



“Mom, Dad, I’m Pregnant…”

FOR TEENS

How can I tell my parents?



Telling your parents, “I’m pregnant,” probably seems like the hardest conversation you will ever have. Most young people fear their parents’ reactions and may try to keep the pregnancy a secret. If you are pregnant, you probably need your parents’ love, assistance, and maybe even their advice. Also, keeping secrets is not generally good for your emotional health and may affect your ability to take care of yourself. Here are some ways to start the conversation:



Set up the conversation. Start the conversation with your hopes and fears about how they will receive the news. “I need to talk to you, but I am afraid that you will start screaming or be upset.” “I really need your support and help. Please don’t be angry.”



Just say it. It’s best to get right to the point. There is no good time to tell big news, although you probably should wait for some privacy with them. If that is difficult, ask if you can speak with them in private. Just say it: “I just took a pregnancy test and I am pregnant.” Or, “I think I am pregnant” (if you don’t really know).

Give them a chance to react. Remember when you found out that you were pregnant? You were probably upset and needed time to deal with the news. Give your parents some time to have a reaction too. “I know you are freaked out. Don’t say anything. We can talk later.” Or, write a note and then talk. If they do go on and on, try hard to ignore words said in anger or fear. Come back to them the next day and, say, “I’m sorry I upset you, but I need your help and support.”

“They would be so disappointed in me.” This is a common fear among teens, but it is not what parents most often say. Parents sometimes set high standards for their children but it doesn’t mean that they expect their kids to be “perfect.” Most parents want to protect their children and give them the best possible future they can. Don’t assume you know what they would really feel.

“What was it like when…?” Ask about their experiences of any abortions, or unintentional pregnancies, or when they first had their kids. Knowing how they felt about this is helpful to understanding them and learning what it was like for them. It may help you figure out what you want to do.

Be safe. Plan ahead. If you really feel it would not be safe for you when your parents find out, consider having someone else that you trust there, like an aunt or cousin, or an older brother or sister. Pick a good time, especially when they are not drinking alcohol, if that’s something they do. If you are really envisioning the worst, make a plan where you could go to be safe. Find out what your rules your state has about young people getting reproductive healthcare without their parents’ knowledge (see Resources below). Know your options if you leave or are thrown out of the house. Be sure you carry your ID, your insurance card, and whatever money or bank account info you have.



You're both "doing your jobs." Your job is to figure out who you are. As a parent, your mom and dad are trying to protect you and your future. That's their job. They remember when you needed them every minute of the day. And they may think you still need more supervision than you think you do. But their concern is usually coming from a good place, just a different place than yours. It can feel like a conflict but you're both doing what you are supposed to do.

Remember, though, that your task is not to do the opposite of what your parents want, or to just resist them. Your job is to be responsible for the rest of your life. There is no greater responsibility than bringing a new life into the world. Pregnancy decisions have very big consequences for your life, your partner's life, and all of your families. Think about what is the right choice for you, a potential child, your partner, and your families.

You don't have to know everything. You may know how you feel, but most young people, by definition, don't have the experience to know how it COULD turn out. Talk to your parents or other relatives and adults to learn how other people have dealt with this decision and how it could affect your future.

Resources

www.MomDadImpregnant.com

Even more information about improving communication between parents and teens during a pregnancy crisis.

www.ChoiceLinkup.com

One site gives you fast accurate information on reproductive health and pregnancy options.

www.pregnancyoptions.info

A guide to making difficult decisions about pregnancy. Special sections for male partners and parents.

www.yourBackline.org

1-888-493-0092 A national toll free talk line to discuss all aspects of pregnancy decisions and options, for you, your partner, and parents.

Information on your legal rights in each state: "Mapping Our Rights" www.ipas.org/mapping; www.statehealthfacts.org; and www.sxetc.org.

Underwriting Support from

Cherry Hill Women's Center, Philadelphia Women's Center, & Hartford Gynecological Center (www.abortionusa.com)

Lovejoy Surgicenter (www.lovejoysurgicenter.com)

Summit Centers (www.summitcenters.com)

Southern Tier Women's Services (www.AmyCousinsMD.com)

Allentown Women's Center (www.allentownwomenscenter.com)

Whole Woman's Health (www.wholewomanshealth.com)

Seattle Medical and Wellness Clinic (www.smawc.com)

Allegheny Reproductive Health Center (www.alleghenyreproductive.com)

Northland Family Planning Centers (www.northlandfamilyplanning.com)

Clinic For Women, Indianapolis (www.clinic4women.net)

HPS Rx Enterprises, Inc. (www.HPSRx.com)