

## Questions for Julia Roberts, author of *MOTHERHOOD TO OTHERHOOD*

1. **Q:** *In your book, you talk about being “un-pregnant.” What is “Unpregnancy?” How did you come up with that idea?*

**A:** Unpregnancy is everything that is good about pregnancy – emotionally, motivationally – without the physical condition. It’s a life-change strategy for mothers.

I wanted a fourth child, but I wanted to get on with my own life at the same time. As Unpregnancy developed in my mind, it became clear it was an unparalleled model for how to get a new life. If pregnancy was an extreme makeover in my life, then Unpregnancy would be the same, in reverse – and give me back all its tools, lessons and examples of how to do it, this time for myself, for my brainchild.

2. **Q:** *What was the most valuable lesson you learned from developing this program and writing this book?*

**A:** I am certainly not alone. Mothers are isolated, busy with children and unsure how they can possibly “have it all.” But mothers are forward thinking, and understand their dreams and contributions are very important. They have a strong drive to give their best back to society, and to the next generation. Mothers needed a new model for how to pursue their dreams in the framework of their lives and their families’ lives.

3. **Q:** *What were your personal goals for your own “Unpregnancy?”*

**A:** Unpregnancy has three trimesters – three areas of focus for your goals – Self, Love, Work. Each trimester helps you achieve an important goal and prepare yourself for the bigger changes coming up. In my own Unpregnancy:

Self – Lost 50 Pounds

Love – Marriage retreat with my husband. Redesigned rooms with each of the three kids to express their personalities and interests.

Work – Backburnered my marketing career enough to volunteer in town to get a community pool funded and built. I gave back in a truly gratifying way.

4. **Q:** *Who do you think will benefit the most from your program? Who is your book written for?*

**A:** Mothers of children aged anywhere from 2 to 20. Mothers who are ready to recommit to their own dreams – whether that’s because their youngest got out of diapers, went off to kindergarten, left for college, or just got married. Mothers who are asking themselves, “What do I want now?”

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5. **Q:** *If you could pick just one point or lesson for a reader to walk away from your book with, what would it be and why?*

**A:** There are great ways to pursue your dreams without being a bad mother. Mothers are naturally ambitious – there is nothing wrong with that. Darwin identified ambition as part of Maternal Instinct, observable even in the wild. In the post-childbearing phase of your life, you are naturally driven to give back your own gift to the next generation.

6. **Q:** *Your book includes several journal entries. How important are these entries for women who are trying to find themselves?*

**A:** Keeping a daily journal has been the single strongest agent for change in my life. Every day I could see where I wanted my life to go, or what was really bugging me and needed to be changed. Additionally, a daily journal is critical to making sure the changes you're pursuing are right for you, truly what you want, and not just what others want for you. I shared certain journal pages to show what sorts of emotions and ideas come out when you let yourself write, give yourself voice.

7. **Q:** *What type of goals and dreams have women you've coached or met with reached for? Whose story was the most inspirational for you?*

**A:** Mothers' dreams are as diverse as they are – One woman showed up one week in a red convertible, because she came to feel like she'd always wanted one, and now, because of Unpregnancy, felt like she deserved it. One woman said she had no goal, other than to raise happy children. She came to feel like she could do that *better* if she opened a yarn store and expressed herself creatively. One of my mothers founded a NFP organization to unite parents of children with a rare genetic disorder and has hosted get-togethers with families from around the world. She also got a grant for an upbeat, informative video about living with the disease, which she has produced and markets to hospitals and individuals worldwide.

I'm inspired by mothers choosing even small changes that make their lives more meaningful – losing weight, going back to work, writing a novel, running for office, getting a community pool built. Their achievements may not grab headlines, but they do deeply satisfy one woman – whose ripple effect begins in a house where she's raising children, to a community where she contributes or sets an important example, to a world where we all benefit from her expression of her talents and gifts.

8. **Q:** *Your program has three trimesters: Self, Love, and Work. Could you explain the main goals and ideas of the three trimesters?*

**A:** In order to bring about a big life-change, I determined that Unpregnancy should progress like a pregnancy – self focused and private at first, then grow to include family and friends, and ultimately engage the world around you. Therefore, Unpregnancy was designed in three trimesters, each three months long, each with its own goal-focus:  
Trimester 1 or T1/Self: Goals related to your body, mind, creativity or spirit  
T2/Love: Goals related to improving relationships with friends, family, or in some cases, finding the love you need to thrive  
T3/Work: Embracing your life's work, whether it's paid employment or not, finding your mission, and striving toward fulfilling it.

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9. **Q:** *Your book has 9 lessons for 9 months of Unpregnancy. When you meet and talk to women, which lesson do they find the most challenging? The most rewarding?*

**A:** T1/Lesson #2 – *Only You Can Do This* – addresses mission and accountability. Finding and articulating your mission is challenging and rewarding. And in a roomful of mothers, it is easier to see how unique and therefore valuable your own calling is.

T2/Lesson #5 – *You Don't Know What to Expect* – isolates our expectations and how they affect our moods, relationships and outcomes. Pregnancy changed everyone's expectations of us, so couldn't we do that again with Unpregnancy? This lesson helps you understand how you're perceived and what expectations you set up, and how you might need to change expectations to succeed.

T3/Lesson #9 – *Nothing Can Stop You in the Homestretch* – gives us each a life example of when it was okay to push. Often women don't want to push – who does? – but labor and delivery are resonant examples of when pushing was forgivable, natural and got glorious results. There comes a time in any worthwhile effort when you have to push.

10. **Q:** *In Part 1, the first trimester, you talk about women needing to focus on themselves. What are your suggestions for women who feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of family and work? What do you suggest for women who simply feel that they don't have the time to focus on themselves?*

**A:** Of course, all mothers feel that way. And it is true, mothers are very busy people. This is a prime example of why pregnancy is an excellent exemplar from our own lives. Suppose that instead of wanting to exercise more, you were pregnant again. Everyone in your life and family – from partner to boss, from toddler to teen to Mother-in-Law – everyone would find a way to accommodate your pregnancy. You have the blueprint in your life for how you got the slack you needed during pregnancy – you can repeat what worked then to get the time, help and energy you need now. You earned it – I had three pregnancies a gift of myself and my focus for 9 months, I therefore feel entitled to three Unpregnancies – three 9 month times of intense focus on bringing about my own life-change. Of course, I'm still a mother! And I still work. But I carve out time to make headway toward that which I know will bring about meaningful changes for me.

11. **Q:** *In Part 2, you discuss the importance of love and relationships. What is your best advice for women who want to reconnect with their spouse, family, and friends?*

**A:** T2/Love helps the mother identify what she needs – relationally – in her life. The Unpregnancy attitude and effort can apply to husbands and children or mothers and sisters. It can even be about finding the love you want because you're a single mom. It can be about reaching out and building a better friend group.

In T2/Love, I focus on how the mothers relate, how they can enlist help and support from those around them, and how much they deserve the self-care and indulgence many of us eschew.

In order to pursue individual goals, like reconnecting with husbands and children, they can come to [www.motherhoodtootherhood.com](http://www.motherhoodtootherhood.com) and see what other mothers have found useful, inspiring. I also blog about self-help methods specific to certain goalsets that I find positive and appropriate to the Unpregnancy point-of-view.

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**12. Q:** *Part 3 is about a woman's career and finding her life's work, or purpose. What do you suggest for women who cannot financially afford to switch careers? How should she pursue her goals otherwise, what are other options?*

**A:** During T3/Work, the Unpregnant woman has already achieved a personal goal, bettered her social support and is prepared to follow her true calling and life's work.

She is centered and has momentum. Change will come. She will be grounded in her power to bring about good change, whether that's in her current job, or by making a lateral move, or by starting a new training course she may need. She may even volunteer to build her necessary experience.

And because she has identified her best attributes and passions – she will be pursuing something she knows is hers, by right, and where she knows will naturally thrive. She will become undeniable. Her zeal will be apparent, and she will attract new ideas and people into her life.

The alternative is to say: *I can't*. And if you continue to tell yourself that, you'll be right.

**13. Q:** *In the final pages of your book, you talk about "words to live by." What words do you live by?*

**A:** Life should be fun. I like to think I put the "elfish" in "selfish."