

# THE BABY BORROWERS

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### EPISODE ONE

#### SUMMARY

The five teen couples arrived at a Boise, Idaho cul-de-sac to participate in an experiment asking them to live “life in fast forward,” to see what kind of parents they would make, if they could handle adult responsibilities, and test their relationships. After moving in, the couples were given a very brief “honeymoon” phase before receiving pregnancy bellies. The “mothers” were required to wear these at all times, including while they attended a class where they practiced parenting with plastic baby dolls. Early the next morning, the couples were thrown into an adult world of responsibility and parenthood with the arrival of the real babies. After their first day as parents, the couples realized that parenting was not going to be as easy as it looks.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR TEENS

- Most of the teens on NBC’s *The Baby Borrowers* thought they were ready to be parents. Kelsey signed up for this experiment to show her boyfriend Sean that they could handle it. Sasha and Jordan took part in order to prove their responsibility to their parents. Do you think the teens who say they’re ready for parenthood are right? Why or why not? What do you want to have in place in your life before you become a parent?
- Almost half of all teens have never considered how a pregnancy would affect their lives.<sup>1</sup> Yet one in three girls gets pregnant at least once by age 20.<sup>2</sup> Most teens who get pregnant—or get someone pregnant—say they never thought it would happen to them. Why do you think that is? What is the most important thing teens need to understand BEFORE they get pregnant?
- Why do you think Kelly got so emotional and refused to wear the pregnancy belly? What did you think of her behavior? Did it surprise you? How do you think she would have reacted to the changes in her body if she were really pregnant? How did her reaction affect things with Austin?
- When Alicea was home alone with Karson and he refused to eat, she got very frustrated and gave up. If you were in Alicea’s place, what would you have done? Why? Are there other situations that you might have handled differently? Which ones? Why?
- How did the couples’ relationships change when the babies arrived? Were they expecting those changes? Whose relationship changed the most from the beginning of the episode to the end? How do you think your relationship might change if you or your partner got pregnant? How do you think pregnancy and parenthood affects a couple’s relationship?

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

We suggest that parents watch the show with their teens, and consider the following questions for discussion afterwards.

- How do you think your son or daughter would have acted as a participant in *The Baby Borrowers* experiment? Which scene do you think would make your teen stop and think and react the most? Why?
- Did you know that teens say the #1 influence on their decisions about sex is their parents?<sup>1</sup> Have you talked with your teen about sex and consequences? What are some good ways to get them to think about the consequences of sex? About the realities of pregnancy and parenthood?
- Is teen pregnancy a problem where you live? What is the impact of teen pregnancy on a family? Community?
- If you could walk into any of the teens' houses on the show and give them one piece of advice about parenthood or preventing pregnancy in the first place, what would it be? Have you shared that advice with your teen?

## TRUE OR FALSE?

Test your knowledge by answering the questions below. Answers can be found on the next page.

**1.) You can't get pregnant the first time you have sex.**

**2.) Most teens say they would rather learn about sex online than from their parents.**

**3.) The only foolproof way to prevent pregnancy is to not have sex.**

**4.) Most teens are having sex.**

**5.) Teen mothers and fathers usually end up getting married.**

**6.) You won't get pregnant if you use condoms most of the time.**

**7.) A big age difference doesn't matter in relationships among teens.**

**8.) Most teens aren't embarrassed to admit they haven't had sex.**

# ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Here are some additional activities you can do as part of a group or on your own.

## 1. Talk Back to Stay Teen

There are a lot of great things about being a teenager—and some things that might not be so great. A pregnancy will change all of them. Now that you've seen how the teen couples in *The Baby Borrowers* handle parenthood, it's your turn to shine the spotlight on yourself and your friends. Ask at least three friends the following three questions:

1. What is the best thing about being a teen right now?
2. What is the toughest thing about being a teen right now?
3. How would their lives change if they got pregnant or got someone else pregnant?

Then write a brief summary (200 words max) of what they said and what you think about it. Send it to us at [stayteen@thenc.org](mailto:stayteen@thenc.org) and it might be featured on "Stay Out Loud," the destination for teens to tell each other what they really think. For examples, check out the [StayTeen.org](http://StayTeen.org) website.

### Things to consider:

- Do guys and girls see things differently?
- Before you asked them, had anyone ever thought about how a pregnancy would affect their lives?
- Did anyone's answers surprise you? How so?

## 2. Make your own "StayTeen" Public Service Advertisement

What does the word "relationship" mean to you? Sometimes it's hard to put something like that into words. So we say: **Don't!** Instead, *show us* your relationship reality by creating a public service advertisement (PSA).

Check out the Stay TV section at [StayTeen.org](http://StayTeen.org). Upload your own videos, then customize with the right words and other details. Be a part of our latest ad campaign, "Stay Teen," which encourages teens to enjoy what's best about being a teen and postpone pregnancy and parenthood. For details, inspiration and to check out what others have done, go to [StayTeen.org](http://StayTeen.org).

## TRUE OR FALSE ANSWERS

1. **False.** You can get pregnant every time you have sex, including the first.
2. **False.** Most teens say they want to get information about sex from their parents. In reality, however, teens say they get most of their information from the media.
3. **True.** Abstinence is the only 100 percent effective way to avoid pregnancy.
4. **False.** Just because you think "everyone is doing it" doesn't mean they are. Some are, some aren't – and some are lying. In fact, less than half of high school students say they have had sex.
5. **False.** Nearly 80 percent of teen mothers don't marry their babies' fathers.
6. **False.** You have to use contraception every single time you have sex, no matter what. A sexually active teen who does not use contraception has an 85 percent chance of pregnancy within one year.
7. **False.** Teens who are in a relationship with a partner three or more years older or younger are less likely to use contraception, and are more likely to report later that they didn't really want to have sex in the first place.
8. **True.** Two out of three teens say they don't think it's embarrassing to admit to being a virgin.

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## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### EPISODE TWO

#### SUMMARY

During the next few days, the couples continued caring for their “borrowed” babies and many started to feel the strain that parenthood and adult responsibilities can put on relationships. Adding to the stress of being first-time parents, one person in each couple went to work to support the household while the other stayed home alone to care for the baby. After long days—and nights—of work and childcare, the tired couples were surprised when one of their own parents arrived for a short visit. But some couples were not as happy as others to have a visitor.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR TEENS

- It costs \$10,600 to raise a baby for one year.<sup>3</sup> That’s the equivalent of 1,178 movie tickets, 163 pairs of sneakers, or 42 iPods. The teens in this experiment earned \$100 each day they went to work, which is \$12.50 per hour or \$25,000 per year, before taxes. What job could you find at your age and in your community that pays this much?
- During her mother’s visit, Morgan refused to discuss her relationship with Daton. Are you able to talk to your parents about your relationships? Why or why not? Do you think it’s important to be able to do so? What advice would you give Morgan’s mother about how to communicate with her daughter?
- Seven in ten teens say they have had a helpful conversation with their parents about delaying sex and avoiding teen pregnancy.<sup>1</sup> What do some parents do to make these conversations helpful? What do some parents do to make them unhelpful? Have your parents ever talked with you about sex? What would it be like to tell your parents you’re pregnant (or got someone pregnant)? How would they react? Why?
- At the beginning of the experiment, Kelsey really believed that she was ready to have a baby, but her experience with Etta changed her mind. How would your life change if you had a child? What would you do about school? How would it affect your social life, family relationships, and getting a job? Do you know someone like Kelsey, who thinks they’re ready to have a child?
- Although rates have declined in recent decades by one-third—which is a big improvement—the United States still has the highest rate of teen pregnancy in the western industrialized world.<sup>4</sup> Do your friends and classmates think teen pregnancy is a big deal? Do you think teens who watch *The Baby Borrowers* will learn something about the realities of being a parent? What are some other ways to show the consequences of unprotected sex and pregnancy?

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

We suggest that parents watch the show with their teens, and consider the following questions for discussion afterwards.

- Were any of the parent-teen relationships in *The Baby Borrowers* familiar to you? Do you talk to your teens about what is going in their lives?
- Most teens say it would be much easier for them to postpone sexual activity and avoid teen pregnancy if they were able to have more open, honest conversations about these topics with their parents.<sup>1</sup> Do your teens know your values and expectations when it comes to sex and pregnancy?
- How do you deal with an "uncomfortable" conversation with your teens about sex? What are some specific ways of talking about sex, love, values, and relationships with your teens that have worked well? Have you tried anything that crashed and burned?

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Here are some additional activities you can do as part of a group or on your own.

### 1. Create a Schedule

Ask teens write up their current weekly schedules, including all of their commitments and activities. Then ask them to create another schedule, this time incorporating all of the additional responsibilities, commitments, and activities they would have if they had to care for a baby. As a group, discuss the questions below:

- What does your current schedule look like? What are some of the major activities you are involved with right now? What do you wish you had more time for?
- What are some of the responsibilities you associated with taking care of a baby?
- How much did your schedule change when you added the baby into your plans?
- What changes would you have to make in order to support a child?
- Would you be willing to give up your current commitments to take care of a child?

### 2. Shopping

Ask teens to make a list of things they'd need to buy in order to care for a child (diapers, food, clothing, toys, etc.). Then send them to the store or the mall with their lists so they can price the items. Afterwards, talk about the financial commitment involved with parenting.

- Does the cost associated with baby supplies surprise you? What were you expecting vs. what did you find?
- Are you ready to forego buying things for yourself so that you can buy things for a child? What would you have to sacrifice?
- What kind of a budget is required to properly feed, clothe and care for a child? How would you earn enough money to meet those needs?

### 3. Make your own "StayTeen" Public Service Advertisement

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# SOURCES

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2. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. (2006). *Fact Sheet: How is the 3 in 10 statistic calculated?* Washington, DC: Author.
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4. National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy analysis of Singh, S., & Darroch, J.E. (2000). Adolescent pregnancy and childbearing: Levels and trends in developed countries. *Family Planning Perspectives*, 32(1), 14-23. Pregnancy rates are calculated as the sum of birth, abortion, and estimated miscarriage rates (20 percent of births plus 10 percent of abortions).

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