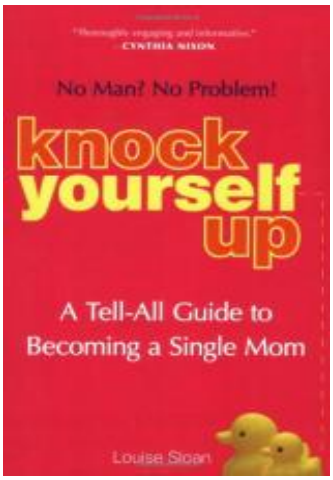
Knock Yourself Up

by Louise Sloan



About the Book

Choosing single motherhood through artificial insemination has become a hot topic and a growing trend --- so much so that it?s the topic of a new big-budget Hollywood comedy, *Baby Mama*, starring Tina Fey (April 25, 2008). **Knock Yourself Up** is a nonfiction book that offers an entertaining and emotional look at the real deal behind the Hollywood fantasy.

In this frank and funny cross between memoir and reporting, writer Louise Sloan shares her experiences and those of many other women who?ve decided not to let being single stand in the way of becoming a mom. The book is a ?girlfriends? guide? for single women over 30 who are thinking about motherhood, but also a great read for men and women of all ages who are interested in the topic and the trend.

In **Knock Yourself Up**, you?ll learn what it?s really like to go through the process of becoming a single mother by choice, from the women who?ve done it. From exploding semen vials to shocked parents to sex and dating while artificially inseminating, Sloan candidly shares her experiences and those of 43 other women from all across the U.S.

Knock Yourself Up is a fun, fast, and informative read, while addressing all the serious issues raised by this growing trend --- a perfect launch pad for discussion and debate. As one reviewer wrote: ?**Knock Yourself Up** is a great read for anyone who simply enjoys good anecdotes and appreciates good writing (the language is sharp, witty, graceful). It brought lumps to my throat, and giggles, too.?

Discussion Guide

Author?s Note:

1. When push comes to shove, does quality beat quantity, in parenting, as the author opines? Or is having only one parent always worse for the child than having two, no matter what the individual situation? Would a bad dad be better

than no dad at all?

2. Do you think it?s selfish for a single woman to have a biological child rather than adopt? If so, how is her decision different from the same decision made by a married couple?

3. The author suggests that having a child solo is more respectful to men and marriage than getting married to Mr. ?He?ll Have to Do? in order to have kids before fertility drops. Do you agree with her?

Introduction:

1. Why do you think the author wishes her son had been conceived at home, rather than at the doctor?s office? Do the details of a child?s conception really matter in the long run?

Chapter One:

1. As career opportunities for women continue to expand, do you feel that the challenge of balancing professional and personal goals will result in more women deciding to begin families solo? Is this the end of marriage and fatherhood, as some critics suggest? Or do you think single parenthood will always be Plan B?

2. Do you think single motherhood through accidental pregnancy is more acceptable to than choosing to be a single mother? Why or why not?

3. What do you think about the idea that single parenthood is easier in some respects? Does this line up with your own experience or observations?

Chapter Two:

1. Do you think that women using sperm banks are looking to create designer babies? Is choosing a handsome sperm donor different from dating only handsome guys?

2. Some countries require sperm donors to release their identities to the offspring when they turn 18, and the author seems to strongly favor open-identity donors. Do kids have a right to the identity of their biological parents? What about birth parents in the case of adoption?

3. Why do you think so many women asked their families for help choosing a sperm donor?

Chapter Three:

1. Do you think fertility challenges are harder for single women, because they are alone, or easier, because they don?t have the pressure of a relationship on top of the infertility?

2. At what point do you think a woman should give up trying to get pregnant? Should this be different for single women than for married ones? What do you think about single women using donor eggs? How about single women who use their own eggs but have to hire a gestational carrier (surrogate) for medical reasons, as Tina Fey does in the comedy, *Baby Mama*?

Chapter Four:

1. The benefit of a known donor is that the child has a ?Dad.? Nevertheless, this arrangement can be fraught with unanticipated issues and concerns. Do you think the potential benefits of the child knowing his or her father outweigh the potential legal and emotional risks? Are women who choose anonymous donors being prudent, or are they being ?control freaks,? as one woman who used a known donor puts it?

2. What do you think about the idea of coparenting with someone who is not a romantic partner? How do you weigh the fact that the parents will never divorce against the fact that the parents were never in love? Which might impact the child more, and why?

3. What about the friends who want to create a situation where the child has two dads and a mom? Will having more than two parents be a plus or a minus for the kids?

Chapter Five:

1. Do you think that a child?s donor-insemination origins should be kept secret, or should it be disclosed, as the author argues? Is this up to the child or the parent to decide? Why?

2. Based on the author?s research, politically and religiously conservative families often end up embracing the single mom and her child, and even defending her choice. Is this surprising to you? Why do you think there is such a divide between what people believe in theory (i.e., that it?s morally wrong, selfish, etc.), and how they behave in individual cases? How do you think your community or family would react if you decided to become a single mother?

3. Some women who?ve decided to become single moms feel their straight, single women friends are disapproving of their choice because they are threatened, and because they feel it calls into question their own choice to wait for Mr. Right. Do you agree that that?s what?s really going on?

Chapter Six:

1. Should there be financial requirements attached to the decision to bear children? If you are below a certain income level, is it morally preferable that you remain childless? If so, does this idea apply more to single women than to married couples? Why or why not?

Chapter Seven:

1. Researchers looking at the kids of donor insemination who grew up without dads all say they?ve found the kids do well, even when compared with the children of traditional families, and that it?s the quality of the parenting, not the structure of the family, that matters the most to kids. Do you buy this? Why or why not?

2. Do you think it matters what words are used to talk about an anonymous sperm donor? If you had used one to conceive your child, would you call the person the donor, the father, or the dad? Would your decision be different if you were a single mom versus a married women with an infertile husband?

Chapter Eight:

1. Is it OK to date while trying to get pregnant through artificial insemination as a single mom?

2. Is it OK to date when you?re a single mom, or is it better to put your social life on a shelf and concentrate 100 percent

on parenting?

Chapter Nine:

1. The author says that being pregnant was the loneliest part of becoming a single mom, and she had a terrible time selecting a birthing partner because she wanted it to be her romantic partner. Do you think she idealized having a partner in these situations?

Chapter Ten:

1. Do you think experience makes a difference when coping with a newborn? Do you agree with the author that the difficulty of first-time parenting a healthy baby is ?20 percent perspiration, 80 percent hyperventilation??

2. Do you agree with the author that married first-time moms may be more likely than single moms to isolate themselves during maternity leave, expecting their spouses to be their sole source of support?

3. Do you think this chapter paints a realistic picture of being alone with a baby to take care of? Do you think that the temperaments of both the baby and the mom have a lot to do with the experience of parenting at different stages, as the author believes?

Chapter Eleven:

1. The author makes the point that most mothers shoulder the majority of child-care responsibilities, and because of that, parenting as a single mom is not as hugely different from coparenting as one might think. Do you agree with this perspective?

2. The author talks about the importance of balancing being a parent with having an adult life, and the effect motherhood can have on a woman?s career . Do you think these issues are bigger for single moms than for married ones? Are married moms more or less likely than single moms to become overinvolved with their children and underinvolved in their own lives as adults? (And do you think husbands might have a different answer than wives?)

3. No one, single or married, is usually willing to go on record saying that she wishes she hadn?t had children. What?s your guess: Do more single mothers than married ones end up finding motherhood too hard and secretly wishing they hadn?t had the child? Or do you think they would have been more likely to regret it had they remained childless?

Author Bio

Louise Sloan has been a professional writer and editor for 20 years. She has written columns and articles for publications including *Glamour, Good Housekeeping, Self, Ms., Out, The Chicago Tribune, The San Francisco Bay Guardian,* and *AARP*. In June 2006 she became a single mom when her son Scott was born. Louise is currently working as a magazine editor and writing for *The Huffington Post*.

Critical Praise

?**Knock Yourself Up** is the perfect book for any single woman considering motherhood ? you'll feel like you've entered the most amazing support group without ever leaving your home."

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