

Checklist:

Are You Ready for Parenthood?

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How to use:

If there are items on the checklist that you can't answer "Yes" to, consider if there are ways to work on this problem before becoming a parent. If you and your partner disagree about whether any of the following issues are a problem, see a therapist or other professional such as a pastoral counselor to sort this out.

- I am excited about bringing a child into my life, even if it sometimes scares me.
- I/we have a good support system of family and/or friends.
- Even if finances are difficult, we have a safe, adequate place to live. We have the ability to provide our child with basics such as food, clothing, and medical care.
- I can protect my child from harm by keeping him away from violent or abusive people, including family members.
- I am willing to seek medical care and counseling for my child when needed.
- I am in reasonably good health. If I have a chronic illness, it is well-managed with medicine and/or self-care.
- I am relatively happy and mentally healthy. I am not so anxious or depressed that I am unable to care for myself, work, or be in a relationship. I know how to control and deal with my anger without lashing out verbally or physically.
- I understand that even happy, healthy children have moments of irrationality, tantrums, rage, and fear. In the first year of life I know that I will be faced with crying jags, wet and dirty diapers and interrupted sleep.
- If I had a difficult or abusive childhood, I have had therapy that healed me enough to enjoy life more and feel more in control. My therapist and I both believe that I have healed enough to be able to enjoy parenting and do it well.



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- I do not try to deny problems with a stiff upper lip, false cheeriness, or unrealistic beliefs that I can make anything happen. I can acknowledge my own and others' suffering, and deal with these with caring and compassion. I could therefore be present with my child even during bad moods, which are part of life. I understand that respecting my child's moods is an important part of her self-esteem and learning to cope. Even though correction, discipline and moral education are crucial, I have a sense that I can accept the child and correct the behavior. If I am in a relationship, I can accept and empathize with my partner's suffering.
- I am capable of apologizing, giving sincere compliments, and negotiating.
- I do not assume that I can mold a child according to my desires and expectations. I am interested and curious in the personality and interests my child will turn out to have as a unique being separate from me (and my partner).
- I am comfortable with physical affection such as hugs and gentle touch.
- If I/we are disappointed in our child or in parenthood, we know that some of this is normal and would seek support from family or friends as well as therapy.
- Even if my partner would have preferred to be childfree, he/she finds enough that is attractive about parenting, in addition to pleasing me, that he/she is ready to make these sacrifices.
- I am not addicted to alcohol, drugs (including prescription drugs), sex, gambling, or spending. If these have been a problem in the past, I have been free of this for a few years and am under the care of a doctor, mental health professional and/or a twelve-step group I attend regularly.
- [If in a relationship]: My partner and I enjoy each other's company most of the time. We are able to disagree and resolve conflicts. We do not experience uncontrollable anger, violence or days or weeks of silence. We are not isolated, but have friends or family or community groups we spend time with.

