

I'm Doug Weiss, and I'm Alvean Lyons, Welcome to Love Life

Alvean, when I was thinking about this episode, it didn't occur to me, but it does now that the title of it should have been. And baby makes three. Our topic. If you haven't already guessed is about when you make that decision to bring another life into your relationship. Sometimes that is a decision that you make consciously. We'd like to think that most of the time, it's a decision that you make consciously. That's a good way to begin. But the truth is, it doesn't always happen that way. Sometimes, surprise, surprise. And then there it is. Sometimes it happens that the partners, particularly when it's a surprise, may not be on the same page. So, there are a couple of different issues that we want to talk about today. One is how do you make sure that you're both on the same page when you're making the conscious decision to bring a baby into the world? And it's not always the case that people reveal how they really feel? And then the related question, is what do you do if it's a surprise? I think they devolve to the same point, but let me just tease it out a little bit. Because I really want to hear what you have to say about this, Alvean. I'm thinking of one particular situation where a couple wanted to have a baby. They couldn't conceive naturally and so they were resorting to artificial insemination, a long, elaborate, difficult process. It would be no different if we were talking about adoption, in some ways, or even natural childbirth, but one partner really wanted a child, the other partner spoke and behaved as if they were entirely supportive. But in fact, and everyone around them knew this, they really were doing this for their partner. You could see that there was maybe not a train wreck, but a train derailment. There was going to be a point where this was going to come out, and it wasn't going to be pretty. I'm guessing that you might have run across similar situations.

What's sad about it is that there's some things in life that don't have a redo, a turnaround option. Having children happens to be one of those things. I don't know that anybody is 100% prepared to be a parent, I can, I can totally agree that people could one hundred percent want to be a parent, but I don't think that any of us who are parents were 100% prepared for everything that was going to come. There's no perfect time to become a parent. As we are ever evolving creatures we are ever learning and discovering things about ourselves and who we were a year ago may be very different than who we are next year, and with all kinds of precipitating events. I just don't think that there's a perfect time to have a kid. But I will say that you need to be pretty sure you're ready to have a child because once you bring a life into the world, you don't get to decide then that Oops, I'm sorry, you were not part of my real plan, can I change my mind? There's no return on having a child. So I think that there's an honesty and a candor uncomfortable, though it may be that is required. Unfortunately, in some situations, it may actually be the reason the relationship ends. Because for some people being a parent is so fundamental to who they want to be as humans, that it is non-negotiable, and for somebody else, it's kind of optional. And then for someone else, it's not even something they really desire. So what happens if when you fall in love, something that is absolutely essential to you is either optional or not even desired by your partner. And you're totally in love with this person, and this is who you want to have a kid with. But this person loves you immensely, but they don't necessarily want to be a parent. I have not seen good things come from that. There have been some, there have been a couple of slight exceptions. And in those slight exceptions, you had a

parent --in this case, it was a woman who really wanted to be a mom, with a husband who was very wealthy, traveled a lot and was not actively at home a lot. So for her being a mom didn't end up interfering too much with his world. They were able to afford support, so he didn't have to do a lot, do any more than he really wanted to do. And when you have that scenario, the kids still feel very loved. The mom is still thrilled she has the babies she wanted. And they seem to be fine, currently. But the children are still small, I don't know what will happen later. But in most situations, you're not talking about that kind of situation, or that kind of flexibility. Parenting is a full-time job for both parties, and if you don't want it, it can really be destructive, not only for you as a couple, but it can be destructive for the kids as well. So, I think that it requires some real honesty and willingness, quite frankly, to let the person you love go, so that you can have the family that you really want with someone who wants to have a family rather than to force a family on someone who doesn't want to be a parent.

There are instances where you see someone that thinks that bringing a child into the equation of the relationship and creating the triangle will strengthen the relationship. And indeed, it can if you already have that strong bond, but if the idea of bringing a child in is a way to strengthen the relationship or save it, that is a decidedly bad idea, really bad, it never works. Yet people do and salvation babies are never a good idea. For me, the question is always whose welfare is paramount? If you focus first and foremost on your responsibility as a parent to your child, placing their welfare first, let that be the guide for having a child or not having a child. Do that and you will be on pretty good ground. I mean, there are a lot of things about parenting that we have to learn as we go along. I had a professor who once said that parenthood was the last of the unskilled occupations. Children come with no instructions. Sometimes I think the barrier to entry should be raised. Because it's just too easy. And there are times when I have a tendency to agree with that prospect. Unfortunately, we should be wiser and more emotionally mature when we make that decision, then typically, we are early in our lives, and earlier in our understanding of ourselves and each other. Suddenly, we're presented with this new, sometimes too wonderful miracle, and a whole set of new challenges that that can get in the way of the thing that was our relationship, because our relationships never going to be the same.

Oh, absolutely not. And it's a one way street. When you become a parent, it is absolutely a one way street. So we're not ever going to be who we were before we had this child. And we have to be prepared for the fact that we are going down this road, like it or not, into this whole new frontier that comes with all kinds of wonderful, unique challenges that will cause us to examine ourselves and each other a million different times during the course of our relationship. And I used to think that people were selfish if they didn't want to have kids, I used to honestly think that until I became a parent. I love being a parent, I'm one of those people who would not have been happy if I wasn't, but I'm married to a man who also would not have been happy if he wasn't a parent. And it wouldn't have mattered whether we gave birth to our natural children, because we have both natural children and adopted children, so it wouldn't have mattered how we became parents. We both love being parents, so we match in terms of our value systems. But I recognize that for those who do not want to have a child, there's nothing selfish about it. There's something very beautiful about you, knowing that about yourself, such that you do not

bring a child into the world, and then decide that you really didn't want to have it. I have a different appreciation for people who are just honestly saying, I'm not really wired to be a parent. I want to live my life in a way that would not be fair to my child, if I were to continue to be who I plan to continue to be. It would be unfair to bring them into the world and ask them to fit into that. Because really, once you become a parent, in a lot of ways you build your world around your children. And you have to be okay with that. Kids can feel resentment. They are some of the most intuitive creatures you will ever meet. You can pretend something and then not know it, but they can feel it, even when you don't say it.

I have some friends who don't have children They love children, and they found what for them is the perfect solution. They became the adopted parents and adopted grandparents of another family. From the very earliest age they did things together, these two families, and over time this couple became surrogate parents and surrogate grandparents It's actually benefited both families in both directions. Because the natural parents of these children as they were getting older, had another team of parents they could lean on when they needed a break. It's allowed this couple who couldn't have children of their own, to have much of the joy and benefit of being parent and it allowed the natural parents of these children to have another set of adult faculties to lean on in raising their children. There were other people that they could share this responsibility with. I think this idea of nuclear families where you have grandparents who are living with parents, where you have cousins, aunts, uncles is wonderful. To quote the old saying it takes a village to raise a child. To have that network is a wonderful thing and it spreads the burden not just the physical burden or the financial burden but also the psychological and emotional burden. Not only can you not return your children, once it starts you're in the race and you can't stop.

It's is just like the commercial, dad's don't get days off and moms don't get days off. You don't get to do sick days, you don't get to walk into the toddler's room and say hey Bobby I'm taking off tomorrow. We don't have those options no matter how we feel or what's going on. You gotta keep it going. So yes it does help to have family, to have networks, to have support and certainly to really have thought out what it means when you're going to become a parent that both of you agree this is the journey you want to go on

And so we come we come so quickly to the end of what could be, so often is a conversation that we want to continue. But we are at the end of our time today so perhaps we'll take this up again in another episode. For today that's another episode of love life. If you have a thought on this week's episode write to us at [doug@lovelife.digital](mailto:doug@lovelife.digital) or [alvean@lovelife.digital](mailto:alvean@lovelife.digital)

We want to thank Kamaria Mason, our producer, Todd Washburn, our Recording Engineer and the entire Love Life family, including you, our listeners. We'll be back next week with another episode. Until then, have a wonderful week. Bye folks.