



by Tamika Michelle Johnson

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Despite what the internet and many in our society may think, a woman getting pregnant and having a healthy baby in her 40's is possible and becoming increasingly common. As a woman who had two children over 40 years old, I never planned on having any children at this age because I pictured a different life for me altogether.

When I was in my teens and 20's, I was confident that I would have a plethora of eligible bachelors lined up outside my door for me to choose from to be my future husband. After all, I was going to be a fierce and successful attorney well before my 30th birthday and always considered myself to be the crème de la crème. And once I was ready, we would get married and after a year or so we would have a few children together to complete our family and we would live Happily Ever After.

However, in the real world, I had a daughter at the age of 25, after my first year of law school with a former flame. That flame quickly burned out and I was a single parent from the moment that my beautiful daughter was born. Weeks after having my daughter, I returned to law school part-time and resumed my mediocre job at a law firm full-time.

After a year of this insane schedule with a newborn, I quit the law firm, temporarily relocated to Louisiana to finish my legal education with my 1-year-old in tow. I graduated 2 years later, moved back to Atlanta, became a licensed attorney in Georgia, and soon became involved in a tumultuous relationship for the next 10 years.

In that relationship turned situationship, my counterpart already had 3 children and a vasectomy before we became involved.



Though my desire to have more children never faded, my ex assured me early on that he would reverse his vasectomy if we married. Due to the state of our insane relationship and a proposal gone bad, we never married. And that was actually a lifesaver because I would have been a single parent again with all of the shenanigans likely to ensue in that situation.

Then, at 39 years old, the light bulb finally went off, and I cut my losses. Meaning, I accepted the fact that I would never get my prime years in my 30's back, that I would not be married before 40 years old, and that having more children was out of the question. My age and the fact that most men that I met at that point didn't want any more children pretty much sealed my fate of adding to my family. I owned that though because I allowed myself to spend nearly a decade of my most fertile years in a dead-end relationship.

Once I came to terms with all of that though, the pressure to be married and have more children by 40 years old dissipated, and I

started to plan my life as a soon-to-be empty nester.

Then, I reconnected with my now-husband, Darryl, who at the time didn't have any children at the age of 46 but wanted them. Secretly, I thought that Darryl was sterile because I did not meet many men his age who could have children but didn't have any. Despite that initial thought, I proceeded to tell him that the chances of me getting pregnant at 40 and older were slim based on what I read and researched on the internet. At that point, we decided to casually try to conceive by not taking any precautions. Admittedly, in the back of my mind, I thought that it would not be that hard for me to conceive since I easily conceived with my daughter in my 20's. Then 6 months passed without me getting pregnant, and for the first time, it occurred to me that all of my eggs were depleted and I was now barren.

Shortly after that, I had a major breakdown and then an emotional and spiritual cleansing. In retrospect, this breakdown was a result of me not healing from the hurt and pain that I internalized for years from my previous situation. Amazingly, once that purge occurred, I was immediately overcome with the greatest sense of physical and emotional peace that I have ever experienced. And within the next month, I became pregnant 2 months shy of my 41st birthday, married a few months later, and delivered a healthy baby boy at 41 years old later that year.

Fast forward 8 months after my son's arrival, I conceived again at 42 years old, only to miscarry some weeks later. I processed that loss and then got back on the saddle again and then

a few days before my son's first birthday, I found out that I was pregnant again and delivered my second son at the age of 43 a few weeks before the pandemic shut our county down.

In the midst of me conceiving my first and second sons after 40 years old, I created a "Pregnancy After 40" community because honestly I was scared to death that I wouldn't make it to term after reading all the daunting statistics regarding women over 40 not being able to conceive or deliver a healthy baby at this age. Then I started the "Pregnancy After 40" Podcast after my second son was born to share not only my story, but also the stories and journeys of other women who had babies in their 40s. Additionally, members had the opportunity to ask fertility and pregnancy experts, professionals, and specialists their questions live and in real-time about fertility, diet, exercise, pregnancy labor, and delivery tips every week.

The purpose of this community and podcast is to support other women over 40 who are trying to conceive and are currently pregnant. Now with over 9,000 members, our group is a safe place for other women to encourage and seek advice from one another. Members ask about and share their infertility struggles, conception recommendations, pregnancy woes, and anxieties as well as celebrate each other's wins and births of their babies.

So, can getting pregnant and having a baby after 40 years be challenging? Yes, but it is absolutely



possible, and our bodies are definitely able to conceive and sustain a full-term pregnancy leading to the delivery of a healthy baby. Many of us can do it naturally, and many more can achieve it with medical intervention if necessary.

Regardless of the conception method though, the most empowering thing about this "Pregnancy After 40" journey is that I am witness to thousands of women rallying around one another daily, regardless of race, nationality, religion, political affiliation, or social-economic status, and letting other women know that it is not too late to conceive, our bodies can handle it and we can have healthy pregnancies and babies after 40 years old.

For additional resources about "Pregnancy After 40," visit www.pregnancyafterforty.com or listen to the "Pregnancy After 40" Podcast on any major podcast platform, including Apple Podcasts, Spotify, iHeart, Google, and more.