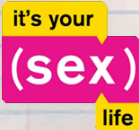




# 16 and Pregnant

## season 1 discussion guides

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# Introduction

## About "16 and Pregnant"

MTV's "16 and Pregnant" is a documentary series focusing on the real life difficulties of being a teen parent. Each episode follows a 5-7 month period in the life of a teenager as she navigates the bumpy terrain of adolescence, growing pains, rebellion, and coming of age; all while dealing with being pregnant.

These stories offer a unique look into the wide variety of challenges pregnant teens face: marriage, adoption, religion, gossip, finances, rumors among the community, graduating high school, and getting (or losing) a job. Faced with incredibly adult decisions, these girls are forced to sacrifice their teenage years and their high school experiences. But there is an optimism among them; they have the dedication to do their best to make their lives work, and to do as they see fit to provide the best for their babies.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

1. Watch the episodes with your teens. This show provides an excellent starting point to talk about the realities and consequences of teen pregnancy. Make copies of the enclosed fact sheet if possible.
2. Use the discussion questions inside to start conversations about what they've seen and how they feel about it – and how it relates to their lives.
3. Encourage teens to talk at home and among their friends about this issue and to think about how important it is to avoid getting pregnant until they are grown up. The teen years are a great time for so many things – school, friends, new experiences, and learning about life. The teen years should *not* be for pregnancy and parenthood.
4. Let us know what you think! If you have questions, comments, feedback or you want additional copies of the DVD and discussion booklet, please contact us at [web@thenc.org](mailto:web@thenc.org).

# Important Things to Know about Teen Pregnancy

- ✦ Once there is a pregnancy, every road ahead is really hard. That's why it's important to not get pregnant in the first place.
- ✦ More than 700,000 teen girls in the U.S. got pregnant last year. Most of them thought it wouldn't happen to them.
- ✦ Every time you have sex there is a possibility of pregnancy – even if it's your first time.
- ✦ 3 out of 10 girls in the United States get pregnant before age 20. 1 out of 6 girls will become a teen mom. It doesn't have to be this way.
- ✦ Sex won't make him yours and a baby won't make him stay. 8 out of 10 guys don't marry the teen mothers of their babies and most couples don't stay together at all.
- ✦ Babies may give a lot of love, but they require even more. Parenting is a 24/7 lifetime job.
- ✦ About half of high school teens have had sex and half haven't. And some are lying. It's okay to wait.
- ✦ Teen pregnancy is 100% avoidable – either don't have sex or use protection carefully and correctly every single time.
- ✦ Half of teens have never thought about how a pregnancy would affect their lives. Think about what your life would really be like if you became a teen parent. And then do everything you can to prevent getting pregnant in the first place.
- ✦ Teen parenthood is hard on teens and worse for their babies. Babies born to teens suffer from more health and developmental problems; are more likely to be abused and neglected; will probably be raised by a single parent and grow up poor. Their daughters are more likely to be teen moms and their sons are more likely to end up in jail.

# EPISODE 1 - Maci

## Episode Summary

Dirt-bike riding Maci is graduating early from high school and moving in with her four-wheel-riding boyfriend Ryan because they are having a baby. Parenthood is difficult and time-consuming – Maci has to put her own interests aside to care for baby Bentley, while Ryan becomes more and more distant. Will their relationship be left in the dust?

## Discussion Ideas

- ✚ Maci tells Ryan's parents that her mom didn't have the opportunity to talk to her about sex because Ryan was her first boyfriend and by that time "it was too late." Ryan's parents say they did talk to him about sex and protection but Ryan is still a young father. Do teens today know everything they need to know? Is knowing the facts enough? Have your parents talked to you? What do you feel like you need to know? Where else can you go for information?
- ✚ Parenting is hard. Doing it alone is *really* hard. Ryan isn't very involved in caring for Bentley so most of the work falls to Maci. Why do you think that is? If you were in a situation like this would you be able to take responsibility? What impact do you think this will have on Bentley? What impact will it have on Maci and Ryan's relationship?
- ✚ Even an age difference of a few years makes a big difference. Maci is younger than Ryan and often that can lead to risky situations, including unwanted or unprotected sex. Should teens be allowed to have serious relationships with people who are older (even if it's just by a couple of years)? Do you know people who have had relationship problems due to age differences? Do you have rules about this in your family?
- ✚ Babies are expensive. Maci was shocked when she learned that day care would cost more than rent. It can cost more than \$10,000 to raise a baby in the first year. Could you afford that? What would happen if you couldn't?

# EPISODE 2 - Farrah

## Episode Summary

Farrah is a busy girl – a popular cheerleader with lots of friends and a job – but when she gets pregnant and becomes the subject of high school gossip she leaves school and starts spending a lot of time with her mother. There's no boyfriend or father of the baby to share responsibility with, and it gets harder and harder for Farrah to stay close with her friends when pregnancy and parenthood take over.

## Discussion Ideas

- ✚ Everything changes when you have a baby. Farrah says her life has changed in many ways, such as "it was only a few months ago that my biggest worry was how my hair looked." What in your life would change the most if you became a parent as a teenager? What are the things you like to do that you'd have to give up?
- ✚ Being a parent at any age isn't easy but being a single parent as a teenager is especially difficult. Do you think Farrah was prepared? Are most teens prepared? Did anything surprise you? What sort of life experiences and support does a person need to have in place before they are ready for parenthood?
- ✚ Dating and relationships are much harder when you have a child. Farrah gets frustrated when her date blows off their plans at the last minute. How would you feel about dating someone who already had a child? How do you think pregnancy and parenthood affect a person's ability to start new relationships? What impact does this have on the child?
- ✚ It's never too early to learn about love and relationships. Farrah says she wants to teach her daughter "to know what's a good relationship and a bad relationship." What do you know about love and relationships? Why are they so confusing sometimes? Can you talk to your parents about these things? Is it easier or harder than talking to them about sex? Why?

# EPISODE 3 - Amber

## Episode Summary

Amber and Gary are moving in and having a baby. Gary works as a nursing assistant; Amber was a senior in high school but got pregnant and didn't graduate. Money is tight and they argue but they're trying to work it out. They're engaged and in love but parenting is hard and they wonder if they'll get married, have more kids, be able to buy a house or even make ends meet.

## Discussion Ideas

- ✚ It takes two people to get pregnant but only one to prevent it. Amber and Gary say they "took most precautions" but... Do you insist on using condoms or do you wait for the other person to bring it up? It's a lot easier to talk about safe sex than it is to talk about being pregnant. Do you know how to use protection correctly? Where can you get trusted information?
- ✚ It's important to take care of yourself when you're pregnant, including eating right. Babies born to teen moms are at higher risk for complications and health problems, in part because pregnant teens are less likely to get consistent pre-natal care. Why do you think it's harder for teens to take good care of their health? Do you think it matters?
- ✚ Being a teen parent makes it a lot harder to reach your educational and financial goals. Is Gary ready to be the sole provider for his family? Will Amber be able to graduate from high school or go to college? More than half of teen moms never graduate from college and fewer than 2% finish college by age 30. How would it be different if they had waited a few more years before starting a family? Have you ever thought about how getting pregnant and having a baby might affect your future plans?
- ✚ Having a baby makes you re-evaluate your priorities – it's no longer about "me" – it's now about "we." What did you think of Gary spending so much money on a video game system? What did you think of Amber's reaction? Would you be able to sacrifice what you want for a baby?

# EPISODE 4 - Ebony

## Episode Summary

Ebony is a military brat who is trading in her ROTC uniform for maternity clothes. She and her fiancé, Josh, plan to join the Air Force after senior year but the responsibilities of a new baby may keep them from enlisting, and maybe even from graduating.

## Discussion Ideas

- ✚ Simply *knowing* about protection isn't enough – you also have to *use* it. Even though their parents have talked to them about sex and birth control, Ebony tells the nurse during a sonogram they didn't use anything to prevent pregnancy. Do you think Josh and Ebony talked about using protection -- or the consequences of not using it -- before they had sex? Do you know how to bring up this topic with your partner? It can be embarrassing but it's a lot easier if you feel confident about the facts. Do you know everything you need to know? Do you know where to find good information?
- ✚ Becoming a teen parent means putting other dreams on hold. Ebony doesn't graduate from high school and she isn't able to join the military like she wanted to. Half of teens have never thought about how a pregnancy would affect their lives. Have you ever thought about how a pregnancy would affect your goals for the future? What would have to change in your life?
- ✚ Having a child is a lot for a teen relationship to handle. Josh is already re-thinking the idea of marriage and Ebony gets choked up when she wonders if Josh will want to be with her once he joins the Air Force. The truth is that most teen couples in this situation don't stay together for the long haul, even if they had good intentions in the beginning. What effect do you think this has on their children? Do sexually active teens consider what kind of parent their partner would be? Should they?

# EPISODE 5 - Whitney

## Episode Summary

Whitney, 16, lives in a small house in Georgia, with her mom, her grandmother, her boyfriend, and their dog. She's home all the time since leaving school last year and as if things weren't crowded enough, both she and her mom are about to have babies. Boyfriend Weston works at an auto parts manufacturing plant but his hours have been cut back so it's hard to save for a place of their own. Will their love be enough to support them?

## Discussion Ideas

- ✚ Every time you have sex you run the risk of pregnancy. Whitney says "I didn't think I was the type to get pregnant at a young age. ...When I'm feeling really overwhelmed I just wonder, 'how did this happen to me?'" Did you know that you can get pregnant the first time you have sex and every time after that as well? Do you know how to prevent pregnancy? You don't have to have sex, for starters. There are lots of methods of protection – find the one that works for you.
- ✚ Having a supportive partner makes a big difference. Can you imagine how difficult parenthood would be for Whitney if Weston weren't so committed to being a father? The majority of children born to teen moms don't have two involved parents – what do you think that means for the teens and for their babies? In fact, children who live apart from their fathers are five times more likely to be poor than children with both parents at home. What would it mean for you?
- ✚ Teen parents have a hard time keeping up with friends and activities like they did before the baby. Whitney dropped out of school and is losing touch with her friends – one friend isn't even allowed to see her anymore because the friend's parents think she's a bad influence. If you had a friend who got pregnant how would you relate to her? Would your friendship change? Do you think having a pregnant or parenting friend would be a bad influence? Would seeing a friend go through this situation make pregnancy seem more desirable, or less?

# EPISODE 6 - Catelynn

## Episode Summary

From a small town in Michigan, 16-year-old Catelynn is the voice of reason in an otherwise hot-tempered family. With the support of her boyfriend Tyler, she's taking the biggest stand of her life and pursuing adoption without the approval of her mom.

## Discussion Ideas

- ✚ Very few teens pursue adoption – less than 2% of teen girls who give birth choose adoption for their babies. Why do you think that is? Do you think it was the best choice for Catelynn and Tyler? What about for their baby? Do you think teens know enough about the adoption process? Would more teens choose adoption if they knew more about it? Is choosing adoption too difficult? Is it harder than being a parent?
- ✚ Birth parents *are* good parents. Catelynn and Tyler love their daughter very much – that's why they made the decision to give her the best life possible – which they believe is with the adoptive parents. Catelynn says getting pregnant at a young age has made her even more determined to finish high school and go to college and then have children with Tyler when they are better equipped to be good parents. How do you feel about the decisions they've made in comparison to other teens profiled in "16 and Pregnant?" Did Catelynn and Tyler focus more on what their child's life would be like than the other teens in the series?
- ✚ Tyler's dad says he was disappointed his son didn't "man up. He wasn't the cowboy I thought he was." What do you think about Tyler's decision to support the adoption? Was he weak? Courageous? Mature? Selfish? Catelynn's mom wasn't supportive either. What do you think about that? Would you be able to make a decision like this without the support of your parents?

# Learn More...

ABOUT MTV'S "16 AND PREGNANT":

[www.mtv.com](http://www.mtv.com)

ABOUT THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGN  
TO PREVENT TEEN AND UNPLANNED PREGNANCY:

[www.thenationalcampaign.org](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org)

ABOUT SEX, LOVE, RELATIONSHIPS,  
WAITING, AND CONTRACEPTION:

[www.stayteen.org](http://www.stayteen.org)

ABOUT PROTECTING YOURSELF FROM PREGNANCY AND HIV:

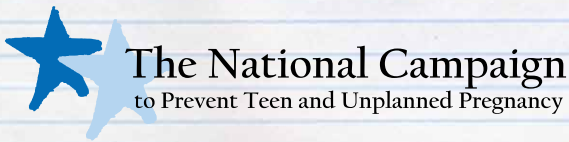
[www.itsyoursexlife.com](http://www.itsyoursexlife.com)

ABOUT WHERE TO FIND A HEALTH CARE CLINIC:

[www.plannedparenthood.org](http://www.plannedparenthood.org)

ABOUT CHOOSING ADOPTION:

[www.ichooseadoption.org](http://www.ichooseadoption.org)



**The National Campaign**  
to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy

## About the National Campaign

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy seeks to improve the lives and future prospects of children and families and, in particular, to help ensure that children are born into stable, two-parent families who are committed to and ready for the demanding task of raising the next generation. Our specific strategy is to prevent teen pregnancy and unplanned pregnancy among single, young adults. We support a combination of responsible values and behavior by both men and women and responsible policies in both the public and private sectors.

If we are successful, child and family well-being will improve. There will be less poverty, more opportunities for young men and women to complete their education or achieve other life goals, fewer abortions, and a stronger nation.

it's your  
**(sex)**  
life



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