



Lowenstein Sandler's Women's Initiative Network Podcast: Real Talk

Episode 9 - The Conversation You're Not Having: Pregnancy, Complications, Miscarriage, and Other Loss at Work

By [Megan Monson](#), [Nicole Fulfree](#), [Rachel Moseson Dikovics](#), [Amanda Cipriano](#)

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Amanda Cipriano: Welcome to the Lowenstein Sandler Podcast Series: The Women's Initiative Network, Real Talk. I'm Amanda Cipriano, an Associate attorney and member of the Women's Initiative Network at Lowenstein Sandler. Before we begin, please take a moment to subscribe to our podcast series at [lowenstein.com/podcasts](https://www.lowenstein.com/podcasts), or find us on iTunes, Spotify, Pandora, Google Podcasts, and SoundCloud. Now let's take a listen.

Rachel Dikovics: Welcome to the Women's Initiative Network: Real Talk. I'm Rachel Dikovics, an Associate in Lowenstein's White Collar Criminal Defense practice group.

Nicole Fulfree: I'm Nicole Fulfree, and I'm Counsel in Lowenstein's Bankruptcy & Restructuring department.

Megan Monson: I'm Megan Monson, and I'm a Partner in Lowenstein Sandler's Employee Benefits & Executive Compensation practice group.

Amanda Cipriano: And I'm Amanda Cipriano, an Associate in Lowenstein's Litigation practice.

Rachel Dikovics: For this episode of Real Talk, we're focusing on issues related to pregnancy and how to handle them in a professional setting, ranging from disclosing a pregnancy to your boss, to reintegrating after a leave. As a sensitivity warning to our listeners, our discussion is also going to touch on navigating issues beyond those that come with "normal pregnancies and maternity leaves." Up to one in four known pregnancies end in miscarriage. So it's virtually really guaranteed that women you work with, probably a lot of them, have experienced some kind of pregnancy complication, but as a general matter, these losses and difficulties tend to be experienced in relative isolation.

Megan Monson: We're hoping that this will become less common over time, and that women feel empowered and comfortable talking about these issues. As a result, we want to lead the way by discussing our own and experiences. Each of us, except for our slightly younger colleague, Amanda, who's going to moderate the conversation today, has experienced pregnancy complications, miscarriage, infant loss, or some combination of all three.

Nicole Fulfree: Our conversation today will come from our hearts as much as our heads. So I want to start off by saying that pregnancy and motherhood is a journey that's

highly personal. We're going to be sharing our own personal views today based on our own personal experiences. We're not doing so to tell you necessarily what's right or what's wrong or how you should be feeling yourself, but we're doing so in hopes that our stories are relatable and can make others feel seen and validated. But I think it's so important that each woman realizes that she needs to do what's best for her and her family. And one of the reasons why we think this conversation is so important is because I think there are societal norms today, especially in the legal world, but I think this conversation is much broader. And I think those societal norms tell us that sharing these types of issues, or talking about pregnancy and issues related to motherhood is something that shouldn't be done in a professional setting.

There's a limited number of women attorneys who are also moms who can act as strong mentors for younger women associates. And I think it's really important that we support each other and move forward in a way from how these issues have been traditionally treated. And I think that talking about these things and making it a little bit less taboo will help law firms retain women attorneys. And I think it'll also just contribute to a more positive work experience for women that makes them feel more supported and comfortable just going about their daily lives while they're experiencing these types of issues.

Megan Monson:

So in prior episodes of our podcast, we've mentioned different programs that the Lowenstein Women's Initiative Network has put on for our female attorneys. And in that typical fashion, we thought it would be important to host a safe space discussion on pregnancy, miscarriage and infant loss. We hosted this discussion last summer, and it arose from a result of some organic conversations between the Women's Initiative Networks members, about how they've experienced some of these issues and how it's really become pretty common, although these women didn't always necessarily feel comfortable talking about those issues in a professional setting, or disclosing it to their supervisors. And we really wanted to start to remove that stigma and share from the experiences that other women at the firm had, had including what they've gone through, how they discussed it with their bosses, and just making it a really more commonplace topic so that we can learn from each other's experiences and feel comfortable navigating through those issues.

As my colleagues mentioned, these type of complications, and just dealing with pregnancy in general, is so common and you don't want to be experiencing in isolation, or feeling that you can't disclose to your boss that you need a day off because you've had a miscarriage and now you need to go and have a procedure where you're just dealing with the emotional turmoil as a result. So, that's where we came about the idea of having the program. The goal of the conversation of our program was to bring into the mainstream discussion, the issues that women have experiences so that they knew they were not alone and also learning from others and how to navigate it in a professional setting. Even for the women who have not yet entered their childbearing years, I heard the program was really powerful in terms of empowering women, making them feel comfortable to the extent that they do experience those issues at a later point in time. And simply just disclosing pregnancy to their supervisors.

Anything personal related can be challenging and tried to navigate it through in a professional setting. And really the goal of that session, and the feedback that we heard from many who attended is how helpful it was to hear from others.

Amanda Cipriano: I agree with Megan, the program was so powerful, even for women who have never been pregnant, or never want to become pregnant, I think the message across the board was that this was an important conversation and it was really incredible to see the women that you look up to in the firm express these vulnerabilities. And so here, I would like to ask everyone to describe their own personal experiences, to the extent comfortable.

Rachel Dikovics: I can go first. This is Rachel. And I will start by saying, this is the second time that we've recorded this episode. And part of the reason for that is because the first time we recorded it, I was doing what Amanda was doing, which was asking questions, but in the intervening months, my personal experiences have changed a little bit. I want to start by saying, I recognize that a lot of people would not be comfortable talking about these things on a podcast, or in their office, but I feel really strongly that the more we discuss these issues and set the example of these not being things that you have to experience alone, or things that are inappropriate to discuss at work, I don't feel like any other health diagnoses, or significant traumatic events in your life, or things that you would hide at work, or from your friends and family either.

So I just wanted to provide that context before we each say a little bit more about our own experiences. So I was recently pregnant. I'm in my fourth year of practice. I'm in my early thirties, and it's the right time in life for me. And I had the perspective that, well, it's way less common for something to go wrong. And I just assumed nothing would go wrong for me. I was not correct. So I had a miscarriage when I was about, I was a little less than seven weeks. So it was very early. It's a challenging thing whenever you experience it, I was happy that it was relatively early, but it was still really disappointing. And the physical experience was a lot harder to go through than I would've anticipated. The day that it happened for me, I wouldn't have physically been able to work even if I emotionally could have. And that really surprised me.

So that was something that made it a little bit difficult to deal with, because it was just an unanticipated element. So I had told a few people at work that I was pregnant. I had told my close friends and the people that I work with the most, because I was pretty tired and there were a couple things Amanda knew, for example, because we were out at a site visit with a client together, and there were a couple things that I wasn't really comfortable doing. And so I asked her to do it instead. And so, a few people knew, but I found that once I had the miscarriage, I told more people than who knew I was pregnant. First of all, because I wanted to, I only took a day and a half off, which looking back, I actually wish I took a little bit more time, but the first day that after it happened, I did take that day off.

And I'm glad that I did. I think a little bit more time probably would've been better, but I also felt like I didn't really want to just sit and stew about it, and I felt physically able to go sit at my computer and get my mind off of it. So, that's what I did. I have to say that I was really, really impressed with the

reaction that I got from people. I obviously expected my female colleagues to be supportive and understanding, which all of them were, but I told a couple of male partners too, because I felt like they would know something was up and I didn't really want to be cryptic about it, I felt there was no point. Some people I didn't tell explicitly, but a couple I did. And they were extremely supportive, and both of them told me that I should take whatever time I needed. So I really appreciated that understanding and empathy more than sympathy. I think that's really what actually can make you feel better in situations like that, is knowing that you're not alone and people understand what you're going through.

So yeah, I'll leave it there for now.

Nicole Fulfree:

Yeah. So Rachel, thanks so much for sharing. I know it was super difficult what you went through, but I was, being someone who was able to see it happen in real time, I was just super impressed with your willingness to share, not only with me, which I wasn't super surprised about, but with your willingness to share with our other colleagues, I think it goes a long way to achieving the purpose of what we're trying to do in this conversation. And I just think the way that you handled it was admirable. So I'll move on now to share with you guys my story, I have a one year old daughter named Savannah. Other than the fact that I was pregnant for the first time in the height of a pandemic, my pregnancy was, I think what most people would call normal at the beginning, I had pretty bad morning sickness, especially in the first trimester. I was so tired, crazy tired, but that's just something that comes along with all pregnancies.

At our 20 week anatomy scan, I was super excited because it was the first time, for whatever reason, I can't even keep track of the regulations at this point, but I think it was the first time that my husband could come with me to an appointment. So we were super excited, but the appointment didn't end up going as we thought it would. We were told that there was a pretty high likelihood that the baby had a heart defect of some sort. They couldn't tell what it was because she was too small at that point, but they were immediately referring me to a fetal cardiologist. And so that was really difficult news to receive. I was supposed to go back to work that day, but instead I had to immediately drive over to a fetal cardiologist, which I was super grateful, they took me in quickly, but we still, unfortunately weren't able to get immediate answers at that appointment.

And so we spent the next 10 weeks trying to figure out exactly what heart defect my daughter had. And so from the 20-week point on, I would say I was having a really hard time dealing with the fact that I knew that there was going to be an issue at birth. I didn't know exactly what it would be. We came to find out around 30 weeks that she has a heart defect called total anomalous pulmonary venous return, which basically meant that the plumbing in her heart was mixed up. And although she was fine in utero, when she was born, her blood wouldn't be able to be oxygenated in the way that it should. And so she would need surgery pretty much immediately upon birth.

And so fast forward to March, of 2021, Savannah was born. She had open heart surgery at two days old. She was in the NICU for 24 days and had one subsequent surgery after that, but between during the time of my maternity leave, and very thankful for Lowenstein's very generous policy. But during the time of my five to six month maternity leave, it was upwards of 60 doctor's appointments, constantly going to get her heart checked on and a couple of related issues, constant meetings with doctors, and her second surgery was in August, so right about the end of my maternity leave. I ended up taking a three extra weeks unpaid, I think, because I just wanted to make sure she was settled in after her second surgery, and that I could return to work with a clear mind that she was stable and healthy while she was in the care of her nanny. And so that's pretty much my journey from being pregnant to motherhood and returning to work.

Megan Monson: Thanks so much, Nicole, for sharing that as well. I think both the stories that you and Rachel have shared are not only empowering, but just helpful because as we stated earlier, the hardest part about going through pregnancy or any related complication is feeling like you're doing it in isolation and that you can't talk to anyone about it because it's taboo or no one can understand. So in terms of my journey, I've been pregnant three times throughout the COVID-19 pandemics. All three pregnancies ended differently. My first pregnancy with my son, and that's the one I'm going to focus on, ended in infant loss, where he passed away at three days old. My second pregnancy ended in a miscarriage, and my third pregnancy, thankfully, while with some complications, ended in the birth of my daughter, who's now four months old, who's healthy, thriving, great baby.

So throughout my first pregnancy, as I mentioned, it was throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. And so while I had disclosed to my immediate team that I was pregnant, many that I worked with at the firm didn't know, because we had transitioned to working virtually and it just didn't come up in normal conversation. So fast forward till I was about seven, seven and a half months pregnant, and I went for what I thought would be a routine doctor's appointment. Suddenly my blood pressure was elevated. I had some other tests that came back with some bad results. And inevitably I was being rushed to the hospital to deliver my son about 12 weeks early. Needless to say, from a professional standpoint, nobody was expecting me to be going out on leave so soon. I hadn't yet transitioned my open matters. A lot of people I worked with didn't know I was pregnant. So it was challenging to navigate in my own head, through that aspect of it, as well as the physical aspects that now suddenly I'm giving birth to a preemie, both the health of myself and my son is uncertain.

So overall, it was a really scary time. And I would have to say I was extremely fortunate for the reaction of everybody at Lowenstein, both from the moment that I said that I was having to deliver early, and everyone jumping in to transition matters and take things over so I could focus on the health of myself and my son, and just the support I got and the outpouring of love in the resulting days. As I mentioned, my son unfortunately passed away three days old as a result of his prematurity and not being fully developed when he was born. But the outpouring of love that I received from people that I knew and didn't know at the firm, was one of the things that got me through one of the darkest times in my life. And one of the women I worked with,

Linda Bennett, who's been featured on a few episodes of our podcast previously, had started a fundraiser to create a Memorial in my son's honor.

And I was astounded by the support and generosity of people. And now it's become a living legacy of something that not only I can go visit in his honor, but take my daughter too. And I was amazed by the outreach of people in not only supporting me, but also sharing their stories and what they've gone through, whether it was a miscarriage, whether they had an infant loss or similar situation. And that was one of the things that helped ground me during that time, when I was feeling desperate, alone, was hearing of how other women in particular got through that time, and learning from their tips. That was one of the things that I kept coming back to and in transitioning back to work after, we'll say my brief leave in terms of recovering from the actual birth process, was being able to leverage those relationships and rely upon some of the things that they did to not only help them transition back to work, but to honor their child.

And then fast forward till about a year and a half later, my pregnancy with my daughter, I felt much more comfortable the second time around disclosing being pregnant and also disclosing when I started to develop some complications, sharing that with my colleagues, because I knew how open and receptive people were to that type of conversation. And it really helped that when I had to leave and give birth to my daughter two weeks earlier than originally planned, I was able to transition much more carefully because I was so open and honest throughout the whole process. And we'll get into this in a little bit later of the discussion, but I think seeing people's reactions to what I went through made me also feel very fortunate to work in a place like Lowenstein, that it's really, you work with genuine people that you care about, but also to feel comfortable talking about these sensitive type of issues.

Amanda Cipriano: Thank you all for sharing those experiences. Like Megan said, it is really empowering to hear what people at your own firm have gone through, let alone the three of you who serve as mentors and role models to so many within this firm, including myself. It really, really is appreciated that you're able to have these stories and that we're able to talk about it, because I know that when it comes time for younger attorneys, or for me to think about these things, there are people that I work with that I would feel comfortable talking to. And I think that's an opportunity that not a lot of people get. So thank you again for sharing your experiences with us. And now I want to ask some general questions. So to start, related to your work, how did you feel when you found out you were pregnant?

Nicole Fulfree: So I'll start with this one son, Amanda. I was obviously first and foremost, so excited to be pregnant, but I had definitely had some concerns with respect to work. I had a lot of fears. I was thinking, I've never had a kid before. Can I handle both? Our jobs are really intense at times and require long hours. And being a mom is also a job that's intense and requires long hours. And so, I'm pretty good at handling nights with little sleep. But I think if there's, potentially two things buying for my sleep time, I was just nervous about how I would handle that and whether it would affect my performance at work, basically whether I could keep up, I was thinking, I don't know what it's like to be a mom. I don't know if I'm going to want to leave my baby.

First of all, am I definitely going to want to come back to work? I think I'm going to want to come back to work. I've worked hard in my career to get here, but again, being a mom is such a transformative thing that I didn't know if I would feel necessarily the same way and as passionate about my career as I did before having her. I was concerned about the thought of traveling before the pandemic. I traveled a decent amount for work and I didn't know how I would feel, or if I would be comfortable leaving my daughter with someone else, or if my husband could take the time away from work to watch her completely, it was, I don't know how those logistics work. So those logistical things were a big concern to me. I was also nervous about the perception, both internally and externally, I was nervous that people would think, oh, she's pregnant now. She's on mommy track, she's not interested in pursuing her career in the way that she was previously.

I was nervous about how I would be perceived externally. Luckily I think Zoom limits the exposure from the chest down. So a lot of people couldn't tell, but I feel like in my head, I was thinking, if I'm having like a Zoom mediation, or a Zoom court hearing in my head, I don't think, to me seeing myself as a pregnant woman, I didn't feel like I was a super formidable adversary as a pregnant... You know what I mean?

Rachel Dikovics: We had to ask you to stand up to give us some bump dates.

Nicole Fulfree: Yes. And so those were all things that I was thinking about. I think as I experienced the pregnancy and becoming a mom, I found out that a lot of those things necessarily weren't true. Although I think my fears were definitely well founded and they made good sense. I was happy to find out that a lot of those things work themselves out very easily. And I think we'll talk about them no later in the episode, but I think it's fair to say that I was really scared about how becoming a mom would impact my career, for sure.

Megan Monson: I echoed a lot of the things that Nicole said. I had a lot of the same fears and concerns in terms of being pregnant, how it was going to impact my career. In particular, the timing of where I was in my career. I was also concerned at how it would impact my potential path for partnership, because starting out as an attorney, and in particular practicing the past few years at Lowenstein, making partner was one of my goals professionally. And I was concerned that the perception, both internally and externally would be that I wasn't focused, that I wasn't cut out for that path, and that I wasn't going to be operating at the same professional level if I had a child, and how that would impact my career trajectory. I was very happy to find out that, that was not an issue as I found out that I made partner at the firm the day before I went out on maternity leave.

So it feels very reassuring to not only have that confidence that I can still reach my career goals, but also that the perception of the people that I work with isn't that women who are "on mommy track, or having children," can't operate at the same level professionally. And so I think that, in terms of prepping up and returning after leave, really helped alleviate some of my concerns. But as Nicole said, you're going through a whole host of things emotionally, physically, and trying to navigate through something that you've

never experienced before being a mom and how to do that while having another important full-time job.

And for me, another thing that I was really nervous about was simply disclosing it to people, because I was concerned on what they were going to think, having that conversation as it's just a little bit awkward and uncomfortable. And while my fears were unfounded, because having that conversation with my colleagues, everybody was over the moon. There was not anyone who was concerned about how it was going to impact me professionally. And they were really honestly happy. It's just something, I think that women more so than men tend to have to experience and deal with because we're so self-deprecating and focused on how something can be perceived by others.

Amanda Cipriano: At what point did you start to disclose information and what type of information about your pregnancies did you disclose to your colleagues? Did you find any benefits in making those disclosures?

Rachel Dikovics: So I jumped the gun and I talked about this when I was giving my intro, but I'll say a little bit more about it because I think it's important, and especially from my perspective, one of the questions and topics here that I feel most close to. So some of my closest friends are people that I work with. And so as to a few people, I told them basically immediately, or literally immediately for a few people. So the benefits were substantial, I think, because in the first trimester, you probably feel physically the worst that you'll feel throughout your entire pregnancy, other than probably your ninth month when you can't move anymore. But I felt like I was so tired and I couldn't put in the hours that I normally put in. I was going to bed at 8:30 some nights, when usually I'm still working at that time.

So telling the people that I was working with closely and people who I'm close with as friends was helpful, because people were able to pick up the slack for me a little bit. And it also just made me feel like it would be easier when I reached the point where I was going to have to start thinking about transitioning things to other people. And so I don't think I would do anything differently in that sense next time. I've thought about that a lot. Would I make the same decisions? And we'll talk more about that later, but generally I'd say yes, because I was able to get a lot of support from people. And my thought in telling people was, I will tell people early if they're people who I would want to tell if I miscarried. And that was always my perspective on that. And I'm glad that I did that because when I did have a negative outcome, I was able to get a lot of support quickly. And that really, really helped me be able to process it positively, I think.

Megan Monson: So I'll jump in. In terms of my first pregnancy, I waited until it was about 12 weeks to disclose anything to anybody. And that was really just my main boss and the partners in my practice group. As I mentioned before, because I was pregnant once we went virtually, didn't really up in conversation naturally. So many other people at the firm didn't know I was pregnant. I think that's something I would've done differently, and I did in my subsequent pregnancies, in particular with my daughter, I disclosed that I was pregnant to my primary boss when I was about eight weeks and virtually to anybody else

if it came up naturally in conversation after I hit 12 weeks, because I wanted not only the transition plan to be smooth, but if I did need to take time off for doctor's appointments, or for any other reason, I wanted people to be understanding.

And I had seen, from sharing with others, how supportive everyone at the firm was. And so it made me feel much more comfortable and confident sharing that with my colleagues. I will mention in my second pregnancy where I did have a miscarriage early on, I didn't disclose that to anybody at work. And I wish that I had, because this was prior to our miscarriage, infant loss and pregnancy complication discussion. And I hadn't realized how common it was. And so I didn't personally know anybody else who had a miscarriage. And I would've benefited, I think from hearing from other women's experience, if I had felt comfortable sharing that early on.

Nicole Fulfree:

So for me, I was about 15 to 16 weeks pregnant when I told my department leader and a couple of the other attorneys that I work with. Similar to what Megan experienced, I was nervous to tell the people that I work with in fear that they would see me differently, but that ended up being completely the wrong way for me to be feeling, because everyone that I told was so happy for me and they were super supportive and made me feel really comfortable with disclosing my pregnancy. I didn't really tell many people at the firm other than my close friends about the complications and Savannah's heart defect. I think at the time I was also processing everything thing, because it, like I said before, it took a while for us to actually figure out what her diagnosis was and what that would mean for me and for her. And so it was hard to tell people what was going on when I didn't really know all of the implications.

I did tell one of the other women at the firm and it turned out that she was pregnant as well. And she was also experiencing some complications with her pregnancy. And so my telling her actually opened up an open dialogue between me and her, which actually was extremely helpful to me and processing everything that was happening. And I feel like I had someone that I could come back to after appointments and tell her what happened, and she would tell me what happened at her appointments. And we were working on a couple of the same cases at the time. So we would cover for each other if one of us had bad news at an appointment, which was so invaluable to me at the time, because when you're going through something like that, it's just such a rollercoaster of emotions. You're going to appointments all the time. Sometimes it's good news, sometimes it's bad news, you never know what it's going to be. And you can't really plan your work schedule around potentially getting bad news at an appointment.

And so that relationship was just so important to me and helpful for my mental health at the time. Near the end of my pregnancy, I did disclose very generally to some of the people in my department that I was having some complications with the pregnancy, and it was more so just to let them know why I was a little bit more unavailable than usual, or I might have to say that I couldn't schedule meetings at a particular time because I was going into the city at that point two to three times a week for monitoring and different appointments. And so those changes in my schedule, with those changes in my schedule, it was just easier to let people know that this was the reason why my schedule was a little bit difficult and so that they could be a little bit

more understanding with me, which they absolutely were. I'm so thankful for that. But I think that when I did disclose those things, I was just so lucky to get the support that I did.

Amanda Cipriano: Did you run into any issues with people at work respecting your boundaries or making any unhelpful or inappropriate comments?

Megan Monson: So I'll start with that. In terms of people respecting my boundaries, I think everyone at the firm did a really good job. As I mentioned towards the end of my pregnancy, I started to blanketly disclose as Nicole did, that I was pregnant, that I was expecting around a particular date, but also to let people know in terms of staffing me on new matters and that there was a possibility I may need to go out on leave early, just due to my prior complications. And so people were really receptive of understanding that I'm happy to take this on, but I may have to transition it to other people. Now on the flip side, I will mention in terms of unhelpful or inappropriate comments from colleagues, in general when I had lost my son, I think people didn't know what to say to me when I returned back to work. And so I did get some uncomfortable comments from people where they think they thought they were being helpful, but didn't really know what to say.

And so trying to just navigate through that was a little bit challenging, but like anything else, you take it a grain of salt. I think people are trying their best and just don't really know how to respond when something unexpected occurs.

Nicole Fulfree: And so for me, I don't think I would say that I got any unhelpful or inappropriate comments, or really had any issues with people respecting my boundaries. I actually had a really good experience in that sense. One funny anecdote that I will tell that during one of our department meetings, one of the partners in my group, and again, we're in Zoom world. So one of the partners in my group said, oh, Nicole, you're pregnant, let's see that belly. Stand up and let's have a bump date, which is what Rachel was referring to before.

Rachel Dikovics: I'm allowed to ask.

Nicole Fulfree: Yeah. Well, yeah, Rachel would always ask for her bump dates, but this was a little bit more of a formal setting. And me personally, I actually welcomed that comment because I feel close with my group, I feel close with the person that asked, I've worked with him for seven years. And so I had been cooped up in my house at that time. So I was actually happy to be able to show everyone my bump and it was completely fine given our relationship. But one thing I will say is that if you are thinking of making a comment like that, just do, take a second thought about whether you're comfortable enough with your relationship with that person and whether or not it could be embarrassing for them. Again, for me, this is completely appropriate. And I think it really depends on who you're talking to and who the audience is. And I think someone else might have been a little bit put off by it, but for me it was actually a welcome comment. So, that's what I'll share on that point.

Amanda Cipriano: Do you think that there's a right time to be pregnant, especially in the legal field where you have class years and then you move to counselor, to partner, do you think there's a time that works best? Because as you were saying, Nicole, you worked with this partner for seven years beforehand. Do you think that it matters?

Nicole Fulfree: So, this is definitely a super personal decision and I think anyone who's thinking about making the decision should do so based purely on what you and your partner think is right. I would not base your decision on when to have kids on your career. That being said, and that was very important advice that was given to me and that I try my best to follow and to give to anyone who asked the question. That being said, I know that what everyone is looking for is an actual answer. And so I think there's pros and cons to deciding to have a kid earlier in your career and later in your career, some of the ones that I could think of, and the others feel free to chime in, but I think if you decide to get pregnant earlier in your career, as much responsibility as you have as an associate, your responsibility is only going to increase on your cases as you get older.

And so no offense to junior associates, but it's a little bit more easy to find someone to take over your role in the case, when you are more junior, as you get older, you get more responsibility. And that becomes a little bit more difficult. I think a pro about having a child a little bit later in your career is that, depending on how long you've worked at the firm, for me personally, I was at Lowenstein for six or seven years before I got pregnant. And so I felt like I had built up a nice reputation in the department and that my colleagues knew me as a hard worker. And just for me, I felt a little bit more comfortable with that being the case. And so, those are just two of the things that I feel like can go either way in a decision, but again, base it on your own personal situation and your discussion with your partner, I think is the most important thing.

Rachel Dikovics: Yeah. I have a lot of thoughts on this issue actually. And part of the reason I do is twofold. First is class year does not necessarily correlate with age, for example, I'm in my fourth year of practice, but I worked for a few years between college and law school. So I'm a few years older than a lot of my colleagues who are in the same year of practice as me. And I think that's relevant because women have a biological clock that men do not have. The older you get, the riskier pregnancy becomes, especially if you want to have more than one child. I think a lot of women end up having situations where they are pregnant a couple times in a row, or what seems like in a row to their colleagues probably, because at least for type A planners like me and probably everybody else on this podcast, I have a set point age in my mind where I want to be done having children.

What I would say about that is things don't always go according to plan, which I think is a theme of this discussion. So I would consider that when you're thinking about what the right time is, things may not happen immediately, or they may just not go to plan immediately. You don't have control over the timing of these things as much as you may want to. That's been something that's challenging for me to accept in this entire process, is how much control you don't have. But having said that, I think I totally agree with Nicole. There are things in life that are more important than work. And I

don't think that you should be planning pregnancy, or having children around work. That being said, it is challenging whatever your seniority, but I think for different reasons.

So I think if you were a very junior, it could be challenging in a sense that I'd be a little more worried about people's perceptions of taking a long leave if I were in my first or second year, for example, whereas now having been at the firm for a few years and feeling like I have a good relationship with my colleagues, people know my work product, I wouldn't think twice about taking the full leave. So I think, but like Nicole said, it's can be harder to transition your work the more senior you are. So there's considerations whenever you decide to start that part of your life, obviously it also completely depends on where you are in your personal life. You may be at an age where you feel like you're ready, but you are not in a relationship you want to be in, or what have you. It's definitely something that you want to plan down to every detail, but is not always going to go according to plan. So I think whenever you feel like it's the right time for you, it will work at work.

Nicole Fulfree: Thanks for joining us for this episode of the Women's Initiative Network: Real Talk. Please be on the lookout for part two of this discussion on navigating pregnancy, miscarriages and returning to work where we'll focus on the importance of maternity leave and some tips for re-engaging after coming back from leave.

Amanda Cipriano: Thank you for listening to today's episode. Please subscribe to our podcast series at lowenstein.com/podcasts or find us on iTunes, Spotify, Pandora, Google Podcasts, and SoundCloud. Lowenstein Sandler podcast series is presented by Lowenstein Sandler and cannot be copied or rebroadcast without consent. The information provided is intended for a general audience. It is not legal advice or substitute for the advice of counsel. Prior results do not guarantee a similar outcome. The content reflects the personal views and opinions of the participants. No attorney client relationship is being created by this podcast and all rights are reserved.