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Youth Work for Teen Parents
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**GOMIC STRIPS ON THE
INTEGRATION ROAD:
GUIDE FOR YOUTH WORKERS**





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CONTENTS

Introduction	6
1. How to tell my parents?.....	7
1.1 Support from your parents.....	7
1.1.1 Supports outside of your relationships with your parents	8
1.1.2 Personal Plan	9
1.2. Developing Confidence to Tell Parents About Pregnancy.....	10
1.2.1 My Supports Networks.....	10
1.2.2 Right Advice to Prepare for Telling your Parents.....	11
1.2.3 Calming Breathing Techniques for Acute Stress	11
1.3 Relationship Between Parents and Their Pregnant Daughter.....	12
References	13
2. What to do?	14
2.1 Unexpected Pregnancy.....	14
2.2 Taking the Right Decision.....	17
2.2.1 Is parenting the right option?.....	17
2.2.2 It is crucial to advice teens to ask themselves if they are ready for a baby	17
2.2.3 What if she decides not to keep the baby?	18
2.3 Healthy Pregnancy	19
2.3.1 What changes to expect immediately?	19
2.3.2 Nutrition during pregnancy	19
2.4 Things to Avoid and Unhealthy Habits.....	20
2.5 Newborn Layette – Essential Things for a Newborn and Mother.....	22
2.5.1 What is a baby layette?.....	22
2.6 Giving Birth – Early Signs of Labour	24
2.6.1 Early signs of labour	24
References	25
3. I am a schoolgirl!.....	27
3.1 School and pregnancy	27
3.1.1 What are my rights?	27
3.1.2 School and maternity leave	28



3.1.3 Dealing with discrimination	28
3.1.4 Building a supporting network	29
3.2 Role change in peer group and between the teen parents	30
3.2.1 How pregnancy is changing the girl's role.....	30
3.2.2 Participation in peer activities	31
3.2.3 Friendship and parenthood.....	31
3.3 Options for studies	32
3.3.1 What are the options for a pregnant girl?	32
3.3.2 Creating individual alternatives for studies.....	33
3.3.3 If things are not going as planned.....	33
3.4 Future perspectives of the pregnant girl	34
3.4.1 What are the options for the future?.....	34
3.4.2 How to plan the future	34
3.4.3 Making sure the pregnant girl is not being left alone.....	35
References	36
4. Early motherhood. Mother's needs. Medical, legal and social problems	37
4.1 Problems and needs of teenage mothers.....	37
4.1.1 Medical problems as a consequence of biological immaturity	37
4.1.2 Legal aspects	39
4.1.3 Threat of social exclusion.....	39
4.1.4 Early motherhood - identifying threats and chances for happy parenthood and adulthood	41
4.2 Attitudes of teenage mothers	43
4.2.1 Characteristics of families with early motherhood.....	43
4.2.2 Family functions. Parenting models, attitudes and styles that are role models for teenage mothers (positive and negative).....	44
4.2.3 Psychosocial problems and the associated risks of negative attitudes.....	45
References	48
5. Positive Parenting.....	50
5.1 What is the best way to speak to my child?	50
5.1.1 Parenting Methods	50
5.1.2 Attachment	51
5.2 How can I be approachable to my child?	52
5.2.1 Emotional Intelligence.....	52
5.2.2 Parenting Tips	53
5.3 How to take care of myself?	54



5.3.1 Self-Care	54
5.3.2 Stress Management	55
5.4 How can I teach values?.....	56
5.4.1 Modelling	56
References	58
Annex No. 1	61
Annex No. 2	64

Introduction

Teenage pregnancy and parenthood are a complex contemporary issue. A teen parent may not be a suitable mother or father because they are overwhelmed by the constant needs of the baby. Their children are more likely to suffer health and cognitive disadvantages, come in contact with the child welfare and correctional systems, live in poverty, drop out of high school and become teen parents themselves. This is a main focus of the project Tool4Teen. Educating about parenting and learning all about how to be an effective parent are the best things to ensure that a child grows up happy, healthy and well-adjusted.

The target group is teens or teen parents from different background, and different education status, with slight learning disabilities, drop out of education or did not complete high school, disadvantaged in society, unemployed, socially excluded in society and above all have psycho-social problems which can lead to learning difficulty.

This **guide** accompanies youth workers step by step through the process of using comic book to communicate with teens. There are 5 chapters in this guide. Every chapter of comic book presents different situation. Each chapter of this guide is dedicated to discuss the main issues which are depicted in the comic book.

The 5 chapters are:

Chapter 1: How to tell my parents?

Chapter 2: What to do?

Chapter 3: I'm a schoolgirl!

Chapter 4: Early motherhood. Mothers' needs.

Chapter 5: Positive parenting.

The process of the sessions:

Teen should be provided with comic book and read it. Youth worker should highlight main issues which are presented in the comic book. By using this guide youth worker should present information to teen and at the end of the session have a reflective discussion about the comic itself and information which was presented.

It is expected that after the sessions teens' confidence will be increased to use their individual strengths, abilities and qualities for their social integration in general. Also, that they will learn responsibility, independence and resourcefulness. They will be empowered to use positive parenting methods. Moreover, these sessions should improve their self-esteem and empower participation in their integration pathway, thus overcoming prejudices and stereotypes.



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HAPTER 1

How to tell my parents? FUTURE IN PERSPECTIVE LIMITED

Early motherhood often directly affects maternal perinatal indicators and family health, leading to dysfunctionality in the family.

Adolescents, at an increasingly younger age, experience the drama of unwanted motherhood, parental rejection and the contempt or indifference of others. Unprepared for motherhood, they arrive at it and this unforeseen situation triggers a series of social and personal frustrations.

Family influence is fundamental in determining the sexual behavior of its members and, above all, of the youngest; values, conceptions, actions and behaviors about sexuality are transmitted through family communication. Parents have a great responsibility in the formation of these human beings; the direct, precise and sincere or, on the contrary, vague way of speaking plays a valuable role in the formation of children. Inadequate communication can become the main reason why the family is the last one to realize when the young person is in trouble. Above all, it is necessary to provide a favorable environment in which feelings, values, ideals, attitudes and habits of social-ethical significance are learned; this is the precise responsibility first of all of the family and then of the schools.

1.1 Support from your parents

Adolescents don't usually have acquired sufficient skills, responsibility and autonomy to have, educate and care for a child properly. They haven't finished their academic training, they don't have a job, they depend on their parents, in short, they aren't prepared to face such a great responsibility and therefore a situation of crisis, fear and concern arises and above all rejection of the young woman's pregnancy.

And what happens when they get pregnant? Most pregnant teenagers experience these situations with anxiety and fear of telling their parents or friends, they feel overwhelmed. Fear of the reaction of their family or friends often leads them to hide it, making it difficult to solve the problem, which requires early detection and immediate intervention and support from the family and other social agents.

Because of their new condition, adolescents may exhibit unusual behaviors, including neglect of both their physical and emotional health. Feelings of helplessness, uncertainty, fear and physical and emotional overload are common in adolescents when they find out they are pregnant, as they experience an internal conflict due to the responsibility that pregnancy implies, which is aggravated by social pressure, generating situations that in many cases force them to think about self-harm and abortion as options to succumb to the internal chaos they are experiencing.



It is important that the young woman, when she feels the aforementioned symptoms, calmly explains to her parents what is happening so that the necessary measures can be taken as soon as possible to deal with the problem effectively. Understanding, close and constructive dialogue will facilitate the reduction of the adolescent's distress and begin to make decisions to provide alternative solutions.

How to work with the group:

- Engage in a discussion about her relationship with her parents.
- Consider the option of having a small meeting with her parents to discuss the importance of the relationship in the young woman's pregnancy.
- Practice with the adolescent different ways of communicating with her parents about the pregnancy.

1.1.1 Supports outside of your relationships with your parents

The family should be a support to lean on when facing a teenage pregnancy. However, there are adolescents who may feel abandoned and alone when they do not see the support of their families.

It is true that every family is different and while some families are very close and help each other, others do not offer their support to a member who really needs it, inflicting much more pain at such times.

That is why when the family is not able to help and turns its back, the pain and the emotional wound is very big and difficult to deal with.

There are certain problems that we sometimes solve better with the help of others. But it is important to know who the people are we are going to confide in. Because sometimes we ask for advice or open our secrets to the wrong people.

Therefore, we should take time and think before opening our intimacies to other people whether friends, other family members, etc.

Learning to trust people within or outside your family environment, to lean on them or seek their advice, is also a matter of trusting your own perceptions and paying attention to your intuition.

If you start to mistrust without any demonstration of anything, you may be going in the wrong direction. Don't be too hasty and see how your relationship evolves before you confide in them or ask for their advice.

How to work with the group:

- List the people she offers her personal information to, and analyze them
- Discuss some tips that she should keep in mind and that may be useful when placing (or not placing) her trust in someone.



1.1.2 Personal Plan

It is normal that when a teenager finds out that she is pregnant, she gets very nervous, one of the reasons being the number of responsibilities that may arise. Sometimes they even feel stressed by the tasks and preparations that must be carried out.

When you are becoming a mum, things change, but it is very important that you keep your personal goals. Taking the time to write down your goals for the present, the near future and the more distant future is a process that can transform your life forever.

Goals are like a magnet, they pull you. And the more exciting, concrete and authentic they are, the greater the magnetism they have on you. Goal setting unleashes an intrinsically human capacity to imagine the future and allow yourself to dream. The truly powerful goals you can set for yourself must have 3 key components:

- They must be inspiring.
- They must be credible.
- They must be something you can act on.

When your goals inspire you, when you believe in them and act on them, you achieve them - no doubt about it!

How to work with the group:

- Discuss what she needs to do to achieve her objectives and goals.
- Reflect on the obstacles she may encounter and whether and how she can overcome.
- Self-evaluation of the goals she has already achieved.

Summary of the section “Personal plan for your pregnancy”

- Managing Emotional management must be carefully managed before communicating with parents about pregnancy.
- Acting correctly when communicating something to parents requires first recognising that there is no exact recipe for good communication.
- Limiting themselves can sometimes provide a sense of security. If a person does not make them feel that their boundaries are violated or not respected, this will build trust.
- Building a support network and identifying the people they can rely on is necessary to avoid future problems.
- Her goals can not only change her life but also the lives of those around her and even the world, so it is important to be brave in setting goals.
- Planning measures to help young pregnant women prepare for the healthiest possible pregnancy.



1.2. Developing Confidence to Tell Parents About Pregnancy

Pregnancy in young people is an issue of particular concern to families because they are interested in preventing it, and most parents do not know how to deal with sexuality with their children. Studies have shown that teenage pregnancy is associated with difficulties in communication and emotional relationships between parents and children.

This is why it is important to reflect on family communication. Sometimes, young people do not maintain a good family relationship and when a situation arises, they do not make the right decisions or do not have the confidence to discuss issues such as sexuality in the family, which can result in unwanted pregnancies. When there is no good family communication to provide adequate information, nor family training on values regarding sexuality, it is very likely that the adolescent will end up getting pregnant or, in the case of men, that he will get his partner pregnant.

Family communication is a determining factor in the relationships that are established in the family nucleus and the relationships that will be established with others. It is a factor that can be considered one of the causes of adolescent pregnancy, the fact that girls present a lack of family affection or family problems, seek their own identity, show interest in what is forbidden and rebel against what is established, desiring to feel like adults.

It is therefore important that parents and children are open to dialogue and try to maintain a good relationship and communication, as the family is the main medium through which values, culture, religion, etc. are transmitted.

1.2.1 My Supports Networks

Support networks are a set of interpersonal relationships that link people with others in the same environment, and allow you to maintain or improve your material, physical and emotional well-being.

Support networks allow pregnant adolescents to enjoy a comprehensive well-being, having relationships that positively influence the acceptance of the expectant baby.

Support networks can vary between friends, family and partners, since in many cases pregnant adolescents have absent parents, or only live with one of them and the relationship is distant. Also, many choose to engage in conversation with a person other than parents, other family members, partners and friends, with the expectation that these people will provide you with knowledge that will allow them to change their way of thinking and release situations that cause discomfort and sadness, among others.

Having a supportive network is about building and maintaining a network of people that you can trust and fall back on in times of difficulty.

How to work with the group:

- If the young person is shy and refuses to seek support elsewhere, leave a piece of paper with some information where she can seek support later.



- Discuss who are the people who would support her in the different social circles in which she is involved?
- Reflect on what needs to be done to ask other people for help.

1.2.2 Right Advice to Prepare for Telling your Parents

Many young teenagers face one of the most difficult challenges of all: telling their parents that they are pregnant.

No teen or young adult wants to go through this situation, but it still happens to thousands every year. You might feel paralyzed by feelings of guilt, embarrassment, or shame or maybe you're excited but fearful of their response. However, the longer you put it off, the more difficult the situation can become.

How to work with the group:

- Role-play with the girl in an active way, to get different perspectives.
- Assess the positive and negative reactions parents might have to the news.
- Discuss possibilities if the conversation with the parents does not work as expected.

1.2.3 Calming Breathing Techniques for Acute Stress

Feeling stressed is common during pregnancy because it is a time of many changes. Your family life, your body, and your emotions are changing. You may welcome these changes, but they can also add more stress to your life. Therefore, a good tool to control stress is BREATHING.

Breathing practices are an excellent way to connect more with the mind, body and spirit. Deep, conscious breathing can be used as an anchor to stay in the present. Breathing can also be used to feel the energy of emotions, especially those that are uncomfortable and that you may be trying to escape from.

In stressful times, good use of the breath allows you to move and release negative energy rather than storing it in the body. This is important because pent-up energy often manifests as muscle tension and other physical ailments.

How to work with the group:

- Discuss times when you would use relaxation exercises to avoid stress and whether you think this would work.
- Use this technique with the young person in a calm place so that they can relax their body and mind.
- Schedule an online meeting with a specialist to help with stress management.

Summary of the section “Personal plan for your pregnancy”

- Increase a support system to help cope with stress.



- Breathing techniques to manage stress and anxiety in a spacious, slow, leisurely and rhythmic way.
- Managing emotions is important to know how to tell your parents about your pregnancy.
- Seek help from those around you to help you deal with the situation more easily and confidently.
- Identify viable moments to have an important conversation with parents.

1.3 Relationship Between Parents and Their Pregnant Daughter

The presence of an appropriate family role model is of utmost importance for adolescent girls in achieving maturity. Honest, simple and timely communication between parents and adolescents will strengthen family relationships.

The role of the family is considered fundamental in the way in which the adolescent pregnancy process is experienced, the family being the main support for adolescent pregnancy, and recognizing that in addition to being a protective factor for the development of the adolescent and her baby, good family quality is a predictor of the absence of adolescent pregnancies.

Most teenage pregnancies have to do with a problem in the family relationship or a malfunction at the level of the family and its members. A lack of resources in the family to adapt to the changes that the transition from girl to adolescent implies, manifests itself in adolescence in this way; when they are neglected, they try to compensate for this lack of attention or establish their own independence and change their relationship with their parents through pregnancy. Studies reveal that the way in which adolescents experience motherhood is significantly influenced by the quality of the relationships experienced by the members of their family group, and the way in which the family does or does not support the pregnancy interferes with the decision to terminate the pregnancy or not.

Scientific evidence shows that family influence is fundamental in determining the sexual behavior of its members, especially the youngest, because values, conceptions, actions, and behaviors regarding sexuality are transmitted through family communication. Lack of communication with parents is one of the main causes of adolescent pregnancy; where the relationship between inadequate relationships and education with parents and early pregnancy is evident, as well as those adolescents who do not discuss sexuality are 12.5 times more likely to conceive an unwanted pregnancy.

How to work with the group:

- Discuss different scenarios in which she practices telling her family that she is expecting a baby.
- Have a meeting with the young woman and a trusted friend to discuss common situations. Practice to feel prepared.
- Take 8 simple and effective steps that she can put into practice if the talk with her parents turns negative.



Summary of the section “personal plan for you pregnancy”

- Learn ways to communicate with your parents about your pregnancy.
- Dynamics in the family to sense the different reactions to communicating the situation.
- Knowing and analysing how to speak and be heard.
- The family's attitude towards early pregnancy is decisive in optimising the health, well-being and quality of life of the young woman.

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HAPTER 2

What to do?

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2.1 Unexpected Pregnancy

This chapter focuses on reactions which occur after hearing about unexpected pregnancy and tips how to deal with it are presented. It is discussed how to take the right decision in deciding to keep the baby or not. Moreover, part of this chapter is dedicated to changes in body while being pregnant, nutrition advice is given, also things to avoid and unhealthy habits are presented as well. Finally, you can find a list of newborn's layette and early signs of labour are described so that teen girl could be informed and feel calmer before giving birth.

Teenage pregnancy can be a crisis for the pregnant girl and her family. Common reactions include anger, guilt, and denial. If the father is young and involved, similar reactions can occur in his family.

Pregnant teens can have many different emotional reactions:

- some may not want their babies
- others may view the creation of a child as an achievement and not recognize the serious responsibilities
- some may keep a child to please another family member
- some may want a baby to have someone to love but not understand the amount of care the baby needs
- some may be depressed before getting pregnant or may develop depression
- many do not realize that their baby can also be demanding and sometimes irritating
- some become overwhelmed by guilt, anxiety, and fears about the future

When talking about pregnancy, many people focus on the mother-to-be, but there are two people expecting a baby and they are in it together. Fathers-to-be also have a hard time.

Many fathers will also be experiencing varying ranges of emotions in the beginning and throughout pregnancy. Many things are running through their minds – from how their life is going to change, to how they will be able to support family. Fathers-to-be undoubtedly also feel very scared at times, and this is perfectly normal. No one really knows what they're doing or what to expect when they bring a child into the world. It is important to emphasize that there is no shame in feeling uncertain or emotional.

It is a good idea to talk to partner about feelings, it is incredibly important to be open and transparent with each other especially in a time that puts both of parents-to-be under a lot of stress such as pregnancy. Also, it can be beneficial to seek out support from others, other fathers or men who may have felt the same way teen is feeling now. Reaching out to others for support, advice



and a shoulder to lean on can help a lot – no one should ever feel like they are struggling with their troubles alone.

When teens get pregnant, very often, they experience an overwhelming onslaught of disrespect and shame, especially from society. They have to deal even with friends who talk bad things behind their backs. Teens might feel alone and even depressed.

Despite the large number of teens becoming pregnant, society stigmatizes pregnancy by pitting “good girls” against “bad girls”. This stigma, and the shame it often brings, stems from **stereotypes** about pregnant teens, including that they are irresponsible, promiscuous and immature. Sadly, there are also plenty of stereotypes about teenagers who choose to become mothers, namely that they will drop out of school, never go to college or university and diminish their chances of success as adults.

Stereotypes aren't just hurtful. They can also have serious negative long-term effects. Therefore, it is important to not only support teenagers before, during, and after pregnancy but to also trust that they will make good decisions.

A few tips on how to deal with negativity:

- **Stay calm.**

Teen should be advised to stay calm. Yelling or getting upset will not change other people's minds, because they will be more focused on teen's anger than words. Staying calm gives the opportunity to share their truth and defend themselves because sometimes people tend to judge without even knowing the situation. However, if the person is particularly offensive and angry it is better not to talk and avoid negative and pointless conversations which would only hurt teen's feelings.

- **Be positive.**

Being positive is probably the last thing teens might feel like doing but staying positive is a great way to deal with negativity. Combating negativity with positivity is a helpful way to steer the conversation in a more positive direction.

- **Focus on other things.**

If someone said something that is really upsetting, it is always a good idea to take a few deep breaths and focus on other things for a while. Giving oneself some space and time from the negative comments can help to see things clearly and talking with family, close friend or even a psychologist can help see things in a more carefree light.

It is always a good idea to advise teens to **seek help from specialists**, for example **psychologists**. They might be afraid to ask for help, but they should be encouraged to do that in order to avoid stress and anxiety which might harm the baby as well. Psychologists cannot share any information of their patients. This might be a good incentive to teens if they fear to talk with family members or friends.



If teens are scared to talk, they can be advised to prepare for conversation. It can be done by taking time to reflect on what person would like to say and the challenges they foresee with the upcoming conversations. If someone is going to be difficult or judgemental (doesn't matter family, friends, society in general) teens can practice their responses and reduce the likelihood they will get defensive and emotional during the conversation. They may even be more open-minded and willing to hear difficult feedback.

One more option is to ask for help from **Crisis Pregnancy Centers**. It is a non-governmental organization established to help women experiencing crisis pregnancies and different pregnancy – related issues. It is also helping women after miscarriages, premature childbirths, postpartum depressions and other related problems.

Crisis pregnancy center:

- Provides free professional confidential counselling that helps women and couples during a pregnancy crisis.
- Provides continuous, complex (material, financial, social, psychological, gynecological, legal, doula, genetic) help of various professionals to pregnant women who, because of an unexpected pregnancy, find themselves in a difficult social, financial or psychological situation. They can also help those mothers during the child's firstyears.
- Provides individual counselling and organize therapy groups for women who have experienced loss of a child because of miscarriage or premature birth.
- Provides psychological support to women undergoing postpartum depression.
- Gives lectures on the development of human life in the womb.

To conclude pregnant teens should also know that support is available for them. In fact, there are many resources, clinics, and agencies to provide help, as well as caring professionals who can offer assistance. They should keep in mind that they are neither the first nor the last teenagers to be pregnant, and they have the control over their pregnancies and their futures.

How to work with the group or individual:

- Give a task to a group or individual to write down their emotions. Have a discussion about it.
- Have a reflective discussion on what are the best ways to deal with negative emotions by sharing each person's personal methods which work the best for them.
- If there is a necessity, encourage teens to ask for help of specialist if they are afraid to do that.



Summary of important points of the section “Unexpected Pregnancy”

- Emotional reactions
- Tips on how to deal with negativity
- Crisis Pregnancy Centres

2.2 Taking the Right Decision

Deciding whether to raise a child is a very important and very personal choice. Everyone’s situation is different, and only pregnant teen knows what’s best for her and her family. Every decision is right but it has to be made responsibly.

2.2.1 Is parenting the right option?

Everyone has their own unique and valid reasons for choosing to have and raise a child. Parenting can be joyful, rewarding, and life-changing - many parents say it’s the best decision they ever made. Nevertheless, it is important to explain that having a baby is also a lifelong commitment that takes lots of love, energy, and patience. It’s normal to have lots of different feelings about whether she is ready to take on the challenge of parenting whether if she is parenting alone or with the father of baby.

2.2.2 It is crucial to advice teens to ask themselves if they are ready for a baby.

Family, relationships, money, school, work, life goals, personal beliefs, and the well-being of future child — most people think carefully about all of these things before choosing to parent. But every person’s situation is different, and only they can decide what’s best in their case.

A few more questions to ask about becoming a mother: Do I want to start a family now? Am I ready to be totally responsible for all of my child’s needs? Will I be able to raise my child in a loving and healthy home? Can I afford to raise a child right now? What kind of support will I have from my family, my friends, and my partner/the father? What would having a baby right now mean for my future? Would I consider adoption? Do my partner and I both feel good about staying together and parenting together? How do I feel about co-parenting if we break up, or parenting alone?

It should be explained that though parenting is hard work, it can also be fun, exciting, and super rewarding. The love parents share with their kids can be really fulfilling. But parents have to give up a lot for their children. Meeting child’s needs can be very challenging. People who are raising kids usually get less sleep and don’t have as much time to do things they need and want to do. Having a baby is expensive, and many people find it hard to financially support their children. Having children can also mess with school or career plans and goals.

There are a lot of things to consider, and it’s totally normal to have many different feelings and thoughts when making decision. That is why it is important to get honest, supportive information

about pregnancy options. Support from other people can extremely help to figure out if keeping the baby is the right decision.

2.2.3 What if she decides not to keep the baby?

While some teens who become pregnant decide that keeping the baby is the right decision for them, other teens come to a different conclusion. Teens should be aware of the options. One of the options is adoption and this process should be explained to teen mother-to-be.

Adoption is the process in which a pregnant woman gives birth and then turns her baby over to an adoption agency. She gives up all of her legal rights to the child. After a careful screening process, the agency chooses a parent or parents who will raise the baby as their own. The birth mother can help choose a couple or person that she feels comfortable turning her baby over to after she or he is born.

Here is a figure with list of pros and cons which can be presented to a teen.

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •It is rewarding •Experience unconditional love •Children give life meaning •Smiles •Cuddling •Passing on knowledge •Laughter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •It is scary •I am not ready •I don't know what to do •Kids are expensive

No one can predict the future. No one can be certain what all of the consequences of any choice may be. But what teens can do is carefully consider their plans, values, and feelings, and then make the best decision for them at the time.

How to work with the group or individual:

- Give a task for a group to write pros and cons which they have in mind about keeping the baby or giving it away. Ask each person to read their lists out loud. Have a discussion on that and make one final list.
- If there is a possibility, invite or ask to join online a few volunteer mothers, who are growing children of different ages to share their pros and cons on giving birth and growing a child.

Summary of important points of the section “Taking the Right Decision”

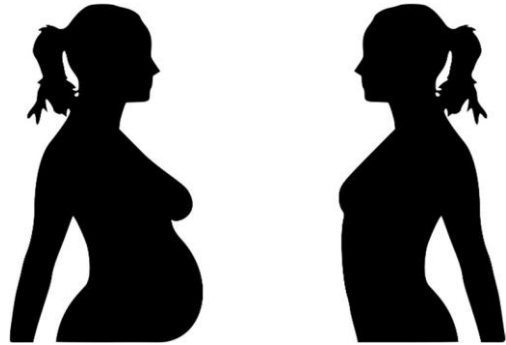
- Having a baby - a lifelong commitment
- Important questions to ask before making the decision
- Pros and cons of keeping the baby



2.3 Healthy Pregnancy

2.3.1 What changes to expect immediately?

As soon as woman gets pregnant, her body goes into overdrive – so no wonder that she is tired and possibly weepy. It is necessary to explain to teen mother that her body has to cope with creating the placenta – the powerhouse of pregnancy, and her baby’s life-support system – so her lethargy is quite legitimate. It only lasts while body adjusts and the placenta is formed. By the second trimester, mother-to-be will have more energy. It is important to get as much rest as possible.



Frequent peeing can be a real nuisance in early pregnancy. It is due to the increase in body fluids that occur at this time. As pregnancy advances, pregnant woman may find that the pressure of the uterus makes her want to pee more. This should not be the excuse to drink less water. Six – eight glasses of water should be consumed during the day.

Morning sickness can be the worst part of early pregnancy. Excessive vomiting, more common in first pregnancies. The reason why many women suffer in the mornings is the fact that their stomach is empty.

For the first trimester (up to 12 weeks) body only needs about 100 extra calories a day. During the second and third trimesters, 300 extra calories are needed per day. It is expected to gain around 11-16 kg. Women who gain less than 9 kg tend to have smaller babies, who may even be more likely to be born prematurely. Women who gain excessive amounts equally risk their health. The muscles have to work harder the heavier woman gets and this may result in back and leg pain, increased tiredness, piles, varicose veins – and even complications during delivery.

Around 1.5-2 kg should be gained in the first trimester, then 5.5-6.5 kg in the second. In the last trimester, woman should expect to gain around half a kilo a week. This slows off in the last few weeks, and weight might drop slightly just before delivery.

2.3.2 Nutrition during pregnancy

Pregnant teen may need extra care and help with what she eats in pregnancy simply because she has not finished growing herself. Teenage mothers tend to gain less weight than older mothers, and to have smaller babies and babies who are born prematurely. As a teen she might still live with parents or be on a tight budget and find it hard to eat well, but it is very important to make sure that she has enough of key nutrients, such as protein, calcium, zinc and iron, and vitamins, such as vitamin D.

It is necessary to emphasize the importance to eat a broad range of food encompassing all the food groups. This ensures that baby gets everything it needs for optimum development. A pregnant



woman needs 75-80 g of protein a day. Hard cheeses, lean meat, cooked fish, pulses, soya beans and eggs are all good sources. Protein is the building block for human cells.

It is better to avoid blue-veined cheese, mould-ripened soft cheese such as brie and soft, unpasteurised goat and sheep cheese due to the risk of listeria, a type of food poisoning.

Calcium is vital for the development of muscles and nerves, blood clotting and enzyme activity. It is needed for building strong bones and teeth. One glass of milk provides about 300 mg of calcium. Other good sources are cottage cheese, yoghurt, sardines and salmon, kale and tofu.

Complex carbohydrates will give a great source of slow burn energy. They also help to prevent constipation. It is better to choose whole-wheat bread, cereal, pasta and rice. Beans and peas, fresh fruit and vegetables are also good source.

Other important nutrients you need in pregnancy include vitamin D, iron vitamin B12, zinc and folic acid. Vitamin B12 needs are higher in pregnancy due to vitamin B12's role in tissue creation and the building of DNA. One source of vitamin B12 is fortified cereal. Alternatively, it is good to eat meat, dairy products and eggs, fermented soya products such as miso and tamari.

Good source of vitamin C include fruits and vegetables such as oranges, strawberries, tomatoes, peppers and cabbage.

Last but not least, it is important to include iron-rich foods in the diet. Baby needs iron for the development of its blood supply. Foods, high in iron include cashew nuts, carob, beef, pulses and wholewheat cereals. Drinking orange juice can help to absorb the iron in food more readily. Also, it is necessary to make sure to consume enough essential fatty acids, found in oily fish, to help the development of baby's brain. Walnuts, wholegrains, green leafy vegetables and rapeseed oil are also good source.



2.4 Things to Avoid and Unhealthy Habits

It is important to advice teen mothers-to-be to discuss their habits with doctor to be sure that they are safe during pregnancy. There are obvious things which must be cut out during pregnancy, like drinking and smoking. Then there are habits that are not as clear-cut, like if a person is caffeine

obsessed, is very active physically, dyes hair often etc. It is necessary to consult doctor about these habits and learn what is safe and what should be cut or minimized.



It is important to have a list of foods to avoid. There is a long list of foods to avoid when pregnant and it can be hard to remember each one. For example,



some fish is safe while other types should be avoided. Instead of doing an online search every time it is advisable to save a list recommended by the doctor and have it for example on the phone.

Things to avoid:

- Eat for two

Studies show that half of women gain too much weight during pregnancy. When that happens, the baby is at greater risk of obesity later in life.

- Visit the sauna

Pregnant woman should avoid the sauna and hot tub. There is a risk of overheating, dehydration and fainting every time a sauna, whirlpool, hot tub or steam room are used. Body is unable to lose heat effectively by sweating and body's core temperature rises. It is very possible that a significant rise in core temperature could affect baby's development, especially in the first trimester of pregnancy.



- Clean the litter box

There's no reason to fear or avoid pet cat but leave the cleaning of the litter box should be left to other people. There are millions of parasites in feline waste and one – toxoplasma gondii – is especially dangerous to pregnant women. Miscarriage or stillbirth can result, and babies who are born with this parasite could develop serious health problems, including seizures and mental disabilities. It also can lead to vision problems.

- Over exercising

Maintaining a regular workout program during pregnancy is excellent for mother to be and the baby. Regular exercise can help with posture as well as fatigue. However, certain types of high impact physical activity may not be recommended. It is important to speak to physician first to make certain that the exercise plan chosen is appropriate.

- Stress

Stress is a part of everyday life, but the more anxiety one can avoid the better mother and baby will be.

- Exposure to toxins

Secondhand smoke is toxic to mother and baby. Mother to be should avoid being around it if at all possible. Other toxins to avoid include paint fumes, pesticides, herbicides, fungicides and harmful household cleaners.

- X-Rays



There is a small risk that x-rays may harm the health of baby, so if it must be done doctor or dentist should be consulted about using low radiation exposure. Waiting to have the x-ray done after the baby is born is best.

How to work with the group or individual:

- Have a discussion with a group or individual on what they think is healthy and unhealthy during pregnancy. If there is a possibility invite a specialist to participate in discussion and share advice about healthy pregnancy.

Summary of the section “Healthy Pregnancy”

- Body changes
- Nutrition advice
- Things to avoid during pregnancy

2.5 Newborn Layette – Essential Things for a Newborn and Mother

New parents-to-be and especially teen parents who do not have experience might not know the essential things which are needed for a newborn. First of all, it should be explained to them what a baby layette is, what are the essential things, so that they could prepare and calmly wait for the birth of their child.

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2.5.1 What is a baby layette?

Layette refers to all the clothing, bedding and accessories that might be required in order to take care of a newborn. Baby layette clothes are essential in order to always keep them comfortable and cozy.

It is important to mention that babies grow very fast and that a newborn will outgrow the new clothes in a few weeks. So big expenses are unnecessary, of course except such things as: crib, baby carriage etc. If there is a possibility it is always a good idea to ask

relatives for some of these items they may have in their storage, because in a few weeks, baby will need a new wardrobe.

There is no strict definition of the items included in a layette, but down below is presented a list of basic ones which are needed:





Baby clothing: long sleeve bodysuits x 8; short sleeve vests x 8; cardigans x 2; light coat (summer baby); fleece jacket or snow suit (winter baby); scratch mittens; socks x 6; hat x 2.

Feeding:

If breastfeeding: burp cloths or muslins; breast pump; nursing bras; milk storage bags/containers; nursing bras; breast pads (preferably washable); nipple cream and/or compresses for sore nipples.

If formula feeding: plenty of bibs (approx. 20); muslin cloths; bottles x 6 (BPA-free plastic); bottle teats; sterilizer (preferably microwave); bottlebrush; formula.

Baby sleep: a Moses basket, crib or cot; a firm mattress; waterproof mattress cover x 2; fitted sheets x 2/3; swaddle blanket.

Baby travel: approved rear-facing car seat (preferably with Isofix base); pram/buggy that reclines flat for newborns; baby carrier, sling or wrap (they allow mum or dad to be hands-free); car window sun shade; 2-3 blankets for out and about.

Baby changing: cotton wool and a small bowl of cooled boiled water (for babies under six weeks); unscented baby wipes; nappy disposal bags; nappy rash cream/ointment; changing mat; a changing bag with plenty of pockets to carry all the essentials whenever parents leave the house.

For disposable nappies: an unlimited supply of disposable nappies in the size best suited to baby's weight (at least 10-12 per day)

For reusable nappies: at least 25 all-in-one cloth nappies; biodegradable nappy liners; a bucket with a lid (for at home); a wet bag (for when you're out and about)

Baby bathing: a large, soft towel; soft baby sponges or face cloths x2 (one for face, one for body); baby soap (try to avoid products with ingredients including parabens, sodium lauryl sulphate, phenoxyethanol and glycol); baby shampoo.

Baby care: digital thermometer; baby nail clippers or nail file; bulb nasal aspirator to clear any snuffles; soft brush and comb; play mat for tummy time.

The layette should have clothes and accessories which are comfortable and fresh looking. They should be made of cotton which is soft and breathable. It is important to ensure that clothes exposed to the healing bellybutton of the newborn are soft. Babies are so tender and delicate so it is necessary to have everything ready for them so that they are safe and parents are prepared for any situation that might arise.



2.6 Giving Birth – Early Signs of Labour



The idea of labour and delivery embarks the feeling of fear in the mind of a pregnant teenager. They would rather just stay pregnant for the rest of their life rather than go through the pain of a delivery. No matter how daunting the thought of a delivery is, every woman - regardless of age, their body is capable of giving birth.

There are different ways of delivering babies, either a woman can opt for a natural childbirth, a medicated childbirth or an analgesic influenced childbirth. Natural childbirth is a delivery without the use of pain-reduction medications.

Not all women like the idea of natural childbirth, more women prefer medication for the simple reason of eliminating labour and delivery pains. Having a medicated childbirth doesn't have any side effects on the mother or the baby, hence it's just another option for women today.

On the other hand, an analgesic childbirth is a much more intense form of medicated childbirth where the medication is injected slowly through a needle that has been inserted into a vein or muscle to relieve pain during the delivery. Heavier dosages could have an effect on the baby and could lead to certain side effects in the mothers. Ultimately, the pregnant teen will have to decide and make up her own mind before the delivery.

2.6.1 Early signs of labour

Giving birth will be different for every woman, but the main signs that labour is starting will most likely be strong, regular contractions. During pregnancy, a plug of mucus sits in cervix. A show is when that plug of mucus comes away, indicating that the cervix is starting to open.

Other signs that labour is starting can include:

- waters breaking (rupture of the membranes)
- backache, or an upset stomach
- cramping or tightening, like period pain
- a feeling of pressure, as the baby's head moves into the pelvis
- an urge to go to the toilet caused by baby's head pressing in your bowel
- Stages of labour

There are 3 stages to labour.

1. The first stage is when contractions increase, and cervix begins to open up (dilate). This is usually the longest stage.
2. The second stage of labour is when cervix is fully open. This is the part of labour where mother helps her baby move through vagina by pushing with contractions.
3. The third stage is after the birth of the baby, when womb contracts and causes the placenta to come out through the vagina.



Below are presented some tips on how to cope when labour begins.

At the beginning of labour, mother-to-be can:

- walk or move about, if she feels like it
- drink fluids
- have a snack if she feels like it
- try any relaxation and breathing exercises she has learned to deal with contractions as they get stronger and more painful – birth partner can help by doing these with her
- have birth partner rub her back – this can help relieve pain
- take paracetamol according to the instructions on the packet – paracetamol is safe to take in labour
- have a warm bath.

All the information presented above is just for general understanding. All the details should be given by doctors, but a general overview can prepare the teen and make her feel more confident and calmer.

How to work with the group or individual:

- Have a discussion with a group or individual about the fear of giving birth. If there is a possibility invite/have online call with an obstetrician or gynecologist to answer most important questions and give some advice for teens.

Summary of the sections „Newborn Layette“ and „Giving Birth“

- List of essential things for a newborn and mother
- Early signs of labor

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C

HAPTER 3

I am a schoolgirl!

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Being pregnant and graduating from school is a significant challenge for a variety of reasons. Teen pregnancy is not a new issue, but schools and parents still struggle with the challenges caused by this situation. While statistics show that teen mothers who graduate from high school now have a better outlook at supporting themselves and their children, keeping them in school until graduation is often easier said than done. The requirements, living conditions and environment, as well as everyday life rhythm of school and early parenthood are just too different as they could easily fit together.

This chapter focus on the impact of pregnancy on everyday school life from different perspectives. The four sections being discussed are: pregnancy and school, options for the studies, the changes of the peer status after becoming pregnant, and the pregnant teen's future perspectives with regard to education. As for any teenager, school is usually the main activity and an important place for meeting peers, and by this it represents a central part of the teenagers' everyday life's experiences. Hence, the previously mentioned four areas were chosen, because the most relevant changes in the life of a pregnant girl are related to school life. Each section is followed by suggestions on how to work with the group in the respective situation.

3.1 School and pregnancy

3.1.1 What are my rights?

At first: All girls have a right to education regardless of their pregnancy, marital or motherhood status. However, discovering to be pregnant probably is an overwhelming news and thinking of being pregnant and a schoolgirl at the same time might evoke confusing thoughts. Nevertheless, since pregnant teenagers still remain pupils, they have the right to attend the school aiming on graduating and preparing for future life as an adult. However, the stakes in a pregnant or parenting girl's decision about leaving school are very high. Helping her stay and graduate is the greatest contribution school boards and personnel make to her life and her children's. The Alan Guttmacher Institute, for instance, said about the connection between teen pregnancies, parenting, and educational achievement: Dropping out of school, not having a baby, is the key factor that sets adolescent mothers behind their peers. If a pregnant teenager drops out, it is unlikely that she will return to school before her children are in school. Adolescent mothers who stay in school are almost as likely eventually to graduate as women who do not become mothers while in high school.

In contrast, only about 30 percent of women who drop out of high school either before or after their baby's birth eventually graduates. According to this statement, a main task of those discussing and counselling with the pregnant girl is **encouraging her for completing school!**



How to work with the group:

- motivational interview
- evaluating and discussing the pro and cons on completing or leaving school

3.1.2 School and maternity leave

Another topic to be discussed with the pregnant girl is the option for maternity leave before returning to school after giving birth. In the absence of a leave, a teenager who gives birth and takes time (post-discharge from the hospital) to heal and bond with her new baby will receive unexcused absences from school. Such absences, in turn, make graduation less likely, which can create significant barriers to the girls' ability to thrive as adults. Giving girls four weeks to recuperate from labour and to bond with their infants is hardly a cure-all for their problems, of course. The girls must continue to complete their schoolwork and return after their "leaves" are over. This requires that there be responsible adults in a girl's life who can help with the new baby and ease the transition back into school by picking up classmates' notes and staying in touch with the girls' teachers. If any of the above is absent, the leave is likely to become permanent and end in the creation of yet another drop-out. However, a general advice is to bring the young mothers back to school as soon as possible. Hence, the option of maternity leave needs to be carefully considered with the pregnant girl as well as with the teacher.

How to work with the group:

- discussing the pro and cons of maternity leave with the girl
- organizing a network meeting for discussing a possible maternity leave, including the teen parents, the parents of the pregnant girl, the relevant teachers, and the school social worker

3.1.3 Dealing with discrimination

Attending school as a pregnant girl might cause different kind of discriminating behavior against the girl, either positive or negative. Generally, the sources of discrimination can be divided into three categories: discrimination represented by peers, teachers or by the school as institution.

Many pregnant teens may find the prospect of attending school every day more challenging than they are willing to manage. Consider the morning sickness that makes it difficult for some girls to get to school in the morning, regular doctor visits that result in frequent absenteeism, and the fear of social stigmas, and you can see why some are hesitant to continue their education path in their current condition. This requires to some extent the consideration of an individualized treatment of the pregnant girl that, in turn, might cause discriminative behaviour on the part of peers, teachers or the school.



Examples of negative discrimination are, for instance, bullying, unfounded exclusion from classes or activities or insisting on rules that may put the girl into unpleasant situations. Examples of positive discrimination are, for instance, privileging the girl without an indication, becoming privileged by a teacher out of compassion, or the heroization of the pregnant girl by peers along with a rising status among peers. However, irrespective of the source and reasons for discrimination, they need to be recognized and actions considered aiming on the girl being treated respectfully and equally having regard to her special circumstances.

How to work with the group:

- reflective discussion with the girl about how she wishes to be treated at school. What are the reasons for a special treatment and what are the reasons against?
- discussion on how to react in cases of bullying, whether represented by peers or a teacher
- organizing a network meeting for discussing the special needs of the girl during schooltime and for graduating in general, including the teen parents, the parents of the pregnant girl, the relevant teachers, and the school social worker

3.1.4 Building a supporting network

As mentioned before, graduating as a pregnant or parenting teen is very challenging and the risk of dropping out of school high. Staying alone in this situation makes the mission even harder if not impossible. Therefore, building a supporting network is essential for getting the girl until graduation. Finding the relevant persons and institutions for such a network needs a careful consideration of the available alternatives. Relevant questions for clarifying the girl's needs are:

- what kind of day-care is needed and available for the child?
- who can provide the best support regarding school tasks?
- who and what else is needed or could be helpful for reaching the goal of graduation?

At first, it should be considered whether there are relatives available for giving support. Another source of support might come from friends, peers, and classmates. Finally, institutional resources should be considered and explored what kind of supporting services are existing in the area.

How to work with the group:

- reflective discussion with the girl about who could be helpful for supporting school and who would not be helpful
- explore together with the girl what kind of relevant supporting institutions are existing in the area
- organizing a network meeting for building a network for supporting school and to determine the role and tasks of any participant of the network



Summary of the section “school and pregnancy”

- all girls have a right to education regardless of their pregnancy, marital or motherhood status
- helping the girl staying at school and graduating is the greatest contribution school boards and personnel make to her life and her children’s
- the option of maternity leave needs to be carefully considered; however, a general advice is to bring the young mothers back to school as soon as possible
- attending school as a pregnant girl might cause different kind of discriminating behaviour against the girl, either positive or negative
- building a supporting network is essential for getting the girl until graduation

3.2 Role change in peer group and between the teen parents

3.2.1 How pregnancy is changing the girl’s role

Being pregnant, no matter what age, requires a shift of focus and responsibilities in life. However, the pregnancy of a schoolgirl does not automatically change her focus of interests. Although some cases of teenage pregnancy are knowingly accepted or planned, a great number of pregnancies in teen age are caused by the girl’s risk behaviour, carelessness, or unawareness. Taking actively care about her own health and well-being and the health of the unborn, most likely requires changes in everyday life behaviour and may cause conflicts with the interests of her partner, friends, and peers. According to that, it can be differed between three types of situations:

1. The pregnancy is wanted or accepted, the girl is easily arranging with the changes involved and is willing to accept responsibility.
2. The pregnancy is unwanted and caused by risk behaviour, the girl has difficulties adapting to the changes involved and does not accept responsibility.
3. The girl is ambivalent regarding her pregnancy and in conflict with arranging with the changes involved.

The discussion with the pregnant girl about responsible behaviour during pregnancy probably also takes part somewhere else, however, the role change in school should be considered separately. School is seen as a meeting place where peer activities and experiences are planned shared face-to-face. In that context, certain “in”-topics, -activities, and -behaviour might be compulsory to keep the position within the peer-group. Due to the pregnancy, the girl is now in danger of becoming an outsider, because certain activities might be improbably for her situation. On the other side, her peer-group might have no understanding for her situation and are excluding her, consciously or unconsciously, from peer-activities. This may cause stress and anxiety among pregnant girls. As a result, the fear of the pregnant girl to lose her friends seems to be well-founded and it is recommended to provide a thorough support during the transition period.

How to work with the group:



- discussion with the girl about her attitude towards the pregnancy and the involved responsibilities
- reflective discussion with the girl about her worries and wishes. Evaluation of the pros and cons of her situation? Consider who are the most important persons of the peer-group
- discussion with the girl on how to ensure the health and well-being of herself and the unborn

3.2.2 Participation in peer activities

Being pregnant in teenage is usually accompanied by significant changes of everyday life habits, since the physical and psychological changes of the girl need to be recognized and addressed adequately. The special characteristic of teenage pregnant girls is that they are in a phase of development that includes testing out themselves, looking for their personal limits, and showing opposite behaviour towards adults. This may include behaviour patterns such as smoking, the use of alcohol and drugs, inadequate physical activities, or unhealthy diet behaviour.

Additionally, peer pressure acts as a booster for participating in risky activities and, on the other hand, makes it difficult for the girl to adopt an opposite position, since this can lead to exclusion from the peer group. The descriptions above show the dilemma of a pregnant girl regarding her position in the peer group and require a profound support of girls in risk who ignore the special requirements of pregnancy to strengthen her self-confidence. Further, it is important to evaluate with the girl in what kind of activities she still wants and may participate, what might be alternative activities, and how she can confidently adapt her behaviour in the current peer environment in a way that it is not harmful to her and the unborn.

How to work with the group:

- informative talk about health and the causes of risk behaviour
- self-confidence training
- exploring ways to participate in peer activities without risk behaviour
- exploring alternative activities and peer groups

3.2.3 Friendship and parentship

Creating and maintaining friendships, dating, and spending time together with peers are crucial parts of teens' everyday activities. Friendships are usually built on common interests and sharing the same opinion on essential things of life. Hence, due to the importance of socializing for teens, it is easily understandable that the danger of losing the partner, friends or the status in peer group represents a threatening situation. However, depending on the previous experiences, coping with the situation may be for the one more challenging than for the other.

Regarding the relationship with the father of the baby, very much is depending on his attitude towards becoming father and to what extent he is capable taking the responsibility. The boy possibly does not want to do anything with the pregnancy and is breaking the relationship to



continue his life as usual. Still, it might be possible that he is leaving the girl, because he is just overstrained by the situation and does not know how to handle it. One should keep in mind that it is a tough time for the boy, too. In any case, it is suggested promoting the communication between the teen parents and clarifying the intentions regarding the relationship with both the girl, the father, and together.

Just like the relationship, the girl's friendships are challenged too. It may happen that some friend is step by step dissociating from the pregnant girl, because of the dissonance of the common topics or the difficulty doing the same things together than before. Nevertheless, it is possible that a friendship is continuing, although, the quality and intensity of friendship might change. Further, it is possible that a new friendship starts with a person who has not been well known before. Generally said, friendship relies not only on common activities and topics to share, but also on a deeper understanding of each other thoughts and emotions. On that base, former friendships might continue. Anyway, it is also a good chance to find new friends or a peer group with similar interests.

How to work with the group:

- reflective discussion about friendship in general and about her relationship to the baby's father
- discussion about how friends have changed in the past and how the girl did cope with it
- organizing a joint meeting with the girl and the baby's father to discuss future relationship and parenthood issues, possibly arranging a meeting separately with the boy alone
- considering and evaluating alternative peer groups with more common interests

Summary of the section "role change in peer group and between the teen parents"

- taking actively care about her own health and well-being and the health of the unborn requires changes in everyday life behaviour
- pregnant girls are in danger of becoming an outsider, which may cause stress and anxiety
- age-typical self-testing and risk behaviour might be a harmful to her and the unborn
- the importance of socializing for teens, the danger of losing the partner, friends or the status in peer group represents a threatening situation for the pregnant girl
- it is important to include the potential father in the discussions

3.3 Options for studies

3.3.1 What are the options for a pregnant girl?

After becoming pregnant, it may seem to the girl that anybody's life is continuing but hers. All others are planning their future and are talking about their next educational steps and some proudly present the grant for a scholarship. Considering the near future of the girl, her possible options might not be varying as much as those of the others, however, in the long term her perspectives



look better. Therefore, it is important to plan the young couple's future on two levels: 1. on individual level, and 2. on family level. Planning the future on the individual level include the person's individual career goal as well as the realistic assessment of options to reach the goal. The family level plan includes both parent's view on what kind of family life is expected and how the individual goals fit these expectations. Finally, it should be considered how to realize the plans and what kind of support is needed. Another option to consider is the option of moving to the new city together with the boyfriend and getting the full support at the new place.

How to work with the group:

- reflective discussion with the pregnant girl and the father of the unborn to plan the future as a family including the individual goals
- making a concrete plan how to realize the goals
- evaluating together the possible options and availability of support

3.3.2 Creating individual alternatives for studies

The first choice for the pregnant girl regarding her education is trying to keep her in school and to graduate as soon as possible. Statistics show that the more time passes getting the girl back to school the less likely it becomes for her to graduate. Unfortunately, this often means harmful consequences to the girls' future as well as to their babies. Best changes for graduating from school in time are probably given when the boyfriend takes his responsibility in childcaring and, by this enables the girl for learning and preparing school tasks. In case the boyfriend is unavailable during week, he can perform his duties during weekend and gives time to the girl for learning. At the best, the school is involved and shows flexibility with deadlines or home-schooling, for instance.

How to work with the group:

- discussion with both parents about future decisions using the Tetralemma method
- creating a realistic work-plan for the family and, particularly, for the girl, involving school
- evaluating additional external source of support

3.3.3 If things are not going as planned

Despite all efforts, things might not be going as planned. This is normal in life; however, it is always good to see the wider future and have a Plan B ready to continue with. Being pregnant in the complex phase of adolescence makes it particularly challenging to make plans and realizing them. Since the factors that have impact on the future plans are usually manifold and complex, one should be prepared to modify or change the initial plans in case they do not work as expected. Although, the flexibility of making plans is limited to some extent by the requirements set by the pregnancy, it is suggested considering alternatives in advance to avoid excessive disappointments and hopelessness.



How to work with the group:

- evaluation of possible options and their ranking of preference
- discussing the signs of plan failure and the right time to react

Summary of the section “options for studies”

- it is important to plan the young couple’s future on individual level, and on family level
- it should be considered how to realize the plans and what kind of support is needed
- best changes for graduating from school in time are probably given when the boyfriend takes his responsibility in childcaring
- school needs to be involved in making plans and realizing the graduation
- considering alternatives in advance is important to avoid disappointments and hopelessness

3.4 Future perspectives of the pregnant girl

3.4.1 What are the options for the future?

On the first glance, the future perspective of a pregnant teenager seems to be limited. This view cannot be totally denied, however, by not focusing solely on the near future but considering a longer time frame the perspectives of the pregnant girl might look better. One choice that already is made is becoming and being a mother and parent, which should be connotated positively as a decision that currently is limiting the options but probably only delaying and not excluding forever. Nevertheless, to great extend the girls’ future depends on her own motivation and the level and kind of support that is available at the right time. Generally, the future options should be considered over a longer period and may require some patience regarding the realization. Depending on the availability of services, concrete options for the pregnant girl can be provided by educational institutions that are specialized in young mothers and who enables graduation and further studies for mothers with children. Another option could be institutions for adult education for finishing graduation. In some cases, it might just be necessary to wait that the child has reached a certain age to continue with the educational path.

How to work with the group:

- motivational discussion with girl on how to positively accept the role as mother
- evaluating the educational options for young mothers in the area
- organizing visits to become more familiar with a certain option or service

3.4.2 How to plan the future

Planning the future starts with the evaluation of the girl’s educational wishes and goals. During the discussion, the recall of wishes that the girl has had before the pregnancy should be done,



compared with her current wishes, and the reasons for changing discussed reflectively. It should be paid attention that the goals are realistic while including a higher vision as the leading target. The agreed goals should be reachable within the considered time schedule and divided into several subgoals. The plan can be made for one, five and ten years ahead guided by questions such as “Where want you to be in one-, two-, five-, or ten years from now?” or “How do you see your own life to be in that time steps?” The Timeline method is an effective way to go through this time. Going back and forth on the line let the girl experience how it feels if a goal is reached, and alternative ways can be tested. In case the change of location or educational institution is considered, visiting the place can help making the right decision, and may lower the excitement or fear of realizing the step. In that way, the girl can develop a plan for her own future in a very concrete manner.

How to work with the group:

- evaluating the educational options for young mothers in the area
- organizing visits to become more familiar with a certain option or service
- using the Timeline method for visually experiencing the near and wider future
- using the Tetralemma method for clarifying options and discrepancy

3.4.3 Making sure the pregnant girl is not being left alone

It is probably the worst case, if the girl thinks that she is alone with her situation. Pregnancy in teen age represents a situation that requires manifold support on different levels. It should also be kept in mind that the girls physical, mental, and social well-being can change very fast and may require an immediate modification of support. Things that are working today might not work any longer in the same way tomorrow. Further, the pregnant girl, and probably the baby’s father too, continuously need to prepare things, adapt to the changes, and organize the future in general while keeping graduating from school as the main goal of the near future. Therefore, it is helpful for the young girl or couple to stay in close contact with at least one trustful adult who is listening how things are going and what kind of support might be useful in the current situation.

How to work with the group:

- ensuring the girl has at least one trustful person she can contact and talk to
- if the girl is rejecting cooperation, leave her a phone number or address where she can get support later

Summary of the section “future perspectives of the pregnant girl”

- the pregnancy might limit current options but probably only delaying and not excluding forever



- future options should be considered over a longer period
- the girls' future depends on her own motivation and the level and kind of support that is available at the right time
- it should be paid attention to realistic goals while including a higher vision as the leading target
- include the father of the unborn whenever it is possible
- ensure the pregnant girl is not being left alone

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CHAPTER 4

Early motherhood. Mother's needs.

Medical, legal and social problems.

Wyższa Szkoła Nauk o Zdrowiu i Biznesu

The world and the deep social changes taking place in it show that nowadays sexual activity is started at an increasingly younger age. Therefore, we can confidently say that the age of sexual initiation in adolescents is decreasing more and more. Parents, teachers and educators are concerned about this. We - adults - are aware that, as Agnieszka Skowrońska-Pućka writes, teenagers "are subjected more than ever to the overwhelming influence of popular culture, which provides them with models of behaviour (also in the sexual sphere) that differ significantly from the norms in (...) society and values. By succumbing to media messages, young people not only believe that they should take advantage of immediate pleasure, but also strive to maximize the impressions. (...) it also applies to sex. (...) The culture of the cult of the body and sexuality allows for great freedom of sexual behaviour, creates the so-called "loose morals" usually characterized by a lack of responsibility for its biological and psychological effects. Therefore, adolescent experimentation often gets out of control and takes the form of risky behaviour. Knowledge about sex life (including contraceptives) obtained from peers, colleagues from the Internet or youth magazines, the lack of responsibility and more reliable knowledge about one's sexuality, which is undoubtedly contributed by the use of "uncertain" sources of knowledge, many times contributes to the emergence of undesirable consequences. The factors outlined above may lead to the phenomenon of (pre) early motherhood. An underage girl's pregnancy may be considered (pre-) early for at least several reasons. First of all, the burden of multidimensional consequences should be emphasized, I mean here the emotional, educational, professional, health or, more broadly, social implications related to the occurrence of this incidental event in the biography of a young woman, borne mainly by teenage mothers (...). In such a situation (pre-) early pregnancy additionally strengthens their socio-economic disadvantage". (Skowrońska-Pućka, 2016, pp. 9-10)

4.1 Problems and needs of teenage mothers

4.1.1 Medical problems as a consequence of biological immaturity

When we look at a teenage mother who, from a biological point of view, can become pregnant or even give birth to a child, we are well aware of the enormous effort for a young organism during pregnancy and childbirth. As educators or parents, we know that it is too early for a teenager for such a serious process that takes place in a woman's body during the nine months of pregnancy. Pregnancy and its challenges, as well as the entire birth process, may result in very unfavourable biological effects for the young organism. (Brzezińska, 2003, p. 43).

The task of teenagers' caregivers is therefore to explain and show with examples that sexual maturity does not mean the body's readiness to produce offspring. Unfortunately, too superficial sex education, lack of conversations with parents or any other trustworthy adults result in a lack of proper knowledge in young people, and above all girls. In "Teenage motherhood as an individual



and social problem" by Ewa Włodarczyk we read: "Unfortunately, most often girls who are surprised by the fact of being pregnant are characterized by multiple immaturity: psychological, emotional, moral, axiological one. This uneven development of these spheres makes them physically like women, and psychologically often still like children (Bidzan 2007, p. 21). "(Włodarczyk, p. 2)

Pregnant adolescents often realise that they are pregnant relatively late (sometimes even when the pregnancy begins to be visible, i.e., between the 3rd and 5th month; this means that without suspecting anything, they do not go to the doctor), and often they are not aware of the importance of systematic medical visits and checkups, they disregard the issue of proper nutrition, warnings about the harmfulness of stimulants and some drugs forbidden during pregnancy. Some have concerns (both well-founded and unfounded) about health (of the child and herself). These doubts, at least partially, could be effectively dispelled by the guardianship of a competent obstetrician-gynaecologist, ready to provide a substantive and comprehensive answer to doubts and be vigilant to detect potential irregularities in the health of the mother and child (however, it should be remembered that many women are deprived of the possibility of using prenatal diagnostics). or has limited access to health care centres specialized in this field). **We highly recommend inviting a doctor and a midwife for the workshops - it is worth briefly explaining the differences between the pregnancy of a teenager and a mature woman, and on this basis, they should present the risks associated with early pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period. At this point, the role of psychologist is also important, who could emphasize that apart from the medical and biological differences between early motherhood and motherhood in adulthood, the psychological sphere is also important.**

How to work with the group:

- A great help in showing the medical and biological difficulties related to childbirth can be a workshop exercise, thanks to which participants would be able to become aware of a whole range of problems related to the first moment of a teenage child's birth. Most often, girls do not realize what the "reality" of the delivery room and the act of birth look like – this is our goal to let them know what they can expect.

SUGGESTIONS

It is worth using educational videos, discussion and descriptions from the literature of “real-life” examples concerning the delivery and the situation in the hospital room right after delivery. Even popular scenes from feature films can be applied. After all, these pictures clearly show the pain and fatigue of mothers - you can see emotions, fears and fears that accompany all participants of this important day. The trainer may ask the groups to write down advice for the young mum, dad and parents of the teenager. Finally, the trainer should take care to summarize the conclusions and close the discussion.

What to do:

- We can divide the workshop group into three subgroups and, based on the materials, consider what emotions and fears may accompany all the actors: a teenager in labour (group no I), a young dad (group no. II) and teenagers' parents (group no III) - everyone, without



exception, is exposed to severe stress, anxiety about the present moment and confusing thoughts about the future.

- Let's ask what emotions the participant of the workshop may feel when he/she put themselves in the shoes of a teenager giving birth, a young father or parents of teenagers - what thoughts, desires or fears may appear in their heads.
- Let's ask about two possible scenarios for the continuation of a teenager's story - positive and negative. Are participants able to understand the procedures and choices that may take place after the birth?

Finally, the trainer should take care to summarize the conclusions and close the discussion.

4.1.2 Legal aspects.

In almost each country, if a teenager becomes pregnant (before she reaches the age of majority), it is necessary to regulate legal issues. This is related both to the care of the child and the teenager herself. In the case of a newborn baby, the caregiver may be the juvenile herself as well as her family, adoptive and foster parents or persons unrelated to the child. Many girls expecting a child (and their parents) are not even aware of the existence of regulations in European Union countries saying that **if the child's mother is under 18, it is necessary to appoint a legal caregiver for her child (until she reaches the age of majority).**

How to work with the group:

- An important aspect of working with a group is the analysis of the legal aspects relating to an underage mother and her child.
- It is worth checking the knowledge of participants in this context.

What to do:

- Brainstorming and writing down rules known to the team regarding the care of an underage mother and a newborn baby.
- Let's check the knowledge about the possibilities of helping and supporting institutions in a given country.
- Possibilities of supporting an underage mother should be explained in the case that the participants of the workshop did not mention all of them.

Knowledge of the law and benefits is an important element in helping mothers who give birth to children before reaching the age of majority or who are socially, economically and emotionally inefficient due to their young age.

4.1.3 Threat of social exclusion

Every minor mother is different, each has different personal problems that result from family and social circumstances. They may differ from one another by their:

- housing status,
- social origin,
- economic (financial) situation,



- intellectual or emotional predispositions.

However, the common and characteristic feature of them are problems on many levels related to early motherhood. Krzysztof Wąż believes that (after: Jaczewski 1992) the lack of compliance between the level and pace of biological, sexual, psychological and social development makes it difficult to take up and fulfil the function of a mother in a responsible manner, leading to many negative health, psychological and socio-pedagogical consequences, which in connection with underage mothers experience their own situation (cf. Izdebski & Niemiec & Wąż 2011, p. 142).

It should be emphasized here that the type and burden of psychological and social consequences that become the everyday life of pregnant teenagers or young mothers depends on many aspects - individual characteristics, already mentioned at the beginning of this section, i.e. the emotional and social situation with the child's father and his family, personal family situation, economic conditions, educational situation and the very age of the minor mother (cf. Izdebski & Niemiec & Wąż 2011).

Agnieszka Skowrońska-Pucka rightly notices that "there is no doubt that the life of a teenager expecting a child or a minor mother is radically different from the life of her peers - teenagers without children. One of the most severely felt consequences of the emergence of (pre-)early maternity, in addition to the fear and anxiety that arises in a teenager, is the constant pressure from society. Young girls are met with "unfavourable public opinion due to failure to comply with social and religious norms, which assume that only an adult woman, after legalizing a relationship with her partner, can give birth to a child" (Bidzan 2007, p. 66). Research by Paulina Bunio-Mroczek shows that the characterized girls do not have an extensive network of social relations (see Bunio-Mroczek 2010, p. 18; Resler 2014, p. 14). This strengthens the process of stigmatization of underage mothers. It is very dangerous because motherhood created by a woman is influenced by social attitudes, especially in the closest, neighbourly environment" (Skowrońska-Pułka, 2016, p. 72).

How to work with the group:

- An extremely important task when conducting the workshop is to draw the trainer's attention to the aspect of the risk of social exclusion of a pregnant minor or mother by a social group or the close environment. At this point, we can work with the comic.

COMIC STRIP

Comic strips no 4 shows that positive relationships with parents and caregivers result in the possibility of support in maintaining relationships with peers or help in continuation of further education/study. **It is worth discussing the needs of young mothers with the participants** of the workshop, it is advisable to pay attention to the fact that often the need to play or be in a group of peers may be associated with emotional dilemmas of young mothers (go out or stay with the baby). **We propose to prepare with the training group a "list of needs and thoughts of a young mother" that may appear at the time of social rejection.**



At this point, let's consider how you can support a teenager when faced rejection and misunderstanding or lack of time to build relationship with another person or friends. **One of the advice / tips on counteracting social exclusion is to encourage further education.** This can be shown based on the scene when daughter and a mom are standing next to the library, i.e., using positive arguments to indicate the importance of further education and remaining in a peer group or a new social group (i.e., a school class), which in fact meets most of the developmental, emotional and social needs, and later also economic. (education = better professional and therefore financial future). **We encourage to discuss the emotions, fears and challenges that a teenager will encounter when deciding to continue education. It is worth drawing up a "list of barriers" and building a "barrier removal list" opposite to it,** e.g., on the "list of barriers" there may be a lack of childcare during school stay or study and as a response to this fear, we will enter preparation on the "list of barrier removal" a list of kind and supportive people who can help in taking care of the child, preparing a schedule for such people, finding a nursery / kindergarten or a babysitter or supporting institutions at such moments.

We believe that during such workshops it is worth discussing the topic of building the self-esteem of young mothers and preparing them for the fact that they may face rejection and even social exclusion. A young mother, being a schoolgirl or a student, will not have as much time and freedom to live outside school as her peers. This can weaken her self-esteem and her motivation to be in a peer group. At this point, building a young woman's self-esteem is very important. Let's try to conduct an exercise called **"How I see myself"**. The goal will be to strengthen your positive self-image, write down 50 of your advantages. Firstly, we should write down the roles we play in life (e.g. mother, schoolgirls, daughter, neighbour, friend, etc.) and referring advantages to each of them. A helpful table is in the appendices. Another task that builds a positive image of yourself is the exercise **"Smile at yourself"** and its aim is to develop the ability to receive and give compliments and self-acceptance. You should write down the features for which you like each other on a piece of paper, it is worth asking the participants of the training group to add to this list the features for which we are valued / liked. A sample worksheet for this exercise is also provided in the appendix.

Such (and other) exercises allow for making attempts / actions to build self-esteem, they create more comfort for the recipients when they come across rejection. Knowing your positive features (and negative ones as well) allows you to understand the accompanying (temporary) difficulties, encourage your own activity, and build confidence in your own abilities and agency. Therefore, starting with very simple exercises or discussing comic scenes in the above-mentioned way, it is worth implementing the people with whom we are going to work to look for strength in their own interior capacities. Only in this way we can learn how to prepare adolescents for difficult times that will undoubtedly come in their lives.

4.1.4 Early motherhood - identifying threats and chances for happy parenthood and adulthood

- risk factors, incl. poverty or family pathology and exclusion in the next (adult) phase of life

The social exclusion, we wrote about in the previous chapter, is often related to the problems of teenage mothers, including poverty and family pathology. In the literature on the subject, we can find many threads that obviously indicate exclusion in these topics (pathology is not always equal



to social exclusion, just as it is not always equal to poverty in the family), but also indicate the possibility of their mutual connections (Szarfenberg & Kurowska 2010, 108). Wczesne macierzyństwo – identyfikacja zagrożeń i szans na szczęśliwe rodzicielstwo i dorosłość.

"Between social exclusion and poverty there can be: (1) a cause-and-effect relationship (sequential relationship): exclusion is understood either as a cause or a result of poverty, (2) an overlapping or encapsulation relationship (descriptive relationship): social exclusion is contained in poverty, it is an element of it, or possibly its extreme form; poverty is situated within social exclusion, it is one of its "component parts", an area, a dimension (Szarfenberg & Kurowska 2010, 108-109, Lister 2007: 104-106). Social exclusion and poverty can also occur separately: one can experience poverty while being socially integrated, or experience exclusion without being poor" (Lister 2007: 106).

"It is worth mentioning at this point the fact that teenage mothers, wards of care and educational institutions", or teenagers from families at risk of social exclusion and even from the so-called "good homes", "have some stories behind them, usually relational problems in their families of origin, inappropriate patterns of behaviour they witnessed in the family home. All this will modify and make it difficult to find oneself in this difficult, often critical situation for them and will increase the size of the consequences resulting from often unplanned pregnancy. (Skowrońska- Zbierzchowska 2010; Izdebski & Niemiec & Wąż 2011; Bidzan 2012; Ratajczak 2016)

- chance coefficient, incl. social integration, finding meaning in life, financial and professional stability

Teenage motherhood is a huge challenge for a young girl, most often exceeding the ability to deal with it on her own. When we look at all the problems described in this handbook, it is impossible not to touch us as a huge area, many complex aspects suddenly face a pregnant teenager or teenage mother. Unfortunately, we cannot boast of institutional assistance in many countries addressed to underage mothers. There is a lack of systemic, long-term and comprehensive solutions.

Most often we come across the opinion that teenage parenthood has negative consequences for adolescent parents, that it threatens with social exclusion, pathology, and lack of proper care for a tiny child. We hear and read a lot about activities to prevent early parenthood and its negative consequences: the above-mentioned social exclusion as well as social inequality, poverty, etc. Meanwhile, research confirms that there are many positive consequences of early parenthood for adolescents' parents and their families, and for society as a whole. Unfortunately, social communication shows having a baby early only as a risk of poverty and social exclusion, when it is often not. On the other hand, there are many positive aspects of early parenthood, they are, among others: **increased competence, skills, sense of agency, self-esteem, self-confidence; experience of the first success in life (which is a child); getting out of addiction (or at least starting therapy), cutting yourself off from an unfavorable peer environment (breaking social contacts with people presenting risky behaviors); resuming education, increasing aspirations, searching for opportunities to raise professional qualifications, starting work, improving relations with family members (primarily parents, siblings, grandparents); gaining a sense of meaning in life, maturity, adulthood, positive identity; increasing the social position, improving the quality of life.** (Bunio-Mroczek, 2016, pp. 29-31).



There are still many beneficial outcomes of teenage parenting for young parents, their child, and the entire family and even society. When a young mother becomes cared for or has enough self-denial to want to change her life so far for the sake of her child and herself, a new model of behavior is formed, focusing on parenthood and family. In her work, Skowrońska-Zbierzchowska poses a question about the importance of early parenthood in the lives of young people, showing in the results those who lost the "meaning of life", achieved "success in life" and "used the chance". (Skowrońska-Zbierzchowska 2010).

How to work with the group:

- The entire subsection above on identifying threats and chances for happy parenthood (and adulthood) perfectly presents practically all the scenes from the comic book chapter about the life dilemmas of a young mother during a walk with her daughter in the park. In each of the scenes you can see the dilemmas, emotions and doubts of our heroine. While discussing the entirety of this comic chapter, we can discuss, together with the workshop group, the evolution of the emotions of the protagonist's attitudes, her mature conversations with her daughter, and the support of the girl's mother indicated in the stories.

What to do:

- At this point, we propose a division into three exercise groups. Each of them will track the emotions, needs, conversations and behaviors of the protagonist and her little daughter.
- It is worth considering what could happen negatively in the girl's life (list the threats) that would prevent a positive ending to this story. What have happened in the girl's life positive and negative, and notice that the whole series of events can lead to a positive ending of the story.
- What kind of life could a girl await if she did not have caring relatives?
- How would her life go if she had not continued her education?
- By analyzing alternative stories, the team will be able to easily imagine how difficult the life of a young mother is, without the support and acceptance of her immediate surroundings.
- Finally, the groups can discuss with the trainer about the prepared threat lists. The trainer sums up the workshop by emphasizing the importance of supporting young mothers by their relatives.

4.2 Attitudes of teenage mothers

4.2.1 Characteristics of families with early motherhood.

Alicja Zbierzchowska writes that "many researchers of this phenomenon (characteristics of the families of teenage mothers) show that the family of origin plays a key role in the biography of teenage mothers (...), which is undoubtedly related to the essence of this social group - the family's primary educational environment and developmental child. Firstly, in the literature on the subject, the family (...) is indicated as the basic source of support for underage parents, although it provides it to a different degree and types (Izdebski, Wąż 2011b; pp. 249–252, Skowrońska 2000, pp. 210–

211). Secondly, in the discussions on the causes of teenage parenthood - apart from the lack of sexual socialization in the family - there are also specific features of families that favor premature parenthood. According to many researchers, families in which underage mothers and fathers grow up are more often characterized by lower socio-economic capital, an early fertility pattern, monoparentality or experiencing many problems causing their educational failure and dysfunction (e.g., alcoholism, crime, violence) (Bidzan 2007; Skowrońska-Zbierzchowska 2008; Wróblewska 1998). The family of origin is the primary source of informal support for teenage parents and should therefore be considered the most important resource for these young girls / boys and their families. For human resources are all potentials that help him meet his basic needs, achieve important personal goals, but also overcome crises. On the other hand, family resources include: the possibilities of individuals in the family, the family as a system and the immediate surroundings of the family (Kawula 2005) "(in: Zbierzchowska, 2020, pp. 120-121)

It is seen that the environment, resources of the family from which the pregnant teenager comes (both economic and other) has a huge impact on the future life of a young mother and can determine her later choices and decisions, and thus her life path. On the other hand - with pregnancy and the birth of a child - we are dealing with the formation of a new family, consisting of a single mother and a child, or of two parents and a child, which does not have to reproduce the mistakes or even pathologies of the parents or the immediate family surroundings.

4.2.2 Family functions. Parenting models, attitudes and styles that are role models for teenage mothers (positive and negative)

Willing to discuss the functions of the family, we would also like to point out how important families fulfil their basic tasks in the life of adolescents. We decided to present a multi-faceted classification of family functions, given by Krystyna Ostrowska. We will discuss the most important functions of the family. According to the author, the family is the most favourable place for the birth and development of children and teenagers.

The primary, one of the most important functions **is the emotional / feeling function**. Strongly emotionally connected people who have authority and social prestige are the best models for a growing person. Even if a teenager becomes a premature mother as a result of certain events, it can be hoped that as a result of a strong bond with her parents and the whole family, she will receive support and help, and later in life she will create a strong relation with her child.

The second very important function **is the socialization function**. In the family, the child learns about social mechanisms: norms, values, behaviour patterns. This happens through modelling, that is, observing the behaviour of other people in the family and the effects that these behaviors cause. The socialization function is realized using a system of rewards and punishments. This system requires a high pedagogical culture from parents. Otherwise, it will do a lot of damage. Starting from the age of 12 years, a child begins to independently fulfil the socializing function in relation to himself. Then the mechanism of internalization works, i.e., conscious commitment to the assimilation of social values and norms. This process enables the young mother to enter the level of logical-abstract thinking.

Families that fulfil **a culture-forming function**, have their own cultural heritage, function in a broader cultural context. Passing on and maintaining traditions, customs and caring for the culture of everyday life, for example home decor, signs and symbols cherished in the family, rituals fulfill.



this function of the family. In this area, there is room for a spiritual culture related to the values professed. These aspects may turn out to be very important when the teenager builds her own family and traditions and creates a home atmosphere.

The way in which parents fulfil their **care and educational functions** seems to be the foundation for the future life of a teenager and her child. Caring for children and creating a foundation for the educational process and its consistent implementation is the main picture of this function. Everyday care and education take place consciously as well as unconsciously. A healthy proportion is important in meeting material, mental and spiritual needs.

As parenting models, attitudes and styles are described in the "Positive parenting" chapter, we will focus on highlighting how the model or parenting style taken from home affects the building of a young mother's own family.

We have already talked about the negative effects of the lack of support from the family and the immediate environment when describing the threat of social exclusion, poverty and family pathology. Now we will focus on a summary of the importance of positive family patterns.

It is worth emphasizing that the parents of a juvenile pregnant woman often experience deep frustration and anxiety when they learn about their daughter's pregnancy. After all, it is usually very difficult to calmly accept such information about an unexpected pregnancy of your child. At this point, one should realize how important is the very favourable, kind and supportive attitude of the closest environment, encouraging, conveying messages that support, reassure, reflect concern, show favour and solidarity, as well as give a sense of security and evoke a sense of hope. Such behaviour of parents builds the safety of a frightened teenager, self-confidence and family support despite adversities and a difficult situation.

It should be noted what is also important - the exchange of information conducive to a better understanding of one's own situation and problem, with the reinterpretation of events to understand them. A conscious parent will try to educate the minor mother, dispel her doubts, focus on giving advice and providing information helpful in solving her problems. Eventually, he will share his own experience showing how the teenager should later support her own child. Of course, economic support is also of great importance - related to specific material, material and financial assistance, both before and after childbirth (as we have already indicated). The creation of a support system for teenage mothers is undoubtedly needed in any country.

It is worth taking steps to ensure that the education of parents of adolescents is carried out by appropriate institutions (schools, counselling centres, support from psychologists and educators), this will contribute to the creation of positive models that teenage mothers will be able to use by working on their new life (although very difficult and difficult). paid with sacrifices) was satisfying and successful.

4.2.3 Psychosocial problems and the associated risks of negative attitudes

Psychosocial problems of young mothers and the risks associated with them constitute the greatest problem for parents, educators and the teaching group of teenagers. The fall of authority, a great need to gain recognition among peers and ignorance of one's own needs and emotions can lead to



unpleasant consequences, wrong choices and sometimes even tragedy. Ewa Włodarczyk in her publication entitled "Teenage motherhood as an individual and social problem" summarizes this problem in a very vivid way, presenting all the dangers related to the negative attitudes of teenage mothers: they become mothers, but the most important thing seems to be to care for their proper mental functioning in this new, difficult situation. Social and emotional immaturity, lack of life experience, irresponsibility, and carelessness are often the characteristics of young mothers. Practitioners dealing with pregnant minors on a daily basis report the existence of particularly difficult problems related to the inability to accept pregnancy or the ambivalent or anxious attitude towards it, generated on an intellectual, emotional and operational level. Acceptance of the situation is often preceded by a period of rebellion, confusion, helplessness, distance, indifference. Pregnancy / a child is sometimes perceived as a threat to health, beauty, freedom, as an obstacle in the implementation of personal plans, resulting in the necessity to give up one's needs, dreams, aspirations and completely devote oneself to the child. Justification for these girls (thoughtless - as some believe) can be found, among others in the element of surprise with the fact of pregnancy, in the lack of a vision of one's own motherhood caused by immaturity in this role (associated with a young age and low reflectiveness) or in the absence of valuable ties and emotional relationships in the family, poor quality of interpersonal contacts, lack or insufficient experience of maternal and paternal love. Often these girls admit that they feel misunderstood, lonely, rejected, stigmatized, and helpless. Research conducted by M. Kościelska among teenage mothers showed that the surveyed girls indicated the lack of support from their parents, guardians and fathers as one of the most difficult aspects of the situation they found themselves in (Kościelska 1998, p. 152). In order to cope with this new situation for them, they resort to the use of defense mechanisms: denial, isolation, escape, withdrawal, rationalization (Bidzan 2007, pp. 57-58). In addition, the situation may be complicated by the awareness of randomness, fleetingness, impermanence of the relationship with the child's father or parting with him, disappointment with his lack of responsibility and attempts to defect. Often the father of a child is either a boy (like the mother, young and emotionally immature) or a man with his own family. In the context of the impact of the relationship with the child's father on the mental well-being of a pregnant woman, such a complexity of the situation also causes stress. There are cases when girls, despairing at discovering that they are pregnant, try to hurt themselves or even commit suicide in a desperate act. The situations of pregnancy resulting from rape, incestuous relationships, prostitution practices, which already require the intervention of an experienced psychologist, are particularly painful and mentally devastating. Every now and then the media reports about abandoned newborns and cases of infanticide (Marzec-Holka 2004). The more drastic consequences of not accepting her daughter's pregnancy are throwing out of the house and persuading her to have an abortion. Therefore, we need to create conditions for these girls to effectively enter the role of a mother, being aware and prepared for the fact that it may be a long-term process and does not happen quickly."(Włodarczyk, 459-460).

How to work with the group:

- The entire section "Attitudes of teenage mothers" perfectly illustrates the comic book related to this part of the textbook. From scene 1 to scene 8, we see an overview of the young mother's life attitude, emotions and needs. Each of the discussed aspects has its place in the picture story. From the situation in the delivery room to the last scene, in which we see a beautiful preparation by a young



mother of her own child for a new family situation. We encourage you to work with a workshop group on positive and negative attitudes of teenage mothers. We propose to divide the group into two teams, whose task will be to list the family functions specified in the handbook. One group will focus on establishing a list of mother's attitudes when family functions are preserved, the other group will work on a list of possible threats when the family is dysfunctional. A comic book can be an example of a teenage mother's behavior. The exercise can be concluded with a discussion about the comic: what family functions did the parents provide to the teenager, what could she gain positive from her family home (perseverance, love, emotional needs, the ability to talk about needs and emotions, aroused higher-order needs - including educational need), the group can be asked to present their answers by pointing to specific scenes in the pictures.

- We also propose to do exercise no. 3 "My positive and negative traits" with a group, the purpose of this exercise is to assess self-esteem on a point scale. It allows to get to know oneself / oneself better and may be the reason for a discussion about our leading attitudes in life and for selecting a list of attitudes which still need to be worked on. The self-assessment instructions and scoring can be found in the appendices under the heading "Exercise No. 3". We wish you a deep, practical experience in working with our comic book.

Summary of the section "Mother's needs"

- *In medical problems, as a consequence of biological immaturity*, you can read about pregnancy and its challenges, which can very often result in unfavorable biological and emotional nipples for the young organism. In this section, you will also find an offer to work with a workshop group. future options should be considered over a longer period.
- *Legal problems* contain a brief confirmation that the knowledge of the regulations should be commonly known to educators, educators and institutions providing care and support / assistance to underage mothers. The subsection also proposes a short workshop
- *Threat of social exclusion* - in this section you can read about the most severely felt consequences of early motherhood. In addition to the fear and anxiety that arise in a teenager, she often feels pressure from society. The subsection also includes a proposal to work with a workshop group, which consists in drawing the trainer's attention to the aspect of the risk of social exclusion of a pregnant minor.
- *Early motherhood - identification of threats and opportunities for happy parenthood and adulthood* - this section deals with risk factors, including poverty or family pathology and exclusion in the next (adult) phase of life. We also pay attention to the importance of social integration, finding meaning in living in a new family and social situation, and the need for financial and professional stability.
- *Attitudes of teenage mothers* - the chapter presents: characteristics of families with early motherhood; family functions. Models, attitudes and parenting styles that are role models for teenage mothers (positive and negative) - we indicate here how important in



the life of teenagers are families fulfilling their basic tasks (upbringing, socialization, etc.).

- *Psychosocial problems and the associated risks of negative attitudes* – awareness of all the risks associated with negative attitudes of teenage mothers is crucial (social and emotional immaturity, lack of life experience, irresponsibility, carelessness, lack of education, etc.). This section also contains an extensive proposal to work with a workshop group.

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C

HAPTER 5

Positive Parenting

Willingness Team

5.1 What is the best way to speak to my child?

The intention of this scene is to discuss how best to approach scolding children, to build a trusting communication. The conversation intends to help the parent understand that mistakes are normal in parenting, however when mistakes are made it is important to forgive oneself while also finding out what resources as a parent are available and what areas one needs help with.

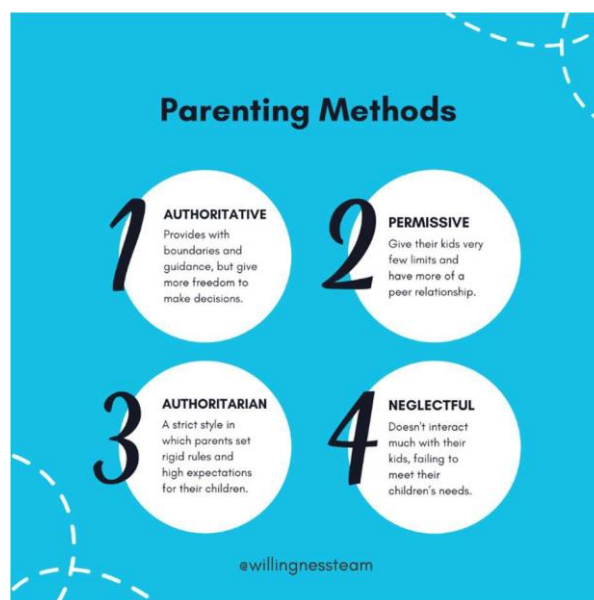
This scene can also introduce some common challenges encountered in the early years, such as tantrums and how to deal with them. It is also beneficial to share information about parenting styles and attachment theory, to foster an understanding of the best contact made with the child to achieve the best possible outcome in their future.

5.1.1 Parenting Methods

When discussing the scene with the parent, it is important to firstly reflect on the reaction of both the parent and the child. Asking questions such as: why did the child react in this way to the mother's words? What do their words show? This helps to open-up the discussion on different ways to communicate with the child and to be more aware of understanding why the child is behaving in such a manner.

Parenting methods or parenting styles are different ways in which parents behave with their children, particularly in terms of discipline. Research suggests that some parenting styles affect more positive results than others, with authoritative being the most appropriate style.

The parent can be both 'firm and kind.' It is important for the parent to show the child that they are in charge, however it is also important to exhibit a better approach towards the child's misbehaviour. The relationship between the parent and the child is often influenced by the parent's goals in line with the child's temperament.



To ensure a healthy development and an overall positive parenting experience, the parent can provide positive emotional support to the child, especially warmth. When a parent shows warmth



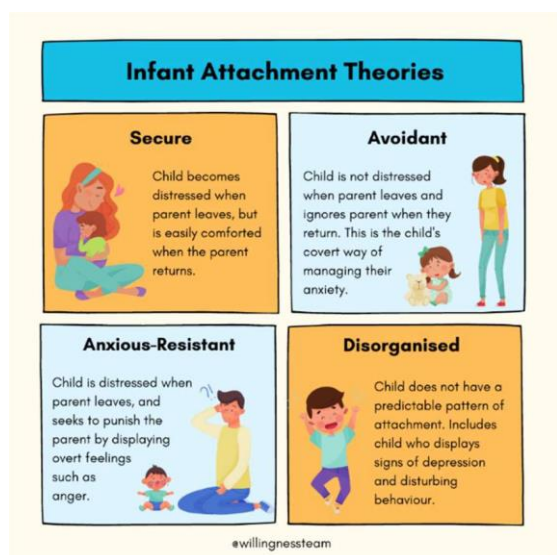
towards their child, this benefits the child’s cognitive ability. This type of parenting is called sensitive parenting. This kind of parenting is linked to good cognitive, behavioural and social outcomes. Instead of focusing on what is right or wrong, positive parenting focuses on the child’s capability to be able to tell what is right and wrong.

Research suggests that temper outbursts are common in toddlers as a normal component of their development. These outbursts have the potential to become dysfunctional, especially if the family relationships are strained. Early diagnosis of abnormal tantrum behaviour, as well as interventions targeted at aiding parents in coping with these tantrums, can help parents prevent detrimental long-term consequences. This scene can be used as a learning point on this matter.

This scene also displays how the mother was reflecting on the situation, and with the help of the mother was finding better ways to cope with such a situation. Here you can ask the parent you are working with the same question, ‘what can you do differently next time?’.

5.1.2 Attachment

Early interactions between a child and their primary caregiver form beliefs that are internalized and encoded as internal working models or representations. These representations tend to predict interactions in later close relationships, responsiveness, and willingness to trust in relationships. This is known as attachment theory. Parenting is a specific behaviour that a parent decides performs consciously or unconsciously, in the caring, upbringing, and education of their child. The attachment and care-giving systems are frequently active at the same time and are therefore related. It is therefore important for a basic understanding of these to be shared with the parent.



A person with a secure attachment style has a high level of confidence in their emotional attachment. The anxious personality is characterized by a high level of anxiety, obsessiveness with one's partner, and self-doubt. When it comes to avoidant style, it refers to a person's desire to keep their feelings and vulnerabilities hidden from their partner. Someone with a dismissive attachment style lacks the motivation to develop or maintain social attachments and does not appear to value close relationships.

According to research, there is a link between attachment avoidance and authoritative versus permissive parenting styles. In addition, there is a link between attachment anxiety and authoritarian parenting styles. Understanding core beliefs as a parent, and understanding one’s own attachment, can support the upbringing of the child. An activity on core beliefs (refer to alternative resources) could facilitate this conversation further.

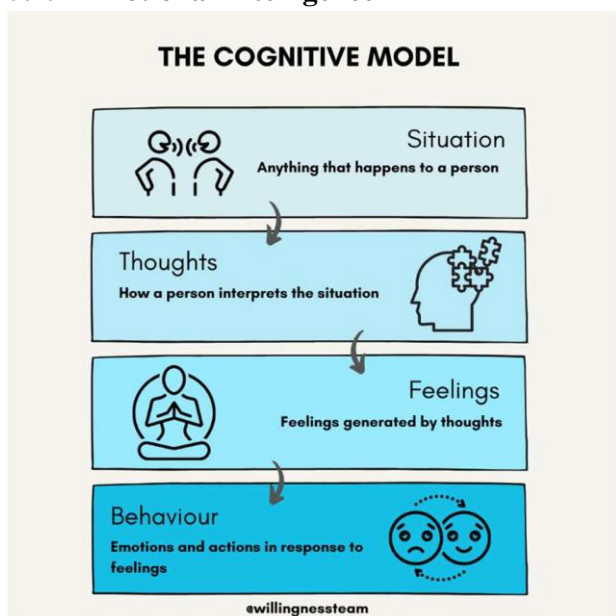
Summary of important points to be displayed through this scene:

- Self-awareness and self-reflection on one's reactions
- Understanding reactions of the child
- Parenting Styles, Attachment, and their relation

5.2 How can I be approachable to my child?

This scene intends to open-up the conversation about emotional intelligence, and how to be approachable in order to help the child grow up understanding different emotions and learning to express them appropriately. This scene is also a good opportunity to discuss how to manage a situation where both the child and the parent are upset.

5.2.1 Emotional Intelligence



For the child to feel safe, the parent must provide a non-threatening environment where the parent shows understanding towards the child. This will help the child become more empathic and so will express their emotions better. When the child is distressed, the parent can suggest better ways to handle their distress rather than throwing their crayon on the floor. The parent can encourage the child, and by doing so, this will help the child to feel more confident and to feel more comfortable with the parent. Communication is very important and if the parent communicates regularly with her child, the child will feel safe to express emotions.

An example of this is if the child wants to do something which the mother does not allow, the mother can explain her reasons to the child. Using the diagram above as a manner to role-play different scenarios, it can be understood how the process of emotional development and its behavioural outcome is formed. This can be very useful in understanding, and modelling behaviour.

Emotional intelligence is defined as "processes involved in the recognition, use, understanding and management of one's own and other emotional states to solve emotion-laden problems and to regulate behaviour". The earlier a child learns how to understand and manage emotions, the easier emotional regulation is developed over time, making it easier to manage behaviours, emotions, and reactions in the future. Emotional intelligence development in children is influenced by several

factors including personality, neurophysiology, intelligence, and social interactions like family and friends are all crucial. The value of a family environment is high in relation to its impact on one's development. Emotional learning begins in the family and lasts throughout one's life. Outside of the family, the child finds how to engage with the physical world, begins to grasp it, and discovers how to apply their various abilities. By seeing what parents do for their children and what they say to them, as well as how parents manage with their feelings, the child learns a lot about emotions across the family. Therefore, it is important the parent understands the influence of the environment of the child.

Children learn how to interact with one another by witnessing their parents, grandparents, siblings, and adults do so at family gatherings, gift exchanges, and shows of love and understanding; through modelling children learn and experience emotions and feelings in the family. Modelling is therefore another important factor to elaborate on using this scene.

5.2.2 Parenting Tips

Teaching about emotions, and helping children regulate emotions, also happens through the parents' reactions to their children. Here it is important to discuss with the parent, that as a parent one must not shame their children for their emotions, and for their behaviours. Lessons can be thought in different ways. Using the adjacent diagram, you can also discuss with the parent, simple yet effective strategies that support an emotionally regulated and positive environment. Having rules is important and communicating why those rules are in place helps the child understand that they are not being punished by abiding by rules.



Establishing routines, and keeping the environment as fun as possible, is beneficial to both the parent the child. All of this affects emotional regulation and approachability. Using worksheets about basic emotion assessment and feelings (refer to alternative resources) would further support the discussion surrounding this scene.

Summary of important points to be displayed through this scene:

- The cognitive model of understanding the relationship of emotions and behaviour
- Emotional Intelligence
- Modelling

- Parenting Tips that support emotional regulation

5.3 How to take care of myself?

This scene is to be used to open the conversation of self-care for the parents. With self-care comes the need for self-awareness, to understand how best to take care of oneself.

This scene is the opportunity to discuss some questions such as ‘what are your triggers?’, ‘what helps you cool down?’, ‘what helps you vent?’. This helps the parent to become more self-aware of their strengths and limitations, and what areas they need support in. This scene is a direct follow up on the previous regarding emotional regulation, focusing more on the emotional regulation of the parent instead. Taking care of one’s mental health is very important to be able to be emotionally there for others, the same goes for parents and their children. As the saying goes, ‘you cannot pour from an empty cup’; therefore, you cannot help others before you help yourself first. This is especially important because children depend solely on their parents’ wellbeing.

5.3.1 Self-Care

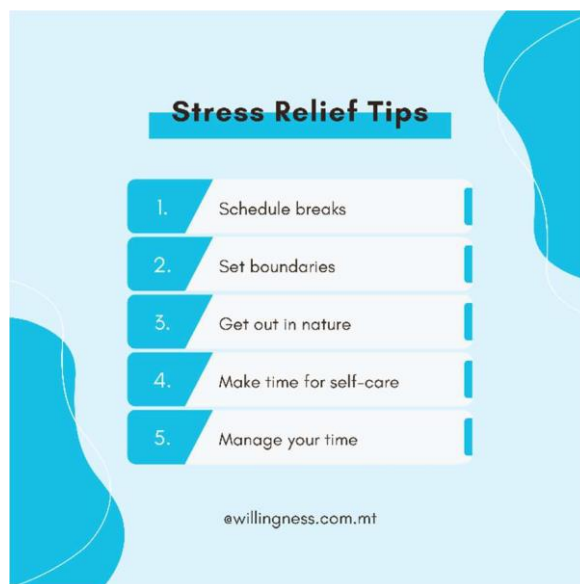
This scene can be used to talk with the parent about different forms of self-care, that are necessary to be able to function healthily from day to day. It is good to discuss the different forms as some take priority over others, such as physical self-care in terms of health and hygiene, emotional self-care in terms of emotional wellbeing, so on and so forth.



As parents care for their children, their perceptions of their own role evolve. They evaluate if their educational efforts will be successful in nurturing and soothing the child, as well as creating socially appropriate behaviour in the child. Even in seemingly normal situations, a parent's expectations to efficiently manage the day-to-day duties of raising a child can trigger a mild stress reaction. According to research, there is a link between stress and parenting practices, implying that increased parental stress results in less optimal parenting behaviours. Therefore, managing stress is an important component to discuss.

5.3.2 Stress Management

In order for the parent to be able to support themselves better, it is beneficial to discuss basic stress relief or stress management skills such as scheduling breaks and managing your time in a manner which is most effective. It is also important to set boundaries for oneself, maybe with other family members, with the child and so on. Self-care is also in itself part of the stress management, whether that be through exercise, going out in nature, general personal upkeep, all are components of good self-care. While it is not always possible to be always on top of all things, making the parent aware of these little adjustments can make a big difference.



Learning to prioritize is another skill that can be developed with the parent, as with time management comes the need to be organized and choosing tasks, chores and duties based on urgency and need. This diagram indicates different ways to label tasks namely ‘urgent and important’ or ‘important not urgent’ etc. According to the combination of urgency and importance, it can be determined what to put at the top of the priority list.

Writing lists, using planners, calendars, sticky notes in the kitchen – these are all different ways one person can use to plan their days properly.

5.4 How can I teach values?

This final scene is intended to teach important values, which include empathy, taking care of nature, respect, and resilience. In order to teach values, the parent is also to understand what their own values are so you can start off by asking the parent: ‘what are your own values as a parent?’, ‘what makes these values so important to you?’, ‘how do you intend to teach your child these values?’.

5.4.1 Modelling

Transmission of values is strongly imparted through modelling behaviour; children often mimic what they see. Consciously and unconsciously as humans we tend to develop behaviours that can be like those displayed by our parents. As the main source of primary socialization, values, morals, beliefs about what is important in life, tend to be passed on primarily from both parents.

Some other stress management skills are a good sleeping routine, making use of breathing techniques, relaxing movement activities like yoga and a good balanced diet. This is not ‘one size fits all’, it is important to try out different things to find what works best for the parent.

Finally, social support is also important, be it through keeping in touch with friends and family, going social groups for parents, having hobbies, and if needs be also professional support such as therapy, in the case when the stress is too much to handle.

Summary of important points to be displayed through this scene:

- Understanding one’s limitations and weak points.
- Self-Care
- Stress relief & management skills

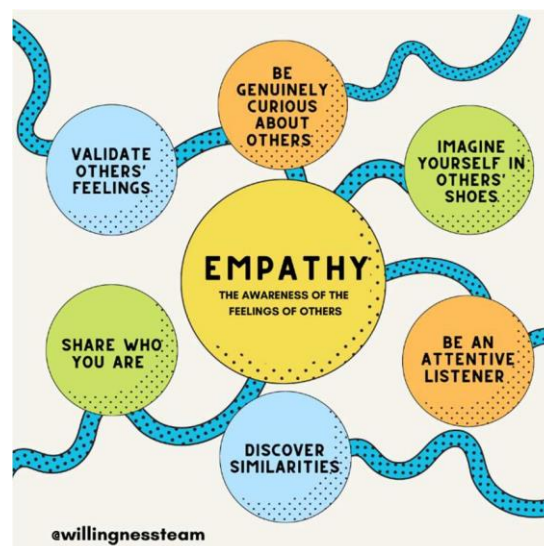
intentionally and unintentionally. This is an important topic to discuss with the parent, as sometimes we may not be aware of what messages we may be passing on to our children. For example, if as a woman the parent looks at the mirror and says, ‘I am so ugly, I am so fat’, the child might grow up believing that if she resembles her mother she must also be ‘ugly’ and ‘fat’. Such examples can help to explain such a phenomenon to the parent.

As established throughout, Children's behavioural patterns are influenced by the interaction between the child and the parent in the family. Problems and unavoidable difficulties will unavoidably meet the child at some point in their life, and the ability to cope will be a determining factor in the outcome. The ability of a child to persevere can influence his or her future success. Parental influence provides a child faith in his or her own ability to succeed in life. This is what builds resilience. Parents can also model resilience, by managing their own reactions to life adversities. This ties greatly with emotional intelligence and emotional regulation, which are both strong components in building a key value of resilience.



An effective way of intentionally teaching values is through storytelling. A narrative usually has more depth than a straightforward example. A tale is about a specific occurrence involving a specific group of people and what happens to them. Storytelling engages our intellect, our emotions, and may even lead to mental imagery production. Current events, history, television shows, classic literature or theatre, and personal experience are all excellent sources for instructional stories (your own and others).

Storytelling is also a great way to teach empathy. This particular value is important to make emphasis as it is a skill that is good to learn as a parent and for the parent to teach to the child. Empathy is the sense of being able to leave one's own reality and enter into another's internal world. Empathy is described as the ability to 'feel with' and understand what other people are going through. Compassion is not the same as empathy. It's a hard-wired skill that research suggests many people nowadays don't have. This is way as the primary caregivers, parents are to model empathic behaviour.



Summary of important points to be displayed through this scene:

- Values
- Modelling
- Storytelling

Positive parenting prescriptions popular in Western countries advise parents to manage their emotions and to display more positive emotion to their children during parenting and to control negative emotions. The findings found that parents have a negative perception of emotional display norms, which is linked to increased regulatory efforts and, as a result, a higher risk of parental burnout.

Key factors to support positive parenting as displayed throughout this chapter include understanding parenting styles, attachment theory, emotional regulation, emotional intelligence, self-care, stress management and transmission of values. Below are some final tips and principles of positive parenting.

Positive Parenting

Instead of: ❌

- Stop crying!
- Don't hit your sister!
- Don't speak like that!
- Stop messing everything up!

Try saying: ✅

- Can you tell me what's wrong?
- Please use gentle hands
- Use kind words, please
- Shall we put these away, so no one trips on them?

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4 Principles of Positive Parenting

- 1 Misbehavior is your child's way of communicating an unmet need
- 2 Validate your child's effort
- 3 Give your child the respect you want them to give you
- 4 Never punish your child for their feelings

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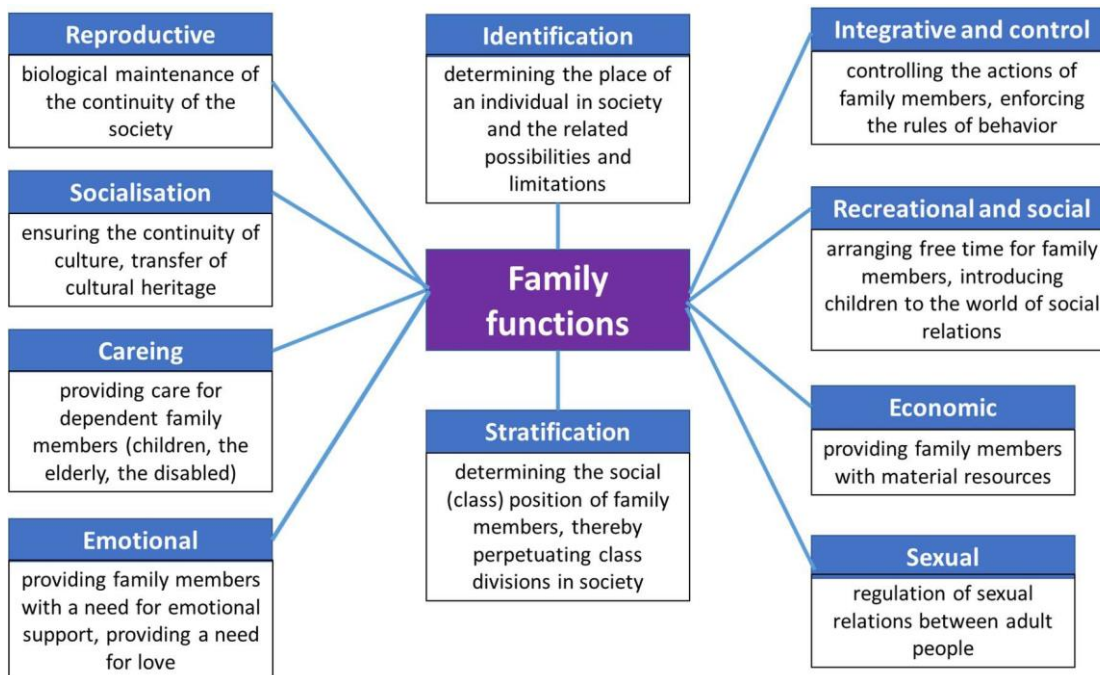


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Annex No. 1

Chapter 4:

Table No. 1. Functions of a family



Source: Funkcje-współczesnej-rodziny.jpg (3546×2174) (ibrbs.pl)

Exercises:

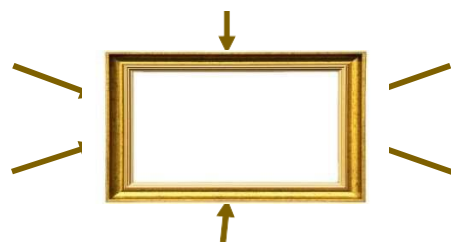
Exercise No. 1. „How do I perceive myself”

No	Role	My advantages	My disadvantages

Exercise No. 2. „Let’s smile to yourself.”

Write what you like about yourself.

Ask other people why they like you as well.



Exercise No. 3 „My positive and negative traits”

My positive and negative traits – part 1

Aim: to estimate self-esteem according to the following scale of points.

Please, don't think long. Write „X” next to the chosen trait.

No	I Positive traits	This feature occurs to me to the level...			
		Very high 3 p.	Medium 2 p.	Small 1 p.	Nothing at all 0 p.
1	I am truthful				
2	reliable				
3	friendly				
4	kind				
5	fair				
6	understanding				
7	gifted				
8	punctual				
9	ambitious				
10	physically strong				
11	healthy				
12	nice and polite				
13	responsible				
14	timid				
15	assertive				
16	self-critical				
17	economical				
18	hardworking				
19	obligatory				
20	brave				
21	physically fit				
22	disciplined				
23	good looking/pretty				
24	I have a strong will				

No	I Negative traits	This feature occurs to me to the level...			
		Very high 3 p.	Medium 2 p.	Small 1 p.	Nothing at all 0 p.
1	I am lazy				
2	careless				

3	unsystematic				
4	dependent				
5	awkward				
6	ill				
7	clumsy				
8	mean				
9	conceited				
10	distracted				
11	jealous				
12	greedy				
13	vulgar				
14	undisciplined				
15	aggressive				
16	lying				
17	shy				
18	nervous				
19	ugly				
20	dissatisfied				
21	reckless				
22	physically weak				
23	messy				

Results

Our self-esteem is...

Positive traits:

< 20 p. – low level; 20 – 40 p. – average; >40 p. – high level

Negative traits:

< 30 p. – high level; 30 – 40 p. – average; >45 p. – low level

Chapter 5

Additional Resources

Free worksheets from www.therapistaid.com that can be used by the Youth Worker or the Parent

- [Basic Emotion Assessment](#)
- [Building Happiness Exercises](#)
- [Core Beliefs](#)
- [My Fears](#)



- [Strengths Exploration](#)
- [Where do I feel?](#)

Free blogs from www.willingness.com.mt for Youth Workers and Parents

- [Parenting styles to avoid](#)
- [We can't agree on a parenting style](#)
- [How parenting affects attachment](#)
- [Attachment parenting, baby carriers, mindful parenting ... are we asking too much of parents? – Part 1 of 2](#)
- [Attachment parenting, baby carriers, mindful parenting ... are we asking too much of parents? – Part 2 of 2](#)

Various tools and worksheets also available from www.psychologytools.com for Youth Worker

Annex No. 2

About us

Future in Perspective Limited

Future In Perspective is a private company based in the border region of Ireland specializing in the areas of education and e-learning, media production, strategic planning and business development and evaluation. Through our work on national and EU funded projects, we have engaged and supported local youth groups, migrant communities, older persons, and individuals who have been absent from education to re-engage with service providers and mainstream education and training offerings. We have expertise in supporting businesses in niche markets such as the creative, cultural and green sectors to develop sustainable business models. In addition, we have collaborated with young people and adults to deliver a range of diverse programs in the areas of media production and career management – supporting the next generation of creative individuals to build and sustain successful careers in the sector. Future In Perspective is a modern business that is structured to reflect the current business reality. It operates in an ecosystem comprising dynamic partnerships and alliances. We have a core staff of 12 highly skilled experts in complementary disciplines that include project management, media production and design, instructional design and e-learning, youth development and research and general administration. Our core team is supplemented by a panel of part-time experts from Ireland and Europe.

Contact Information

Website: www.futureinperspective.com

Facebook: [@futureinperspective](#)



Instagram: @future_in_perspective

Ireland

Asociacija MINTIES BITÈS

Since 2012, MINTIES BITÈS has been bringing together organizations and individuals to carry out activities of public benefit in the public interest; ensure the psychosocial integration of socially vulnerable and disadvantaged persons / groups, seek their equal rights and opportunities, and implement preventive and interventional measures for social problems.

The Association promotes, organizes, designs, develops, evaluates and implements the innovative and effective programs and tools such as social integration, increase of professional rehabilitation and employment, violence prevention and help, strengthening and development of communities and non-governmental organizations, equal opportunities for men and women, educational, informational and training of prevention, educational activities, integrated services, etc., for various social groups and persons.

Contact Information

Phone: +370 600 76148

E-mail: asociacija@mbites.lt

Website: www.mbites.lt

Facebook: [@AsociacijaMintiesBites](https://www.facebook.com/AsociacijaMintiesBites)

Instagram: [@mintiesbites](https://www.instagram.com/mintiesbites)

LinkedIn: [@AsociacijaMINTIESBITÈS](https://www.linkedin.com/company/AsociacijaMINTIESBITÈS)

Lithuania

SOCOM - The Centre of Expertise on Social Welfare in South-East

The Center of Expertise on Social Welfare in South-East Finland, called also as Socom, is one of the eleven centers of expertise on social welfare in Finland. The Centers of Expertise provide their services in provinces. Socom provides their competence/their know-how in South Karelia and Kymi valley.

The central objective of Socom is to establish a working method/model and stable co-operation structure between practical work in the social field, research and education, and municipalities and other service providers. The Centers of Expertise on Social Welfare are open networks based on territorial cooperation needs. The management of the organization is as light as possible. This enables flexible and innovative activities.



Contact Information

Website: <https://socom.fi/socom-in-english/>

Phone: +358 044 7485307

Facebook: @SocomOy

Twitter: @OySocom

Finland

WYŻSZA SZKOŁA BIZNESU I NAUK O ZDROWIU

- THE ACADEMY OF BUSINESS AND HEALTH SCIENCES -

The Academy of Business and Health Sciences is one of the three biggest schools of non-public higher education in Lodz. Currently in our Academy they are studying over 1000 students. The Academy carries out its unique, modern syllabuses which are, one hand, tailored to the current needs of the labour market, and on the other hand, they are in accordance with the syllabus requirements established by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. The Academy educates in a practical profile, which means that over 60% of classes are conducted in the form of workshops and projects. Trying to meet the expectations and using the technological possibilities our Academy also offers online studies, aiming at those who want to combine education with professional and family duties. The students of the Academy have an opportunity to do internships and work placements in the countries of the European Union within the Erasmus + programme.

The Center for European Educational Initiatives is an all-university organizational unit established in May 2011, whose aim is to support and stimulate the processes of sustainable development of a modern and open society. CEIE deals with the initiation of partnerships and agreements aimed at social integration, promotion of participation in social and public life of children, youth and adults, especially 50+, and development of volunteering, through the organization of training, workshops, seminars, conferences, debates and other forms of education.

Contact information:

Phone: +48 42 683 44 22

E-mail: m.sujka@wsbinoz.pl

Website: www.wsbinoz.edu.pl

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/wsbinoz>



CEIE Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=centrum%20europejskich%20inicjatyw%20edukacyjnych>
[ch](#)

Poland

WILLINGNESS

Willingness was founded in 2011 with the concept of providing holistic services with regards to Family, Sex and Health. Willingness Team is a multidisciplinary team composed of different professionals with backgrounds in the therapeutic, medical, educational or social fields among others, mainly with a background in psychology. Our mission is bringing professionals and students together to fight the stigma of mental health by encouraging ‘the willingness to adapt’. Our vision is a resilient self-aware society, capable to address mental health effectively and adapt to life’s adversities more easily. To do this we follow the values of professionalism, approachability, evidence-based practice, and team.

Currently, Willingness offers the following services: individual therapy, couples therapy, family therapy, sex and relationship therapy, integrative counselling, psychological assessments, cognitive behavioural therapy, child psychology, educational psychology, health psychology, counselling for families going through illness, gestalt psychotherapy, career guidance, life coaching and parent coaching and consultations, among others. The Willingness Team also includes Physiotherapy, Nutrition & health coaching, Gynecological services as well as Genito-urinary Services, and other services related to health. Therapeutic services are also available online through our online clinic.

In addition to clinical services, Willingness offers Childminders by Willingness, psycho-sexual education sessions, and other psycho-educational, practical, and training activities such as webinars. Meanwhile, we present information at Conferences, Congresses and Educational and Training Events, both locally and internationally.

Contact Information

Website: www.willingness.com.mt

Phone: +356 79291817

Facebook: @WillingnessTeam

Instagram: @WillingnessTeam

LinkedIn: Willingness

Malta