



Discussion Guide

For Adults Working with Teens

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Lesson: My Sister's Secret

Learning Objectives: By the end of the activity, participants will be able to:

- Describe at least three alternatives for a teen that is facing an unplanned pregnancy.
- Rank which alternative they believe is the best option for that teen.
- List at least two places where teens could go for help if they or their partner might be pregnant.

Preparation:

Double-sided copy “**Teen Resources Wallet Cards**” and cut along lines

Materials:

- Copy of “**My Sister's Secret**” for each participant
- Copy of “**Teen Resources Wallet Cards**” for each participant
- Newsprint
- Markers

(Facilitator Note: It is helpful to try and pair a male and female to work together to decrease the chances of blaming one gender or the other for the situation. Please also note that the purpose of this activity is to expand the possible alternatives for any teen facing an unplanned pregnancy. In order to meet this goal, help students to resist focusing narrowly on one choice to the exclusion of all others. Support and value all reasonable options to help your students think “outside of the box.”)

Procedure:

1. Explain that teens may recently have heard about some situations in which a teenage girl gives birth to a baby and then abandons the baby, denying she was ever pregnant. These births have happened in bathrooms, hotels, even at the prom. Sometimes the baby dies as a result and usually criminal charges are brought against the teen. Since people have a lot of strong feelings about what the girl did and what she could have done differently, it's important to talk about these situations in order to be prepared, in case this ever happens to anyone you know. Instruct students to find a partner and sit next to each other, so they can work together on this activity.

2. Read the following situation to the group:

Aimee is a 16-year-old girl who lives at home with her parents and goes to your school. She had been dating a guy for a few months when she became pregnant. Unfortunately, they broke up before she knew she was pregnant, and he's involved with someone else now. She gained some weight, but at no point during the pregnancy did she appear obviously pregnant. Aimee also struggles with depression. She told no one she was pregnant and ended up giving birth to the baby by herself, without any medical help, and then left the baby at a local hospital.

3. Instruct the pairs to imagine that Aimee confides in them about what she has just done. They are to brainstorm what they could do after Aimee tells them what happened. The pair should think of as many different ideas as possible and not limit themselves. The first pair to come up with 15 alternatives should raise their hands. Allow the group three to five minutes to brainstorm and, as soon as the first pair has listed 15 alternatives, instruct the rest of the group to stop.

4. Go around the group and ask each pair to share one alternative, while you write it on a piece of newsprint or chalkboard. Repeat this procedure until you have an exhaustive list of all the possibilities the pairs have created.

5. Next, instruct each pair to look back at their original list and choose what they believe to be the BEST choice for Aimee. Ask for volunteers to suggest what might be the best choice given Aimee's situation. Briefly discuss the possible consequences of each choice. (For example, if a pair suggests that they call Aimee's parents, discuss what the possible consequences, positive and negative, might be for involving her parents.)

6. Next, ask the pairs to again look at their lists and select what they think they would MOST LIKELY do in the situation. The pairs should be prepared to defend their decision in front of the large group. Allow pairs a few minutes for discussion. Then ask for volunteers to share the decision they are MOST LIKELY to make given the situation. Discuss the possible options, focusing on why there might be a difference between the BEST choice and the one they would MOST LIKELY make.

7. Distribute copies of "My Sister's Secret" and read together with your group.

8. Instruct each pair to find another pair to join with, to form groups of four. Give the groups five minutes to discuss the following question related to the story: "What are the five most important things that could have prevented Tanya's situation?"

9. After five minutes, ask each group to share one item from its list with the large group. Encourage participants to be as specific as possible, so that students will

understand the resources available to them if they are in a crisis situation. (For example, if a student suggests that Tanya could have gone to get birth control, ask the group where in their community a teen can get birth control. Or if a student suggests that Tanya could have talked to her parents, ask the group how teens might bring up the topic of sex or pregnancy with their parents. What could they say?)

10. Distribute “Teen Resources Wallet Cards” to the group. Tell students that these wallet cards contain national hotlines and Web sites that teens can use if they ever need help or are have an emergency. Remind them that no matter the situation, there are always people and organizations that can help. No one is ever alone.

11. For closure, ask participants to go around in a whip format and say one word about how they are feeling or what they are thinking as a result of this activity.

The Discussion Guide was created by Nora Gelperin, M.Ed., director of training and education at Answer. For additional lessons, go to http://answer.rutgers.edu/page/lesson_plans.

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