

TRANSCRIPT

Starting a family early usually means giving something up. I asked a few women who had children early in their lives what the decision meant for them and what price they had to pay. Listen to what they told me.

Tara Hastings

We didn't want to be old parents. We thought it would be great to be still full of energy when the children finished high school. But when I left my job as a manager to be with the children, it affected me more than I'd expected. You become miserable when you stay at home all the time, and when you start losing respect for yourself, your partner loses respect for you. On the other hand, Tim had to work extra hours to help us make ends meet, and that obviously deprived him of time to spend with the kids and also created distance between us. Our marriage suffered, we separated, and it was really tough for both of us. Now, I'm back at work, and we're back together, but it wasn't all easy.

Janice Pepper

Having my first child at 22 meant tightening the belt. Now we have three daughters, and we're still far from well off. We still have to get by on cheap dinners, we drive a second-hand car, and Jason freelances as a computer specialist in addition to his regular job. Two-income couples often get used to perks like expensive cars, dinners out and overseas vacations, and then when they have children, they have to cut back. We never had that so we don't feel deprived. I didn't even try to make a career, but then ... when you're old and dying, you don't think about what you did at work, do you? And do you know what I look forward to? I really hope to live long enough to see my great-grandchildren.

Linda Stern

I dropped out of college when I got married, and my daughter was born when I was 23. Two years later I had my second child, and soon after that my husband and I split up. I work as an administrative assistant and raise the children on my own. The truth is I envy those couples who waited to become established. They bought homes and put some money aside. We were always behind; we started off with much less and never managed to catch up. My children are a great joy to me, but I'd advise my daughter to wait until she's 28 or 30.

Vanessa Carroll

It's a general problem - the best years for having children are also the best time for establishing a career. The only thing you can do is decide what you want to achieve

by a certain point in your life, and plan backwards from there. I was determined not to end up as a 35-year-old assistant. I decided to take a big pay cut and moved from ELLE to a smaller magazine so that I could get to a higher position in my job. That'll help when I get back to work.