

Celebrating Being a Teen Mom

Tara Letourneau

In the United States, many teen girls get pregnant and drop out of high school. According to statistics, 3 out of 10 teen girls will get pregnant at least

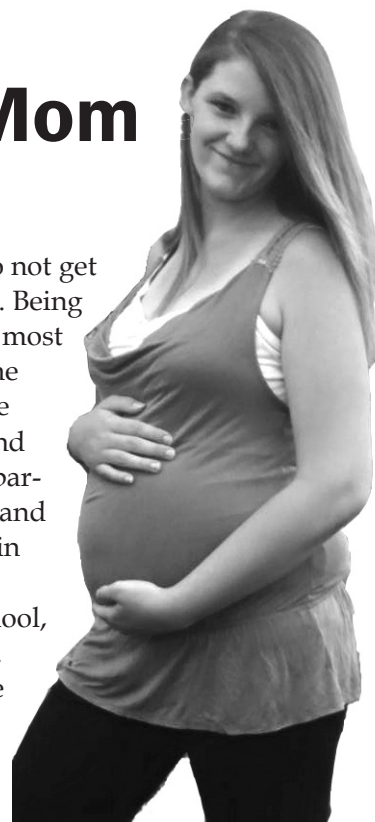
The reason most pregnant teen girls drop out is because of discrimination.

once before the age of 20. There are nearly 750,000 teen pregnancies every year. Statistics say that 50% of teen girls who drop out do it because they are pregnant. Also, about 25% of teen moms will have their second child within 24 months of their first.

The reason most pregnant teen girls drop out is because of discrimination from teachers and peers. For example, many pregnant teens are called names, like whore or slut. Teachers might imply to the pregnant girl that she has ruined her

life. Many girls just do not get the support they need. Being pregnant is one of the most wonderful things in the world. It should not be hard to be pregnant and be in school. I am preparing to be a teen mom, and I am planning to stay in school.

In my current school, no one puts me down. My peers celebrate me by bringing in journals that I can use to record my child's life from birth until age five. My peers and teachers compliment me and encourage me when I'm just not feeling right. They help me lift myself up. Statistics mean nothing to me. There are plenty of teens out there who will agree with me on this. Just because you have a baby doesn't mean your life is over, and it doesn't mean you can't get a high school diploma. Every day I make the choice to work my butt off to earn my diploma so my baby has a good life and has everything he needs.



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Tara Letourneau is a student at Vermont Adult Learning in Saint Albans, VT. She is 19 years old and 6 months pregnant with a baby boy, Emmytt James. She says, "I look forward to having my precious baby boy in my arms and a diploma in my hand. I want to say thank you to the VAL staff for believing in me when I didn't believe in myself."

Sources: <www.prikruby.com/2015/05/07/teen-pregnancy-rates-stds-and-other-american-facts-and-figures-2>; <www.dosomething.org/facts/11-facts-about-teen-pregnancy>; <www.advocatesforyouth.org>.

Sexual Double Standard

In the graphic below, what is the illustrator saying?



Illustration by Hayley Lim

November 9, 2015

Dear Tara,

I read your article "Celebrating Being A Teen Mom". I would like to share some things I noticed. I would also like to share my personal experience.

In the article, you talked about celebrating. You were celebrating about your pregnancy during your teen years when you were soon to be a mom.

You celebrated through your friends' gift. They gave you a journal for you to record your child's life, from birth until age 5 years old. I think it is great idea for you to record this because in the future, your son will read it and see what he did. You celebrated because you get along with and were supported by teachers, friends and students who really respect you. Your teachers encouraged you when you did not feel right. Teachers were always there for you. You are on the way to being successful!

You wanted the reader to understand that you did not drop out of school, and I understand you did do a lot of hard work in school. I understand that you will be a good mother to your baby, and you will keep your goals to get your high school diploma. Your life will be awesome! Your life in the future is very precious.

I have a personal connection, too. My friends, who are twins, got pregnant when they were teenagers. They dropped out of school because they were so embarrassed, for they experienced that their friends, teachers, and families insulted them. These important people in their lives were not happy to see them because they got pregnant during their teen years. After their babies were born, they studied for their GEDs, and they finished their GEDs! I haven't heard from them for long time, but I remember their success.

Something you said that caught my attention, is "just because you have baby that doesn't mean your life is over." This would help teenagers who are pregnant to realize and think about their future and know that their lives are not over. Saying this will positively impact them.

From reading your article, I learned you are sharing your experience and showing students in similar situations how to handle staying in school while they are pregnant. You encourage teen moms not to give up. I learned that you have a lot of faith and are very motivated. I learn that you are helping teen moms and encouraging them to think positively and think about their futures. Also, I learned not to give up on anything I think of as a failure, for I will stay strong, positive and hang in there. Though I'm not pregnant, I do have many challenges.

I would like to share that I have three teenage children. They are 18, 16 and 14. I will tell them what it is like to be a teen parent to a baby. If they accidentally get pregnant, I will guide them and help them to finish their school, and I will always be there for their baby and my teen children. I will remind them not to give up and that their futures are so precious.

Sincerely,
Jennifer

Father's Day

Carmen Ruiz

Since I was little girl, I have always thought about how different my life would have been if my father did not die when I was only one year old. My mom and our neighbors always told me how happy my father was when I was born because he took such good care of me. Everyone said he was a

This was one of those moments when I said to myself, "I miss my dad."

proud dad and I know my life would have been different with his presence.

Nowadays, when I have difficult moment in my life, especially in my relationships, the only thing in my head is how I miss my father. I think some

men respect you more when they know you have a father. I think some situations in my life could have been avoided by having him around.

The saddest moment I can never forget is the day I graduated from elementary school in Hon-

Explore Further

Use inference to make meaning. In the first paragraph the author says about her father: "My life would have been different with his presence." In the next two paragraphs, she identifies two ways she particularly missed her father, but she does not say *explicitly* what would have been different in her life if he had lived. As the reader, you can *infer* her meaning from the information given. Using inference, describe two significant ways her life could have been different if her father had lived.

How do you honor people who have passed? How do you express gratitude? (See the essay on the next page.)



A father holds his baby. Public domain, from pixabay.com.

duras and my mom told me, "Your teacher told me you are a smart girl. She said I should find a way to let you go to middle school, but I do not have money to pay for that. So, you must go live in the city with your aunt, help her with her kids, and go to the middle school at night." This was one of those moments when I said to myself, "I miss my dad, especially today."

I now work as a nurse's assistant in a hospice unit for people living with HIV. I honor my father's memory in this way, because I like to help those in need. Doing my job with love and taking good care of my patients reminds me of the way he used to be. I celebrate his legacy by showing my children how to be loving and kind in everything they do.

I honor my father's memory in this way, because I like to help those in need.

Carmen is a mother of three children and a student at Mid-Manhattan Learning Center in NYC. Her goal is to become a teacher's assistant for children with special needs. She would also like to help those who have had difficult childhoods to believe in themselves and follow their dreams.

November 9, 2015

Dear Carmen,

I read your article "Father's Day" in The Change Agent. I would like to share things I noticed. I would like to share my personal experience.

In the article you talked about celebrating your father and how kind he was, how much he had a positive and tragic effect in your life. You said you celebrated by doing good & nursing in a hospital for people with HIV. Also, you celebrate by bettering yourself & your children to do good in everything they do! This is probably from the motivation your father gave you. Because you celebrated by keeping your father's heart warming legacy going, by passing your love and knowledge down to your loved ones showing them a gentler way to take life by, I thought that was very touching and a great way to honor your father.

A personal connection I would say is I have is I know a person who means a great deal to my life, so I see how hard it is for you to not have a father and have the positives and the negatives of not having a role model.

Your story did teach me to cherish my parents because not everyone has them, People should see the outcome and become a better person and do good. Someone can learn so much when they read this beautiful inspiring article you have written.

Sincerely,

Rocky Mehmedovive

Name_____

Date_____

Weekly Reading Log! Homework Due _____

Directions: Pick an article from the **Change Agent**. Be ready to share with the class!

Name of article_____page____

Author's name_____

Why did you choose it?_____

****Turn the title into a question. Question words: who, what, when, where, why, how**

What can you get from reading this? (Purpose)

____learn something new

____learn about somebody's life

____find something that relates to my life

____change my life

____challenge myself

____imagine a different world

something else_____

Now skim the article:

Kinds of pictures: ____graphs ____maps ____drawings ____photos

How many paragraphs?_____ How many pages?_____

What will you find out?	How do you know?

Three words you may **need to know**.

Word	Another word (synonym)

Name_____

Date_____

Now read the article.

Who (person or people)_____

Where (Place)_____

When (time)_____

What (actions, thoughts) _____

Why (you may have to guess or infer)_____

****Now look back at your question. What is the answer?**_____

Something(s) that interests you (surprised you, caught your attention)	This makes you think about...

What do you think the author is trying to do?

___give important information

___ express a feeling

___give an opinion/make you agree

___ share an experience

___ explain something

___ tell a story

Something you could tell a friend _____

Name_____

Date_____

Class Practice! Reading Log!

Before you read:

Name of article_____page____

Author's name_____

Turn the title into a question. Question words: **who, what, when, where, why, how**

What can you get from reading this? (Purpose)

___learn something new ___learn about somebody's life

___find something that relates to my life ___better my life

___challenge myself ___imagine a different world

something else_____

Now skim the article:

Kinds of pictures: ___graphs ___maps ___ drawings ___photos

How many paragraphs?_____ How many pages?_____

What will you find out?	How do you know?

Three words that look hard but you may need to know

Word	Another word (synonym)

Name_____

Date_____

Now read the article.

Who (people or character)_____

Where (Place)_____

When (time)_____

What (What happened) _____

Why (you may have to guess or infer)_____

How (the action)_____

Something(s) that interests you (surprised you, caught your attention)	This makes you think about...

What do you think the author is trying to do?

___give important information

___ express a feeling

___give an opinion/make you agree

___ share an experience

___ explain something

___ tell a story

Something you could tell a friend _____

Name_____

Date_____

Paper #1, Notes: Reply to Article in The Change Agent

Pick an article that really interests you in The Change Agent: Celebrations. You are going to write a reply/letter to the writer!

Article_____

Author_____

Summary Notes

What is the author's big celebration?_____

How does the author celebrate?_____

Why does the author celebrate? (problem the writer 'solved')

Name_____

Date_____

Something the writer wants you to understand _____

Part 2 Your response: How you connect to the article

A personal connection you have _____

A detail that caught your attention _____

Something you learned_____

Something you would like to share_____

Name_____

Date_____

Writing Detective: Reply to Article in The Change Agent

November 8, 2015

Dear Carmen,

I just read your article, “Father’s Day” in the Change Agent and it really caught my attention. I would like to share with you some things I noticed about it. I would also like to share some of my own experiences.

You mentioned that you lost your father when you were only a year old, but you celebrate his memory. Everyone told you he took good care of you. You really miss your dad, though. You had some hard situations in your life because he wasn’t there. For example, relationships with men were hard.

You celebrate your father by the work you do. You take care of people, and in this way, you honor your father. It seems that ‘father’s day’ is every day in your life!

I also feel a special connection with my dad, just like you do with your dad. I was lucky to have my father for a long time. Since he died, I try to honor his memory in the work I do. I try to share my gifts and be fair, just like my dad did. Even though our situations with our fathers are different, we both like to honor our fathers in their work.

I really like how you have turned your loss of your father and your sadness into something positive. You look at your work as a chance to honor his memory. Your article showed me that we can take something hard in our life and make something good from it. I felt hopeful after reading your letter. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Gale

Name_____

Date_____

Look at the writing sample by Gale

How many paragraphs are there?_____How do you know?_____

What the **first** paragraph tell you_____

Why is Gale writing a letter to Carmen?_____

The **second** and **third** paragraphs tell you about :

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

How does Carmen celebrate her father?_____

The _____ and _____ paragraphs give a **summary** of Carmen's article.

How are Carmen's and Gale's experiences the same?_____

What is a special detail Gale liked about Carmen's article?_____

What has Gale learned from Carmen's article?_____

The _____ and _____ paragraphs are Gale's **response** to Carmen's article.

Reader_____

Letter writer_____

Response Letter to Article in Change Agent: What Does Your Classmate See?

The person reading the letter

What article is the person 'replying' to?

What was the person in the article celebrating?

What is a personal 'connection' the letter writer has?

The letter writer

Your favorite detail or line is...

Something you will add or change is...

Reader_____

Letter writer_____

Response Letter to Article in Change Agent: What Does Your Classmate See?

The person reading the letter

What article is the person 'replying' to?

What was the person in the article celebrating?

What is a personal 'connection' the letter writer has?

The letter writer

Your favorite detail or line is...

Something you will add or change is...

Name_____

Date_____

Paper #2, Draft: Reply to Article in The Change Agent

Directions: Use your notes to put the letter together. Remember, you are writing it to the person (author) who wrote the article in **The Change Agent: Celebrations**.

This is only a guide! You don't have to use the exact words. However, you do have to have all the parts!!

Dear _____,

(Part 1 Summary--use your notes)

I read your article_____in **The Change Agent: Celebrations**

I would like to share some things I noticed. I would also like to share my personal experience.

In the article, you talked about celebrating _____

You celebrated by_____

You celebrated because_____

You wanted the reader to understand_____

Name_____

Date_____

(Part 2 Your response-use your notes)

I personal connection I have _____

Something you said that caught my attention_____

Something I learned from reading your article_____

Something I would like to share_____

Sincerely,

Now Read Your Letter Back

Do you have proper end punctuation? (. ? !)

Do you have capital letters (always 'I')?

Do you use specific details in your response ?

Does it make sense?