



Love, Life, and the Lacheys

Two busy careers, fame, and a super-active toddler ... how do Vanessa and Nick Lachey hold it all together? They're making it up as they go along, just like the rest of us (non-famous) folks.

by PATTY ADAMS MARTINEZ photographs by CHRIS CRAYMER

fortunately, the Lacheys are down-to-earth and likable. If not, it would be tempting to hate such a gorgeous family. But all is not perfect in their tidy two-story Los Angeles home today. “Camden’s feeling under the weather,” Vanessa announces in a baby voice as Nick, wearing a white V-neck and gray shorts, carries his 17-month-old son to the couch and hands him a sippy cup. “Poor little guy had a 104°F fever yesterday,” continues Vanessa, sitting on the floor in a striped sweater and jeans with her hair in a loose ponytail. Nick chimes in, as if completing his wife’s thought: “It’s so sad when he’s sick, because he’s usually such an upbeat kid.”

It’s easy to see where Camden gets his cheery attitude. Vanessa, star of FOX’s dysfunctional-family sitcom *Dads* and spokesperson for Procter & Gamble, seems to have a permanent smile, lighting up every time she even looks at her boys. And Nick, host of VH1’s *Big Morning Buzz Live* and lead singer of the boy band 98 Degrees, seems to live every day as if he just won the lottery. That is, unless you turn on a tearjerker. Vanessa lets it slip that Nick cried watching *Love Actually*. “I’m an admitted softy,” he confesses, and that’s partly why Vanessa fell for him in the first place.

The two—who share a birthday—first met in 2003 while judging the Miss Teen USA pageant (Vanessa, then Vanessa Minnillo, was crowned Miss Teen USA in 1998). After years of seeing each other at events and on the set of the music countdown show *TRL*, where Vanessa was a VJ, they finally got together once Vanessa and Yankees shortstop Derek Jeter split up, and Nick and singer Jessica Simpson divorced.

“Nick asked me to be in his *What’s Left of Me* music video [in 2006] and that’s when we started talking more,” says Vanessa, shooting Nick a smile, as she tries to keep Camden entertained with a toy car. “Apparently Nick had wardrobe approval, because I was wearing this little dress that was actually a shirt.” They both laugh. “It was a dress as far as I was concerned!” says Nick.

The duo was together five years before sharing “I do’s.” Six months later, Vanessa found out she was pregnant. “It was fun to have the honeymoon phase before bringing the little guy in,” she says. Nick and Vanessa say they both wanted kids from the beginning but didn’t talk about it in detail. “As we started getting serious, we’d ask each other things like, ‘What kind of parent would you be?’” Vanessa remembers. “Then when I was pregnant, we really talked. ‘How would we teach



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him right from wrong? How would we raise him with values? At that point it wasn't hypothetical—it was happening whether we were ready or not!"

Becoming parents only strengthened their bond. "My wife's maternal side is a new dynamic to her personality—and it's definitely made her even sexier," says Nick, while Vanessa says that Nick wasn't too shabby to begin with. "The man I knew I was going to marry was not only a great man, a good friend, and a family guy, but he was going to respect and treat me well and be an amazing father and role model to our children," she says with a smile. "That's Nick."

making it work

It's Saturday, which is usually spent at a nearby park, or staying in and watching sports, especially if Nick's hometown team, the University of Cincinnati Bearcats, is playing hoops. (Camden has a mini basketball hoop next to the TV in the living room, so he can play along.) "Weekends are reserved for family time," says Nick, as Vanessa excuses herself to put Camden down for his requisite 1:30 nap.

Camden's nap schedule is no joke for these first-time parents, who usually drop everything to make sure the sleep schedule isn't disturbed. "Whether we're in New York or Cincinnati or on vacation, as long as he gets his story, sound machine, and song, he's good," explains Vanessa, as she carries a sleepy-eyed Camden upstairs.

Within a few minutes, Camden is snoozing away and Vanessa is back to clarify the couple's complicated work schedules. When she's filming *Dads*, the family is in L.A., as they were when we visited, and Nick cares for Camden during the day. Only if Nick also has work to attend to does a nanny come over. But when Nick is working on *Big Morning Buzz Live* and the family is living in New York City—as they are this spring—they switch roles, with

They're all Cincinnati fans, either born or bred!



Vanessa on daytime duty. Bicoastal living is new for them and it wasn't a decision they came to lightly. "Nick made the sacrifice of waiting until my show wrapped to do his show, and I'm not taking opportunities in L.A. during my show's hiatus," Vanessa says. "We are a family first, and that means both of us raising Cam together."

life as the Lachey's

As much as they love family time, Vanessa confesses that she and Nick look forward to 7:30 P.M. each night, when Camden goes to bed. "We put on some music or a favorite TV show, pour a glass of wine, have dinner—that's our 'alone time,'" says Vanessa.

"That's why it was so important to us to establish Camden's sleep schedule right out of the gate," she says. "I had six different moms telling me, 'Get him on a routine; you will thank yourself later.'" Friends also advised her that as tempting as it is to let the baby sneak into bed with you, for the sake of sexy time don't. "When you've got the little one between you, it's not as romantic as when the two of you are alone," says Vanessa.

At this point, Camden doesn't realize his mom and dad are famous. Nick took Vanessa and Camden on the road for his 98 Degrees reunion tour last year, but his son never got to see Daddy on stage because it was past bedtime.

"As a parent, it can be exciting to share photos of your child on social media, but we try to keep in mind that things can be picked up by the press,"

says Vanessa, who has about 155,000 Twitter followers. (Nick has the same issue with his 280,000 Twitter fans.) Both parents have shown Camden in their profile pic, but, says Vanessa, "What's being a proud parent and what is sharing too much? You can drive yourself crazy thinking about it!"

what's next

Would they consider making Camden a big brother anytime soon? "We definitely want more kids," they say in unison. Nick and his younger brother, 98 Degrees bandmate Drew, are two and a half years apart, which Nick thinks is perfect. "You don't want kids to have to share the same group of friends," he says. Counters Vanessa, "But you don't want them so far apart that they have nothing in common."

Nick nods in agreement. "Yes, they have to be close enough in age so they can still relate to each other," he says. No matter how many kids they have, Nick may have to record each of them an album, says Vanessa. "Since Nick did *A Father's Lullaby* for Camden, we joke that if he doesn't do one for each of the kids they're going to think Camden is Daddy's favorite!"

The couple would love to reach a place in their careers where they could move permanently to their second home in Cincinnati, next door to Uncle Drew. "I was an Air Force brat," says Vanessa with a laugh. "And I loved it. But I went to eight different schools my first nine years of schooling, so I would love to have Camden grow up the way Nick did, in one place, surrounded by family and friends."

The future is up in the air, as it is for all families trying to find what works for them. "We're learning together and figuring it out along the way," says Nick, who in one breath goes from sounding really confident to hesitating. "At least we think we've figured it out," he says. "I guess we'll find out down the line if we screwed up or not!" 😊

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