Too Young

Using this Discussion Guide

In *Too Young*, teen parents from a variety of backgrounds share their stories and – in their own words – offer their candid views about the difficulties they have faced. Their compelling stories make clear that teen pregnancy is closely linked to a host of other problems for teens and their babies, including welfare dependency, health problems, absent fathers, educational failure, and more.

Too Young offers an excellent starting point for a discussion about teen pregnancy and its consequences. The purpose of this discussion guide is to help teens and adults explore in greater depth some of the issues raised in the video. Because no single message will work for everyone, we urge you to help your group identify its own priorities, views, and expectations – and ideas for how to prevent teen pregnancy in the first place.

To find out more about teen pregnancy – including facts, consequences, prevention messages, and additional educational videos and other materials – visit the National Campaign's websites at *TheNationalCampaign.org*, *TeenPregnancy.org*, and *StayTeen.org*.

The National Campaign wishes to thank Wyeth Pharmaceuticals (*www.wyeth.com*) for their generous support of *Too Young* and a range of other Campaign activities.

The National Campaign

For more information and to order copies of the Too Young educational video, please visit TheNationalCampaign.org/TooYoung.

Too Young deals with the following themes:

- Sex is serious and can have serious consequences – both physical and emotional.
- Having a child as a teen can have negative implications for your education, financial security, and goals for the future.
- You can get pregnant the first time – and every time – you have sex.
- The teen years are for learning and growing up – not for pregnancy and parenthood.

Did You Know?

- One in three girls becomes pregnant at least once by age 20. That's 750,000 teen pregnancies each year.
- Although the rates are declining, the U.S. still has the highest rate of teen pregnancy in the western industrialized world. Problems related to teen pregnancy cost taxpayers $9.1 billion per year.
- Two out of three teen mothers never finish high school. This leaves them unprepared for the job market and more likely to raise their children in poverty.
- Babies born to teens are at an increased risk of low birth weight and resulting health problems, including mental retardation, blindness, deafness, mental illness, cerebral palsy, and infant mortality.
- Eight out of ten fathers don't marry the teen mother of their baby. On average, these absent fathers pay less than $800 annually for child support.
- Most teens agree that 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.
- Two out of three sexually experienced teens wish they had waited longer to have sex.
- Almost 50 percent of teens have *never* considered how a pregnancy would affect their lives.

Discussion Questions for Teens

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

- What did you think of *Too Young*? Do you feel like you learned anything from it? What is something you learned that surprised you?
- Do you think teen pregnancy is a big problem in your community? Why is it a problem? Whose problem is it to solve?
- Does it shock you that the United States has the highest rate of teen pregnancy in the developed world? Why do you think so many teens in the United States get pregnant? What is the most effective way to prevent pregnancy among teens?
- Do you think most teens have an open, honest, and ongoing dialogue with their parents about sex? How open is your relationship with your parents? Do you talk to them about sex? What do you think they'd do if you got pregnant or got someone else pregnant?
- Do you know any teen moms or dads? What do you think is the hardest part of being a teen parent?
- How would your life change if you had a child? What would the implications be for school? social life? family life? money? job?
- Does it surprise you that two-thirds of teen mothers never receive their high school diploma? Do you think it would be difficult to complete your education if you had to take care of a child?
- Many of the parents in the video talked about the financial struggles associated with caring for their children. What are some of the costs associated with having a child? How do you think you would care for a child financially? Do you think you could do it on your own?

- Many of the girls in *Too Young* talked about how their relationships with their boyfriends changed after pregnancy. Why do you think this happened? Do you think your relationship might change if you or your partner got pregnant?
- What could you teach others from the stories of these teen moms?

Discussion Questions for Adults

There are many ways parents and adults can help teens avoid early pregnancy and parenthood. One way is to know your children's friends and their families. Consider convening a group of parents of teens in your community to watch Too Young *and discuss the following questions:*

- Is teen pregnancy a problem in your community? If so, how big is the problem? What are we doing to prevent it?
- How much do we know about the relationships our teens are having? What are some ways that we can find out more and monitor them without them feeling their privacy is being violated or their space is being invaded?
- Do we know where our kids are after school? What are they doing? Who are they hanging out with? Are we providing them with fun activities and adequate supervision? How can we, as parents, support each other in doing this?
- Are we being clear enough with our teens about our own values and expectations when it comes to sex and pregnancy? Do they know what our values are? How do we know that?
- How can we deal with an "uncomfortable" conversation with our teens about sex? What are some specific ways to bring up the subjects of sex, love, values, and relationships with our teens? Do you have any examples that have worked well?
- 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?

Activities

Activity #1: Create a Schedule

Ask teens to write up their current weekly schedules, including all of their commitments and activities. Next, ask them to think about all of the responsibilities associated with caring for a baby and have them create another schedule including all of those commitments and activities. 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 are some of the responsibilities that you associated with taking care of a baby?
- How much did your schedule change when you factored a baby into the equation?
- What changes would you have to make in order to support a child?
- Would you have to give up any of your current commitments?

Activity #2: Role Play

Ask the teens to split up into three groups and have them prepare short skits based on the following scenarios. Then have them act out the skit in front of the group.

- Help a friend decide what to do when they are feeling pressure to have sex from their partner.
- Tell your parents that you are pregnant or that your partner is pregnant.
- Tell your girlfriend or boyfriend that you are not ready to have sex.

Activity #3: Fact or Fiction?

Ask the teens in your group to take out a piece of paper and write "fact" or "fiction" as you read out these questions. Then discuss the answers found on the next page (but don't ask anyone to hand in their answers. Keep it confidential!)

1

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

2

Teens 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

If you have a baby as a teen, you probably won't marry the father.

6

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

7

Age doesn't matter in relationships.

Tips for Teens

The following section offers advice from teens for teens – gathered from thousands of teens across the country – that they have given their friends about sex and dating.

1. Thinking "it won't happen to me" is stupid; if you don't protect yourself, it probably will. Sex is serious. Make a plan
2. Just because you think "everyone is doing it," doesn't mean they are. Some are, some aren't – and some are lying.
3. There are a lot of good reasons to say "no, not yet." Protecting your feelings is one of them.
4. You're in charge of your own life. Don't let anyone pressure you into having sex.
5. You can always say "no" – even if you've "yes" before.
6. Carrying a condom is just being smart – it doesn't mean you are pushy or easy.
7. If you think birth control "ruins the mood," consider what a pregnancy test will do to it.
8. If you're drunk or high, you can't make good decisions about sex. Don't do something you might not remember or might really regret.
9. Sex won't make him yours, and a baby won't make him stay.
10. Not ready to be someone's parent? It's simple: Use protection every time or don't have sex.

For the free downloadable pamphlet "Thinking About the Right Now," with more on what teens want other teens to know, visit www.teenpregnancy.org.

Tips for Adults

Thousands of teens nationwide helped develop this list of things that they want parents to know:

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 – but that doesn't mean we shouldn't have it.
12. For us it's not about abstinence *or* contraception; it's about abstinence *and* contraception.

For the free downloadable pamphlet "Talking Back," with more on what teens want parents to know, visit www.teenpregnancy.org.

FACT OR FICTION ANSWERS

1. **Fiction.** You can get pregnant every time you have sex, including the first.
2. **Fiction.** 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. **Fact.** Abstinence is the only 100% effective way to avoid pregnancy.
4. **Fiction.** 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 50% of high school students say they have had sex.
5. **Fact.** Nearly 80% of fathers of babies born to teen mothers don't marry their babies' mothers.
6. **Fiction.** 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% chance of pregnancy within one year.
7. **Fiction.** Teens who are in a relationship with a partner three or more years older 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.