

Unsure About Your Pregnancy?

A Guide to Making the
Right Decision for You

What do I do?



We prepared this booklet for the many women, teen and adult, who become pregnant and find it hard to make a decision about what to do.

The ideas in this booklet are based on our experience counseling thousands of women.

This booklet, like counseling, does not encourage you to make any particular decision. Rather, it offers ideas that have been helpful to other women as they struggled to make the decision that was right for them.

Each person reading this is facing her own special situation. Yet we have found that each woman also has some things in common with others who are facing the same decision. We hope you will use these ideas to help you become clear about your own thoughts and feelings.

First, Are You Pregnant?

How Do You Feel About Being Pregnant?

When you suspect that you are pregnant, your first step is to get a pregnancy test. If you use a home kit, you should still have the pregnancy confirmed with a physical exam by a health care provider.

If you find out that you are not pregnant — and if you really don't want to be pregnant now — this may be the time to obtain a dependable method of birth control.

If you are pregnant, you have three basic choices:

Choice A: Continue the pregnancy and become a parent.

Choice B: Continue the pregnancy and arrange for temporary foster care or an adoption, either within your family or through an agency.

Choice C: End the pregnancy now by having an abortion.

The rest of the booklet asks questions to help you clarify

- Your feelings about being pregnant;
- Your plans and dreams for the near future; and
- Your thoughts, values, or beliefs about each of your options.

This guide also gives ideas about

- Where you can obtain more information and help; and
- How to go about deciding which option to choose.

Perhaps you planned to get pregnant because you wanted to have a baby, and that is still what you want most at this time. If so, you will probably decide on Choice A — continuing the pregnancy and becoming a parent. If that is no longer what you want, or if you didn't intend to get pregnant in the first place, you can start by looking more closely at how you feel about being pregnant. An unintended pregnancy can arouse many different feelings. In fact, most women find they have mixed or conflicting feelings.

For example, you might feel:

- Worried about being able to manage a baby;
- Afraid you'll have to give up other things that are important to you; or
- Concerned about how other people may react.

At the same time, you might also feel:

- Happy to learn that you can get pregnant;
- Pleased to have the opportunity to have a baby; or
- Excited by a new and unique event in your life.

In the following space, list the different feelings you have right now about being pregnant. (When you can't think of any more, go on to the next section. Later, if you think of other feelings, you can add them to your list.)

What Are Your Plans and Dreams?

Here are some good questions to ask yourself about your life right now and your future:

What are two or three things that matter most to me in my life right now?

What are two or three things that I hope to have or achieve in the next five or ten years?

In order to have or achieve those things,

How would becoming a parent help?

How would temporary foster care or adoption help?

How would abortion help?

What would I lose or give up right now:

If I become a parent?

If I arrange for temporary foster care or an adoption?

If I have an abortion?

What would I lose or give up in the next five or ten years:

If I become a parent?

If I arrange for temporary foster care or an adoption?

If I have an abortion?

How much money could it cost me:

If I become a parent?

If I arrange for temporary foster care or an adoption?

If I have an abortion?

How would other people who matter (such as my partner, parents, friends) react:

If I become a parent?

If I arrange for temporary foster care or an adoption?

If I have an abortion?

What are Your Values? What do You Believe?

Up to this point, you've been looking at the possible effects of different decisions on your plans and dreams. Now look at your thoughts, values, and beliefs about your situation and the different choices.

Following are some statements people often make. Check the ones that fit for you, and write in other thoughts you have.

Choice A *Becoming A Parent*

- I feel ready to take on the tasks of being a parent.
- Some people have said they will help me.
- I want a child more than I want anything else.
- My partner and I both want to have a baby.
- I think I am too young (or too old) to have a baby.
- I don't believe I can manage this by myself.
- I don't have enough money to raise a child properly.
- Having a child now would stop me from having the life I want for myself.
- Having a child will cause problems for the children I already have.

Other:

Choice B *Arranging For Temporary Foster Care or An Adoption*

- I could continue the pregnancy and give birth, and arrange for the child to stay temporarily with a family member or in foster care until I am ready to care for a child.
- I could continue the pregnancy and give birth, without having to raise the child.
- I could help the child have parents who want it and can care for it.
- I could postpone being a parent myself until later in my life when I feel ready.
- I like the idea of giving someone else the baby they can't create themselves.
- My family would rather have the baby stay in the family than be raised by strangers.
- I don't think I could give up the baby after nine months of pregnancy and delivery.
- I would not like living with the idea of someone else caring for my baby.
- I would worry about whether the baby was being well treated.

Other:

Choice C *Having An Abortion*

- I would like to postpone being a parent until I am able to provide for a child (older, finished school, more financially secure, in a stable relationship).
- I don't want to be a single parent.
- My partner doesn't want a baby, and I want to consider his feelings.
- An abortion is a safe and sensible way to take care of an unwanted pregnancy.
- My religious beliefs are against abortion.
- I am afraid I might not be able to get pregnant again.
- My family (or someone else who is important to me) opposes abortion.
- I don't have enough money right now to pay for an abortion.

Other:



Summing Up Your Feelings

If you — like so many women — have mixed feelings about being pregnant and about each of the choices open to you, making a decision can feel scary and difficult. In making your decision, it is helpful to know your feelings, to name them, and to look at them. To show how you are feeling right now, try to finish each of these sentences.

The idea of becoming a parent makes me feel _____
because _____

The idea of arranging for temporary foster care or an adoption makes me feel _____ because _____

The idea of having an abortion makes me feel _____
because _____

Now that you have explored your choices and clarified your feelings and values about the choices, you may be ready to make a decision. Since you probably have conflicting feelings about each choice, you may find that whatever decision you make won't feel like the "perfect" decision. It is natural to continue to have some mixed feelings. Ask yourself, "Can I handle those feelings?"

If your answer is "Yes," you are ready to act on your decision. If you cannot decide, you may need to get more information about your choices or talk with someone you trust — not to decide for you, but to help you decide what you think will be best for you.

That person could be a:

- Parent or other family member;
- Teacher or religious counselor;
- Close friend or partner who cares about you; or
- Counselor in a social service or family planning agency such as Planned Parenthood.

The questions in this booklet might help you and that person discuss your choices. Even without knowing how far along your pregnancy is, we must emphasize the importance of deciding soon. If you decide to continue the pregnancy, it is important to begin prenatal care early so you and your baby are healthy. If you decide on abortion, the earlier you obtain it, the safer it will be.

No one can predict the future. No one can be certain what all of the consequences of any choice may be. What you can do, however, is carefully consider your plans, your values, and your feelings, and then make the best decision you can at the time.

Do You Need More Information?

There may be things you need to find out before you can make a decision. If so, you can get more facts about each of your choices by calling or requesting information from places like the following:

- Adoption agencies and abortion clinics in your area are listed in the yellow pages of your telephone book. (If an agency tells you that abortion is unsafe or immoral, that is a clue that they are not interested in helping you make your own decision; call the National Abortion Federation's Hotline at 800-772-9100 for the name of agencies which are known to provide accurate information and non-judgmental assistance.)
- Your state, provincial, or local department of social services, family planning clinics, and many physicians have information about adoption, prenatal care, delivery, and parenting. Once again, it is important to remember that not all resources will be equally knowledgeable and non-judgmental if you are still considering your options.
- The National Abortion Federation's toll-free, confidential Hotline has facts about pregnancy and abortion and can refer you to qualified medical professionals near you (800-772-9100). You can also visit the NAF website at <http://www.prochoice.org>.

Note:

If you are teenager considering abortion, some states say you can make that decision on your own, but others require teens to involve a parent or close family member.

If you have questions about your state, call the National Abortion Federation's toll-free Hotline at 800-772-9100.



For Information About Abortion

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800-772-9100 or visit our website at
<http://www.prochoice.org>.