

When I need a pick-me-up, I lock the outside world away and allow myself time to just be with my kids and to become one with myself!

**L**eanne and her husband, Marc Menelaou, are proud parents to Alexandro (4) and Gabriella (1). Being the offspring of a Lebanese mother and Greek father, both children are sure to have the best of both worlds. But how does Leanne make sure she gets the most from both?

**Q** You established a career and became a household name before starting a family. What are the benefits and downsides of having children 'later in life'?

**A** For me, the positives far outweigh the negatives. It's been amazing and I have no regrets. I did everything I wanted to do before having kids. Having kids is hard work; nobody can tell you otherwise. It's also the most rewarding and wonderful thing in the world.

The only advice I can give a couple who want to start a family is to enjoy each other before having children. When kids come along, it's all about them, and your relationship – whether you want to believe it or not – takes a backseat.

Having kids 'later in life' (I'm 38) has its benefits. I got to travel with my friends; I got married and enjoyed being with my husband; and we worked hard to get ourselves into a comfortable position where we felt we were ready to have kids. Then we had kids and I wouldn't change a thing.

The downsides are that you're older and pregnancy does get more difficult with age. It is harder on your body.

# The best of both

Helène Ramackers interviews *Morning Live* anchor Leanne Manas and asks how she balances career and family responsibilities.



**Q** Could you describe a day in your life?

**A** My alarm rings at 4:00am and I get to the television studios at 5:00am. I anchor *Morning Live* between 6:00am and 8:00am. After the show, we have a production meeting.

Then I rush home to take my son to his playgroup. I try to get to gym at least three times a week. I also own a shop in Sandton City called Simply Manas Gift Emporium with my sister-in-law, Mandy. I like going there and helping whenever I can. Our website is [www.simplymanas.co.za](http://www.simplymanas.co.za).

I also MC events, travel with *Morning Live* and do guest speaking or corporate events.

In the evenings, it's all about being mom – feeding and cooking. Mostly, Marc and I rustle something up to eat. At this point in our lives, it's wonderful chaos.

**Q** What do you enjoy most about your work?

**A** No two days are ever the same. I get to meet amazing people and do what I love – broadcasting. It's what I know and what I'm good at, without sounding vain.

I've tried many things in life and this is what I love; I never take it for granted. I cherish it, because many people would love to do this but they aren't given the opportunity. I'm grateful that I have this opportunity and the longevity to last for almost a decade with one programme, which is amazing.

**Q** What do you think it is about you that

makes you such an inspiration to so many moms out there?

**A** I have no idea! I think it's because I'm on TV and people watch me daily. They regard you as being a part of their family.

I've been through the following on live television: I got engaged and got married. I fell pregnant with my first baby and went through my entire pregnancy until two weeks before he was born. I came back, lost the weight and put it all back on. I fell pregnant again and stayed until two weeks before I gave birth. I came back and had to start losing the weight all over again!

I think people have watched this real person – there's no pretending: what you see is what you get. This is life happening; people are watching reality television right in front of their eyes.

**Q** Being on live television and pregnant must be a challenge. When did you announce your pregnancies and how did your viewers react?

**A** With Alexandro, I was skinny and everyone started noticing, so I had to say something. It was getting a little bit too obvious. When I announced it, there was such a wonderful celebration.

**Q** How did your two pregnancies compare to each other?

**A** They were very different. I had a very easy pregnancy with Alexandro. I think your first pregnancy is very exciting because you don't know what you're in for. The second time around, you're more prepared.

With both pregnancies, I couldn't eat red meat. With Gabriella, I was craving fruit juice and oranges. I had a bit of a tough time during my pregnancy with Gabriella – she was fine, but I had heart palpitations and also developed insomnia halfway through my pregnancy.

**Q** Did you have a caesarean or natural birth?

**A** I really wanted to have a natural birth with Alexandro, but unfortunately, it didn't work out that way. I wasn't dilating enough and I always thought my 'childbearing hips' would come in useful one day but clearly not! Both Alexandro and Gabriella were born via C-Section.

**Q** There surely is a juggling act with two children, a busy career, travelling etc. How do you do it?

**A** I have a brilliant infrastructure around me and wonderful help. Marc is very hands-on. Then I have help from my mom, Vida Manas, my mother-in-law, Connie Fear, my helper Lenah Molohe and my night nurse Alice Sibeko. It's impossible to do everything and the old adage of 'It takes a village to raise a child' is so true. ➔

Having kids later in life has its benefits.







Leanne believes in a good support system.

## MY HOPES FOR MY KIDS

My proudest moment as a mom is seeing my kids happy and content; running up to me and giving me a hug and saying 'I love you' for no reason. My hopes and dreams for my children are that they're happy, well rounded, healthy and live the life of their dreams – not mine.

**Q** Can you offer some tips for moms out there in your position, who are juggling family and career responsibilities?

**A** Don't be brave and think you can do it alone. If help is offered, take it.

**Q** How did you choose your children's names?

**A** I've always loved the name Alexander. The Greek version is Alexandro, which made sense with my Greek husband. I've also always loved the name Gabriella.

**Q** How do you and Marc manage to find quality time to spend together as a couple, and what do you do?

**A** We go away without the children. This year, we're going on a cruise. We also try to have a date night each week, even though we half fall asleep at the table. Just breaking away and being together does wonders for a relationship.

**Q** How are your children taking to each other?

**A** Beautifully. They're getting to the age where they can interact with one another. It was difficult for Alexandro in the beginning, being an only child and suddenly having to share the attention.

**Q** Do you have any creative ways you enforce self-discipline in your children?

**A** I'm constantly teaching him right from wrong. When he's not listening, we get a little bit stricter.

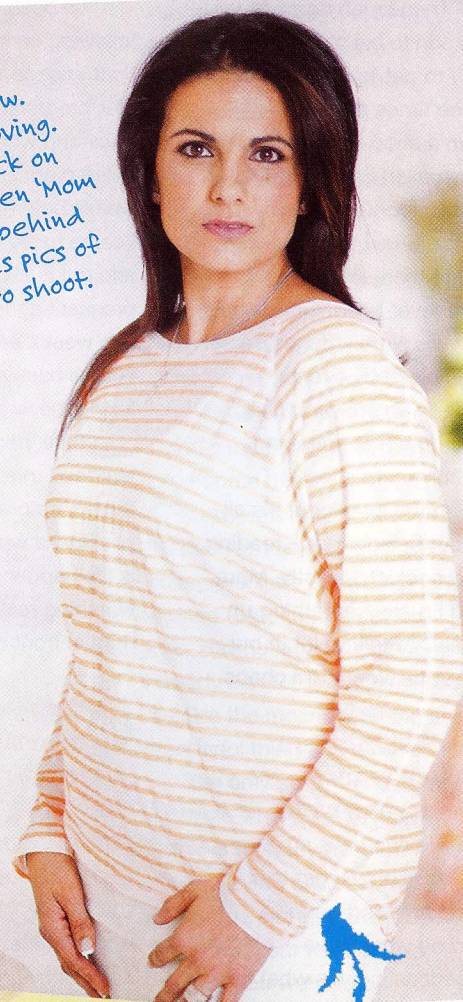


## More about Leanne

**My proudest career moment** was seeing girls that we had highlighted in a broadcast about child trafficking. They had

been trafficked into child prostitution and were living in Hillbrow, but moved out into a safe house after a sponsor saw the story.

Go to [www.livingandloving.co.za](http://www.livingandloving.co.za), click on 'Articles' then 'Mom time' for behind the scenes pics of the photo shoot.



## Taking her body back

Leanne is on a diet called Eden Life under the guidance of Paula Galvao. "I've lost 15kg so far. I started in February and it has been amazing. I lent my body out to my children and I am now taking it back. I'm so excited and motivated. I'm also at gym with my personal trainer Gail Lechinsky three times a week and I feel like a new person." **I&I**