LIFE YOU WANT.**



WTF!

WHAT THE FACT

BIG THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO PARTICIPATED IN OUR CHILDFREE AT WORK SURVEY. THESE ARE SOME OF THE STATS THAT COME FROM 1000 PEOPLE WHO RESPONDED.

The survey asked 9 questions and respondents were from all over the world, from different industries and working different hours each week.



44.5%

of people surveyed said they had left a job or -thought about it - because of the way they were treated.



“My availability is assumed. My consent for my time is not asked. Colleagues with children are allowed to be less professional.”



62.5%

of people said they were occasionally or sometimes treated differently because they were childfree.

68%

of people said they were not comfortable raising the issue or were concerned for their job if they did so.



A majority of respondents feel that a flexible workplace is very important.



READER SPOTLIGHT

RAPHIE WAGNER

Location: Florida, USA
Age: 50
Marital Status: Married
Occupation: Podcast Coach

Who inspires you:

All the amazing childfree humans from all parts of the world who I have met on social media and through my podcast.

Hobbies:

Anything audio, podcasting and audiobooks. Also, anything business software. I know it's odd.

Fave toy growing up:

Atari.

Do your parents accept your choice?

Yes, actually was never questioned.

Most offensive thing someone has said to you:

Who will take care of you if you are alone and old. We know that's just BS.

Your story / childfree why:

I am 50 years old and depending on when I was asked this question that answer would vary. I consider myself "childfree just because". I did not ever make a declaration of "I am not having children".



I simply lived my life and children were never wanted so badly that I took that path. In my 30s I had 2 friends that actually wanted to be mothers so badly they were artificially inseminated.

By the time that little glimmer faintly appeared for me, I was in my mid-40s and just married. My age was the number one reason, having children was never an option for us.

SNAP POLL RESULTS

We asked the question
“Should kids be allowed in 5-star hotels and resorts?”

This is what the childfree community thought...

YES!
14%

NO!
86%



A LETTER TO MY YOUNGER SELF

Written by Marcia Drut-Davis

NOW 78, AMERICAN AUTHOR AND CHILDFREE TRAILBLAZER MARCIA DRUT-DAVIS LOOKS BACK OVER HER EVENTFUL LIFE AND PENS A LETTER TO HER TEENAGE SELF.

Dear Marcia,

Remember when you were 19 and visited your beloved 19-year-old cousin with her toddler son? You thought, "This should be fun!" You couldn't wait to talk to her about married life and sex.

It was winter in the Bronx, New York. You were in school, aiming to get your degree in teaching. Your cousin was home raising her little boy and being a housewife.

When you got to her home, the smell of a baking cake wafted past your nostrils. The television was on and your cousin greeted you at her door holding her son. Did you feel a bit of jealousy? You did! She was home, cooking and watching TV, taking care of a little one, while you were in the throes of trying to pass calculus and biology. (You never understood why those courses were a prerequisite to teaching!)

Your cousin placed her son in your arms. He was adorable. Soon you were crawling on the floor and having a great time





playing with him. Then, he needed a diaper change. Not fun! You watched as your cousin cleaned out faeces from the creases of his bottom. The smell was awful.

Your cousin suggested you take a walk outside in the brisk winter weather. Snow was gently falling but your cousin needed to get out of the house. "I'm in the house day and night," she wailed. "I need to get out of here!"

At that moment, you didn't realise how confining it was to be with a child day and night. Marcia, how could you know the truth? Truths were never shared about childcare. Myths of unlimited joys were taught in home and career courses.

You watched as your cousin dressed her son for the chilly, snowy day. Layers of clothing were added to keep him warm. He could hardly move! Then, the boots, gloves and hat. Your cousin packed a large bag of things he might need on the walk. You were exhausted at all the preparation for a simple walk. Then, he suddenly needed another diaper change! Off went the layers of clothing. Next, he was wailing!

Your cousin suggested you skip the walk and she put him down for a nap. You were relieved. You started to think that maybe, just maybe, this life of being an at-home mum, baking, watching TV and playing with a little one wasn't so much fun after all. You even looked forward to studying that damned calculus and biology in the peace and quiet of your room that night!

It was all a bit upsetting though, as you were supposed to want to be a mum some day, and supposed to love what mums did in caring for their child. "Pfffft," you thought. "There was plenty of time to be concerned about that!" You were still in school and had no plans of marriage. In those days, babies only came with marriage, and you didn't even have a steady boyfriend.

Dear Marcia, you were being influenced by a pronatal society that made you feel having a child was an amazing, fulfilling biological destiny. Not to want that made you feel there was something wrong with you. But there was nothing wrong with you!

You graduated college in 1964 with your hard-earned degree in teaching. You fell in love and

married at 22. Neither you or your then-husband ever once discussed having children. It was assumed it would be a part of being married. But you felt fearful of pregnancy, going through the birthing process (which your cousin explained in frightening detail) and having to be responsible for a child 24 hours a day.

Marcia, you were lucky! Your fears were supported by the realities of pregnancy, birthing and the constant demands of parenting. It should have been perfectly fine to observe those realities and feel it wasn't the lifestyle you desired.

Your marriage ended in less than three years. He was mentally abusive and would never be a great father. A narcissist could never be the kind of father a child requires.

After being single again, you didn't worry about babies. However, you started to become aware of the drama your friends faced in raising their children. It seemed they never had time to breathe. In those days, the woman was the main caregiver of her children. The man worked and came home to a cooked dinner and a clean house. The



child (or children) would already be bathed and dressed for bed. The man would pat the children on the head, kiss them goodnight, go to work the next morning and resume the brief nightly connection to his children. Although more men are helping with childcare in many societies today, the majority of the responsibility still falls on the mother.

Marcia, it was perfectly okay to see those responsibilities and lifestyle as not what you wanted. Your eyes were opened wider each time you saw more realities. Some of your friends faced the sad trauma of illnesses in children, and even had kids with learning disabilities. Others worried about finances. Having children is very expensive.

After your second marriage, you still never discussed children. In fact, your new husband even wrote a song about you on the back porch with a child in your arms. It was sweet but evoked an immense sense of dread! What if he wanted a child and

you didn't? Marcia, you should have discussed this before you married! (Thankfully, it ended well.)

You found the book *The Baby Trap* by Ellen Peck. It was what you needed to learn about the word "childfree" versus childless. You also learnt what pronatalism was and how it made you feel there was something wrong in not wanting to birth or raise a child. Marcia, again, there was nothing wrong with you. In fact, there was a lot right with you, as only you could decide what your goals were. Luckily, your husband was just as relieved after he read *The Baby Trap*. You both decided on a childfree lifestyle.

As you look back to your younger days, just know that these were lessons and not failures that you can now share with those you can reach.

After that, you travelled to many amazing places, enjoyed the peace of being at home and doing what you wanted, when

you wanted to, while taking care of your own inner child. You nurtured your animals, plants, hobbies and loved ones. You had "daughter-friends" from students you had the honour of teaching, and one "son-friend". They are very much in your life. One has a son who calls you "Marma" (Marcia-grandma).

The burning question repeatedly asked of you is, "What if you regret not having kids?" It makes you smile. Looking back, you've never felt regret. Your life has been - and still is - full. You're connected to thousands all over the world on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. You're about to host another childfree group cruising to Alaska in 2022. Your books touch many hearts. You're in two childfree documentaries. Your mind is filled with memories of those exciting trips, teaching adored school children, and all the possibilities of embracing the childfree lifestyle.

Marcia, you made a wise choice.



Marcia Drut-Davis is an awarded septuagenarian pioneer in the childfree lifestyle. Her delight is reaching hearts in need of her support and hosting childfree group cruises. Her books [Confessions of a Childfree Woman](#) and [What? You Don't Want Children?](#) are both on Amazon.



**IF PEOPLE ARE
UNCOMFORTABLE
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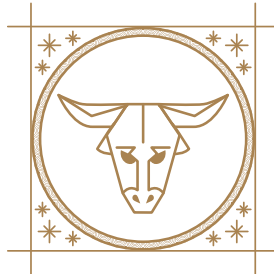
YOUR "PIZZA" ZODIAC

WE THOUGHT WE'D HAVE A BIT OF FUN WITH THE ZODIAC. HOW ACCURATE IS THIS FOR YOU?



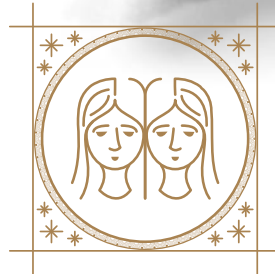
ARIES

"Guys, just follow this recipe."



TAURUS

throws up dough in the air
falls on Cancer



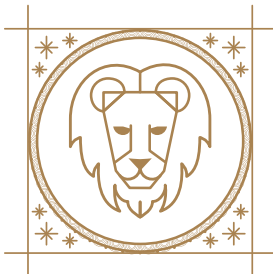
GEMINI

"Let's put EVERYTHING on it."



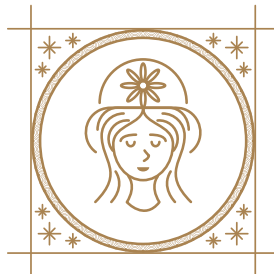
CANCER

"TAURUS, STOP IT!"



LEO

"Let's just top the dough with sauce and cheese and get it over with."



VIRGO

starts food fight



LIBRA

*starts slapping Capricorn with a spoon"



SCORPIO

"STOP FIGHTING!"



SAGITTARIUS

jumps into table and starts twerking



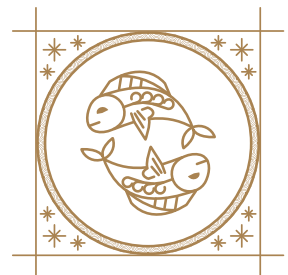
CAPRICORN

kicks Libra in the shins



AQUARIUS

*perfectly makes a pizza and puts in oven"



PISCES

"I thought we're making a sandwich..."

READER SPOTLIGHT

LUCAS CHANEY

Location: Dallas, Texas, USA
Age: 40
Marital Status: Widower
Occupation: Technical Architect for IBM Cloud



Who inspires you:

Michael Jordan who is not only the greatest basketball player of all time, but his incredible work ethic and desire to win has inspired me my entire life no matter the endeavor I am undertaking.

Hobbies:

I have a lot of hobbies that center around Basketball. I am a massive Chicago Bulls fan, race cars with buddies, have every single Wolverine comic ever made, and run my #NoKids and BuyChildfreeByChildfree business ventures!

Fave toy growing up:

Nintendo 64 - I played so much Mario Kart and have such fond memories of it.

Do your parents accept your choice?

Yes, I am lucky that both my parents accept my childfree choice. My older brother is also childfree but my younger sister has 2 kids giving my parents their desired grandkids. I love my niece and nephew very much and enjoy getting to see them several times a year.

Most offensive thing someone has said to you?

I've had all of the Childfree "Bingo's", but the one I really don't like is the "who's going to take care of you when you get old". I find this offensive, but honestly the most offensive thing someone has said to me when they found out I was childfree was "then what is the point of your life?". I didn't even bother trying to converse with that ignorant person and just moved on.

Your story / childfree why:

I have a Masters in IT from the University of North Texas and am a Cloud sales rep for a large IT organization. I decided to be childfree in my mid 20's and when I went looking for childfree merchandise and didn't find much available, I decided to use my IT skills to create an e-commerce business to provide empowering childfree merchandise to like-minded people. I live in a suburb of Dallas, TX. I'm the founder of #NoKids LLC, a childfree business that offers a new apparel brand labeled #NoKids, to the childfree among us. The t-shirts and other merchandise proudly declare our #NoKids lifestyle!

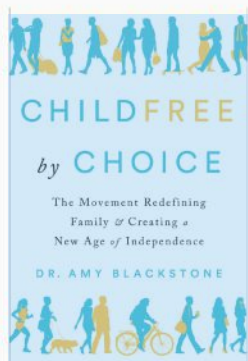
BOOKS

WHAT WE'RE READING

WHO DOESN'T LOVE A GOOD BOOK? THESE ARE SOME OF OUR FAVES TO GET YOUR CHILDFREE FIX. HAPPY READING!



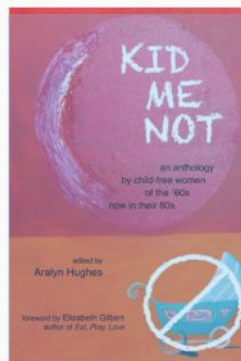
NON-FICTION



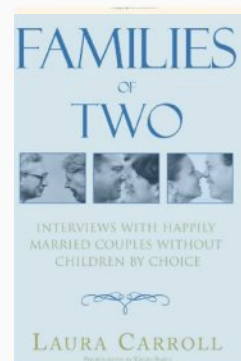
Childfree by Choice
by Dr. Amy Blackstone



Confessions of a Childfree Woman
by Marcia Drut-Davis



Kid Me Not
Edited by Aralyn Hughes



Families of Two
by Laura Carroll



NOT JUST ENTERTAINMENT

BILL RYERSON EXPLAINS HOW ONE NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION IS USING TELEVISION AND RADIO PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS THE USE OF CONTRACEPTION AND BRING ABOUT A SUSTAINABLE HUMAN POPULATION.

Written by Bill Ryerson

Global population is now about 7.9 billion and is increasing by about 83 million per year. The expanding need for primary resources, consumption of non-renewable resources and increased use of fossil fuels is driving climate change, which is causing further loss of biodiversity and threatens to make the planet uninhabitable by the end of the current century.

The primary drivers of population growth and non-use of contraception are desires for large family size, especially in Africa, where many couples say their desired fertility is five

children on average. In West Africa, desired fertility is above actual fertility rates. For example, in Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, the actual fertility rate is about five children per woman, while women indicate they want seven and men want nine. In Niger, the fertility rate is about seven children per woman, while women want nine and men want 13.

Among the 450 million men and women who do not want a pregnancy and are not using contraception (called "unmet need"), the top reasons given for non-use of contraception are

male opposition, religious opposition, fatalism, and the belief that contraception is dangerous. Much smaller numbers of non-users of contraception cite lack of access to services as their reason (generally less than 1 per cent). Therefore, while contraceptive services are important, addressing cultural and informational barriers is critical to achieving behavioural norms that can help us achieve sustainability.

The mission of non-profit organisation Population Media Center (PMC), which I founded in 1998, is to work with mass

media and other groups worldwide, to bring about the stabilisation of human population numbers at a level that can be sustained by the world's natural resources, to lessen the harmful impact on the environment and help large numbers of disadvantaged people move out of poverty. The emphasis of PMC's work is to educate people about the benefits of small families, encourage the use of effective family planning methods, elevate women's status, and promote the concept of gender equity.



We do this work via serialised radio and television dramas, in which key characters evolve into role models for the elevation of women's status, education of daughters, stopping of child marriage, use of family planning, child protection, and environmental protection. Our programs have reached 530 million people in 52 countries in the past 23 years.

In each country, PMC partners with in-country government ministries, UN agencies, NGOs and broadcasters, who advise our creative teams on the

cultural realities and problems facing the country. For example, in Mexico, we worked with the network Televisa to co-create a telenovela addressing teenage pregnancy and parenthood. The program, *Vencer el Miedo* ("Overcome the Fear"), became the number one show in its timeslot in 2020. One of the key findings of the evaluation was that viewers were 1.79 times more likely than non-viewers to have used dual contraception within the past three months. This show then aired on Univision in the United States.

Following the five-year run of our first US program, *East Los High*, which became the longest-running program in the history of Hulu and in the top five all five years (and number one among Latino viewers), PMC has created a team of Hollywood professionals to develop new programs for American audiences. The US Content division has about a dozen projects in development.

PMC commissions independent baseline and post-broadcast quantitative surveys nationwide to measure changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour, to see if there is a differential in change among listeners and non-listeners resulting from the program. For example, in Ethiopia, our listeners were 5.4 times more likely than non-listeners to know at least three or more family planning methods. Married women who were listeners increased current use of modern family planning methods from 14 per cent to 40 per cent, while non-listener use grew less than half of that. And our listeners were 2.5 times as likely as non-

listeners to seek an HIV test. In Sierra Leone, 50 per cent of reproductive health clients named PMC's program when they were asked what motivated them to seek services.

We know this approach is working. We commission clinic questionnaires to find out the major factors that caused clients to seek reproductive health services. An example is one survey we did in Sierra Leone, which found that 50 per cent of reproductive health clients named PMC's program when they were asked what motivated them to seek services. One of our programs in Nigeria was cited by 67 per cent of new family planning clients as the reason for their visit to the clinic.



Bill Ryerson founded Population Media Center (PMC) 23 years ago, as yet another step in his personal mission to achieve a sustainable population by enhancing human rights. PMC is a non-profit leader in entertainment-education that has helped more than 500 million people live healthier lives in more than 50 countries. PMC creates entertaining, long-running TV and radio shows designed to inspire positive behaviour changes for issues at the intersection of social and environmental justice, with a focus on gender equality. More about PMC's work can be found at www.populationmedia.org.

CHILDFREE TRAVEL

TAKE ME THERE

20 CHILDFREE TRAVEL
DESTINATIONS TO GET YOUR POST
COVID TRAVEL GROOVE BACK



CHILDFREE TRAVEL NORTH AMERICA



Miraval Austin
Texas, USA



UNICO 20°N 87°W
Riviera Maya, Mexico



Sandals Emerald Bay
Great Exuma, Bahamas



Two Bunch Palms
California, USA



Ho'oilole House
Hawaii, USA



The Point
New York, USA



Rancho Pacifico
Costa Rica

CHILDFREE TRAVEL AUSTRALASIA



**Little Polynesian
Resort**
Cook Islands



**Hurawalhi Island
Resort**
Maldives



qualia
Australia



The Shore at Katathani
Phuket, Thailand



Likuliku Lagoon Resort
Fiji




**Jamahal Private Resort
& Spa**
Bali, Indonesia




The Louise Barossa
Australia

CHILDFREE TRAVEL EUROPE



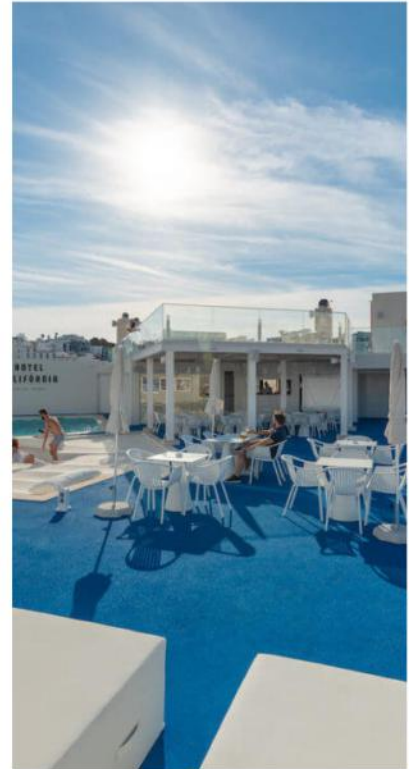
 **Elisabeth Hotel**
Mayrhofen, Austria



 **Hotel Caesar Augustus**
Anacapri, Italy



 **Iberostar Grande Salome**
Spain




 **Hotel California**
Albufeira, Portugal



 **Lindos Blu Luxury Hotel & Suites**
Rhodes, Greece



 **Foxhill Manor**
Broadway, UK



Brittany Ryan is a travel writer and content creator who provides detailed travel itineraries, guides, and updates on childfree destinations, resorts, cruises, and more! Contact her for travel planning and consultation.

<https://www.jetsettingblonde.com/>
[@thejetsetblonde](https://www.instagram.com/thejetsetblonde)

WHO'S GOING TO LOOK AFTER YOU WHEN YOU GET OLDER?

IT IS THE ONE QUESTION THAT MOST CHILDFREE PEOPLE GET ASKED FREQUENTLY. SO HOW DO WE SOLVE IT?



Let's create a global family.

The concept of "Framily" is to create a global online community of childfree people to be part of our extended family. The idea is that we can reach out to someone on our 'framily' when we need help or assistance, especially as we get older and might need a little help. This could be for help getting to a medical appointment, getting help around the house, running errands, or might even extend to social outings.

So if you need help you will be able to open the app and see who is in your local framily area that might be able to help.

Where are we at?

I am at the very early stages of concept development and I'd love your valuable input into developing the idea. I have some initial thoughts of how I see it working but I want to hear from you. This is going to be your framily app.

It is going to be most relevant for people 50 or 60 plus but hey, we are all getting older so anyone is welcome to register.

How you can help?



Share your ideas

What would you like to see included?



Register your details

This will help us design and develop the app that suits our needs.



Spread the word

Please share with your childfree friends

[LEARN MORE](#)



REJECTING MOTHERHOOD

IS LIKE LIFTING YOUR MIDDLE FINGER
TO THE TRADITIONAL NARRATIVE

READER SPOTLIGHT

JENNIFER KEENE

Location: Digital Nomad
Age: 44
Marital Status: Married
Occupation: Weight, Habit & Mindset Coach



Who inspires you:

I am inspired by women who embrace their uniqueness and quirkiness and don't bend to societal pressures, such as famously childfree (by choice and without regret) Betty White.

Hobbies:

I'm currently traveling the US with my husband, so my hobbies include eating at as many new vegan restaurants as possible, exploring the places we travel to, and taking photos of street art on my walks.

Fave toy growing up:

I think our family dog was my favorite thing to play with growing up. I remember that all I wanted for Christmas in 1984 was a Pound Puppy stuffed dog toy.

Do your parents accept your choice?

I've never felt any pressure from my dad to have a kid. I think he'd be shocked if I'd ever decided that I did want one, as I get the sense that I never really seemed like the maternal type.

Most offensive thing someone has said to you?

When I was about 13, my mother told me that she had never wanted to have kids, but my dad did. I was already pretty uninterested in ever having.

Your story / childfree why:

I just never felt any urge to have kids and especially ZERO desire to have a baby or be pregnant. The whole thing always sounded horrible to me. I have always kind of walked to the beat of my own drummer, so making a non-traditional choice like that didn't seem so strange. When my closest friends started having babies, it definitely changed things in our relationships and how much time and energy we were able to spend together. I started to feel lonely and sought out some additional friends through a Childfree By Choice MeetUp group in Portland, Oregon. Now I am connected with childfree folks all over the world!!

“MY SO-CALLED SELFISH LIFE” IS FINISHED!

HERE'S HOW YOU'LL BE ABLE TO SEE
THE NEW DOCUMENTARY.

Award-winning filmmaker Therese Shechter has just completed her new documentary *My So-Called Selfish Life*. In the film, she confronts the entrenched assumption that motherhood is not only a biological imperative but the defining measure of womanhood.

This idea is so deeply embedded in the fabric of our society that we take it for granted as part of the natural order of things. It's unimaginable that a woman might make the choice not to become a mother. Or is it?

My So-Called Selfish Life weaves together interviews with the so-called “selfish” women who have said no to motherhood, a vivid tour through pop culture's obsession with birthing babies, and Shechter's own reckoning with her choice to remain childfree. It's both entertaining and thought-provoking.



With so much in the news about dropping fertility rates, population issues, and threats to reproductive health care, this film couldn't be more timely!

I've been following the progress of the film for several years, so I was excited to speak to Therese about completing the film and how we can all see it.

You've been working on this film since 2016, right? How does it feel to be done?

It feels amazing and I can't wait to share the film with our childfree community and beyond! It's the culmination of five years of research, fundraising, interviewing, filming, editing, scoring, animating, recording, and making the film look and sound gorgeous.

We've had so much support from everyone—from our cast and crew, to our donors and cheerleaders. I'm especially proud of our team for finishing the film during a freaking global pandemic.

What's next? How can people see the film?

- We hope to have our official premiere this Fall
- Also starting this Fall, you'll be able to book a private screening event for your organization, conference, school, or company. Please give us a shout if you have any questions or want to get the ball rolling. [You can get more information on booking events here.](#)



- For public screening events, [join us on the First To Know list](#), and we'll keep you up to date on all the upcoming virtual and in-person screening opportunities in your area.
- I'm really looking forward to hosting these events, which will include a Q&A/discussion with me and hopefully others from the film. It's going to be so much fun watching and talking with you all.

Aside from screenings, will people be able to buy or rent the film?

That will happen a bit down the road. Joining the [First To Know](#) list is the best way to keep up with the latest news. We'll also be in direct contact with our lovely Kickstarter supporters who will be getting film-related backer rewards.

Does this mean you've raised all the money you need?

Not yet, unfortunately. We still have bills to pay for the film, and are starting to work on our audience outreach programs. We're very happy to accept [contributions](#) from anyone who feels able to do it.

How else can people get involved?

- Join our online communities on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Links are at the film's [website](#).
- The [website](#) is also bursting with inspiring goodies like videos from our audience, a gallery of childfree women, and even a childfree comic.
- Let us know about conferences and schools that you think would be interested in screening our film. You can contact me directly at therese@trixiefilms.com



NAVIGATING PEOPLE AND THE PANDEMIC

LACEY PRUETT SHARES HOW LIFE CHANGED FOR HER IN 2020, AND DISCUSSES THE IMPORTANCE OF AUTHENTICITY AND FINDING A BOND WITH FELLOW FEMALES.

Written by Lacey Pruett

When several of our trips were cancelled due to the pandemic in 2020, I decided to dive back into my animal rescue efforts as a special needs medical foster 'parent'. I wound up fostering a few dogs and one dog, in particular, needed some extra TLC. It meant having to commit some of my day to being a caregiver.

My life choices (specifically, remaining childfree) allowed me the flexibility to add this temporary responsibility to my days. Ironically, though, some of my duties as an animal caregiver reminded me of the strains my mum friends have shared, such as sleepless

nights, elimination accidents and crying/whimpering during conference calls. Yes, I felt it all too, just in different ways, and I learnt more about myself in the process.

Ultimately, though, I loved the flexibility I had to rearrange my days depending on what was needed from my husband or the dogs. I joyfully cared for each of them, and enjoyed nurturing their wellbeing.

I recall sharing some details of my day with a friend who has three children, and having her encourage me. As a childfree woman, that encouragement meant a lot to me, as many

"It's vital that we create authentic, supportive relationships with the women in our lives..."

parents discount our frustrations with “oh, you have no idea about that until you have kids.” As my friend and I continued to discuss our week’s happenings, the details were pretty different, but we simply supported each other. As women, our choices don’t need to divide us, and my relationships with my girlfriends who happen to also be mothers has reaffirmed this belief.

Of course, not all relationships survive the split that occurs between remaining childfree versus bringing children into the world. Early on in my decision to not have children of my own, I was blindsided by the reaction of some people around me. I wasn’t prepared for the negative opinions and hurtful comments some shared about my decision to not become a mother.

“As women, our choices don’t need to divide us...”

I had to use all the tools from my book, *High Performance Detox*, to remember that other people’s opinions are just that - their opinions. They have nothing to do with my freedoms and choices for my life. There was a time that I had to print this out on a sticky note and read it every morning until it stuck in my psyche. Then I was prepared for other’s opinions, comments, and even some alienation from groups, events, and social gatherings. Being secure in one’s own choices is imperative to living an authentic life.

I live in the United States, in the South, where women are supposed to produce biscuits and babies. I realised that my life would look different from most around me and I started asking some intuitive questions of myself, such as:

- What are my strengths?
- What do I love about my life?
- What activities help me feel fulfilled?
- Where and when do I feel most alive?
- How do I want to spend my days?

After I learnt some key things about why I’ve made the choices I’ve made, and a little more about who I am authentically, I started designing a life I was excited to live - every single day. Would my choices bring a stress-free life? No. I still live a very human experience, with some of the same stressors other women have. The details of my stressors just look a little different.

I’ve found, through healthy relationships with women, the emotion surrounding life’s stressors is the same. She feels overwhelmed, as do I. She feels sadness, as do I. She feels joy and love, as do I. The details of each emotion and what brings it to light may differ, but it’s in our similar feelings that we find connection. That connection is so grand and so necessary for all the different journeys women can choose. It’s vital that we create authentic, supportive relationships with the women in our lives so we have a soft place to land when the world gets really hard - as it does for everyone.

If you want to grow your confidence in your choices, or you want to start making more authentic choices for your life, start inside. Ask yourself the questions above, and listen to what your heart and soul already know. Life is more exciting when you take control of your choices, when you remember all the options you have and, most importantly, when you step into the power within yourself to design the life of your dreams. It’s your choice!



Lacey Pruett is an author and yoga teacher in Dallas, Texas, sharing mindfulness strategies and encouragement to help others connect to personal authenticity.



AUGUST 1

INTERNATIONAL

childfree

DAY

THE DAY TO CELEBRATE YOU

INTERNATIONAL CHILDFREE DAY IS THE 1ST AUGUST EVERY YEAR.



It was created in 1973 in the United States by the National Alliance for Optional Parenthood at the time the National Organisation for Non-Parents (N.O.N.), under the name of Non-Parents' Day. The day is aimed at celebrating people who voluntarily chose not to have children and to foster acceptance of the childfree choice. It has also been described as "a day of celebration worldwide for those couples who have faced criticism, ridicule, and rejection because they chose to be Childless by Choice."

Forty years later, in 2013, an internationally known author and expert on the childfree choice Laura Carroll brought it to the present day and founded International Childfree Day (ICD). Laura wanted to create ICD as "a celebratory way to recognise amazing childfree people and foster acceptance of the childfree choice." Each year the Childfree Person and Group of the Year are nominated by people from around the world and the Winner Selection Panel picks the winners who are announced on ICD.

Winners receive childfree-themed awards, and have included books, films and merchandise donated by authors, filmmakers and businesses. ICD also has a Winner Award Fund, which is designed to expand its awards through general public donations. "Thanks to volunteer efforts and the childfree community, every year it grows in its global exposure," she says. Rather than nominations and winners of famous or well-known childfree people, "each year we seek to bring international childfree people from all walks of life into the spotlight."

2021 winners can be found at
<https://internationalchildfreeday.com/>



THE COVID-INDUCED IDENTITY CRISIS

HANNA TURNER'S FABULOUS CHILDFREE LIFE WAS ALL ABOUT TRAVELLING, GOING TO GIGS, EATING OUT AND REVELLING IN "WORKING LESS, DREAMING MORE". THEN, THE PANDEMIC HIT...

Written by Hanna Turner

More than not wanting kids, I really didn't want to be a mother. I know these two things go hand in hand, but I think some of you will understand what I mean.

I've seen the change happen to a lot of women. They have a child and promptly turn into members of those coffee groups that block doorways with prams and allow unsupervised sticky fingers to play in racks of \$300 dresses. Can you tell I used to work in retail?

Clearly, I'm not into motherhood. Being an adamantly childfree human is something I've identified with most of my life. I didn't want to spend my time constantly prepping food, cleaning the house, wiping butts or watching far too colourful things on television. I never wanted to fit the profile of the 'stay-at-home mum'.

My childfree life has taken me on many adventures around the globe, exploring new places and meeting interesting people.

"Where was the box for the childfree woman whose life suddenly revolved around household chores, dog walking and nothing fun in between?"

I love going to music festivals and gigs in random bars. And, on regular days, I enjoy a dinner out with friends that turns into an evening of too much wine and '90s music spirals on YouTube.

I don't really work because we can afford for me not to. As a yoga teacher, my job is more like my hobby and - without going into detail - where I live (in Berlin), our tax situation is simply better if my income stays below a certain level. I have never felt the need to apologise for my life of 'work less, dream more'. In fact, I've revelled in it.

And then the pandemic hit. All the things I loved, that helped me identify who I was as a person and - moreover - helped me to justify my childfree existence, were gone.

Here I was in 2020 - and a good half year into 2021 - essentially being supported by my husband, with nothing to do but look after home and household. I had become what I'd feared: a stay-at-home (dog) mum. This realisation was problematic to me, and I needed to understand why.

Although there are many reasons why someone neither wants nor has children, I believe there are two narratives that have come to be accepted by the broader community regarding women who don't have kids. There's the businesswoman who decided to choose her career over a family, and there's the childless woman who doesn't hold that title by choice.

I don't fit into either of these categories, and I didn't know and hadn't heard of any other women



like me. Where was the box for the childfree woman whose life suddenly revolved around household chores, dog walking and nothing fun in between?

On top of losing access to the life I loved during the pandemic, I felt guilty for letting the community down. Aren't childfree women meant to lead magnificent, jealousy-inducing lives? I was having an identity crisis.

If I'm childfree and essentially job-free, with no major career ambitions on the horizon; if my ability to travel and enjoy the world has been removed, and if I'm staying at home anyway, is my life less valuable because I'm not raising children? What is my worthiness as a stay-at-home dog mum?

For the past year(ish) I've mostly watched Netflix, read books, looked after my physical and mental health, walked the dogs to my favourite coffee spot, stayed in bed too long scrolling

the socials, gone on loads of hikes, and gratefully managed to get in as much travel and time with friends as was safe and possible. Mother or not, I remain a human being having a human experience. And it's enough.

The childfree community is vast and diverse and we cannot be categorised into neat boxes. Stay-at-home mothers cannot be either. I want to acknowledge that I'm fully aware I categorised them too and, just like us childfree folk, the stay-at-home mum experience is also a varied one.

As we climb out of this pandemic, a time that's given us all some space for reflection, I hope we continue to break out of the boxes society is so determined to put us in. Instead, let's remember to live unapologetically as the best, most authentic versions of ourselves - whatever that may look like.



Hanna is a stretchy-pants advocate, keeping it real on YouTube with her accessible and humorous yoga classes. She can be found in Berlin, or somewhere on the road, enjoying adventures with her campervan Herbert, her curly-haired husband and their two dogs.

IT'S FUNNY 'CAUSE IT'S TRUE

We spent \$12,775 on daycare last year, for anyone currently using the pull out method.

Maybe instead of calling women without children "Childfree" we should call them "Well-rested"

HER: Do you want to have kids?
ME: No .
HER: Why not?
ME: I couldn't take all the crying.
HER: They don't cry all the time
ME: No, I meant me.

There is no better birth control than the sound of a child screaming.

Baby giraffes can walk within minutes of birth but sure, show me more photos of your infant doing nothing, Karen!

People my age are making babies and I can't even make a salad LOL



MY CLOSETED CHILDFREE EXPERIENCE

Written by Emma Duval

EMMA DUVAL SHARES WHAT IT'S LIKE TO HAVE TO HIDE YOUR TRUTH AS A CHILDFREE WOMAN FROM A CONSERVATIVE, RELIGIOUS FAMILY, AND WHY THIS MAKES THE CHILDFREE COMMUNITY ALL THE MORE IMPORTANT TO HER.

“Is it because you hate me? Is that why you keep saying you don't want children?” cried my mother, with growing anger in her voice. I panicked. I could feel this was the decisive moment in the conversation - the moment right before the explosion. We were in public, in a restaurant, and we had started this conversation on much better terms. I don't recall how it ended but I remember doing everything in my power to placate her: apologising, backtracking, downplaying, lying and promising.

A few years have passed since that incident but when I recall that memory, it still feels raw. This was the last time I tried to have a conversation with my mother about how I didn't want to have kids, and I'm not eager to bring it up again.

My mother has always made it clear that she believes a woman's life has no purpose without children. Maybe it's because, in my conservative Catholic family from France, remaining unmarried and childless is not an option, unless you join religious orders. Out of the hundreds of adult family members I can think of, I've never heard of any women who didn't marry and have children. On top of that, due to religious beliefs, my grandmothers each had seven children and most of my aunts had three to five children.

Family reunions were loud and chaotic. I remember noticing that the kitchen was always full of mothers feeding toddlers, cooking or cleaning, and thinking that I didn't want to marry because I didn't want that life.



What life did I want? I wanted the life of the very few unmarried or childless women that I did know, usually family friends. I remember Jeanne, who produced international documentaries and was always travelling abroad. I remember Marie, who told me about her hippie lifestyle of the 1970s, living in a shared house with 10 friends and many dogs. And I remember Catherine, who chose which artists, museums and theatres would get financing from the institution she worked for.

During my teenage years, when I started pushing back against my mother's expectations of

marriage and motherhood, my views were dismissed as childish and immature. I later learnt to keep those ideas to myself because they would always lead to conflict and tears. The few times I tried to discuss my thoughts with extended family members, I was met with confusion and even disgust. After all, according to the Bible, it was my duty to “be fruitful and multiply” and openly refusing to do so was seen as an affront to God himself. When I wasn't berated, I was mocked and laughed at, which felt cruel.

I was already a timid, reserved and quiet teenager, not one to

openly rebel against authority or push boundaries. Feeling so out-of-place within my own family led me to withdraw even more. Anytime I could, I would immerse myself in books, graphic novels and music. Thankfully, I also had my friends. We shared the same interests: books such as *Little Women* or *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*, popular television shows such as *Charmed* or *Buffy*, amateur soccer, and dreams of pursuing our creative passions. To this day, as we approach our 30s, none of us have children.

I left home in France around the age of 21 to attend graduate school in the United States. It was my first time away from home and my extended social circle. A lot of my views changed during this time because I finally had the space to be able to reflect on everything.

While in the US, I fell in love with an agnostic American and, when facing the risk of being separated due to immigration issues, we


got married. Later, we were also married in a Catholic church in France, which included having to promise to be “open” to the idea of children for the marriage to be considered valid. I decided to use semantics - which religion is full of - to my advantage. Yes, I would stay “open” to it. I would be open to the idea that there was about a 1 per cent chance I would change my mind and want children one day.

I believe that this religious wedding convinced my mother that I had changed my mind about having children. She probably thought I had finally met the right person – the person who would change my mind – since it was unthinkable that I would want to get married without wanting children.

Deconstructing my faith took several years but eventually I left religion altogether. It was incredibly freeing to let go of the guilt and pressures imposed by Catholicism.

Through social media, I connected with childfree communities and found strength. Not enough strength to openly affirm my childfree status to my family back home, but enough to stop feeling like I was in the wrong for not wanting children. It was a breath of fresh air to see other people’s unapologetic belief in the same life choice, to share the same frustrations and feelings of freedom. The childfree communities are so active and abundant that I sometimes forget that being childfree is not the norm, until I take a look around and notice that most people have, and want to have, children.

When I visit my mother these days, I simply avoid the subject. It’s not always easy because all my cousins who marry end up with kids within a year or two (barring any fertility issues). The only exception so far is me. Now that I’ve been married a few years, I know that people are starting to wonder why we aren’t having children. Maybe they pity



"It was a breath of fresh air to see other people’s unapologetic belief in the same [childfree] life choice, to share the same frustrations and feelings of freedom."



us because they believe we are infertile. Or maybe they aren't worried yet because I'm still relatively young.

I know that I will have to face the question one day, and I dread it. I'm afraid that telling my family that I will never have children will rupture my relationship with my mother forever. I'm afraid that the question will be asked during a large gathering and I will have nowhere to go. I'm terrified of the fallout this could cause - all over a simple life choice. But it isn't really a simple life choice in my family.

My hope is that some of my cousins whose parents are less rigid, less conservative and less religious will be brave enough to take the first step and openly admit that they don't want children. I feel like a coward for saying that though because I could be that cousin who opens the way for others, but I'm too paralysed by fear. I like to think that as the percentage of childfree people grows in the general population, it will mean that the percentage will also grow within my extended family. But only time will tell.

As a teenager, I associated marriage with the inevitability of children. Now I know very well that they are two different life choices and are not inherently tied to each other. I want every teenager to be able to have that realisation and not fear that they will become shells of their former past once they marry.

Parenthood leads to many sacrifices (physical, mental, financial) and if parents keep sacrificing their own lives so that their children can have a better life, when does the cycle stop? Life is hard and fulfillment is not guaranteed but I see it as my responsibility towards my ancestors, especially my female ancestors, to try to live my best life, and to fulfill my dreams if they couldn't fulfill theirs.

While I have never felt a call to become a mother, I have struggled with the societal, familial, and religious expectations that are imposed on women. That's why the childfree community is so important to me. Not only does it help those who feel alone in their decision to go against traditional values, but it can reach those who might have

not even questioned the expectations in the first place. My experience has strengthened the belief that the childfree movement needs to be normalised so that people will stop being pushed, pressured and bulldozed into parenthood, especially for the sake of tradition and religion.

***Emma Duval** is an author-illustrator based in the United States. Passionate about women's history, she wants to share the lives of women from the past who went against the societal expectations of marriage and motherhood. She is currently working on her first book, *Single Women Through History*, and hopes to develop an illustrated book on inspirational childfree women next. You can find her on Twitter and Instagram @MillennialEmma, where she shares the stories of women from history who had no children.*



CHILDFREE

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CONTACT

PRACTICAL WAYS TO CREATE POSITIVE CHANGE

FOR THE CHILDFREE COMMUNITY

WORKPLACE

- Bringing up issues in the workplace
- Being vocal against discrimination and unfair work practices day to day
- Sharing resources with your bosses & HR leaders to influence change in your workplace
- Stand up against parents who believe they should have more entitlements
- Ask for Pawternity Leave or Family Leave
- Change the dialogue and conversation to bring awareness



EDUCATION

- Encouraging teachers to include curriculum around choice
- Talking to the children in your life about having permission to have a choice
- Provided teaching resources for schools to access
- Being a childfree role model
- Encouraging their parents to have conversations focused on choice
- Not giving them dolls as gifts



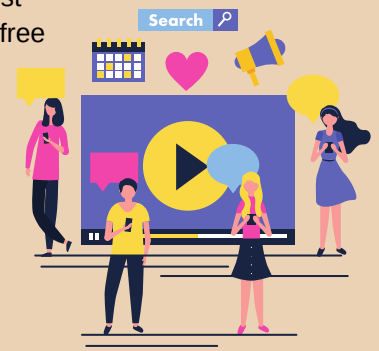
RESPECTFUL CONVERSATIONS

- Having respectful conversations with your parent friends
- Sharing the 'How to Talk to your Childfree Friends' guide with your parent friends
- Conversations with parents
- Speak up in parenting groups online
- Push back in real life when you are judged and explain the childfree choice to them
- Stop calling parent's horrible names – you don't get respect unless you give it



CHANGE IN POLICY AND ATTITUDE

- Lobbying state & federal government to change policy
- Speaking out against formal baby bonus programs
- Commenting on group forums and posts where possible
- Be vocal about old fashioned policies needing a modern relevant twist
- Share positive childfree media stories across your online channels



KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

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