

TOUGH ROADS:
Teen Parents
Tell Their Stories

DVD Version

Credits

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Teacher's Resource Book
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DVD Menu

MAIN MENU

➤ **PLAY**

➤ **CHAPTER SELECTION**

From here you can access many different paths of the DVD, beginning with the introduction and ending with the credits.

1. Introduction
2. Money Stress
3. Emotional Stress
4. Lack of Sleep
5. Single Parenthood
6. Hard Work
7. Body Changes
8. Setbacks
9. Conclusion

➤ **ABOUT HRM**

➤ **TEACHER'S RESOURCE GUIDE**

A file of the accompanying Teacher's Resource Guide is available on the DVD. To open the file you need to load the DVD onto a computer that has a DVD-ROM and Adobe Acrobat Reader. Right click on the DVD icon and then double click on the file titled "Teacher's Resource Book."

Introduction

According to the Children’s Defense Fund, each day over 1,000 unmarried teenage girls become new mothers, and another 1,100 unmarried teens get abortions. Some young mothers go on to give birth to additional children while still teenagers—and many remain single.

These figures have profound implications for a number of reasons: teen parents are likely to be forced to abandon educational and career goals, become single parents, rely on public assistance, and give birth to more children than they can support, both emotionally and financially. The children raised by teen parents are often at high risk for developing a range of social and behavioral problems.

Yet, despite the bleak prospects of teen parenthood, the pressures on teens to engage in sexual activity are greater than ever. In advertising, films, television and music, teens are bombarded with images that celebrate sex. Unfortunately, emotional involvement and personal responsibility rarely enter the picture. Instead, the cultural message is that having sex is synonymous with being popular and desirable.

Too often, teens harbor fantasies about what it’s like to have a baby, imagining themselves showing off the baby, not really comprehending the immense sacrifices and hard work that babies require. In some circles, a teenage boy who fathers a child experiences it as a sort of rite of passage into manhood—again with little regard for the responsibilities and follow-through that real parenthood entails.

In the face of both cultural pressures and the “romanticization” of parenthood by some teens, we urgently need to make students more aware of the reality of being a teen parent: the incredible emotional and financial stress, the loss of sleep and freedom, the curtailed social life, postponement of educational and work goals, and the hard work that goes into parenting an infant—especially for a teenager who still has so many emotional and financial needs yet to meet.

Tough Roads: Teen Parents Tell Their Stories features the powerful, honest testimonials of young parents who speak candidly about what having a child as a teenager has cost them. These true stories challenge viewers to question any fantasies they may have about being a parent, and face squarely how difficult and utterly “unromantic” teen parenthood really is.

Learning Objectives

After viewing *Tough Roads: Teen Parents Tell Their Stories* and working on the assignments in this Teacher's Resource Book, your students will be able to:

- understand that the reality of being a teen parent is much different than the fantasy
- identify at least six difficulties commonly encountered by teen parents
- list at least ten financial expenses specific to rearing a child
- understand the relationship between completing high school and earning enough money to care for a child
- anticipate how having a child requires enormous personal sacrifice
- cite examples of how caring for an infant can be emotionally stressful
- realize that having a baby often requires getting up in the middle of the night, not sleeping late anymore, etc.
- recognize that teen parents usually end up as single parents, and that very often relationships do not last once a girl gets pregnant
- see the fallacy in thinking that having a child by someone will bring him closer
- understand that having a baby requires a lot of hard work, and cite some examples
- realize that once you have a child, your freedom to hang out with your friends will be extremely curtailed
- cite the difference between fathering a baby and being a daddy
- recognize that having a baby will likely cause setbacks in school and career goals, and usually will affect a teen parent's ability to earn a good income

Program Summary

Tough Roads: Teens Parents Tell Their Stories opens with four short views of teen parents in stressful situations: Destiny is exasperated because her son just spilled milk everywhere; Kate is getting up in the middle of the night because her baby is crying; Joel is trying to calm his daughter down while reflecting on how he “thought it would be easier;” and Lisette is struggling to get out the door with her dirty laundry and her toddler son, noting that having a child “may look exciting, but it’s a lot of hard work.”

We then meet the narrator, Hilary, who herself was a teen parent. She admits that before getting pregnant, she and her boyfriend thought it would be “cool” and “romantic” to have a baby together. “We thought we’d dress the baby up, take him out, show him off.” In reality, she wound up a single parent with a lot of stress.

The narrator then introduces the six teen parents featured in the program: Kate got pregnant because her boyfriend wanted her to, and now they’re splitting up. Shamika had to dropout of high school to take care of her son, losing her dream of graduating with her class. Joel can’t hang out with his buddies anymore, now he has to work to support his daughter. Anna talks about the stress of a screaming child and tells viewers “they’re not always quiet, happy little babies with bows in their hair and smiles on their faces, ya know.” Destiny thought getting pregnant would bring her boyfriend closer, but instead he went off with a new girl and now Destiny is totally stressed out. Lisette struggles to support her son and finds that she can’t buy him the things he wants.

The financial stress of having a child is the first topic tackled in depth. The narrator admits that “as a teen parent your options are to go on welfare—which isn’t a great start in life. Or to work really hard at a low paying job—because, without an education, we’re really not qualified to do much else.” The teen parents take turns citing the expenses they’ve encountered, from formula and disposable diapers to car seats, baby clothes, cribs and diaper bags—not to mention the living expenses if the parents live on their own.

This leads to the topic of sacrifice. Teen parents recount all the things they’ve had to give up now that they’re parents: new clothes, sneakers, jewelry, going to the movies. The narrator notes how hard this can be for a teenager. “At 18, I still wanted a lot of things for myself,” she reflects, “so it was very hard to put someone else’s needs first.” Shamika then describes

Program Summary (continued)

going to the store to buy something for herself, and coming out with sneakers for her son. “And it happens like that continuously,” she admits. Destiny, who’s obviously living in poverty, rifles through her drawers to find something to wear, but admits she doesn’t have a decent outfit. “It’s been a year since I’ve gotten my hair done, gotten dressed up. It put a real setback on my life. And it will. Don’t ever think you can have a child and still do whatever you want, because it’s a lie.”

The emotional stress of having a child is addressed next. The narrator describes how, when her son was an infant, she thought she’d go crazy if she heard him cry one more time. Destiny describes herself as “not having patience” for kids, and how it’s “too much stress for a young person.” Kate describes it as “being trapped in a corner, with the walls barricading, closing in on you and there’s nothing you can do about it.” Joel describes how having to care for the baby means that you can’t have any time to yourself or as a couple.

This leads to the topic of little sleep. The narrator reminds viewers how even at night your time is not your own. If the baby wakes up and needs something . . . you’ve got to get up.” We see Kate getting up while hearing her baby wailing in the background. Anna talks about how getting so little sleep makes her irritable. And, she says, you can’t count on the father being there.

Single parenthood is the topic of the next segment. When a teenage girl gets pregnant, the narrator reminds us, the relationship usually doesn’t last and she ends up raising the child alone. And, she notes, in at least half of all pregnancies among girls age 15 to 17, the father is a man aged 20 or older. “The girl tends to believe everything he tells her.” We learn how Anna fell into that trap. She was 15 when she met Kenny, 21. “He promised me everything,” she recalls, “he was like the perfect guy.” Then she told him she was pregnant and he left her life. “He turned out to be a real jerk,” she muses, “that’s the only way I can express it.” Destiny was bitterly disappointed. Her boyfriend didn’t even come to the hospital when she delivered her son. “I came close to having a nervous breakdown,” she says holding back tears.

Program Summary (continued)

The hard work it takes to be a parent is addressed next. Anna describes a non-stop schedule of cooking and cleaning, while the narrator says she essentially holds two full-time jobs. Joel recalls how he used to sleep until 11 every morning, but now gets up at 6:00am to go to work. “I come home dirty and tired, take a shower, go to sleep, and get rested to do it all over again the next day.”

In addition, you can't hang out with your friends the same old way. Lisette laments that “girls my age go to clubs and parties. These are things that I can't do. I missed out.” For Joel, not being able to see his friends has been the hardest part of being a teen parent. “I can't chill out like that no more,” he says. Joel serves as a positive role model as he expounds on the fact that “it's not right” to have a child and not be there for him or her. “Why have a kid if you're not gonna take responsibility to stay home with your kid and work for your kid?” he asks. Joel draws a distinction between being a father (“anybody can make a baby”) and a daddy. A daddy, he says, has to play with his child, feed him, burp him, change him—that's being a daddy.

Next the girls talk about the body changes they've experienced: the stretch marks, loss of firm figure, gained weight. Kate poignantly describes how, when she was going through these physical changes, her boyfriend wouldn't be affectionate toward her. Close to tears, Kate describes how all the other mothers-to-be at her childbirth preparation class had someone there rubbing their bellies, but she “felt left out, kind of like a loner.”

Having a child also causes setbacks in school and work goals. We see Destiny, desperate for a job, poring over the want ads. She admits that without even a GED, her chances are slim. “I could have been proceeding on my life to be somebody, and it's just gonna set me back.” She hopes her son won't hate her someday, when she's unable to buy him his first bike or his “first whatever.” Anna agrees. “No education means working at McDonald's or Burger King for the rest of your life for \$5 an hour. And you cannot support a family on \$5 an hour. It's impossible!”

The program wraps up with some words of advice from several of the teens. Joel says, “Don't be so rushed into being a parent . . . Don't do it just because you see your friend with a baby. For that, go buy a baby doll. That way, you can put her away when she's being bad. You can't do that with a real kid.” Credits roll over the repetitive wail of a baby crying.

Answers to Review Quiz

1. Hilary, the narrator, discusses how girls often believe the wrong things about their boyfriends. What does she mean specifically?
Hilary says that many young girls tend to believe whatever their boyfriends tell them, such as "I'll be with you forever," or "If you get pregnant, I'll help raise the child." She explains that young girls often get pregnant as a result of relationships with men who are five or more years older than they are.
2. What were some of the stresses mentioned by the teen parents?
Kids messing up the house, babies crying all the time, having to get up in the middle of the night, kids misbehaving, doing everything without any help, financial burdens, being isolated from friends and a social life.
3. What did Joel say was the hardest part of being a father?
He said that it was hard not to be able to hang out with his friends anymore. Now he works all day, comes home to his family, and then has to "get rested to do it all over again the next day."
4. What happened to Destiny's boyfriend after she became pregnant?
He grew even more distant from her, he went out with others, he didn't even come to the hospital when their child was born.
5. How does having a baby put stress on a relationship, according to Kate?
The couple doesn't have time to be alone together anymore; there may be fights over who is going to take care of the chores; there can be arguments over how to care for the baby properly; there is financial stress; and both parents suffer from lack of sleep.
6. What were some of the day-to-day requirements for taking care of a baby that the teen parents described?
Cleaning the house, making meals, feeding the baby, washing bottles, making formula, going to the job to support the baby, changing the baby, burping the baby, playing with the baby, etc.
7. Some of the mothers said they didn't get much emotional support from their partners. What were some examples?
One girl's boyfriend didn't want to touch her when she was pregnant. She had to go to childbirth preparation classes alone. Another girl's boyfriend didn't even come to the hospital to see her when she delivered.
8. Some teen parents in the video said that having a baby interfered with their educational goals. What examples did they give?
Hilary kept falling asleep in class and failed her course because she was so tired from being up at night with her baby. Destiny dropped out of school. Joel had to postpone going to college because he had to work to support the baby. Kate had to work for \$5 an hour because she didn't have an education.

The Choices Game

The choices that students make—about being sexually active, using birth control, getting married, graduating from high school, becoming a parent—have enormous ramifications in their lives. This activity is intended to help students realize the importance of their own choices.

Supplies:

You will need scissors and photocopies of the **Choices Cards** (pages 25-27).

Preparation:

Depending upon the size of your class, please copy enough cards so that there is one for every student in your class.

If possible, clear an area of the classroom so that students will be free to move around the room.

In Class:

1. Line up students in the center of the room.
2. Distribute one card to each student randomly. Deal them out like a deck of cards, face down.
3. Explain that each card represents a different individual. The description on the card represents the decisions that “you,” the character, have made.
4. Give students a few minutes to read over their profiles.
5. Answer any questions that students may have.
6. Ask students to line up in the center of the room, all facing the same direction. Students should take their cards with them when they line up.
7. Read aloud to the class the following instructions. Pause between each statement. Give students enough time to determine whether they should respond by stepping forward, backward, or staying where they are.

The Choices Game (continued)

Instructions to the Class

- If you finished high school, take 2 steps forward.
- If you dropped out of high school, take 2 steps backward.
- If you finished no more than 2 years of college, take 1 step forward.
- If you finished 4 years of college and got a degree, take 2 steps forward.
- If you became a single parent, take 2 steps backward.
- If you got married before having your first child, take 1 step forward.
- If you had 2 or more children by the age of 20, take 2 steps backward.
- If you went on public assistance, take 2 steps backward.
- If you worked for at least 5 years before having a child, take 1 step forward.
- If you got into an abusive relationship, take 1 step backward.
- If you stayed in the abusive relationship, take 2 more steps backward.
- If you dropped out of high school but later got your GED, take 1 step forward.

8. Ask students to stay where they have ended up. Some students will have moved far ahead, others will be in the middle, and some will have moved backwards—depending upon their profiles, and the steps they had to take.
9. Ask two of the students in the front to read their profile cards. Then ask two students in the middle to read their profile cards. Finally, ask two students in back to read their profile cards.
10. With students still standing in place, ask them how they would feel if this really was their own lives, and the results of their own actions.
11. Ask students to return to their seats and discuss what they have learned from this exercise.

Student Worksheets

Review Quiz

1. Hilary, the narrator, discusses how girls often believe the wrong things about their boyfriends. What does she mean specifically?

2. What were some of the stresses mentioned by the teen parents?

3. What did Joel say was the hardest part of being a father?

4. What happened to Destiny's boyfriend after she became pregnant?

5. How does having a baby put stress on a relationship, according to Kate?

6. What were some of the day-to-day requirements for taking care of a baby that the teen parents described?

7. Some of the mothers said they didn't get much emotional support from their partners. What were some examples?

8. Some teen parents in the video said that having a baby interfered with their educational goals. What examples did they give?

Where Do Babies Fit?

What would you like to accomplish over the next five years? Check off “yes” or “no” for each of the suggested categories below. You may also add other categories that are not on the list.

Over the Next Five Years, I Would Like to:

	Yes	No		Yes	No
<u>Education</u>			<u>Career</u>		
Graduate from high school	_____	_____	Work part-time	_____	_____
Get my GED	_____	_____	Work full-time	_____	_____
Attend college	_____	_____	Launch a career	_____	_____
Graduate from college	_____	_____	Start a business	_____	_____
<u>Income</u>			<u>Purchases</u>		
Become self-supporting			Buy a car	_____	_____
Be earning at least \$	_____	_____	Buy:	_____	_____
Save each month at least \$	_____	_____	Buy:	_____	_____
<u>Living Space</u>			<u>Creative pursuits</u>		
Rent an apartment	_____	_____	Learn an instrument	_____	_____
Rent a house	_____	_____	Play in a band	_____	_____
Buy a house	_____	_____	Pursue acting or dancing	_____	_____
Live with my parents	_____	_____	Pursue an art form	_____	_____
<u>Recreation</u>			<u>Social</u>		
Travel	_____	_____	Make new friends	_____	_____
Take up a sport or hobby	_____	_____	Build a serious relationship	_____	_____
Become active in a charity	_____	_____	Get married	_____	_____
<u>Other Goals</u>					
1. _____					
2. _____					
3. _____					

Use the back of this page to write a paragraph about how having a baby would fit in with the goals you’ve identified. Would having a baby help or hinder you? Given your personal goals, is there an age that—if you were to have a baby—might be a “better” age for you?

The Price is High (1)

1. In the space provided, estimate how much money you think each item would cost if you purchased it new.

	ESTIMATED NEW	RESEARCHED RESULTS
crib and mattress	\$ _____	\$ _____
stroller	\$ _____	\$ _____
play pen	\$ _____	\$ _____
diaper bag	\$ _____	\$ _____
bottles and nipples	\$ _____	\$ _____
baby toys	\$ _____	\$ _____
baby clothes	\$ _____	\$ _____
blankets and sheets	\$ _____	\$ _____
other:	\$ _____	\$ _____
other:	\$ _____	\$ _____
other:	\$ _____	\$ _____

2. Now estimate the weekly cost of these necessities.

baby food	\$ _____	\$ _____
baby formula	\$ _____	\$ _____
baby diapers	\$ _____	\$ _____
child care	\$ _____	\$ _____

3. When you have finished your estimates, use newspaper ads, catalogs, or go stores to find out what the actual prices are. Enter those figures under the column marked "Researched Results."
4. Place a check mark (✓) next to any items that were considerably more expensive than you thought.
5. Total up your expenses for one year. *Hint: if the figure you have written is for the week, multiply by 52. If the figure you have is for one day's worth, multiply by 365. Generally, furniture is a one-time expense, so add that in only once.*

YEARLY TOTAL: \$ _____

The Price is High (2)

If you are seriously considering having a baby as a teenager, here is your chance to consider where you would get the money you would need to meet these expenses.

6. Visit your local public assistance office. How much would a single parent with one child receive per month in your area? If you would be living on public assistance, is the welfare amount sufficient for you to support a baby for one year?
7. Look at the Help-Wanted ads in a local newspaper. Select a job that you are qualified to perform. How much does the job pay? If you would be working in order to support the baby, you will need to spend money on child care. After deducting for taxes and any child care you would need in order to go to work, would you have enough to support the baby for one year (based on your calculations from the previous page)?
8. Would you be able to continue living at your parents' home? Would you have to get your own place? If you would be renting, add to your total estimated expenses the amount you would be spending for:

Lodging	\$ _____	per month
Heat	\$ _____	per month
Electricity	\$ _____	per month
Groceries	\$ _____	per month
Transportation	\$ _____	per month
Clothes	\$ _____	per month
Telephone	\$ _____	per month
Insurance	\$ _____	per month
Medical	\$ _____	per month
TOTAL	\$ _____	

9. After you have answered these questions, write a brief essay in which you describe how you feel about having a baby while you are still a teenager. Explain the reasons behind your decision.

Debate

Divide the class into two equal groups. One group must argue **Yes**, and the other group must argue **No**. Each side must support its position with facts and valid arguments.

Choose one of the following debate topics:

1

Should birth control be the responsibility of the female partner in a sexual relationship?

2

Should all people be required to get a “parenting license” (like a driver’s license) before they can begin a family?

3

Should public assistance be provided for teenage parents who need financial help to support their children?

4

Are teenagers able to be good parents?

5

Should teenage boys who become fathers be required to take equal responsibility for their child or children?

Dear You

Pretend that you are an advice columnist for a magazine. These are the letters that you received in this month's mail. Choose one of the following letters and write a response on a separate sheet of paper.

1. *Dear You,*

My boyfriend and I think it would be pretty romantic to have a baby together. I'm graduating high school next year and hope to go to college. My boyfriend says that he'll help me take care of the baby if we do this. Should we go ahead?

Hilary from Harrisburg

2. Dear You,

I am 16 and pregnant. My boyfriend won't touch me anymore since I started gaining weight with the pregnancy. I want him to go to Lamaze classes with me, but he refuses. I feel really alone. What should I do?

Kim from Kansas City

3. Dear You,

I'm a 17-year old guy. My girlfriend is pregnant. I want her to get an abortion, but she refuses. I'm not ready to have kids yet. I'm too young! What should I tell her?

Homeboy from Houston

4. Dear You,

I'm a teenage girl. I love my boyfriend so much. The problem is, he isn't faithful to me. He says he loves me, but then he cheats on me with other girls. I'm tempted to get pregnant by him so he has to settle down with me. What do you think?

Denice from Denver

5. *Dear You,*

I am 15 years old. My boyfriend is 21. He says that he loves me and wants to make love to me. If I ever got pregnant, he says that he would marry me. The last time we went out, we almost "went all the way." I want to do it next time, but a voice inside me says I should wait. What would you do?

Nicola from New York

At First Hand

In order to observe first-hand what it's like to take care of a baby or toddler, each member of the class should arrange to baby-sit for a young brother, sister, or a child in the neighborhood for a minimum of three hours. Answer the following questions:

1. Did you change the baby's diapers? What was that like?

2. Did you feed the baby? What was that like?

3. Did the baby cry much? How did that make you feel? Were you able to comfort him or her?

4. Did you get anything else done while you were watching the baby?

5. How did you feel after it was all over?

6. How would you feel if this was your life 24 hours a day?

7. What was the hardest part of taking care of a baby?

8. What was the best part of taking care of a baby?

9. What did this experience teach you about being a parent?

Choices Cards (1)

<p>You dropped out of high school, got a job, and remained single with no children. But you did get into an abusive relationship—and you stayed in it.</p>	<p>You became a single parent of two children. You never finished high school, but you got your G.E.D. You receive public assistance.</p>	<p>You dropped out of high school and got married. Later you had a child. Your partner became abusive. You left your marriage and took a full-time job.</p>
<p>You became a teen parent, dropped out of high school, and receive public assistance.</p>	<p>You became a single parent of two children, got married, got your G.E.D. and eventually got a job.</p>	<p>You dropped out of high school but later got your G.E.D. You stayed single with no children.</p>
<p>You became a teen parent, dropped out of high school and had a second child. You got into an abusive relationship but you left it. Now you are working full-time.</p>	<p>You dropped out of high school and got married. Eventually you got your G.E.D., got a job, and worked for five years before having your first child.</p>	<p>You became a teen parent, dropped out of high school but later got your G.E.D. You got into an abusive relationship and stayed in it. You receive public assistance.</p>
<p>You became a teen parent of two children, dropped out of high school, and now receive public assistance.</p>	<p>You graduated from high school, and now you have a full-time job. You are single with no children.</p>	<p>You became a teen parent, dropped out of high school, but later got your G.E.D. and now you hold a full-time job.</p>

Choices Cards (2)

<p>You became a teen parent, but still graduated from high school. You have a great relationship with your boy/girl friend. You are working at a job.</p>	<p>You became a single parent as a teen, but you finished high school and went on to two years of college. You're now working at a terrific job.</p>	<p>You went to college for two years, and now are working at a terrific career. You are single and have no children.</p>
<p>You became a teen parent, graduated from high school, had a second child. You got into an abusive relationship, but you left it. Now you are receiving public assistance.</p>	<p>You were a teen parent, but you completed high school and two years of college. You got a good job, but then you got into an abusive relationship and stayed in it.</p>	<p>You graduated from high school, then graduated from a two-year college. You worked steadily for five years before having your first child.</p>
<p>You graduated from high school, married a terrific partner and then worked for five years before having your first child.</p>	<p>You finished four years of college, got married, worked for five years steadily, and then had your first child.</p>	<p>You finished two years of college despite having had a child as a teenager. You are still single. You work at a full-time job.</p>
<p>You graduated from high school, had a baby while still a teenager, got married, and now you hold a job.</p>	<p>You became a teen parent, but still went on to college and graduated after four years. You work at a great full-time job.</p>	<p>You were a teen parent, but you went to college for four years and now have a degree. You are married and working now.</p>

Resources

American Social Health Association
Department PR27
P.O. Box 13827
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709

Family Resource Coalition
200 South Michigan Avenue, #1520
Chicago, IL 60604-2404

The Father's Network
P.O. Box 800 SH
San Anselmo, CA 94979
tel: (415) 453-2839

The Mother's Connection
50 Pintard Avenue
New Rochelle, NY 10801
tel: (914) 235-9474

National Organization for Single Mothers
P.O. Box 68
Midland, NC 28107
tel: (704) 888-KIDS

SIECUS (Sexuality Information & Education Council of the US)
130 West 42nd Street—Suite 2500
New York, NY 10036
tel: (212) 819-9770

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