



LESS STRESS, MORE
LAUGHING—THAT'S OUR
KIND OF PREGNANCY.

the

NO-GUILT

GUIDE

to

**MOMMY
PREP**

Giddy, elated—and totally overwhelmed?
Don't worry. Everything's about to
get infinitely more manageable.

WHEN YOU FIND OUT YOU'RE PREGNANT, YOU CAN ALMOST FEEL YOUR TO-DO LIST GROWING FROM XL TO OMG.

There are books to read, rooms to redo, an almost absurd number of things to buy—and on top of it all, you're supposed to morph into a responsible, even-keeled, fully actualized adult in nine months. Hellooo, intimidation. "Many women are afraid they'll be found inadequate when it comes to pregnancy and being a mom," says Laurel Schwartz, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist in Stamford, Conn. "They end up wasting the whole nine months worrying about falling short."

Part of this pressure may come from the "momshells" we see everywhere. Celebs who appear to effortlessly juggle a relationship, career and newborn (on their 35-inch hips—cough, Gisele Bündchen, cough) can lead women to have unfair notions of what's required to be a good mom, Schwartz says. And then there's Facebook, showing

us only the veneered view of our friends' pregnancies. It's hard *not* to feel a twinge of "I should be like that."

Thankfully, you don't need to have a model pregnancy; you need to have *your* pregnancy—and you're already pretty awesome. Of course, if you're living on Arby's or bickering with your dude like crazy, you've got a great opportunity to make some changes. "Pregnancy is an ideal time for self-improvement," says Mike Dow, Psy.D., a parenting expert in Los Angeles. "Taking care of yourself enables you to take care of your baby." The trick is making small tweaks that'll have potent effects without making you feel hyperventilate-y.

We've rounded up some common resolutions and cut 'em down to doable changes. Nobody expects you to be perfect, but, lady, life's about to get a lot more pleasant.

TOO-BIG TO-DO Get in shape

A BETTER TO-DO Hammer out a plan ("I'll do two walks and two prenatal yoga classes per week"), and "consider joining a workout class or making exercise dates with a friend," says Karen Nordahl, M.D., a University of British Columbia clinical associate instructor and coauthor of *Fit to Deliver*. Spending money or setting a date makes you feel obligated to at least show up. After that, you'll start to feel so good, you'll want to keep moving. "Exercising reduces many common pregnancy complaints, and it can ease some postpartum issues," Nordahl says. Factor in that regularly breaking a sweat can help you avoid excess weight gain and build up strength (key for labor and your life with a new baby), and yes, the barre-class deal on Groupon is a must-buy.

TOO-BIG TO-DO Start eating better

A BETTER TO-DO Without a clearly defined strategy in place, you're just going to lose motivation and wind up scraping the bottom of the Häagen-Dazs container. (Not that anyone's calling for a Häagen-Dazs ban here.) The key is to create a predictable eating pattern. "Otherwise, when you're stressed, tired or hungry, you'll make less nutritious decisions," says Eileen Behan, R.D., author of *The Baby Food Bible*. Plot out three healthy meals and two snacks a day, and include a fruit or vegetable every time you eat.



10 THINGS YOU JUST SHOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT DURING PREGNANCY, PERIOD, MIC DROP.

1. The names your mother-in-law picked out for her grandchildren.
2. The difference between the \$349 stroller and the \$329 model. Pick one and move on.
3. If your feet will ever fit into those hot python stilettos again.
4. Whether you've read enough parenting manuals.
5. Whether you've read too many parenting manuals.
6. If your partner still finds you sexy. (Hint: He does.)
7. How your coworker will feel after you politely ask her to stop eating salmon in the cubicle next to yours because it's triggering nausea, thanks.
8. What anyone thinks of your new, slightly ugly walking shoes. Keep steppin', people.
9. How Gwen Stefani, Megan Fox, Jennifer Love Hewitt and all the other expectant celebs look when they're about to pop. Their job is to step out with amazing hair and a serene gaze, 'kay?
10. The afternoon you farted in a meeting. Life goes on.

—Andrea Bartz

TOO-BIG TO-DO Strengthen your relationship

A BETTER TO-DO “Go into detail with your partner now about how you’ll handle baby conflict down the line,” suggests Foster Cline, M.D., cofounder of the Love and Logic Institute in Colorado. Why you must: “Couples are often complementary. But when the baby is crying, the woman’s understanding nature means she’s going to be popping up to tend to him, and the more practical guy might think that will lead to more crying. Next thing you know, there’s conflict,” Cline says. Create game plans now for the times you’ll want to hit him over the head with your breast pump, and save yourselves a predawn sparring match.

TOO-BIG TO-DO Get your crap together when it comes to your finances

A BETTER TO-DO Start talking about money. For instance, have a discussion with your partner about how you’ll pay the bills while you’re on maternity leave. “Not having a fallback plan will make any fear seem bigger than it is,” says Amanda Clayman, L.M.S.W., a therapist in New York City. And do remember, your kid doesn’t require a big house or a fancy school district—just love and security. You’re all over that.

TOO-BIG TO-DO Redo your house

A BETTER TO-DO Scrap the grandiose renovation plans and instead pledge to clear the decks before D-day. “Once you become a mother, you’re overwhelmed in many ways, and calm surroundings can help you feel more peaceful,” says Gia Russo, cofounder of the design and lifestyle brand MiGi. A yard sale (or, better yet, Goodwill donation) will give you that fresh-start feeling ... and plenty of freed-up space for baby essentials after your bubs arrives.

TOO-BIG TO-DO Find your center

A BETTER TO-DO “Make time for something ‘selfish’—a walk, a massage, a dinner with friends,” Dow suggests. Since you can’t be there for your family when you’re a big ball of stress, regularly scheduling me-time will actually make you a better wife and, eventually, mom. Breathe. See, there’s no reason to believe you must morph into a Buddhist monk to have a healthy, happy baby. That newborn won’t need a Wondermom; he’ll need you. And boy, can you deliver.