



BABY? NOT BEFORE MY NAPPY LIST

Thursday November 18, 2010

LAURA Johnson has given herself a set of goals to achieve before starting a family.

I'm in the midst of a pregnancy crisis. I'm not pregnant and I've never been massively maternal. I don't tend to coo over podgy-faced newborns and have been known to recoil in horror at the sight of a toddler throwing a tantrum.

However since turning 30 I've suddenly started to have feelings of irrepressible broodiness and am concerned I may be leaving it too late.

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There is still so much I want to do, see and experience before I feel ready to transform into a yummy mummy. So in preparation for parenthood, rather than limbering up in yoga classes and eating a raw food diet, I decided to write a "nappy list". It's a list of things I want to achieve before having a baby. It's a bit like the bucket list people make of things they'd like to do before they die but with a less depressing deadline.

I partly blame my little sister Becky and her growing baby bump for the list's existence and my urgency to complete it. Her pregnancy has made me more aware of the things I want to achieve before I become a parent. Suddenly doing these things seemed more urgent so this year I decided it was time to stop the excuses.

On my list are challenges I set myself years ago that are gathering dust in my conscience, goals I've never committed the time to achieving and more indulgent experiences I've always dismissed as too lavish. All are things I want to do before becoming a mother.

I started in January this year with a trip to New York. It had been on my to-do list for years and by going pre-parenthood I was able to savour a few days in the complete delusion that I was living the life of the glamorous characters from Sex And The City.

Buoyed by my stateside trip and the passing of my 30th birthday I decided to tackle another item on my list: learning to dance. Without the confidence boost of a tippie I could barely manage a side-to-side shuffle. Fast forward a few months and I'm locking and popping like a hip hop pro – well almost. In April I took to the stage and performed in my first street dance show. To their shock my friends and family in the audience were proud rather than embarrassed.

My next challenge was the Glastonbury music festival in June. I say challenge because I see dirt as one of the greatest enemies of mankind. Despite this Glastonbury has always appealed to me. I love live music, have hippy tendencies, can drink bucket loads of cider and I've been looking for an excuse to buy some Hunter wellies since Kate Moss made them chic.

However I have clean freak genes. I can't help it, it's in my bloodline but I plucked up the courage and I'm pleased to say I survived. In fact it was one of the best things I've done on my nappy list so far.

In the second half of the year I've started to tackle more items on my list. I ran a half marathon in October in under two hours.

My husband Mike and I have also finally made provision for our old age.

Being self-employed means neither of us have pensions so we've invested in a cottage in Cornwall in a giant leap of commitment that means we have somewhere to holiday in the years to come.

Finally I'm now training to climb Mount Kilimanjaro in the new year fulfilling a travel ambition that Mike and I have pondered since our last trip to Africa in 2006.

Whenever I mention my nappy list to friends it provokes different responses. Some applaud it, others are more defensive and slightly insulted I'm painting parenthood as the end of my life and dreams.

For the record that's not what I believe at all. I think it's more to do with succumbing to the modern day pressure to have it all, to be well travelled, an achiever and a fearless follower of adventure with a backlog of exciting stories to delight my admiring brood with.

Alison Tinsley, of Lavish Lifestyle Consulting, comes across this attitude a lot in her job.

"We're under so much pressure to be everything, to have everything," she says. "Lots of people will do one thing and then come back and want do something else because it hasn't fulfilled them.

"There's a sense that unless you've done something absolutely fantastic in your life it's not counted for anything yet.

"For some people the best thing they can do is to work on their relationship and their family and that's an amazing achievement. Yet there's a sense that's not good enough."

I've taken her advice on board but I'm not quite ready to abandon my nappy list and have children just yet. After all I haven't even started my novel.