



# BALANCED BEAM

Actor **Anna Kendrick** used to have a hard time smiling, but now she finds it hard not to

By Lauren Paige Kennedy, WebMD Contributing Writer

**Anna Kendrick** is quick to grin—in fact, her winsome smile just might be her signature feature. Yet just a few years ago, when she first became a household name after a knockout, Academy Award-nominated performance in *Up in the Air* opposite George Clooney, her beam was a bit of an act.

“I try so hard to keep smiling, and to deal with everything publicly,” she told talk show host Ellen DeGeneres in early 2010, right as her career was hitting hyper-drive. “But my poor friends and family are dealing with my meltdowns on a daily basis.” Kendrick says she felt overwhelmed by the media attention and the transition from life as a working actor who’d labored for years on Broadway and in smaller parts to bona fide celebrity.

“It feels funny to complain about that end of it,” she says now. “So I won’t do that. But it does put you in a very vulnerable place.”

Two years later, after critical praise for her work in Seth Rogen’s 2011 cancer dramedy *50/50* and with the much-buzzed-about *What to Expect When You’re Expecting* due for delivery in May, Kendrick says her inner and outer selves have finally aligned. But that’s not because the media juggernaut has become any easier.

“I enjoy being on set—much more than getting caught up in the promotional end,”

she says. “I am a lot more comfortable in my skin now, mostly because I did six films last year, and I spent more of my time doing the actual work, which is what I really enjoy.”

Kendrick, 26, always wanted to be an actor, even as a preteen growing up in Portland, Maine. Her parents helped make that happen, packing Kendrick and her older brother onto a Greyhound bus to New York City so they could audition for—and win—coveted roles. (Her first acting gig was at 12, playing Dinah in the Broadway musical *High Society*.) “We had to promise up and down we’d go straight to the audition” and then turn around and come straight home, she laughs.

She’s doing less auditioning nowadays as acting roles continue to roll in. In *What to Expect*—a film co-starring Jennifer Lopez, Cameron Diaz, Elizabeth Banks, and Chris Rock—Kendrick plays a gourmet food truck vendor who hooks up with a fellow rising chef, played by *Gossip Girl*’s Chace Crawford.

After the “meet cute,” the fledgling duo find themselves, to their great shock, pregnant.

How did Kendrick prepare? “I did some research with a chef,” she says, “and cut my fingers so many times in the process! But I felt weird about going up to random women and asking if they’d ever had an unexpected pregnancy, and what that felt like. For part of the shoot I did wear a pregnancy prosthetic, and I was most surprised about how many people came up and just started poking at my stomach. They’d just poke it! And so many women on the set would see me [wearing] it and immediately start telling me about their own experiences being pregnant. There was something about the stomach itself that made women want to talk.”

Kendrick says she’s “nowhere close to being enough of a grown-up” to consider motherhood, although she’s not ruling it out down the line. She’s glad she’s been able to first pursue her dream. In fact, Kendrick’s mother paved the way by setting a good example.

“I grew up with a working mom,” Kendrick says. “So that was always normal to me. But I remember one time a neighbor who was a stay-at-home mom came over and criticized my mother for making one big batch of pancakes and then freezing what was left so we could take them out and eat them all week. And my dad overheard her, and he just let her have it! Why do moms do that to each other? Because you know what? We loved those pancakes! We did.” ■

ART: STREIBER/AUGUST



## 3 THINGS THAT MAKE ANNA SMILE

- 1 “Seeing people’s home renovations in *Dwell* magazine. What they’ve done to their homes, I always think it’s so sweet—and cooler than anything I can manage.”
- 2 “Dog-sitting! I don’t have one yet, so I will dog-sit for basically anybody.”
- 3 “My mom makes jewelry, and sometimes she sends me something in the mail out of nowhere.”

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