

## FIRST PERSON

# Jen and I are of one mind: Hold off on talk of babies

By Abigail Green

Special to the Tribune

Even though weeks have gone by since we heard the shocking news that Mr. and Mrs. Pitt have split up, their faces are still plastered across the tabloid covers. Entertainment news shows are still searching for answers as to what went wrong.

Is this because so many Americans, like me, are sadder than we have any right to be, given that we know neither Brad nor Jen, nor do we have any personal stake in their relationship whatsoever?

Even so, the sad news of their separation after more than four years of marriage weighs heavy on my heart. Because I can relate. Really, I can.

To Jennifer Aniston, I say: I feel your pain, sister. I, too, am in a young marriage and know that "happily ever after" is harder than it should be. I, too, struggle with feelings of insecurity, knowing somewhere deep down that without the highlights and the teeth-bleaching and the low-carb diet, I, too, am rather average-looking.

And I, too, have grown tired of the baby question, the none-too-subtle glances at my waistline and my wineglass at parties, the heads turning to take in my reaction when yet another friend announces that she's expecting. Because, yes, I also grapple with the dueling concerns of career and family.

## Schoolyard rhyme

Sometimes it seems as if the whole world has bought into the schoolyard rhyme: "First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes the baby in the baby carriage." And they get antsy when we don't follow in lockstep.

But Jen and I know it's not that easy. Having a baby is hard—we've seen our best friends do it. The thought of feeling nauseated, tired, bloated, and/or constipated for nine whole months is off-putting.

Plus there's the whole food issue. Jen's reportedly on the Zone, and I'm a vegetarian who doesn't really like vegetables.

*If I'm worried about inadvertently poisoning my unborn child, just imagine the pressure if it were Brad Pitt's unborn child!*

But when we're eating for two, we'll have to pay more attention to our bodies' nutritional needs. Every other week you read about different foods you're supposed to eat or not supposed to eat when you're pregnant.

It's all so overwhelming. If I'm worried about inadvertently poisoning my unborn child, just imagine the pressure if it were Brad Pitt's unborn child!

Try having your burgeoning "bump" chronicled daily by the tabloid media, or even by chunkier friends who have long been jealous of your slim hips and flat belly, gawking with obvious glee as you balloon to the size of a water buffalo.

And God forbid the pounds don't melt off within weeks after the baby's born, à la Gwyneth Paltrow. Can you blame us for being a little apprehensive about procreating?

And Brad? You can just stop with all of your baby-lovin', nursery-designing, can't-wait-to-strap-on-the-Baby-Bjorn prattle, OK? My husband says the same things. Nevertheless, he gets annoyed when our friends come over and their infant inconveniently cries during the Patriots game.

As pretty as Brad is, I'm betting he's the same way. Jen and I know who's going to be responsible for the nighttime feedings and diaper changes. That's right: us. Then the guys tote the tot around in public for a few minutes and get all the glory for being sensitive, hands-on dads.

There's pressure from all sides to have a baby, not just from hubby and the grandparents. Maybe it's a single co-worker who's adopted a Cambodian baby and dedicated all her free time to stumping for UNI-

CEF and saving the world.

She makes it all look so easy, doesn't she? Now her trivial little pre-baby life is behind her and she's all about the betterment of humanity. So those of us who prefer to spend our Friday nights gossiping with the girls over margaritas are selfish and shallow, I suppose.

## It's easy for others

"Other women manage just fine," say the baby-pushers, offering up Kelly Ripa or Courteney Cox or the impeccably dressed soccer mom down the street as examples of moms who have it all. But that only makes Jen and I feel worse about our hesitation to procreate.

The thing is, neither of us is 100 percent happy with our careers yet. Yes, Jen had a good run on "Friends" and generated some buzz for "The Good Girl," but she hasn't yet begun to really stretch her acting legs. Who wants to be known as a one-note performer?

I certainly don't want to be defined by my biggest accomplishment to date, which might possibly be playing Little Orphan Annie's understudy in a class play once (because I was the only other girl in the 4th grade with red hair). Jen and I know we have more to offer. We just want to have a chance to figure out what it is before we're saddled with a couple of kids and a full schedule of Gymboree classes. Is that so much to ask?

I've tried to get at the root of my misplaced empathy for Jennifer Aniston and her failed marriage. Is it because she and Brad shattered the illusion of the proverbial perfect couple when they turned out to be mere mortals like us? Is it because I am uncertain about my own competence as a wife and future mother? Is it because they are just so darn good-looking, and everything seems worse when it happens to pretty people?

I don't know. But Jen, if you want to talk about it, give me a call. I'll bring the margaritas.

Abigail Green is a freelance writer based in Baltimore.