



Discussion Guide

For Adults Working with Teens

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I Chose Abortion

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Two years ago, I ran away from home to live with my 18-year-old boyfriend, because I was having a lot of problems with my mom and I couldn't handle it anymore. My boyfriend wanted to help me out.

I hadn't been using any birth control with my boyfriend, because I felt safe with him, and he'd recently been tested for sexually transmitted diseases.

But then I missed my period and started getting very sick in the morning, so I took a home pregnancy test. It was positive.

Only my boyfriend, his mother, and my close friend knew about my pregnancy. I told them because I knew they'd understand and help me in any way.

My boyfriend and I decided I should have an abortion. We were worried that because I had run away and because he was older, he'd get in trouble if anyone knew we had a baby. We didn't want to put the baby up for adoption or become parents.

After we made the decision, we didn't know where to go for the procedure, so we went to a local Planned Parenthood to talk with a counselor. During the visit, which was confidential, I took another pregnancy test (to make sure it was positive), and then the counselor referred us to another clinic, because our Planned Parenthood doesn't perform abortions.

The clinic was about a half-hour away from our town. It dealt with all aspects of pregnancy—from prenatal care to abortion. I wasn't sure what to expect when we got there, and I was very nervous.

After we got there, they talked to me about adoption and parenthood. I told them that these options weren't going to work for me. They just wanted me to be sure that abortion was the road I wanted to take. It was, and I chose it.

I had to wait two weeks before I could get the procedure done, because the clinic was very busy. Other than that, everything went off without a problem. My boyfriend's mother helped us pay for the abortion, which was \$800.

That day, the people who did my abortion were professional and compassionate. The clinic was clean, and the procedure was over quickly.

I wish that I could've been in a better situation to keep my baby. It still hurts me to know that I stopped a life, but, at the time, I thought it was the solution. I don't think that abortion is the best answer, but it's what many girls choose. It all depends on your situation.

It's important for both partners to be involved in the decision and get as much support as they can. The decision definitely weighs on you. My boyfriend was involved in the whole process and told me that the choice was really up to me.

In many ways after an abortion, you're relieved that you won't have this new responsibility or bring something into the world that you can't provide for. On the flip side, though, it hurts, because you think of all the things that could've been. For a while after, it goes through your mind every day. You definitely remember the whole situation for a long time.

I'm now on Depo-Provera to prevent pregnancy.

Ally, 16, is a *Sex, Etc.* contributor who lives in the Midwest.

Abortion Glossary

Abortion Laws and You: Do you know your state's laws on abortion for minors? You can call the National Abortion Federation Hotline at **1-800-772-9100**.

Adoption: While most pregnant teens choose teen parenthood or abortion, some girls choose adoption. For more info, contact the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse, 330 C Street, SW, Washington, D.C. 20447, **1-888-251-0075**.

Ally didn't need her parent's permission, but many states have laws that require a teen to notify or get permission from one or both parents before she can get an abortion. You should know about these laws:

Parental Notification: A law that requires a female minor to notify one or both of her parents before she can get an abortion, usually 24 to 48 hours before the procedure.

Parental Consent: A law that requires a female minor to get consent (permission) from one or both of her parents before she can get an abortion, usually 24 to 48 hours before the procedure.

Judicial Bypass: If a female minor wants an abortion and lives in a state that requires parental consent, she may be able to go before a judge to seek a "judicial bypass." The judge decides whether or not she can get an abortion without her parents' consent, usually because there's physical, sexual, or emotional abuse at home. The National Abortion Federation Hotline at **1-800-772-9100** can help you.