

## Teens Tell All about . . . The Reality of Being a Teen Parent

- It's really, really hard. I've got to get up with him during the night, then get up early for school. My mother watches the baby during the day. But in the evening, I've got to do my homework, feed him, give him a bath, get him to sleep and get myself ready for the next day.<sup>1</sup>
- What troubles me is when another girl finds out that I have a daughter and she says "that is so neat." A car is neat, an outfit is neat, a baby is not. They take a lot of time and work. When you become a mom, you become responsible (physically, emotionally, and financially) for a child for the rest of your life. There are no weekends or summer vacations, the child will always be there. And no matter how good your relationship was before you became pregnant, the father will most likely have gone on his merry way. If I had been better informed, I would have never had sex in the first place, let alone a child.<sup>2</sup>
- Feeling insecure, lonely and frustrated.  
Needing someone to love me.  
So I look to him.  
Thinking he can fill this emptiness inside of me.  
Hoping he is the one.

How do I feel while lying under him?  
Blinded by the love or the deep feelings I have for him.  
Does he love me or even care about me?  
Is what I ask myself while giving him a part of my soul, my temple.

Am I settling for less?  
As I wait for him to show me some affection.  
Once I realize how infatuated I am with him  
And the fact that we are not looking for the same thing,  
It is too late..<sup>25</sup>  
- Poem by a teen mother

- I got pregnant at the age of 14 and had no clue what to do...people these days seem to talk of only two or three solutions to teen pregnancy, although most people forget another--adoption. It was the best yet hardest decision of my life. I look at all I am doing now and think where I would be with a baby. I was not and will not be ready to take care of a baby for a few years...Plus, the most important thing to me is that my baby has two parents who love each other.<sup>3</sup>
- Changing diapers, and feeding them, and taking baths, and playing with them. It's not like you can just say, 'Ok, I'm tired of being a father,' and just give up. That child's still here.<sup>4</sup>
- I never thought--never in this life--that I would be a statistic.<sup>5</sup>
- My friend just became a mom. She has no time for anything else. She comes to school looking so tired and run down. She leaves at lunch to go feed her baby. Sure, babies are cute but they are so much work. I know that now and I am more careful about using protection when I have sex.<sup>6</sup>
- Get up, take her to school, go to work, pick her up, bathe her, feed her. Then it's just the same thing over again.<sup>7</sup>
- I got pregnant a month before my 17th birthday. My son's father and I got married five months ago and we're already separated. I live in an emergency

shelter for teen moms. I raise my son alone. My son will be a year old next week. In his whole life, his father has only taken care of him by himself one time. He does not pay me child support...I have only been out once without him. The rest of the time he goes everywhere with me. I only get four hours of sleep at night. I have no money because I quit work to go back to school, and I'm not on public aid at the moment. I miss my friends. I don't see them anymore because they have their own lives. All I do is sit at home...I love my son more than anything in the world, but it would have been a lot better if this had happened when I was like 27 instead of 17.<sup>8</sup>

- You sometimes feel as tired when you get up in the morning as when you went to bed.<sup>9</sup>
- I recommend kids just staying away from sex all together unless you like waking up in the middle of the night and early in the morning, spending all of your money on that child and not having a dollar to spend on yourself. Just because my parents and family help me does not mean yours will. Think about it next time you go to have sex- is it really worth the lifetime responsibility for the 5 minutes of pleasure? My daughter is the best thing that ever happened to me but I really wish I would of waited. So don't make the same mistake I did. Please use abstinence as your birth control method.<sup>10</sup>
- People talk about welfare, getting money. You can't get support. It's going to get cut off.<sup>11</sup>
- I am 15 years of age. I am 5 months pregnant with my 2nd child. My boyfriend is 17 years of age and has been behind me all the way. Even though I love my son and un-born child, I've missed out on a lot of TEENAGE things like dances, parties, or just having fun. I have 3 jobs now, and spend most of my money on food, diapers, and child needs. To all teens thinking about having sex, don't make the same mistake I did. It takes a lot of time and a lot of hard work.<sup>12</sup>
- I could've been a cheerleader. I could've been in pageants and homecoming queen. But I lost all of that.<sup>13</sup>
- Another thing that is so hard is not being able to go out with my friends as much as I would like to. Once a week just doesn't seem to cut it. I absolutely hate hearing everyone talk about that great party on the weekend or how they are going out of town over spring break. It just seems that I am missing out on all my childhood years, all the memories of being a teenager. When my daughter grows up and asks me what I did when I was a teen all I will be able to say is 'I changed your diapers and prepared your formula.' I really wish I could go back and do things differently. I am sick of the constant worrying about how we are ever going to live once we move out of my mother's house.<sup>14</sup>
- You can say it's not going to happen to you and keep on doing what you're doing. But I said the same thing.<sup>15</sup>
- I don't want someone else to go through what I'm going through. I was 17 when I got pregnant. When I was 13, I was staying out until 3 am. I was going to parties. I was having sex, I thought I couldn't get pregnant.... On the same day my boyfriend broke up with me, I found out I was pregnant.... My son is going without a lot of things he'd have if he had two parents. You need a family. You need to be stable. I'm alone except for my baby.<sup>16</sup>
- I was there from the time my friend got pregnant and the time she gave birth. And it just gave me a real clear understanding of what happens and how it can mess things up and how your life won't be the same afterwards.<sup>17</sup>
- I don't get to do things normal high school kids get to do. At 5:30 am, I get up, get ready for school. At 6:30 am, I wake up my daughter and leave the house at 7:00 am. Around 9:00 pm, I put her to bed. And the next day it's the same again.<sup>18</sup> --teen father
- I always say I feel like I'm 40 years old. I missed out on my whole childhood.

- That's it.<sup>19</sup>
- You have so much to do. I mean, they puke and they poop--you have to clean all that.<sup>20</sup>
  - I didn't think it would be that much screaming. Or that he'd need that many diaper changes.<sup>21</sup>
  - [Excerpts from a letter] At age sixteen, I became pregnant. Before my pregnancy, I was a cheerleader and involved with many school clubs. I had many friends and was enjoying my teenage years. I now ask myself, "What happened to me? Where did I go wrong?" Why was I now standing in line at the welfare office waiting for food stamps? Maybe because I was involved with a guy who was three years older than myself. My parents had forbid me to stay in the abusive relationship. My answer to stay with this guy was to become pregnant. I will never forget the tears that my mother shed when my step-father told her the news. That night, I left my home, my teenage years, and never went back...[A while later,] I finally reached the lowest point in my life. There I was lying in a bed at a shelter for battered women. In the past, I would always leave the relationship [with the baby's father], but always return. That same night, I prayed for the strength and courage to get myself back on my feet. That was also the night that I left him and never went back. Even though my life seems to be going well now, there are emotional scars that I will carry with me each and every day of my life. There is not a day that goes by that I do not think about my past mistakes. This letter is not in any way intended to prove how teen mothers can succeed, but rather to prove how one mistake can change the rest of your life! Enjoy your teen years! I never went to my prom; I never got to cheer at homecoming; I never went on my senior cruise; I never went off to college. These things I will never have the opportunity to do again, but you will. Please, think twice before change the rest of your life!<sup>22</sup>

### Endnotes

1. Survey: "What Teenage Girls Say About Pregnancy." *Parade Magazine*, February 7, 1997.
2. Response from the online Weekly Teen Survey. National Campaign To Prevent Teen Pregnancy. Washington, DC. December 30, 1998.
3. Personal letter submitted to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. October 23, 1998.
4. *Ultimate Choice*. Atlanta, Georgia: Imagemaster Productions. 1997.
5. *Ultimate Choice*. Atlanta, Georgia: Imagemaster Productions. 1997.
6. Response from the online Weekly Teen Survey. National Campaign To Prevent Teen Pregnancy. Washington, DC. March 29, 1999.
7. *Ultimate Choice*. Atlanta, Georgia: Imagemaster Productions. 1997.
8. Response from the online Weekly Teen Survey. National Campaign To Prevent Teen Pregnancy. Washington, DC. March 29, 1999.
9. *Ultimate Choice*. Atlanta, Georgia: Imagemaster Productions. 1997.
10. Response from the online Weekly Teen Survey. National Campaign To Prevent Teen Pregnancy. Washington, DC. March 29, 1999.
11. *Ultimate Choice*. Atlanta, Georgia: Imagemaster Productions. 1997.
12. Response from the online Weekly Teen Survey. National Campaign To Prevent Teen Pregnancy. Washington, DC. March 29, 1999.
13. *Ultimate Choice*. Atlanta, Georgia: Imagemaster Productions. 1997.
14. Response from the online Weekly Teen Survey. National Campaign To Prevent

- Teen Pregnancy. Washington, DC. March 29, 1999.
15. *Ultimate Choice*. Atlanta, Georgia: Imagemaster Productions. 1997.
  16. "Voice of Reason." *Los Angeles Times*. August 18, 1998.
  17. The National Campaign To Prevent Teen Pregnancy. (1999). *Where Are the Teens? Research On What Teens Say About Teen Pregnancy. A Focus Group Report*. Washington, DC: Author.
  18. "Teen Pregnancy and Parenting". Channel One Network. October 21-22, 1997.
  19. "Teen Pregnancy and Parenting". Channel One Network. October 21-22, 1997.
  20. "Teen Pregnancy and Parenting". Channel One Network. October 21-22, 1997.
  21. "Teen Pregnancy and Parenting". Channel One Network. October 21-22, 1997.
  22. Excerpts from a letter sent to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. (1999). Washington, DC.

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