Choosing the right kind of child care is one of the first important issues new parents face.

65% of American women with children under age 6 are in the workforce, compared to 30% in 1970.

Their child care choices follow:

- **Pros**
  - **Nanny:** Parents choose nannies because they believe their children will be safe and feel more secure at home. They like having someone available to care for them, and they feel more relaxed.
  - **Home care:** Parents like the choice because they want their children to be in a home-like environment and can have a say in who their child will interact with.
  - **Child care centers:** Parents like the centers because they believe their children will be safe and will have the opportunity to socialize with other children.

- **Cons**
  - More expensive
  - More strict
  - No flexibility

A survey conducted by Hewitt Associates, a benefits consulting firm, found that although only about 10% of U.S. companies offer on-site or near-site child care, 93% of companies surveyed say they provide some kind of child care assistance, including dependent care spending accounts and insurance/reimbursement services.

Employers are being creative in order to meet the needs of their employees. Some are offering flexible work schedules, allowing employees to bring their children to work (usually only until the babies are 6 months old or just until they start crawling).

A recent study found that 83% of parents surveyed were very satisfied with their current child care arrangements.

**ACTION ITEMS**

Ask yourself these questions:

1. Can you or your spouse afford to stay home with your child? It is also important to ask what would be happiest doing.
2. How much can you afford to pay? Nannies are usually most expensive, in-home care least.
3. How flexible is your schedule? Child care centers and preschools usually have set drop-off and pick-up times.
4. Does your company offer a child care center, allow you to bring your baby to work with you, or let you work at home? This benefit allows you to continue working and still be near your child.
5. Do you have relatives nearby that can help? Many parents prefer relative care, especially with infants, because they know this caregiver best.

6. Would your child benefit the most from group play or more individualized attention? During the first year, individualized attention is often best. After that, look for an environment that gives a mix of both.

7. Does your child have health issues or needs that require special attention? If so, you need to review them with your child’s pediatrician and ensure these needs are met.

8. Do you prefer structured play and activities for your child, or are you comfortable with a more free-form situation? Some settings are more structured, while others have more flexible schedules. A balance is often best.