

“They’ve been married for five years and I’m still not a grandmother. What on earth are they waiting for? My daughter-in law seems more interested in her job than having children. And heaven forbid the reaction when I even mention the subject with them!”

grandparents in-waiting

No Grandchildren yet?

It’s not unnatural for parents to look forward to becoming grand-parents, but the truth is that it’s not up to you whether or not your children decide to become parents themselves. And probably the worst thing you can do is make an issue of it. There’s a whole host of reasons why couples these days delay having children or decide not to have them at all.

So what’s stopping them...?

Socially and financially so many things are different now to the Australia you possibly knew when you had your family.

In particular, young people study longer and reach independence much later. They aren’t always in a position to think about partnering and forming a family.

In addition, you need two wages in most cases to pay a mortgage for even a modest home.

Women are increasingly the breadwinners or the higher earner in a family.

More jobs require qualifications, so more young people are completing study or taking further education.

Incomes are less secure, government paid parental leave helps but is not set at a replacement rate for income, and few employers top it up to match salary levels.

Childcare is expensive for one child, often prohibitive for two or three children, there are long waiting lists and it’s often just not available when working parents need it to be flexible.

Life is different...

The old social norm of Mum, Dad and those 2.3 kids just isn’t the reality any more.

These days, there are combined families, step families, gay families, de-facto relationships and in many cases men are taking longer to mature and commit ... the so-called “failure to launch” syndrome.

Men and women want to feel financially secure before they have children families are geographically spread and grandparents aren’t necessarily prepared to be the childcare alternative, some of them happily busy in careers of their own.

Our social definition of success and happiness for both men and women has changed to include a career as well as a family. As a result young people are meeting later and marrying later, often cohabiting for a number of years first, before they decide they’re ready to even think about having kids.

Contraception is widely and readily available and all too often, when these couples do decide to try and start a family in their late thirties and early forties, they run into medical problems ... and they may well be issues they may not feel comfortable discussing with a mother or father-in-law. You may not know what they’re already going through.

A recent Australian survey revealed that 88% of men and 57% of women aged between 30 and 40 believe they will have no problem conceiving. Yet we know that 1 in 6 couples experience fertility problems and a medical cause cannot always be pinpointed.

So what should I do...?

Realistically, there’s nothing you can do. Try to understand and respect your children’s choices, even if you don’t agree with them. Your children are entitled to make their own decisions about their future and their fertility ... and that may include not having children at all. The best advice is simple. Try to support your children whatever they decide.