

TEEN PARENT STORIES - No. 1

A Note To Your Teen Living Class:

As a Teen Living teacher for many years, one of the highlights of each semester is the day the teen mothers come to my class to share their stories. My students are always amazed and very sympathetic with the teen mothers, even under the best circumstances. I would like to share some of the most memorable stories and circumstances in the hopes you can learn from them.

Sincerely,
A Teen Living Teacher

Brandy was 17 and had a pretty face and an athletic body. In fact, she loved all types of sports, but especially basketball. She attended a local high school and had played on the high school team as a 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grader. At least, she began the season her senior year, but wasn't able to complete it.

Brandy had been offered a full scholarship from U.C.L.A. which would also have paid for her room and board. And, she was offered a job working for the P.E. department there. She could hardly believe it and was very excited. All of her dreams were coming true.

Then the nightmare began. She suspected she might be pregnant and had confided in a friend who bought her an early pregnancy test. When the results came back positive, she could hardly believe it.

Her boyfriend had been offered a scholarship, also. He told her he was really sorry it had messed up her plans, but how could she expect him to turn down his scholarship and stay here to help her? He would send what money he could to help, and maybe things would work out later.

Brandy had a cute baby boy and is raising him in her parents' home. The scholarship offer was revoked. Her life is certainly not over, but it has definitely changed directions.

TEEN PARENT STORIES - No. 2

Tawny and her boyfriend had been dating for almost a year and they were very devoted to each other. They had been intimate only once. When her monthly period did not begin, she told him she might be pregnant. Even though they were only 16, he was happy and told her he would marry her right away. They planned to move in with one of their parents. He would work after school and she would drop out of school and work full time until the baby came. Then she would go back to school.

When Tawny's boyfriend left her that night, she felt nervous and scared, but thought that together they could make it. The next day her boyfriend wasn't at school. She called his house when she got home, but there was no answer. She called later that night, and there was still no answer. It got later and later, and still no answer came.

The next morning there was still no answer to her phone call, so she drove over to his home. There was no sign of life anywhere. The house was vacant. Everything was gone! Tawny stood outside the front window looking in at the empty living room. You can imagine her shock when a neighbor came over and told her that the family had started moving late the night before last, and had spent all night packing their furniture and other belongings. They were moving back to Idaho, their home state!

A few days later Tawny received a short, handwritten note in the mail that said, "I'm so sorry. I told my parents and they freaked out. We have moved back to Idaho--that's all I can tell you. I won't ever forget you. Goodbye."

Tawny delivered a healthy baby girl and is living with her parents. Her boyfriend has never been in touch with her. Even though he seemed to want to be there for her, his parents ended it.

TEEN PARENT STORIES - No. 3

Trisha is as pretty as a Seventeen model! Her story is a little different. She had the idea that she could do with her own body whatever she wanted. She chose to become sexually active with her boyfriend and they even took some precautions against pregnancy and STDs. She felt very grown up and mature--after all, she was 15.

The relationship Trisha was in was either wonderful or miserable--there was no middle ground. He was jealous, and she liked to flirt, but they were very attracted to each other and had fun together when they were not fighting. When they had been sexually active for about six months, Trisha realized she was pregnant. She told her boyfriend who asked her to marry him on the spot. She turned him down, explaining they had already made one mistake, and jumping into an early marriage might be a second mistake.

Trisha delivered her baby boy almost two months early. The doctor told her that her own body hadn't been mature enough to carry the baby to full-term. Due to the premature birth, her tiny baby had to stay in the hospital for two more months before Trisha could bring him home to her parents. The 60 days little Matthew had to stay in the hospital were very traumatic for everyone. At first, the doctor gave her very little hope that he would even live. She couldn't hold him or even touch him at first due to his paper thin skin. Her boyfriend was with her in the delivery room and spent some time with his son, but he said it made him depressed, so he stayed away.

As Trisha was able to watch the improvement in little Matt, she began to make plans to bring him home. About this time, she started to add up the hospital bills that kept coming and coming. The grand total for her delivery and the baby's hospital care came to a whopping \$60,000! She applied to the state welfare office for assistance, and they did pay for most of the bills. But, it's not an easy deal, because when she and her boyfriend both turn 18 years old, they will have to start paying the state back at \$230.00 a month until the \$60,000 is paid off.

Trisha still sees the baby's father and until recently had planned to marry him someday. She can see now that they have too many basic differences in values and beliefs for a marriage to work. She goes to school and will be one of the few teen moms to graduate from high school in 1994. (Only one out of five teen mothers end up graduating.) She plans to work, continue going to school, and hopes to get to the point she can make it on her own.

TEEN PARENT STORIES NO. 4

Often boys who become a teen parent are seen as not living up to responsibility and abandoning the girl when the situation gets difficult to handle. There are many boys, however, who are willing to take upon themselves the responsibility that comes with being a teen father. Craig is one boy who is willing to take the demanding role of a parent.

Craig made a lot of sacrifices during his senior year of high school. He arrived at school at 6:45 a.m. for jazz band practice, attended three classes and worked all afternoon as a plumber's apprentice. Twice a week, he took night classes at the local technology college.

This is not the kind of life that a lot of seniors dream about. He is one of the first Utah students to become a licensed apprentice before even graduating from high school. "I needed grounds for myself so I wasn't hit with, "What am I going to do now?" all at once. I wanted to be on top of things," said Craig.

When he receives his diploma in June, he will work full time as a plumber's apprentice, making \$10 to \$12 an hour. While he is proud of his accomplishment, he said that it was no easy task.

At the end of his junior year, Craig and his girlfriend had a baby on the way, and he started thinking about his future. "I was not thrilled about college," Craig said, adding he had trouble motivating himself to even attend high school. He decided to become a plumbing apprentice, and started looking for a job. Twenty-five companies turned him down before he found a job.

"No one wanted to take a 17 year-old apprentice," said Craig. He went to his high school counselor so he could shorten his school day to squeeze in work and the 144 hours of night classes that are part of the apprenticeship program. In his spare time, Craig said he has tried to be a normal high school student, playing drums in jazz band, going out with friends, and spending time with his 6-month-old son, Colton.

Having Colton helped him get focused. "I already planned to do something like this, but he definitely hurried it along," Craig said. He helps to support Colton, pays for his own tuition, books, and clothes, and even bought himself a Jeep.

"He really is an amazing kid," said the counselor. "I have to commend him for taking on so much responsibility. He just jumped right in, worked really hard and now he's seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. And he did all of it on his own, which is rare!"

TEEN PARENT STORIES NO. 5

Nicole was 15 and not able to officially date yet for another year, but because Kurt was such a great young man, Nicole's parents didn't seem to mind all the time they spent together--in fact, they even encouraged it. Kurt had plans to go into the medical field after high school, he worked hard, and earned A's in school. He had already earned the money for a great truck, which Nicole loved and her parents thought was indicative of his ambition.

The time they spent together became more frequent and the opportunity for them to be alone became more convenient. A month before her 16th birthday and her first "real date" to be with Kurt, Nicole found out she was pregnant. Both Nicole and Kurt were shocked! How could this be happening to them? They were both good kids! How would they tell their families? What about their future? Secretly Nicole was a little relieved--maybe now Kurt wouldn't leave her to go away to college.

They began to fight more and their relationship grew distant as they agonized over what to do and how they had let their families down. Finally they made the decision to be married and try to make things work. Both families were informed and through many tears and much heartache, there was a small wedding in their grandparents' home. They both dropped out of school and attended night school together so Kurt could work and also graduate. Nicole delivered a baby boy and then continued her schooling at the school for teen parents so she could graduate.

Nicole and Kurt are still together, but life has been way different for them than what they'd thought or planned. They live in a small apartment with matted orange shag carpet, one bedroom which they share with their baby, and a small bathroom with peeling vinyl. Kurt's dreams of a medical career seem to slip farther and farther away. He works in a warehouse and doesn't have the time or money to go to school. Their truck had to be sold because it was too expensive to keep and operate. He takes the car to work. Nicole is either stuck at home all day or she catches the bus to her part-time job.

Nicole never did get to go on a "real date" with anyone else, to her senior prom, or just bumming in the car with her girlfriends. She chose teen parenting instead. Her 16-year-old friends have nothing in common with her anymore. To them, she's no fun now--she's too serious. Nicole feels very much alone at times. When she and Kurt start arguing, sometimes she just wants her Mom and to be home in her nice house and have someone take care of the meals and laundry and baby.

Kurt and Nicole have been married five (5) years now and they've made it so far, but not without sacrifices and struggles.