

The N's A Walk In Your Shoes Episode #32: Teen Parent -Teacher's Guide-

Sivan and TJ are the model high school couple. She is captain of cheerleading squad. He was homecoming king. They enjoy carefree teenagers' lives hanging out with friends. They can't imagine that "good" kids like them could end up having a baby, but if they did, they think they'd be good parents. They think, "It's not that hard." They swap lives for two days with Kaitlyn and Justin, kids just like them who *did* have a baby, and find out that it is *very* hard.

Note to teachers: It is always useful to screen programs before watching them with your class. This program focuses on the daily reality of teenage parents taking care of a one-year-old child. The voices in the program are those of the teenagers and their parents. The teenagers discuss the emotional and physical responsibilities that can follow from the decision to have sex, but the program does not deal directly with sex education, sexual behavior, pregnancy prevention, abstinence/contraception or pregnancy.

Also, a specific Parent's Guide for this episode of A Walk In Your Shoes is also available at <http://discussions.the-n.com>.

Objectives:

- To develop awareness of the immense responsibilities and hard work of being a parent.
- To understand the ways adult responsibilities change a teenager's life.
- To help students develop tools for expressing their concerns and getting help in making good decisions.
- To explore the role that parents play and encourage parent-teen discussions.
- To help students understand the seriousness of the possible consequences of sexual activity.

Standards:

Social Studies

Individual Development and Identity

- Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of individual development and identity.

Language Arts

- Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

Web Resources:

The resources listed here are geared toward adults rather than students. Much of the information about teen pregnancy is aimed toward teens or toward adults—not toward middle school students.

Research has shown that parents are extremely important influences in preventing teen pregnancy. In fact, teens report that the #1 influence when it comes to sex and pregnancy is their

parents.¹ You might want to let families know when you are discussing this program and encourage them to watch it at home and discuss it with their children.

There are other excellent resources for parents available. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, a private non-profit group whose goal is to reduce teen pregnancy by one-third over ten years, has a website and excellent brochures, videos and discussion guides. The National Campaign is science-based and non-partisan. Free downloadable materials, tips for parents, tips for teens, fact sheets and other resources are available on their website.

National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy offers tips for talking to kids about issues related to sex and pregnancy and tips for helping to prevent teen pregnancy. It includes statistics, tools for community organizing and a section with teens speaking about the reality of being parents.

www.teenpregnancy.org

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services supports abstinence-based programs to prevent teen pregnancy. Information about Federally supported programs, as well as links to government statistics on births to teenagers, teen risk behavior and other health-related adolescent behaviors can be found on the HHS website .

www.hhs.gov/news/press/2002pres/teenpreg.html

Steps:

Before Viewing Discussion

1. Do you know any teenagers who have had children? If so, talk about them. Do the parents live together? Do the parents go to school? How has having children changed their lives?
2. Do you think it is hard or easy to be a parent? Why? Ask students to jot down answers to these questions. They will refer to them after having watched the program.
3. Do you think that being a teenager would make it harder or easier to be a parent? Explain your thinking.
4. What role do you think parents should play in teens' decisions when it comes to avoiding pregnancy? What role should peers play?

After Viewing Discussion

1. Invite general reactions to the program. Has anyone's opinion changed about being a teen parent? Ask students whose minds have changed to share what they thought at first and what changed.
2. How does Justin say he reacted when Kaitlyn let him know she was pregnant? Why do you think he cried in private after she left?
3. What do you think about what Kaitlyn's parents said?
4. Why was Sivan so surprised when she met Kaitlyn? What kind of person do you think she expected to see when she knew she was visiting a teen-age mother?
5. Kaitlyn and Justin were upset when Sivan and TJ were late for their first day of the swap. Do you think it matters when people are late? Why did it bother Kaitlyn and Justin so much? How do you think having a child affects the way people manage appointments and schedules?

¹ Source: The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

6. List some ways that Kaitlyn and Justin's lives have changed since they had Sean.
7. Describe the expression on Sivan's face when she is at Kaitlyn's office? How do you think she feels about Kaitlyn's job? Why does Kaitlyn do that job rather than something that would be more fun?
8. How have Kaitlyn and Justin's priorities changed now that they have a child?
9. What do you think Kaitlyn and Sivan had in common before Kaitlyn had a baby? What do they have in common now? How are they different? Organize this information in a pair of charts. BEFORE HAVING A BABY: Similarities/Differences. AFTER HAVING A BABY: Similarities/Differences. Make a similar set of charts for TJ and Justin.
10. What role do you think fathers should play in caring for a baby? Do you think teen fathers should have the same role? Why do you think so?
11. What were some of the most difficult things for Sivan and TJ to handle? What might be the most difficult things for you to deal with if you had a child?
12. In what ways do you think the support group for teen parents helps people? What do you think they talk about?
13. Do you think Kaitlyn and Justin would act differently if they could start high school all over again? How?
14. At the end of the program Kaitlyn says that Sivan and TJ had a little taste of walking in her shoes, but that they had one of the easiest days. What do you think she meant by this? How might some days be harder? What kinds of things might happen when you have to care for a baby?
15. How did Sivan and TJ feel after having walked in Kaitlyn and Justin's shoes for two days? Do you think it should change their behavior in any way? Do you believe it will? Explain your thinking.

Writing

1. Choose an ordinary day in your life and write down a schedule of what you do all day and all night. Then write down a schedule of what you would do if you were taking care of a child.

Make a list of all the things Kaitlyn and Justin must do each day. Try to remember all of the details including: making sure the child doesn't get hurt in the bathtub. Ask students to go over their lists with a partner or a small group and then add to or change their lists. Put the different items into categories. Students can choose their own categories. They might include: safety, play, nutrition, earning a living, cleaning, school, homework, friends...Ask students to share their ideas and put them together in an organized master list to post.

Projects

1. Do your parents or guardians have rules about dating? If you were a parent, what rules would you set up for your children? You will probably have different rules for kids at different ages. Students can work together to come up with a set of rules they think are reasonable. Then, talk about how students would react to having those rules. How could parents present them in a way so kids might obey the rules?
2. What are some consequences of sex (emotional and physical)? Do kids' know what their parents views, values and expectations are when it comes to sex and pregnancy? Students should work in teams. They can choose from any of the following projects: a pamphlet for other students, a pamphlet made by kids for parents, a letter to the editor of the local newspaper, or a poster for other kids. Pamphlets and posters should be illustrated. Each

group should decide on their audience and then brainstorm and work on the message and the best images to communicate the message.

Additional Facts & Figures²

1. In the U.S., 4 out of 10 girls get pregnant at least once by age 20.
2. The U.S. has the highest teen pregnancy rate of any western industrialized nation.
3. Only 1 out of 3 teen mothers ever finish high school.
4. 8 out of 10 teen fathers do not marry their babies' mothers.
5. Babies born to teens are more likely to suffer abuse and neglect, as well as severe health problems.

² Source: The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2002.