



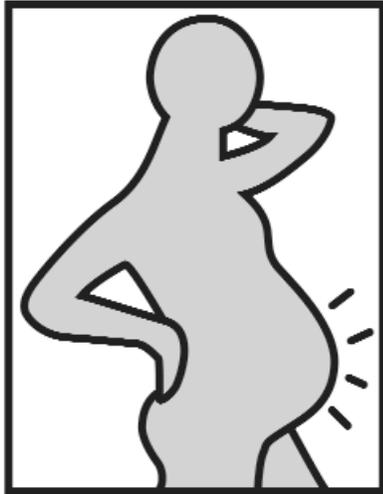
Chapter 1

Pregnant. No Way! (Yes, Way.)

My mother's first reaction was like, "No, not my lil' girl." All she could do was cry and cry and cry. I felt like she was ashamed of me. I was ashamed of me. And I thought she would definitely kick me out of the house 'cuz she's one of those 'you made your bed you sleep in it' types of people. But she didn't throw me out. She let me stay. After a while she was okay about it even though she thinks I messed up my life. Me? I felt stupid, like how could I do that to myself. At first I was in shock and just didn't believe it. When it finally sunk in I just sat around the house wondering, "So how's this gonna work?"

Charlene, 16 years old

I'm Pregnant... Now What?



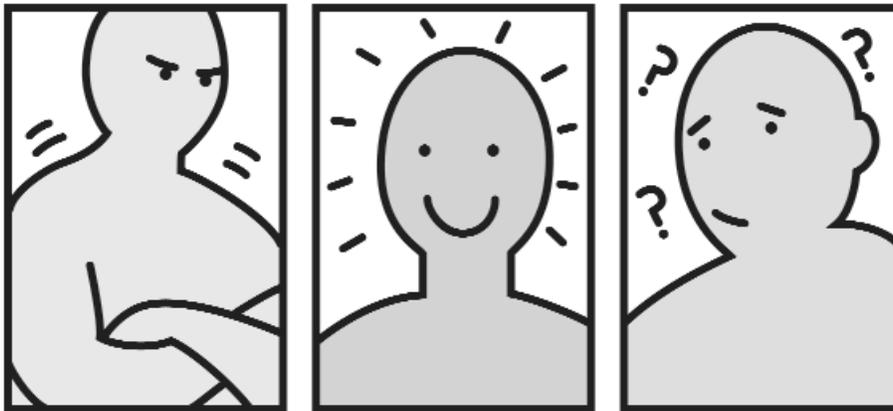
Welcome to the shortest chapter in the book. Actually, it makes sense that it's the shortest chapter, because pregnancy is the shortest part of being a parent. Think about it. Pregnancy lasts for nine months, but if you choose to become a parent, you'll be one for the rest of your life.

The other reason this is a short chapter is because this book is not about your decision whether or not to become a parent. There are other options out there. Only you (and people who have your very best interests at heart) can make that decision. And we know how hard that choice is to make. Take the time you need. Listen to your gut. Talk to other people who have been through it and really listen to what they have to say. Be as honest (and gentle) with yourself as possible, and chances are you'll make the right choice.

Dealing with the Feelings

When you first find out you're pregnant, you might have a lot of different feelings. There's no one way for people to react. However, many teens describe feeling shock and denial at first, like it couldn't really be true. Most people feel like it couldn't happen to them. Then other feelings wash over them, like fear, worry, regret, shame, and anger. These are all natural and they don't last forever. Know that you're not alone. When most young people find out they're pregnant, they feel the same way. If you can, talk to

other people who have some wisdom about the whole thing. We're not saying that you need to tell everyone on the street your business, but keeping your pregnancy a secret can make everything seem worse and cause painful feelings to build up. Even finding one trusted person you can confide in can release some of the pressure and fear you might be feeling.



Other Peoples' Reactions

The first person I told when I found out I was pregnant was my boyfriend. He totally flipped out because he didn't want a baby and he told me to have an abortion, but I didn't want an abortion. So I decided to keep the baby and he broke up with me. That hurt because I thought he really cared for me. So I went through most of my pregnancy alone and right before I was supposed to have the baby he came back around. Then he started touching my stomach and he told everyone about the baby

and people were happy for him. Things started changing between us and he was nicer to me. We're still together. I'm glad I didn't have the abortion just to hold onto a guy, 'cuz I really don't think that'll work. I made the right choice for me.

Carrie, 17 years old

No matter what choice you make, you'll have to deal with other peoples' reactions to your pregnancy: parents, boyfriends, friends, teachers, neighbors, sometimes even the doctors you see. Lots of people will have an opinion about what you should do. Some people might even be openly judgmental.

I saw the neighbors looking at me and shaking their heads and I heard the gossip going around. But the thing that hurt me the most is when my father and me got into a fight and he called me a whore. When he said that it made me feel like I was the worst person in the world. I know it's not true, but it's hard to take coming from your father.

Latisha, 17 years old

People's negative reactions can make feelings like shame, embarrassment, fear, sadness, and confusion even stronger. While people's first responses to your pregnancy can be hard to bear, it's important to remember that they often change over time. People

might think, "Oh, she's too young and irresponsible to take care of a baby." But you can prove them wrong by stepping up to the plate. You often can't control or change how people respond to your pregnancy. But you can sometimes gain their respect by becoming an effective and reliable parent.

Unfortunately, some people might hold on to their judgment or doubt about you even if you are a responsible and dedicated parent. Remind yourself not to get caught up in their negativity. No matter what other people think, don't lose sight of the fact that you are still a strong, wise, good person. Even if you messed up and got pregnant by accident, that doesn't change the power and goodness in you. Holding on to that truth can sometimes make it easier to deal with the world around us.

Making the Promise

When I got pregnant it was cool and fun. People like my mother and boyfriend spoiled me and got me whatever I wanted. They was always asking me how I felt and could I get you something to eat. Everyone in school wanted to ask me questions about being pregnant. I felt special and important. But now the baby's here and it's like night and day. Everyone is worrying about the baby and they're giving no thoughts to how I feel. I love the baby and all. I mean, he's my life, but it's like no one cares about how I'm doing anymore.

Diamond, 18 years old

Like we said, there's a big difference between nine months of pregnancy and twenty (or more) years of raising a child. Pregnancy is mostly about you. It's exciting. People might take care of you. You're the center of attention. Not so once you become a parent. Parenting isn't really about your needs, it's about the baby's needs. It's not about your comfort as much as the baby's. Mostly, it's about giving, not about getting. Of course, you have to take care of yourself in order to be a good parent. But a lot of times, being a parent means giving things up for the sake of your child.

To really get the job of parenting done right, you have to make a promise. It's a promise to get up every morning and do the best job you can. We know that nobody's perfect. We all make mistakes. But day in and day out, the job of parenting requires that you do what's right instead of what's easy. Being a parent asks you to take this job to heart and bring your whole self to it every single day. Sounds tough, but in the long run there's a huge payoff. By making sacrifices, both big and small, you raise the healthiest baby you can. This is the promise we ask you to make to yourself and your child as you read this book.