

Assignment Discovery Online Curriculum

Lesson title:

Teen Pregnancy

Grade level:

6-8

Subject Area:

Health, Biology

Duration:

Two class periods

Objectives:

Students will do the following:

1. Consider the short- and long-term consequences of teenagers having babies
2. Recognize the responsibilities associated with being pregnant and having a newborn
3. Become familiar with the resources available in their community for pregnant teenagers

Materials:

- Paper and pencil (for each student to keep a journal)
- Computer with Internet access (optional)

Procedures:

1. As a homework assignment, have students keep a journal of their activities for one day. Have them answer the following questions in their journal:
 - What time did you wake up?
 - What time did you go to sleep?
 - What did you eat during the day? Be specific: include fruits, vegetables, and junk food.
 - How much time did you spend with friends?
 - What activities did you participate in? How much time did you spend at each?
 - Were you tired during the day? If so, were you able to nap?
2. The next day, share with students the following information about pregnancy. Hold a class discussion about pregnancy and the health, social, psychological, and financial implications. You may want to start by sharing these facts:
 - Pregnant women must eat a balanced and healthful diet.
 - Pregnant women tire more easily, and often need to take frequent naps during the day.

- Moderate exercise is an essential part of a healthy pregnancy.
- Many pregnant women experience morning sickness, or nausea and vomiting, and a diminished appetite.
- It is crucial for pregnant women to visit their obstetrician regularly throughout their pregnancy to ensure adequate prenatal care. These doctor visits and tests can be very expensive and time-consuming, and are not always covered by health insurance.
- Even healthy pregnancies can include other physical discomforts such as constipation, mood swings, anxiety, swelling, and so on.
- Pregnancy can cause a woman to have to limit or avoid certain activities such as participating in certain sports, consuming alcohol or drugs, smoking, lifting heavy objects, and so on.

3. Ask students to consider how being pregnant would affect their daily routines. Ask them to take about 10 minutes to highlight the activities in a typical day that would be impossible or would dramatically change if they were pregnant. Ask them to share their thoughts with the class. Not only might they detect time and financial restrictions, but they might also recognize physical limitations that occur during pregnancy that limit what activities they can do.

4. Next have students consider the implications of becoming a parent. Begin by discussing how their daily routines would change if they had a child to take care of. Then focus them on the long-term challenges they would face as teen parents. How would having a child affect their education? Other aspects of their future? What kinds of financial responsibilities come with being a parent? If students strongly believe that their long-term goals would not change with a baby, you may want to share the facts below from a 1996 study (SIECUS [Sexual Information and Education Council of the United States]; Web site <<http://siecus.org/pubs/fact/fact0010.html>>):

- Ninety-four percent of teens believe that if they were pregnant they would stay in school; in reality, 70 percent eventually complete high school.
- Fifty-one percent of teens believe that if they were involved in a pregnancy they would marry the baby's mother or father; in reality, 81 percent of teenage births are to unmarried teens.
- Twenty-six percent of teens believe that they would need welfare to support a child; in reality, 56 percent receive public assistance to cover the cost of delivery and 5 percent receive public assistance by their early 20s.

5. The next day, ask students to consider how they would have to take care of themselves during a pregnancy. For example, what is necessary for a healthy pregnancy? (Examples: good medical care, including routine examinations; a well-balanced diet; plenty of sleep; regular moderate exercise; sufficient vitamins; avoidance of certain over-the-counter drugs, alcoholic beverages, cigarette smoke, and illegal drugs.)

6. Then ask students what they would have to do to take care of themselves and their baby after birth. (Examples: healthful diets for each of them, especially if they are breast

feeding; plenty of rest; regular doctor visits; positive role-modeling and interaction.) Are they aware of the number of doctor visits a newborn requires? Do they know about inoculations children need? Do they know what to feed a baby and how often? Are they prepared to become positive role models for their child? Ask students to name any issues they will have to learn about to care for a baby.

7. Ask students if they were to become a teen parent, how they would make the most of the situation. For example, what people or services in their community would be available for support? Suggest that they visit the Internet and other resources to research programs. They may find home-visiting programs, education or job skills programs, homes for teen parents and their children, special child care programs, and programs for young fathers.

8. Conclude the lesson by asking students whether their ideas about teen pregnancy have changed as a result of working on this lesson. Knowing what they know now, would they be more careful to prevent a pregnancy from occurring? Would boys and girls both be more concerned and take on more responsibility for their behavior?

9. For more information about teen pregnancy, see the following Web sites:

Sex Information for Teens

<<http://www.siecus.org/teen/index.html>>

Campaign for Our Children

<<http://www.cfoc.org>>

National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

<<http://www.teenpregnancy.org/>>

Life Stories: Self-Portraits by Teen Mothers

<<http://www.journale.com/teenmothers/>>

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think teenagers have sex? What are some reasons they don't use contraception?
2. Society sends mixed messages about sex. How do the media and the entertainment industry influence teenagers' decisions about sex? Do you wish sex were treated differently in popular television shows and movies? If so, how?
3. What are some ways your parents, older siblings, or other adults have or could have influenced your decision about sex? What are some things that an adult could say to encourage a teenager to wait before having sex? What could an adult say to encourage a teenager to use effective contraception?

4. When a teenage girl gets pregnant, what role should the father of her child play? Do you think boys always play this role? Why or why not?

Evaluation:

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate how well students participate in class discussions on sensitive topics, understand the responsibilities associated with being a parent, and apply what they learned to their own lives.

Three points: participated actively in class discussion; demonstrated above-average ability to discuss issues with maturity and insight; demonstrated good understanding of the responsibilities associated with being a parent; showed strong ability to apply what the student has learned to his or her own life.

Two points: participated in class discussion; demonstrated ability to discuss issues with some maturity and insight; demonstrated average understanding of the responsibilities associated with being a parent; showed average ability to apply what the student has learned to his or her own life.

One point: participated little in class discussion; had difficulty discussing topics with the class; demonstrated weak understanding of the responsibilities associated with being a parent; had difficulty applying what the student has learned to his or her own life.

Extension:

How Much Does a Baby Cost?

Discuss with students the financial responsibility of taking care of a child. Have students brainstorm about what expenses are involved in a month of parenting an infant. Their answers should include diapers, formula, child care, and clothing. They should research the costs of these items for one month, making sure to find out the amount of each item. Have students prepare a cost report using their findings. How much would they need to earn to support a child for one month and still remain in school? Could they still have a social life? Could they still save for their future and their child's?

World Book Online Search:

Baby ER: The Heroic Doctors and Nurses Who Perform Medicine's Tiniest Miracles
Edward Humes. Simon & Schuster, 2000.

Follow in detail the life of a busy neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), where doctors and nurses who specialize in neonatology care for tiny babies. Case studies reveal the complexity of this demanding and rewarding career. A brief history of the development of the NICU is covered. A list of resources for parents and others and an extensive index follow the text.

Careers in Nursing: Managing Your Future in the Changing World of Healthcare
Annette Vallano. Simon & Schuster, 1999.

Nursing has changed dramatically with the evolution of health care, and it will continue to change in the new world of managed care. *Careers in Nursing* describes how nurses can take control of their careers by exploring changes in the field, assessing their personal strengths and weaknesses, developing career goals, and putting together a plan of action to seek out the kind of positions they want. Full of practical suggestions, sample resumes, practice interview questions, and more, this is a very useful title.

Vocabulary:

abstinence

Definition: The choice to not have sexual intercourse.

Context: The only way to completely guarantee that you will not get pregnant or contract a sexually transmitted disease is through abstinence.

teen pregnancy

Definition: Pregnancy occurring in young women between the ages of 13 and 19.

Context: The United States has the highest rates of teen pregnancy and births in the Western industrialized world.

Academic Standards:

The following standards are from the American Association for Health Education for students in grades six through eight:

1. Students will demonstrate the ability to access valid health information and health-promoting products and services.
2. Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and reduce health risks.
3. Students will analyze the influence of culture, media, technology, and other factors on health.
4. Students will demonstrate the ability to use goal-setting and decision-making skills to enhance health.

This lesson plan adheres to the standards set forth in the *National Science Education Standards*, in particular the category Science in Personal and Social Perspectives.

Credit: Joy Brewster, freelance writer and editor of educational material.

This lesson was developed in conjunction with Nancy Hudson, health education consultant.

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