

**IT'S YOUR  
CALL: MAKE  
THE RIGHT  
DECISION  
FOR YOU**

**A**

**B**

**C**

# EXAMINE YOUR

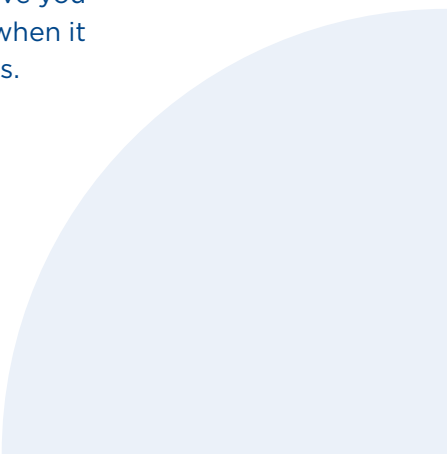
## **SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:**

- > Are there things that have happened to you that make it difficult to think about the future?
- > What do you need to make you feel secure and safe?
- > Would consistent family support and a permanent relationship (adult and/or peer who you could depend on) make life better?
- > Do you know how to build strong relationships and how to figure out who are your real friends?
- > Do you know how to take care of your physical and mental health, including avoiding unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs)?
- > Do you have goals for the future and know where to go to get to support to help you achieve your goals?

This brochure is for youth in foster care and it is designed to help you think carefully about sex, health, and relationships. It provides resources that will give you support and information that will help you when making important decisions about your life.

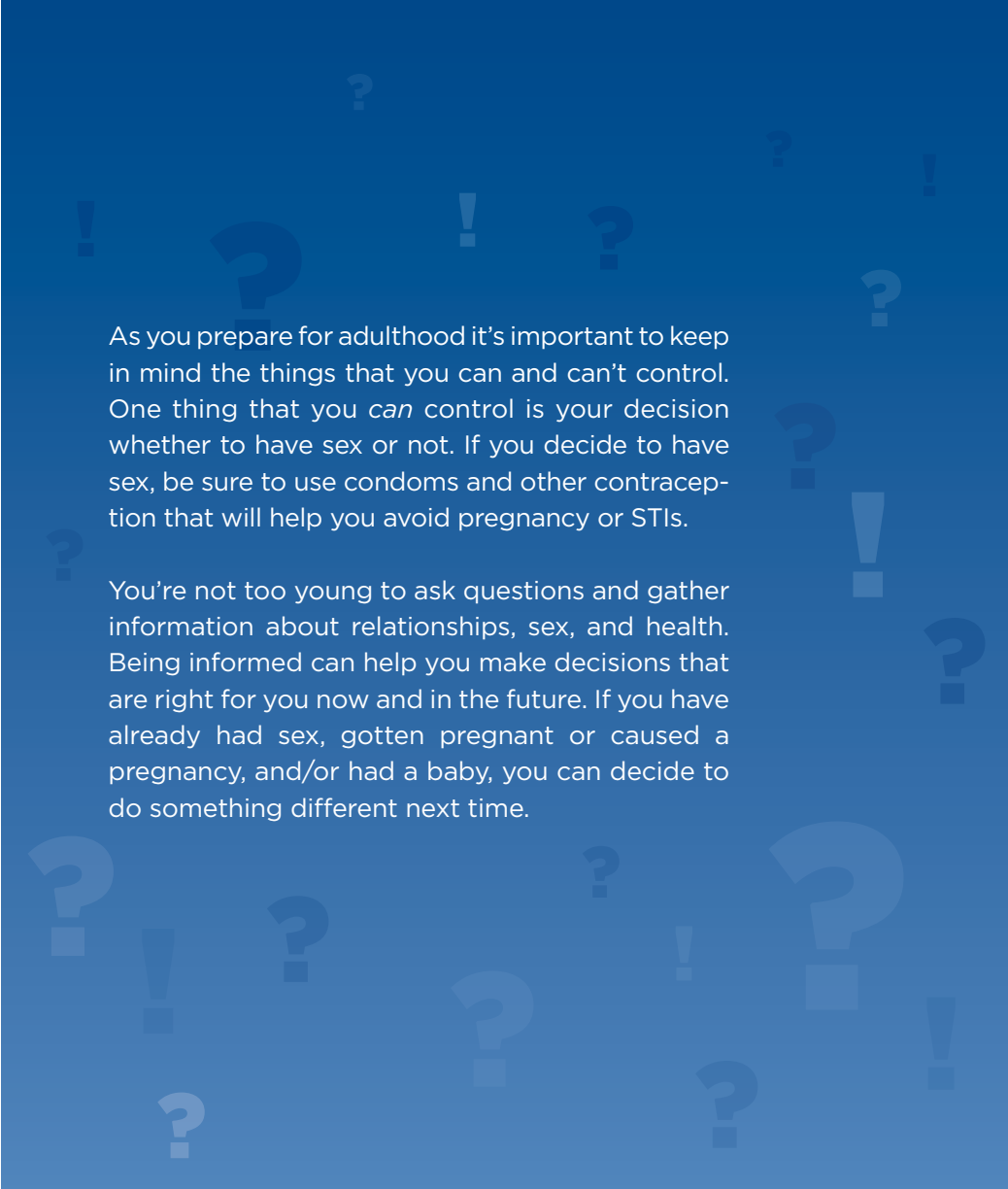
# WORLD

There are many things that may affect your answers to these questions and how you see the world, including: losing parents or other important people in your life, lacking a stable place to live, uncertainty about having enough food and clothing, experiencing physical or sexual abuse, attending lots of different schools, and the inability to have the same friends for very long. Knowing the answers to some of these questions may help you put things into perspective and give you the ability to make healthy decisions when it comes to sex, health, and relationships.



# THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

More than 94 percent of Americans of all ages recognize that education, full time work, financial independence, and the ability to support a family are necessary to be a successful adult. Barely half think having a child or getting married as a teen makes you an adult.

The background is a solid blue color with several faint, semi-transparent icons scattered across it. These icons include question marks and exclamation points in various sizes and orientations, creating a pattern of inquiry and emphasis.

As you prepare for adulthood it's important to keep in mind the things that you can and can't control. One thing that you *can* control is your decision whether to have sex or not. If you decide to have sex, be sure to use condoms and other contraception that will help you avoid pregnancy or STIs.

You're not too young to ask questions and gather information about relationships, sex, and health. Being informed can help you make decisions that are right for you now and in the future. If you have already had sex, gotten pregnant or caused a pregnancy, and/or had a baby, you can decide to do something different next time.

# RELATIONSHIPS

**You probably already know that there are many types of relationships in life.** Establishing healthy relationships with peers and adults—people who you feel good about and who make you feel good about yourself—is important. You should have a close relationship and strong communication with a caring adult who you can trust and talk to about your past experiences and your present-day feelings, fears, and goals. Everyone needs someone they can trust and confide in. Who is that person for you? If it's difficult to think of someone, consider an adult you care about and who cares about you. It could be a foster parent, case manager, teacher, coach, mentor, doctor or nurse, religious leader, brother or sister, or other relative.



# RELATIONSHIPS

**When you think about having a sexual relationship, ask what is right for you.** Healthy relationships include a balance of respect, trust, and honesty and build on similar or shared experiences or interests. The decisions you make about your relationships matter a lot—both in the short-term and in the long-term. Developing good relationships is a learning process no matter what age you are and it's okay to ask questions. So, get some facts, tips, and feedback from an adult you trust about what makes a relationship healthy. This can help you avoid an unhealthy one.



# SEX, PROTECTION,

**Have you experienced pressure to have sex? Does it seem like all your friends are having sex and that, if you want to fit in, you are expected to as well?** Be strong and respect yourself enough to take care of yourself. It's alright to say "no" or "not now." Having sex can be life-altering—after all, you can become a parent or get an STI. Besides, having sex is not the only way to express your affection for someone and show him or her that you care.

Remember, sex often doesn't mean the same thing to two people. Having sex before you are ready may turn a relationship built on honesty, openness, meaningful conversations, friendship, and genuine intimacy, into a relationship filled with pressure, questioning, dishonesty, and second-guessing. Be honest with yourself and remember to answer this question: what do *you* want to do?

If you decide to have sex you need to know how to protect yourself. Sex is a big deal and can have big consequences. When you are sure you are ready, you will need to learn how to keep yourself healthy and make sure you use birth control that will help to prevent pregnancy and STIs. Some things to keep in mind:

- Seek medical advice to learn about the best health options for you.
- Preventing pregnancy means you need to use protection every single time. Sexually active couples who don't use protection during intercourse have an 85-90 percent chance of becoming pregnant over the course of one year.
- Preventing pregnancy is both partners' responsibility. If you can't talk with your boyfriend or girlfriend about birth control, is this someone you should have sex with?
- Guys, be smart—insist on using protection. If you don't, you can contract an STI or get someone pregnant. The effects of early parenthood follow young fathers, mothers, and their children throughout their lives.



# AND PREGNANCY

- > Girls, be smart—sex won't make him yours and a baby won't make him stay. Having a baby can affect your life in many ways. Even though you may feel that a baby gives you someone to love and someone to love you unconditionally, remember that a baby is a lifetime commitment. Remember too that babies don't provide unconditional love, they *require* it.
- > How will your future be affected if you have a child? Will you be able to finish your education and/or complete your job plans? Balancing school, work, and parenting is stressful.
- > Will the baby end up being taken care of by someone else? Children born to teen mothers are more likely to end up in foster care and are twice as likely to have a reported case of abuse and neglect compared to children born to a mother in her early twenties.

**If you think you are ready to have a baby ask yourself these questions:**

- > Are you ready to take care of a baby? Can you financially support a baby now and for at least 18 years? Are you at a point in your life where you could give a child the opportunities you would want to give them? If you already have a baby are you ready for another one?
- > Who will help you? Having a child is a hard job even when planned and supported by your boyfriend or girlfriend and family.

# REALITY CHECK



- 1.** More than half of teens are not having sex. Seventy-five percent who have had sex wish they had waited, and 75 percent don't see anything embarrassing about admitting that they're a virgin.
- 2.** Eight out of ten first-time teen sexual relationships last six months or less and one out of four of those are one-time occurrences.
- 3.** Teen mothers are less likely to complete the education necessary to qualify for a well-paying job.
- 4.** A child's chances of growing up in poverty is 9 times greater if 1) the mother gave birth as a teen, 2) the parents were unmarried when the child was born, and 3) the mother did not receive a high school diploma or GED.

# WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

Decisions about relationships, health, pregnancy, and sex can be overwhelming. Increase the chance that you will have a healthy future and make the decision that is right for you. The resources below can provide you with information to help you make good decisions. Get it right. Be informed. Have a plan!

## **QUESTIONS ABOUT SEX, CONTRACEPTION, AND STIs, SEE:**

**American Social Health Association:** 1-800-227-8922 or [www.ashastd.org](http://www.ashastd.org)  
or [www.iwannaknow.org](http://www.iwannaknow.org)

**MTV/It's Your Sex Life:** 1-888-BE-SAFE-1 (237-2331) or [www.itsyoursexlife.com](http://www.itsyoursexlife.com)

**Pause:** [www.fox.com/pause](http://www.fox.com/pause)

**Planned Parenthood:** 1-800-230-PLAN or [www.plannedparenthood.org](http://www.plannedparenthood.org)  
or [www.teenwire.com](http://www.teenwire.com)

**Sex, Etc:** [www.sexetc.org](http://www.sexetc.org)

**StayTeen:** [www.StayTeen.org](http://www.StayTeen.org)

**Teen Health:** [www.teenhealth.org/teen](http://www.teenhealth.org/teen)

**National HIV Testing Resources:** [www.hivtest.org](http://www.hivtest.org)

## **QUESTIONS ABOUT EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION, SEE:**

**American Social Health Association:** 1-800-227-8922 or [www.ashastd.org](http://www.ashastd.org)  
or [www.iwannaknow.org](http://www.iwannaknow.org)

**Association of Reproductive Health Professionals:** 1-888-NOT2LATE  
or [www.not-2-late.com](http://www.not-2-late.com)

**MTV/It's Your Sex Life:** 1-888-BE-SAFE-1 (237-2331)  
or [www.itsyoursexlife.com](http://www.itsyoursexlife.com)

**Planned Parenthood:** 1-800-230-PLAN or [www.plannedparenthood.org](http://www.plannedparenthood.org)  
or [www.teenwire.com](http://www.teenwire.com)



## **QUESTIONS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS, SEE:**

**Pause:** [www.fox.com/pause](http://www.fox.com/pause)

**StayTeen:** [www.StayTeen.org](http://www.StayTeen.org)

**Teen Health:** [www.teenhealth.org/teen](http://www.teenhealth.org/teen)

## **IF YOU HAVE BEEN SEXUALLY ABUSED OR ASSAULTED, SEE:**

**Covenant House:** 1-800-999-9999 or [www.covenanthouse.org](http://www.covenanthouse.org)

**National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline:** 1-866-331-9474 (1-866-331-8453 for the hearing impaired) or [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org)

**National Child Abuse Hotline:** 1-800-422-4453

**Healing Woman Foundation:** 1-800-477-4111

**National Sexual Assault Hotline:** 1-800-656-4673

## **IF YOU ARE GOING THROUGH A CRISIS, SEE:**

**Covenant House:** 1-800-999-9999 or [www.covenanthouse.org](http://www.covenanthouse.org)

## **IF YOU HAVE RUN AWAY OR NEED SHELTER, SEE:**

**Covenant House:** 1-800-999-9999 or [www.covenanthouse.org](http://www.covenanthouse.org)

**National Runaway Switchboard:** 1-800-621-4000

or [www.1800runaway.org/youth\\_teens/nrs\\_help.html](http://www.1800runaway.org/youth_teens/nrs_help.html)

## **LOCAL RESOURCES**

**THIS SECTION SHOULD BE COMPLETED BY A CASE MANAGER OR CAREGIVER. PLEASE USE THIS TEMPLATE TO DEVELOP A LIST OF RESOURCES THAT ARE AVAILABLE WITHIN YOUR COMMUNITY AND STATE FOR THE YOUTH IN YOUR CARE.**



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**BIRTH CONTROL (FAMILY PLANNING)**

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**HEALTH CARE INFORMATION**

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**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

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**A MENTOR/FIND SOMEONE TO CONNECT WITH**

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**CHILD WELFARE SERVICES**

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**SOMEONE TO TALK TO**

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**CHILD CARE OPTIONS**

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**EDUCATION OPTIONS**

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**VOCATIONAL COUNSELING**

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**SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

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**MENTAL HEALTH**

*\*If you have received this resource and the information above is incomplete, please seek assistance from an adult such as a health provider, guidance counselor, case manager or parent to fill it in.*



The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy seeks to improve the lives and future prospects of children and families and, in particular, to help ensure that children are born into stable, two-parent families who are committed to and ready for the demanding task of raising the next generation. Our specific strategy is to prevent teen pregnancy and unplanned pregnancy among single, young adults. We support a combination of responsible values and behavior by both men and women and responsible policies in both the public and private sectors.

If we are successful, child and family well-being will improve. There will be less poverty, more opportunities for young men and women to complete their education or achieve other life goals, fewer abortions, and a stronger nation.