

Joanne McHugh's Candid and Unglossy Bio

In the beginning, my romantic life was disappointing. It was a good thing I wasn't one of those girls who felt like she had to have a boyfriend because I had a hard time finding one. When I was a college sophomore, the relationship that turned into a 30-years-and-counting marriage began when I told a guy in my circle of friends, "I think we should try dating."

Though I was voted Most Likely to Succeed in high school, in college I became a wayward accounting major who had a hard time figuring out what I wanted to be when I grew up. After some great and no-so-great internships, I recalculated and rerouted myself towards a marketing career. The road was bumpy at first—I hated my first job—but eventually I found my way to a dream job in international marketing.

When I married my Mr. Wonderful after four and a half years of dating, I was surprised that learning how to play the Newlywed Game successfully required some effort. Eventually we got so good at being a double-income no-kids duo that I pushed back my deadline for when to start a family twice.

Another reason I delayed childbearing was because I had no idea where the hell I was going to put the baby. I wasn't clueless about basic child care—I knew the baby would sleep in a crib and spend her waking hours in age-appropriate child-safe seating. But since I had found my way to a cool job that I really liked, I struggled with where the baby would spend her days if I continued working.

Once I decided I was ready to have a baby, I made the mistake of expecting God to work like Amazon Prime. After a brief delay, our baby request was fulfilled, and like most new parents, we were awestruck. Most astounding was how one small human who only weighed as much as a large Christmas ham was able to bring two people used to being in control of everything to their knees. In fact, I was so overwhelmed at first that I pondered whether it was possible to return early from maternity leave.

We eventually got the hang of things, and I figured out how to be a real-life Elastigirl—one of those superheroes also known as a working mom. However, by the time baby number two was on the way, I was tired of feeling like someone trying to stuff the proverbial ten pounds into a five-pound bag. So I decided to cash in my chips and stay home with the kids.

Like many other things about being a grown-up, it wasn't like I thought it was going to be. I had imagined that I'd be living the life of Samantha Stephens, the glamorous wife and mother in the 1960s sitcom *Bewitched*. Instead, I found myself identifying more with the dark humor of the 1980s sitcom *Roseanne*.

The solution of continuing to work part-time ended up saving the day. Preserving part of the old life that I knew and loved helped to stabilize things while I learned the ropes of hands-on, in-the-trenches motherhood. Though I always held on to a paying gig, raising those three daughters under a regime that I dubbed Camp Fend For Yourself evolved into the best job I ever had.

Now that I've reached the Maytag-repairman stage of parenting—when I only need to be on call for those rare instances when my super-reliable children break down—my mission is to share everything I think young women should know about building their grown-up lives. By speaking honestly about the ordinary struggles of adulthood, offering common-sense wisdom, and throwing in a few laughs, I hope to help reduce anxiety about becoming a grown-up.