

Oh, do stop milking it!

MY REACTION was half sympathetic, half frankly amused when I heard that BBC presenter Alex Jones is outraged at the lack of 'facilities' for new mothers at the glass palace of new Broadcasting House in London.

She had her first baby, Teddy, 18 months ago, came back to work after three months and has already written a book on parenting.

Fast work, Alex! I took three whole years to pop out my own How Not To Be A Perfect Mother back in distant 1985 — while also working as a presenter at the BBC.

Ms Jones sadly says that the 'male-dominated environment' of the BBC, where she presents *The One Show*, made her give up breastfeeding because there wasn't anywhere to express milk. There is no creche or dedicated room in the fancy new half of the building, and (she claims, astonishingly) not even a fridge in which to store the milk.

She adds that there is a breastfeeding room in the other half of the building, but when she went in she found men off the night shift sleeping on the sofas who resented being woken.

Blimey. Some news items really make you feel like a dinosaur. Women these days rightly expect everything laid on (and ideally not full of snoring blokes). But it was not always so.

While I sympathise with Ms Jones, and agree that employers should make life easier if possible for those breeding the new generation, I could pass on a few hints on old-style, pioneering working-mother craft. Guerilla breastfeeding, as practised in the Eighties.

After both my babies, I went back to working regularly at Broadcasting House as a freelance well before three months.

WHEN my daughter Rose was still being fed six times a day, I had a crafty system for my job on Radio 4's Midweek programme.

I would arrive at 7.30am, feed her, pop the carrycot on the desk, check the research with the producer (often while waving a Sooty hand puppet with the other arm to keep Rose quiet) then hand the baby over to an agency nurse, hired at my own expense for a two-hour shift.

In that time I could do the show, thank the guests, and belt back upstairs to feed the baby again. Rose delivered her first proper smile to an agency nurse in a BBC cubbyhole — nothing like early socialising.

Earlier still, when my son Nicholas was born, if a job came up I would park him

BBC veteran
LIBBY PURVES
says young stars
moaning about
its breastfeeding
facilities today don't
know they're born

by *Libby Purves*

close by for the few hours between feeds with a babysitter or family member.

I presented a curious show about DIY — like *Gardeners' Question Time* with wallpapering advice.

Once, we had a meeting with senior police officers to discuss home security and my babysitting collapsed. I had to bring a tiny baby boy with me, since rearranging the meeting would annoy everyone even more.

All went well, until from the basket under the table came a grizzling sound. I said: 'Gentlemen, mind if I feed? It'll be quieter.' No problem: anything to prevent a meeting going on longer than it should.

And if you have the sense to wear a loose top and the baby is concentrating, nobody sees an inch of flesh.

However, don't do this after three months, girls: bigger babies get sociable and will suddenly turn away from your breast, revealing it in all its splendour as they deliver a wide, milky smile to onlookers.

I also spent a lot of time on trains and the same common sense applied: discreet feeding. As my brother said: 'You're not going to offend anyone you'd actually like, so who cares?'

When one man did harrumph, on a train to Exeter, I just said: 'OK, squire, you choose. Two more hours. Feeding, or screaming? Your call!' He muttered: 'Oh, feeding I suppose...'

The most alarming work journey I ever made was to Scotland, for some ridiculous programme at Floors Castle with the Duke of Westminster.

I assumed that on the train up

I would sneak off to a quiet carriage, but it was packed and we had reserved seats.

So, to my horror, I was trapped for three hours at a table, baby on knee, opposite the other panellists: smart media gents Auberon Waugh and Peter York.

I quailed. But Auberon was a parent himself and Peter York, inventor of the Sloane Ranger, was very polite about it all.

I like to think it was an educational experience for him, because after some whimpering while Nicholas was feeding, I looked down and found his first tooth had appeared.

I exclaimed in surprise, and remember Mr York's shocked: 'Is that what happens? I know nothing of babies...'

THE most important thing about meshing babies and the working world is that you have to respect both.

When my eldest was four months old, I was spending four days a week at Vogue House in Hanover Square for an ill-advised period as editor of *Tatler*. I didn't bring the baby in, to avoid distraction.

But I expressed milk each day in the ladies' and popped it in the office fridge, next to the Art Editor's *Veuve Clicquot*.

So, is there a moral to all this reminiscence from a desperado Mum, sneaking milky new babies through gaps in the patriarchy?

It's this: women should be cunning, cheerful and never ashamed of their own needs or their baby's.

And to Alex and women like her in powerful jobs, please, use some of that cunning and influence to see to it that rooms, creches and flexible hours are available for your younger, less confident sisters.

Up the guerilla breastfeeders!

MY BODY shape has definitely changed since I hit the big five-oh.

I remember listening to my mother and her friends talking about how their bodies had 'thickened out' and I didn't understand what they meant. But now I do.

Then, last year, I did reality show *Strictly Come Dancing* — and it changed the shape of my body.

I was effectively doing five hours of constant aerobics every single day.

But, more than losing weight, I found my waist! I hadn't seen it for

quite a few years and I know that's the thing most women complain about when they hit the menopause: that they've lost their waist.

So it was amazing that, at 57 (I'm now 58), I had mine back again, along with muscles in my legs I'd never had before. It was astonishing.

Clever dressing also comes into play when you are older — it helps you keep that hourglass silhouette.

From tunic tops that skim the waist, to details that distract the eye or create the illusion of curves, and jeans that fit perfectly, I've discovered it *can* be done...

Interview by **CLAIRE COLEMAN**

Pinch-you-in peplum

Peplum top, £165, thefoldlondon.com; Trousers, £120, reiss.com; Shoes, £195, lkbennett.com; Earrings, £18, qvcuk.com

THE asymmetric lines and neck detail of this top appeal to me. Plus the fact it has a sleeve. The nipped-in design flatters the waist without clinging so, despite its structured look, it's very comfortable.

White trousers can be difficult: you have to try on a lot to find the right ones. This pair are very flattering, as they don't cling on the thigh or knee, but taper to a cigarette pant, giving a long, lean look — plus they're half-lined, so you don't have to worry about your underwear showing.



Banish your muffin top

Bomber jacket, £74.98; top, £30, and jeans, £49.50, Ruth Langsford at qvcuk.com; Shoes, £195, lkbennett.com

THESE jeans, from my range at QVC, address all the problems women like me have when trying to find a stylish, but comfortable, pair. The waistband of the jeans sits on the waist, not below the belly button, which, at 50-plus, is often the part you're trying to cover up.

They're made in four-way stretch denim, so they are really comfortable, and come in three different leg lengths (petite, regular and tall).

Ruth Langsford's range for QVC UK is available exclusively at qvcuk.com

How to reclaim your waist after 50

By TV's Ruth Langsford



Stripes can be slimming

Top, £35, hobbs.com; Colour-block skirt, £125, jaeger.co.uk; Shoes, £195, lkbennett.com

MANY women might shy away from stripes, but this red-and-white Breton top is not too clingy. Tucked into the top of a skirt like this gives a flattering shape.

The skirt is two-tone — navy at the top and cream on the bottom half. It has such a classic, stylish shape, but putting together the two shades makes it feel fresh and modern.

Crucially, having the dark colour at the top, and flaring to white underneath, is figure-flattering.

Belt it (but not too tightly!)

Dress, £54, Ruth Langsford at qvcuk.com; Shoes, £65.21, [Mitarotonda at qvcuk.com](http://Mitarotonda.com); Belts (from top to bottom): £39.50, jcrew.com; £55, lkbennett.com; £95, russellandbromley.co.uk

A BELT instantly creates a waistline — but don't cinch it in too tightly. It should not pinch or dig in. Sitting lightly on a dress, a dark belt such as this one works to give you shape, without creating lumps or bumps.

The stretch fabric of this dress is so flattering. It's designed so it doesn't ride up and it also has a sleeve, as so many ladies don't like showing their arms. Meanwhile, the variety of colours in the floral print means you can pick out whatever you like for accessories.



Create the illusion of a waist

Blue dress, £49.50, marksandspencer.com

I WANT to enjoy life, and I find it very boring when people won't have cake and can't talk about anything but calories.

At times when I know I'm a bit overweight, clever dressing comes in to play.

Details that create the illusion of a waist — such as the tie waist — are very effective.

Distract the eye with a print



Dress, £39.96, Ruth Langsford at qvcuk.com

THERE are certain basics that I think are important in a dress. Most women over 40 aren't keen on showing their knees, so this is cut to hide them, and it also has a V-neck that isn't too low.

The material has stretch, too (you want to be able to eat and dance!).

Meanwhile, it has design details that draw the eye from areas you'd rather not show off, such as a zip down the back, a bold, slimming print and pretty detail on the sleeves (which aren't so long that they'll dip in your soup).