

# UNEXPECTED

## Discussion Guide

*Unexpected* follows five teenage couples and their families who are navigating teenage pregnancy and parenthood. We created this discussion guide with our partners at **Power to Decide**, the campaign to prevent unplanned pregnancy, to help open the lines of communication for young people and their parents, mentors and allies to spark meaningful conversations about unplanned pregnancy, and to help ensure that all young people have the power to decide if, when and under what circumstances to get pregnant.

Check out the resources available at [TLC.com/FamilyResources](https://www.tlc.com/familyresources), join the conversation on social media by using #Unexpected, and watch full episodes by downloading the TLC GO app or visiting [TLC.com/Unexpected](https://www.tlc.com/Unexpected).

### Discussion Topics

After watching *Unexpected*, discuss these questions with the young people in your life and encourage them to watch the show with you. Some questions are for adults, some for teens, some are for everyone. Watch the show together and add some questions of your own!

#### What do you think about teen pregnancy and parenthood?

- Have you ever thought about whether or not you'd want to have a child one day? What do you believe are important things to accomplish before pregnancy and parenthood? What kind of relationship, educational and life goals do you want to achieve? What do you need to do now to reach those goals in the future?
- None of the young parents in *Unexpected* planned to get pregnant. How did the teen parents' expectations compare to the realities of parenthood? Have you ever thought about how a pregnancy would affect your life right now? How would your daily routine change? How would your relationships change?
- What messages do you think young men and young women get about their roles and responsibilities when it comes to sex? Pregnancy? Birth control? Parenthood? Do you think there's a double standard? Do parents treat sons and daughters differently? What about in your experience?
- Once you have a child with someone, you are connected forever – even if the relationship between you two doesn't last. What qualities do you think would make someone a good parent? A good partner? Do you have "relationship role models" to guide you?
- Do you think society treats teen parents differently than older parents are treated? Why or why not? If one of your friends or relatives became a teen parent, what would you do to support them? Did this show change the way you think about teen parenthood? How?

**Takeaway:** All young people should have the power to decide if, when and under what circumstances to get pregnant. This includes the power to say no to sex, even if they've said yes before. Teens consistently say that parents are most influential on teens' decisions about sex, but parents often underestimate how influential they are. Teens want and need help from their parents and mentors in navigating relationships and in figuring out how they will handle sexual situations *before* they're in the heat of the moment. Teens need to know that taking responsibility means avoiding pregnancy until they're ready – not just taking care of a child once you're a parent. Talking about future goals and how a pregnancy might affect those goals is a powerful way to help young people figure out how they will avoid unplanned pregnancy.

#### What's your comfort level with conversations about sex, love and relationships?

- What qualities do you think are must-haves to make a relationship strong and healthy?
- Like all families, the relationships we see on *Unexpected* are complicated. Once a baby arrives, the need for



clear, honest communication becomes even more important. What do you think is the best way to keep the lines of communication open between parents and teens? How do you build good communication in a romantic relationship?

- What qualities make someone easy to open up to? When it comes to conversations about love, sex, relationships and birth control, what can adults do to be more "askable?" How can adults let the teens in their lives know their views about sex and pregnancy, and that they are listening, not judging?
- What advice would you give to a teen who is sexually active but afraid to talk to their parents or guardians? Who are some adults in your life – parents, mentors, allies – whom you can trust to talk to about sensitive topics? What qualities make them someone you can trust?
- Many adults worry that talking openly about birth control encourages young people to have sex, when in fact, it really encourages safer sex when young people are ready. What do you think about this? What is the best advice anyone has given you about sex, love and relationships?

**Takeaway:** Talking is power. Communication and trust are the keys to a successful relationship at any age. Conversations about sex, relationships, pregnancy and birth control can be awkward, but they are always worthwhile, and can be life-changing. Every family is different, and handles communication differently. Don't wait for the young person in your life to come to you. If they have questions, don't assume they're already doing it. There's no such thing as "the talk." It's an 18-year conversation.

#### What are your thoughts on the families featured in the show?

- Who did you relate to the most? Why?
- What do you think about the ways that Lexus, McKayla, Emiley, Chloe and Laura changed as they dealt with the ups and downs of pregnancy and parenthood? What advice would you give them about achieving their future goals?
- What do you think about the way Kelsey, Bridget, Shannon, Jessica and the other parents/grandparents reflected on their own experiences as teen parents? Do you think they were harder on their own kids because they were teen parents? How did this shape their relationships with their daughters?
- What do you think about the way the young dads in *Unexpected* handled their roles? How did their own childhoods affect their views about fatherhood? What advice would you give Max, Caelan, Shayden, Diego, and Tylor about their futures? How did you see them change and develop as the realities of fatherhood started to sink in?
- Whether or not there is a history of teen parenthood in your family, did this show help you think more about your own views on unplanned pregnancy? Birth control? Teen parenthood? Did the show help you think about if, when and under what circumstances you/the teens in your life would be ready for pregnancy? What surprised you the most about the stories of these five families? Why?
- Did this show inspire you to communicate more openly with your own family about sex, relationships, unplanned pregnancy and birth control?
- What are some ways you can help the young people in your life set goals for the future and have a plan to attain them?

**Takeaway:** When young people have the power to decide their futures, everybody wins. Becoming a parent or grandparent changes the way you see yourself, and how you relate to your family, friends and partner. Babies need and deserve unconditional love, 24/7. Their needs come first, which makes young parents grow up fast. Young parents need all the support they can get for themselves, their babies and their futures. Helping teens delay pregnancy helps expand opportunity, create positive social change, and allows young people to be stronger contributors to their communities.

**Power to Decide** is a private, non-partisan, non-profit organization that works to ensure all people – no matter who they are, where they live or what their economic status might be – have the power to decide if when, and under what circumstances to get pregnant. Visit [www.PowerToDecide.org](http://www.PowerToDecide.org) for more information and tips on jump-starting open conversations about sex, love, relationships and unplanned pregnancy.

