Pregnancy Advisory Service Considering having your first child? Hopes & realities

The Royal Women's Hospital Fact Sheet / www.thewomens.org.au



When faced with unplanned pregnancy women might go through any or some of the following stages and feelings. These are all normal reactions to a major life event, an event that can sometimes feel like a crisis.

Some women realise quickly that they are leaning towards a termination. Others realise they're leaning towards continuing the pregnancy. Sometimes they want to weigh up whether they're ready to parent — even when it's not their first time. Each pregnancy in your life will have a different set of circumstances. Factors like your age, financial situation, supports and physical and mental health will all differ at various stages in your life. All of this will affect your decision about if and when to parent.

Common stages and feelings in an unplanned pregnancy

- Shock
- Disbelief
- Panic
- Concern or worry
- Fear
- Excitement
- Exploring fantasies of parenting associated with your hopes, dreams and goals
- Exploring realities of parenting associated with your hopes, dreams and goals
- Practical decision-making (the reality)
- Coming down to earth (reconciled to the decision)
- Moving on after the decision is made.

Exploring hopes and realities

The following activities will help you look at the 'hopes' and 'realities' of your decision on whether to become a parent at this time. You can complete them on your own or share them with a trusted friend, partner, family member or support worker. A diary can also be used to keep a record of how you came to your decision.

These activities work well with our *Pregnancy and Parenting Resources* information sheet.

Values, goals, hopes, priorities¹

• Write a list of things you value in your life at the moment e.g. 'I like having my independence, going out with my friends, having money to spend on myself, babysitting friends' children, looking after my dog'

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5 years 10 year	g. 'I want to be financially secure, I want to travel overseas, want to finish my studies, I want to have children before I'm 30'	Notes /
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Now allow any fears or worries or questions to come up. Let your practical 'head-voice' speak	Notes
- write down what is it saying?	_
Allow yourself to explore the practical side of how you would survive in the real world. Now that you know what you really want, let your practical side and your heart have a constructive debate. Don't let your head overrule your heart or vice-versa: just question	
your fantasy. Write down the questions that keep coming up in this debate.	
How are you able to answer these questions?	
Tow are you able to answer triese questions:	
Do you need information or help to be able to answer your questions – write down what you	
need to find out and where you might go for help.	
Are there any nagging doubts you want to explore?	
Are there things you are worried or fearful about?	
How do you feel now?	
ore questions – for first-time parents ²	
Have you ever done any child-care for family/friends? What did you like about it? What didn't you like about it?	
writat didir t you line about it:	
What do you do on an average weekend? What do you look forward to?	

Could you give that up and stay at home with the child? Could you take a child with you to those activities?	Notes /
If you are still at school, can you continue? If you are working, when will you be able to return? Who will take care of your newborn? Who would take care of your child if you get sick?	
Where would you live? Is it a reasonable setting to bring up a child? If not, are there options for you to move?	
oout the father	
Is he involved in your life? If so, how do you want him involved?	
Does he want to be a father to his child?	
Does he have children already – how many?. If so, does he spend time with them – how often?	
Does he provide financial support for his children – how much?	
Do you expect him to be involved in raising your child – does he want to?	
Do you trust him to be involved in taking care of your child?	
If he is not involved, how do you feel about being a single parent?	

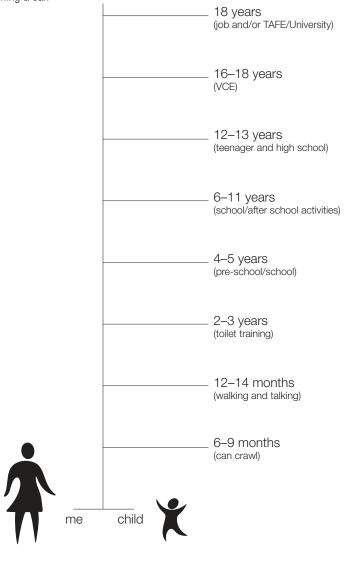
Timeline of life events

The timeline below shows the major events in your child's life. On your side of the line mark your age at each event in your child's life and what you hope to have achieved.

· How old will I be at each stage of my child's life?

Put events in your life on one side of the timeline – eg. VCE, driver's licence, TAFE/university,

first job, moving out, owning a car.



References

- 1 Activities adapted from Council of Single Mothers and their Children Inc. (CSMC), 'Making a Decision Exercises', 'Life with Baby: young mums tell', Carlton South, 2007, pp.19-22.
- 2 Adapted with permission from 'Activity 4: Having a baby/Being a parent', Johnston, Margaret R, 'Pregnancy Options Workbook', Ferre Institute, New York, USA, http://www.pregnancyoptions.info, viewed 7 June 2010.

Disclaimer The Royal Women's Hospital does not accept any liability to any person for the information or advice (or use of such information or advice) which is provided in this fact sheet or incorporated into it by reference. We provide this information on the understanding that all persons accessing it take responsibility for assessing its relevance and accuracy. Women are encouraged to discuss their health needs with a health practitioner. If you have concerns about your health, you should seek advice from your health care provider or if you require urgent care you should go to the nearest hospital Emergency Department. © The Royal Women's Hospital, February 2010

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