

Therapists and Social Workers: Lessons You Can Use With Teens

This issue of *Represent* focuses on relationships, sex and teen pregnancy. The stories are a way to open up a discussion with teens about practical aspects of their choices about sex and parenthood. They're also an important opportunity to explore the deeper emotions associated with these topics and help teens make informed, thoughtful choices.

Teen Motherhood

1. Read "Looking for a Mother in a Baby," p. 18, and "Never Leave My Side," p. 23. Both are stories about girls who miss their mothers and want to have a child. What were Destiny's reasons for wanting a baby and why did she ultimately decide to wait? What were Keily's reasons for having a baby while she was still in high school?

2. What sacrifices has Keily made? Have the teens discuss how they would handle a baby, a job, and getting their education. Then have them read "What It Takes," p. 14, to find challenges Keily might face, now and in the future.

Teen Fatherhood

1. Boys also have expectations about how a baby will change their lives. Read "Not Ready for Fatherhood," p. 10, and "Reaching for Sky," p. 27. In the first story,

D.B. finds out a girl he had sex with is pregnant, and he is paralyzed with worry. Have teens discuss how a boy can take action after unprotected sex both to support the girl and control his own life. Have the teens role-play alternatives to D.B.'s call telling the girl to get an abortion. (They could have talked sooner about the possibility of pregnancy; D.B. could have researched local clinics; they could have gone to a clinic together to get emergency contraception.)

2. Chris also feels a lack of control over his daughter Sky's life and his role as a father. In what ways is Chris "manning up" and meeting his responsibilities and doing better than his own father, who abandoned him at birth? Then ask what kind of fathering Sky is actually getting. How could Chris be a better father? What stands in his way? What does Sophie, his ex-girlfriend, expect of him? What is fair and what isn't? (It may not be his fault that it took him a while to get a job, but his anger and substance abuse are things he can work on.)

Other Ways to Connect to People

What else could Keily and Chris have done to get the love they didn't get from their parents? The second half of this issue, "Home Away from Family: Finding a Group," explores ways to find friendship, support, and a sense of belonging. Ask the teens to describe important connections they've made that helped them feel less alone. How did they meet those people? How did they get to know them? Did the friendship and/or group change the way they saw themselves and their futures? How?