

# “She’s Too Young” Discussion Guide



Lifetime’s movie “She’s Too Young” explores the cavalier sexual attitudes of today’s teenagers as seen through a mother/daughter relationship that is profoundly changed when the mother discovers that her daughter and her group of friends are engaged in dangerous sexual behavior. The movie offers an excellent starting point for parents and teens to discuss their own views and values about sex, love, values and relationships.

We hope that parents and teens will watch the movie together, and will use this guide to explore in greater depth some of the issues raised in the movie. Because no single message will work for everyone, we urge you to begin a dialogue about your own priorities, views, and expectations – and ideas for how to *prevent* teen pregnancy in the first place. This guide is also useful for youth program leaders, teachers and others who work with teens.

For more information about teen sex, pregnancy and prevention – and for free downloadable tips and materials specifically tailored to parent and teens -- visit the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy’s web site ([www.teenpregnancy.org](http://www.teenpregnancy.org)). The site also offers interactive quizzes and surveys for teens, as well as postcards, pamphlets, posters, and additional videos. For more information about Lifetime Television and its original movies, please visit [www.lifetimetv.com](http://www.lifetimetv.com). We hope you find this useful, and hope that you’ll visit us online and tell us what you think.



## **“She’s Too Young” Discussion Guide for Parents and Teens**

### **Did you know?**

- Approximately one in five adolescents has had sexual intercourse before his or her 15<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- The U.S. has the highest rates of teen pregnancy in the industrialized world. 35% of girls become pregnant at least once by age 20.
- Compared to delayed sexual activity, early sexual activity has been linked to a greater number of sexual partners over time and an increased risk of both teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.
- Two-thirds of sexually experienced teens wish they had waited longer to have sex.
- Most teens (69%) agree 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.
- Parents tend to be unaware of what their children are actually doing sexually – only about a third of parents of sexually experienced 14-year-olds know that their child has had sex.

### **How to use this discussion guide**

Watch Lifetime Television’s original movie, “She’s Too Young,” with your teen, or with a group of teens and parents. Then use it along with this guide to begin a conversation about sex, love and relationships and specific issues raised in the movie. Sometimes, the most difficult part of the conversation is getting it started.

### **The Movie Deals with the following themes:**

- Sex is serious and sex has consequences – emotional and physical.
- Starting sex early is very risky.
- Many teens and adults do not have the same definition of what “counts” as sex.
- A younger girl with an older partner can lead to unwanted and unprotected sex.
- You can always say “no”, even if you’ve said “yes” before.
- Telling a teen not to have sex is not enough.

### **Discussion Questions:**

*Ask your teens to answer these questions on their own, while you answer them too. Then, compare and discuss your answers.*

#### **Parents and teens:**

- i Do you think most teens have open, honest and ongoing dialogue with their parents about sex? Why or why not?
- 2 In the movie, four types of parenting are shown. How do you think each parent's attitude affected the teens? For example, how do you think Nick's parents influenced his behavior?
- 3 How do you think Hannah felt when she had to call her mom for a ride home when her friends left her alone at the diner?
- 4 Hannah's parents tried to do the right thing, but Hannah still got into risky situations. What advice would you give to Hannah's parents? What did you think of the way Hannah's mother took action in the community? Did it help?
- 5 If you were Hannah's older sister, what advice would you give her?

#### **Teens and Sex:**

- 1 Do you think the attitude toward sex among teens as depicted in the movie is realistic? How does it compare to teens in our community?
- 2 Do you think 14 is too young to have sex? Why or why not? How does someone know they're ready to have sex? What is the "right" time?
- 3 How does having sex relate to being popular? Do you think some teens lie about whether or not they've had sex? Why or why not?
- 4 Hannah – like many teens -- believed oral sex isn't sex and doesn't have the same consequences. How would you define what is considered "sex"?
- 5 Why do you think Becca was crying on her bed at the end of the movie? How could Hannah, Becca and their friends have helped each other more? What advice would you give them?
- 6 What did you think about Tom's decision not to have sex with Hannah?
- 7 What advice would you give Nick for the future?

### **Discussion with Other Parents:**

*There are many ways parents and adults can reduce risk for teens. One way is to know your children's friends and their families. Consider convening a group of parents of teens in your community, and asking the group to discuss the following questions:*

- i Are STDs and teen pregnancy a problem in our community? If so, how big is the problem? What are we doing to prevent it?
- ② In an environment where teens are pressured by each other and are receiving such varied messages about sex, what can we do to make sure our views are being heard by our teens? How much do we know about the relationships our teens are having?
- ③ Do we know where our kids are after school? What are they doing? Are we providing them with fun activities and adequate supervision?
- ④ How can we deal with an “uncomfortable” conversation with our teens about sex? What are some specific ideas for bringing up the subjects of sex, love, values and relationships with our teens? Do you have any examples that have worked well?
- ⑤ What are some of the things we remember about “the talk” about sex with our own parents? Did we even have “the talk”? What would we do similarly with our kids – and what would we do differently?

### **Talking Back: What Teens Want Parents to Know to Help Them Prevent Pregnancy**

1. **Don't leave us alone so much.**
2. **Pay attention to me *before* I get in trouble.**
3. **If I ask you a question about sex, don't assume I'm already “doing it”.**
4. **Show us what good responsible relationships look like.**
5. **Talk to us honestly about love, sex, and relationships.**
6. **Telling us not to have sex is not enough.**
7. **Even if we don't ask, we still have questions.**
8. **Whether we're having sex or not, we need to be prepared.**
9. **Show us why teen pregnancy is such a bad idea.**
10. **We really care what you think, even if we don't always act like it.**
11. **We hate “the talk” as much as you do.**
12. **For us it's not about abstinence *or* contraception; it's about abstinence *and* contraception.**

## Tips for Parents

*The following tips for parents were derived from research and from discussions with experts, parents and teens nationwide*

### **10 Tips for Parents to Help their Teens Prevent Pregnancy**

**1. Be clear about your own sexual attitudes and values.**

Communicating with your children about sex, love and relationships is often more successful when you are certain in your own mind about these issues.

**2. Talk with your children early and often about sex, and be specific.**

The time to begin talking to your teen about sex and its consequences is now. Initiate the conversation, and make sure it's honest, open and respectful.

**3. Be a parent with opinions.**

In addition to being an "askable parent," be a parent with a point of view. Tell your children what you think and why you think so.

**4. Supervise and monitor your children and adolescents.**

Establish rules, curfews, and standards of expected behavior, preferably through open family discussions. It's not being a nag – it's being a parent.

**5. Know your children's friends and their families.**

Friends have a strong influence on each other. Meet with the parents of your children's friends so that you can get to know them and establish common rules and expectations.

**6. Discourage early, frequent, and steady dating.**

Allowing teens to begin steady, one-on-one dating much before age 16 can lead to trouble. Instead, support group activities.

**7. Take a strong stand against your child dating someone older.**

Try setting a limit of no more than two- (or at most three-) year age difference. The power differences between younger girls and older boys or men can lead girls into risky situations.

**8. Let your children know that you value education highly.**

Encourage your child to take school seriously and set high expectations about school performance. School failure is often the first sign of trouble that can end in teenage parenthood.

**9. Talk to sons as well as daughters.**

The nearly 900,000 teen girls who get pregnant each year don't do it alone. Boys need to know that teen pregnancy has serious consequences for them too.

**10. Know what your kids are watching, reading and listening to.**

Television, radio, movies, music videos, magazines and the Internet send many messages about sex: Sex often has no meaning and unplanned pregnancy seldom happens. It is important to talk with your children about what the media portray, what you think about it and what your children think about it.

*For more tips and details, visit [www.teenpregnancy.org](http://www.teenpregnancy.org).*