

# Letter to a daughter

big on little



meher  
marfatia

DEAR Daughter,

You've only blown the candles on your 18th birthday cake. Reading on, you may say, "Chill mum, hold off the baby talk, I've a long way to get there."

Sure you do. That's the point of this letter. To make clear *you* retain that future right to decide when to welcome motherhood. Not family or friends. Or, company.

A company can't dictate to you, no matter what delicious deal they dangle before the sharpest set-on-career eyes. Today it's Facebook and Apple paying up to \$20,000 to keep women staffers "unpregnant". Tomorrow a bunch more will urge: wait it out, freeze those eggs, control-climb that work ladder. I think there's a limit to plotting and planning.

Not for a moment am I suggesting that parenting should define or consume you. If you opt not to have kids, I'll even respect that (just allow me a fleeting moan about missed grandchildren). But if you do plan a family, let it not take forever. For now fully enjoy the years of finding yourself. Form vibrant new friendships, follow your dream, enter an exciting profession, save and travel to your heart's content. Explore

enough relationships to know the men you don't want. Before settling for the one you do.

Hand on heart this isn't a plea for early domesticity, it's more a case for unpressured parenting. The ideal time to become a mother is when you think it should happen.

Simply slowing the ticking biological clock won't win that elusive spot atop the corporate game. Young women dither, doubt, delay. Then pump painful hormones which induce mood swings and bloat before babies are even born. Where does the promise of tech-driven, too late motherhood really leave you? Rigid in your routine with drooping levels of energy and elasticity, twin tools that best tackle the toughest challenges children toss you. Trust me they'll come in tons. Motherhood is

courage, the fears and tears flowing freely.

Besides, a mum must be just a bit mad. To think on her feet, jump and jive with them. Children crave an animated, not a decimated parent to come home to. Endless patience, selfless love, helpless laughter, you'll feel it all — sweeter still with age on your side.

Agreed, assisted birth is liberating. Yet, other freedoms are as heady. Try look beyond frozen eggs, IVF and surrogacy to that original choice of the childless. Faced with the futility of fertility, why not adopt. The premium on the creation of life is priceless. But any child is a gift, whether it swells your womb or your soul space. In Carl Sandburg's words, "A baby is God's opinion that the world should go on."

Instead of bargaining with nature, have a little faith. Work like a woman possessed. Earn the power and privilege to be so policy-bending great at the job that you're seldom denied flexi hours, paid maternity plusses you need. A busy mum is beautiful, fun for her kids and their father to have around. There are few things sexier than a marriage which stays the course. You've grown up seeing some such closely. Celebrate them, emulate them.

Do what you want to do and go where you're going to... George Harrison is singing as I sign off, you sneaking an over the shoulder peek at the writing! That line hums in my head happily inverted, far from its meaning in the breakup ballad it was composed for. Go where you're going to. With the healthy hope the

freshness of your years brings to look forward to.

Go to whom? The magic question girls of every generation ask. When I wondered, in stepped my incredibly insightful grandmother. She, who got more couples hitched than any Jiyo Parsi ad campaign can, said: "Choose the man who is kind. Kindness outlasts all else."

Glad I listened to her.

Love you,  
Mum.

Meher Marfatia is the author of 10 books for children and two for parents. She has mothered her own kids well past the terrible twos and almost past the troubled teens. Reach her at: [mehermarfatia@gmail.com](mailto:mehermarfatia@gmail.com)