

The “Having It All” Club

by Stacie Brown

Child? *Check.* House? *Check.* Marriage? Education? Career? Financial freedom? *Wait, where’s the memo listing requirements for the “Having It All” club? Will meeting these criteria automatically qualify me for this elite group?*

Some people establish a career while dating for a year or more, get married, buy a house, carefully plan their first child, and work until their 401K kicks in. An outsider, like me, sees an evenly flowing transition to the perfect life. *These folks certainly have it all, don’t they? Are these people the club’s founders?* Yet, even prudent planners will have to decide which one will stay home with the baby, essentially giving up her career, or, if both parents choose to keep working, they’ll struggle with the daycare debacle. *So who’s in charge? Who sets the bar?*

It’s apparent that I never got the memo. There was no slow and steady transition for me; I wound up with everything happening at once. I had just moved back home from out of state and had no college degree, no career goals, and no house of my own. When my boyfriend and I got pregnant, I wondered what the heck I had spent the last 25 years accomplishing. With a baby on the way, I enrolled in college for the third time and moved in with my “baby daddy.” He proposed shortly after our son was born and then we bought a house. We only recently started planning our wedding. Today’s job market made my decision to be a stay-at-home mom easier, but, after our son was born, I could not put my career on hold any longer. Since I work from home, I can participate 24/7 in my son’s early years while still contributing to the family’s

finances, although admittedly, balancing motherhood, work, and school is becoming more challenging as he gets older.

Will I ever have it all? Surely the club's founders know, but who are they? The founders might be the folks who say I either have it all figured out, or I don't. They're the ones who have it all figured out, right? So I must not. I want to be a great parent, so I follow the so-called experts' advice. I try to change my parenting style or my lifestyle in order to pacify others who think I'm going about it all wrong. I let others' opinions sway my own sound judgment and my perfectly capable instincts.

The truth is there's no such thing as the perfect formula for the perfect life. I didn't have life mapped out; it just happened and I rolled with it. If "having it all" means I need to have a college degree, establish a career, get married, buy a house, birth a child, and gain financial freedom, especially *in that order*, then sorry bub, no club for me. Love? Happiness? I've got plenty of those to go around. I call B.S. on "having it all." Nobody is that good.