

## 1 WORTH THE RISK?

### 2 **Introduction**

3 Place a basket on the floor. Mark the floor with 5 lines for  
4 points, 1 being the closest to the basket (lowest points) and 5  
5 being the furthest from the basket (highest points). Call on 2  
6 volunteers.

7 Choose your mark on the floor to throw from. You each will be  
8 given 3 chances to try and ring the basket. The number you are  
9 standing on represents the number of points you may earn. The  
10 closer you are to the basket, the fewer points you earn,  
11 however, you have a greater chance of earning points. On the  
12 other hand, the further away you are, you risk missing, but  
13 should you ring the basket, you may get more points to win the  
14 game. Choose your numbered mark.

15 Have each player take their three shots. Award points  
16 accordingly. Congratulate and give the winner a candy prize.

17 Did the risk pay off? Sometimes in life, risks do pay off. For  
18 example, it's a risk to start your own company, but the payoff  
19 may be a multi-million-dollar business. At other times in life,  
20 it's best to play it safe, guaranteeing an outcome of success.  
21 The key is knowing when to take risks and when not to.

22 Over the next two days, we're going to play a game and see if  
23 it's worth the risks involved. We'll let you decide. According  
24 to research, sex amongst teens and young adults is very risky.  
25 Statistics tell us that young people between the ages of 15 and  
26 24 are experiencing more harm than good from sexual activity.  
27 So, we have to ask - if sex were like a game show, would it be

28 worth taking the risk? Let's get started and find out what is at  
29 stake. Who wants to be my first volunteer to spin the wheel?

30 Have volunteer spin the wheel. The wheel is divided into 12  
31 sections. Behind each section of the wheel is a risk involved in  
32 sexual activity. The sections are divided into 3 categories and  
33 relate to the percentage of exposure when a young person is  
34 sexually active. The three categories are STDs, Pregnancy, and  
35 Mental Health Risks and are divided accordingly:

36 - 50% of the wheel (6 sections) are related to STDs (According  
37 to the CDC, half of all sexually active young people will  
38 contract an STD by the age 25)

39 - 25% of the wheel (3 sections) are related to pregnancy and  
40 your three options; abortion, adoption and parenting. (According  
41 to the CDC, 1 in 4 adolescent girls will become pregnant by the  
42 age of 20)

43 - 25% of the wheel (3 sections) are related to mental health  
44 risks associated with early sexual activity (According to the  
45 National Institute of Health, cross-sectional research has found  
46 that adolescents who have engaged in sexual intercourse are more  
47 likely than adolescents who have not to be depressed and to have  
48 attempted suicide, as well as have long-term consequences on  
49 their mental health.)

#### 50 **STD Risk Category**

51 \*The first time a student lands on an STD, the following  
52 statement should be made.

53 STDs can affect anyone who is sexually active no matter their  
54 gender or sexual preference. It's also important to know that

55 STDs spread through vaginal, anal, and oral sex as well as  
56 genital touching. For pregnant women, STDs are especially  
57 dangerous because they can spread to their baby during  
58 childbirth.

59 Periodically throughout the STDs, let students know we provide  
60 STD testing.

61 We provide free and confidential STD testing at our office. If  
62 you've been sexually active, even just once, you can make an  
63 appointment with us to get tested at no cost to you.

#### 64 **Chlamydia**

65 \* (At mention of the first bacterial STD, define what bacterial  
66 STDs are.)

67 Before we continue, you need to know that bacterial STDs can be  
68 cured. In most cases you get a prescription for an antibiotic,  
69 and this resolves the issue. But this also means you have to get  
70 tested to see if you have the infection in the first place.

71 Looks like you got chlamydia. That makes sense considering that  
72 chlamydia is the most common bacterial\* STD and it infects  
73 sexually active teens more than anyone else.

74 The problem with Chlamydia is that most people don't know they  
75 have it. It usually has little to no symptoms and if symptoms do  
76 occur, they may not appear for several weeks after having sex.  
77 You may be thinking, what's the big deal with this STD if there  
78 are not any symptoms? I'm glad you asked. If Chlamydia is left  
79 untreated, it can cause permanent damage to a woman's  
80 reproductive system, making it difficult or impossible to get  
81 pregnant later in life. If a woman does get pregnant, she has an

increased chance of having an ectopic pregnancy. An ectopic pregnancy is a pregnancy outside the uterus. The uterus is the proper place for a pregnancy to develop. Ectopic pregnancies cannot survive and can be life-threatening to the mother. Men, on the other hand, rarely have health problems from chlamydia, but untreated chlamydia may increase your chances of getting HIV. Is that really worth the risk?

Chlamydia is common among both women and men and sexually active young people under the age of 25 are at a higher risk of getting chlamydia. This is why it's so important to get tested and to continue to get tested if you choose to be sexually active. The right treatment can cure chlamydia when taken properly. Although the medicine may stop the infection, it will not undo any permanent damage caused by the disease.

### **Gonorrhea**

This common bacterial STD is another silent one, since most people have no symptoms. No symptoms means it could go undetected. If you do have symptoms, we're talking a greenish, yellowish discharge oozing from your genitals or a painful, burning sensation when you pee. That doesn't sound fun to deal with. This infection is most common among 15-24-year-olds. It can infect genitals, rectum, and throat depending on how it was contracted. Can you imagine having an STD in your throat? Definitely not the worth the risk in my opinion.

Undetected and untreated gonorrhea can cause Pelvic Inflammatory Disease, also known as PID, in women. PID can cause complications with future pregnancies, possible infertility, as well as long-term pelvic/abdominal pain. For men, gonorrhea can

110 cause a painful condition in the tubes attached to the  
111 testicles. Yikes! Sometimes, untreated gonorrhea can spread to  
112 your blood or joints, a condition that is life-threatening.  
113 Untreated gonorrhea may also increase your chances of getting  
114 HIV.

115 Since gonorrhea often goes undetected, it's important to get  
116 tested. There is medicine available to treat gonorrhea, however,  
117 gonorrhea is becoming more difficult to treat due to the  
118 increase of drug-resistant strains. Worth the risk? You decide.

## 119 **Syphilis**

120 \* (At mention of the first bacterial STD, define what bacterial  
121 STDs are.)

122 Before we continue, you need to know that bacterial STDs can be  
123 cured. In most cases you get a prescription for an antibiotic,  
124 and this resolves the issue. But this also means you have to get  
125 tested to see if you have the infection in the first place.

126 Yikes, this STD gets you in the short and long term. Syphilis  
127 has multiple stages of development. Each stage can have  
128 different signs and symptoms.

129 Let's look at the first stage of syphilis. The symptoms to watch  
130 for is a single sore or multiple sores. The sore is the location  
131 where syphilis entered your body. This could be in your genital  
132 area, on your lips, or even in your mouth. It's important to  
133 note that since condoms do not cover the entire genital area,  
134 syphilis can spread even during protected sex. The problem with  
135 these sores is that they're often painless. That may sound like  
136 a good thing, but then if they're painless, you may not notice

137 you have one. If you don't notice it, you may not get treated,  
138 which allows the infection to move to the next stage. A sore  
139 will usually only last 3 to 6 weeks and then heal on its own.  
140 However, the STD does not.

141 In the secondary stage, the sores may return, along with skin  
142 rashes. The rash can be on the palms of your hands or the  
143 bottoms of your feet, but can be so faint, you may not notice  
144 it. You do not want to ignore the early symptoms of syphilis.  
145 Untreated syphilis that develops into the last stage can affect  
146 many different organ systems, causing long-term damage to your  
147 eyesight, hearing, and healthy brain function. In other words,  
148 if this STD goes untreated, you could be left blind, deaf and  
149 with dementia.

150 Get tested. Get treatment. This is one STD that is definitely  
151 not worth the risk if left untreated.

## 152 **Genital Herpes**

153 \* (At mention of the first viral STD, define what viral STDs  
154 are.)

155 Before we continue, you need to know that viral STDs cannot be  
156 cured. Once you get them, it's yours for the rest of your life.  
157 Depending on the type of STD, there may be medication to help  
158 control symptoms or outbreaks, but it can never be cured.

159 Genital Herpes, this one definitely isn't good. For one, it's a  
160 viral STD, so I hope you're ready for a lifelong commitment,  
161 because you're not getting rid of this one. This viral STD will  
162 be yours for the rest of your life. On the bright side, you can

163 get prescription medication to reduce the effects of the  
164 outbreaks of blisters on your genitals.

165 It's important to note that genital herpes is different than  
166 oral herpes. Oral herpes can result in a single cold sore or  
167 fever blister on or around the mouth. Oral herpes is spread  
168 through non-sexual contact and most people get it during  
169 childhood. This is not the type of herpes we're talking about  
170 today.

171 We're discussing the type of herpes that spread sexually. This  
172 means you can spread genital herpes to the mouth from oral sex.  
173 Like this. (Show "*It's Herpes*" video)

174 Like this girl, genital herpes on the mouth usually appears as a  
175 cluster of blisters around the mouth rather than a single cold  
176 sore and can be quite painful.

177 One more thing to be aware of, the oral type that you may have  
178 gotten as a child, can spread to the genital area, which may  
179 result in genital herpes, if you have oral sex with an active  
180 sore.

181 I'm telling you; this STD is no joke.

182 Herpes sores usually appear as blisters on or around the  
183 genitals, rectum or mouth, depending on your exposure from  
184 genital fluids or skin to skin contact. These blisters can break  
185 open and leave painful sores that may take a week or more to  
186 heal. You can also experience flu-like symptoms during an  
187 outbreak.

188 You should know that genital herpes can spread even when you do  
189 not have a visible sore or outbreak. That also means you can

190 contract it from your partner without knowing they have it. You  
191 can also pass herpes to your unborn child before birth or during  
192 delivery which can lead to a deadly infection to your baby  
193 called neonatal herpes.

194 It's also much more common to contract HIV when you have genital  
195 herpes. I don't know about you, but an STD for life that causes  
196 painful blisters and an increased chance of getting HIV . . .is  
197 it really worth the risk?

### 198 **Human Papillomavirus (HPV)**

199 Of the STDs that happen the most, this is top of the list. In  
200 2018 there were 43 million infections of HPV and most of those  
201 were teens and young adults in their early 20s.

202 This type of virus is not only spread sexually, but also through  
203 close skin-to-skin touching during sex, which means condoms can  
204 limit, but they don't stop the spread altogether.

205 It has many varieties and the most dangerous of those cause  
206 genital warts and cancer. HPV can cause cervical cancer,  
207 including other types of genital cancer, as well as rectum  
208 cancer and cancer in the throat, depending on how you contracted  
209 it. HPV can also cause warts on the genitals and in the throat,  
210 if gotten through oral sex.

211 The dangerous part about HPV is you can pass the infection to  
212 someone without knowing you even have it. And since cancer often  
213 takes years, even decades, to develop after a person gets HPV,  
214 if you decide to be sexually active, imagine the number of  
215 people you could infect. And it's so highly contagious, you can  
216 get it even if you've had sex with only one person. HPV is so



217 common that almost every sexually active person will get HPV at  
218 some point.

219 The CDC recommends getting the HPV vaccine to help prevent the  
220 spread of this infection. There is no test to find out a  
221 person's "HPV status". And there's no approved HPV test to find  
222 HPV in the mouth or throat. So there's really no way of knowing  
223 if you're infected unless you get genital warts. Otherwise, you  
224 may not know until signs of cancer appear.

## 225 **HIV/AIDS**

226 HIV - The big one! Undoubtedly, you've heard of HIV. HIV is the  
227 STD that can eventually develop into AIDS. And people who get  
228 syphilis, gonorrhea, and herpes often also have HIV or are more  
229 likely to get HIV in the future.

230 This virus is unique in the way it directly attacks your immune  
231 system. Once it demolishes your immune system it then becomes  
232 Autoimmune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and your body can't even  
233 fight off the common cold without serious health problems.

234 This is primarily a fluid transfer infection, but if there are  
235 open sores, like from herpes or syphilis, your risk of  
236 contraction significantly increases. Condoms are only 85%  
237 effective at stopping the transmission of HIV, because it can  
238 spread through open sores, sometimes not covered by condoms,  
239 still putting you at risk even during protected sex.

240 There are medications for those infected to help control the  
241 disease, but without a cure, people with HIV have it for life.  
242 Symptoms for this disease are similar to flu-like symptoms;

243 however, some people have no symptoms at all in the early stages  
244 of HIV. The only way to know if you have it is to get tested.

245 **Pregnancy Risk Category**

246 \*The first time a student lands on Pregnancy, the following  
247 statement should be made.

248 You took the risk, had sex, and now you've got to deal with a  
249 pregnancy. Statistically, every time you have sex, you put  
250 yourself at a 25% risk of a pregnancy, that's 1 in 4 of you in  
251 this classroom. Obviously, same sex couples may not experience  
252 this particular risk, but you'd be surprised the number of  
253 lesbians we've seen in our office who are pregnant.

254 So now that you're pregnant, you have three outcomes to choose  
255 from. Any guesses as to what 3 options you have? Abortion,  
256 Adoption or Parenting.

257 It looks like you landed on the outcome to *[abort, place for*  
258 *adoption, parent]*.

259 **Abortion**

260 Abortion can seem like a logical option in an unplanned  
261 pregnancy, especially as a teenager, because it eliminates the  
262 problem of unplanned pregnancy. You can continue to pursue your  
263 personal life goals without the added burden of caring for a  
264 child. However, thinking you've avoided the risk from sexual  
265 activity, you may not realize the additional risks you've added.

266 Before we look at the risks involved in abortion, let's discuss  
267 what's legal or not legal within the state of Alabama. Abortion  
268 is no longer legal in all 50 states. Each state has its own

269 abortion laws. For the state of Alabama, abortion is illegal  
270 with the exception to save the pregnant person's life or if the  
271 fetus is not expected to survive the pregnancy. So is abortion  
272 an option for someone in Alabama who takes the risk, has sex,  
273 and ends up pregnant. Well, that depends.

274 You could travel to a state where abortion is legal. But  
275 majority of states near Alabama have total bans or restrictions  
276 on abortion. Just to travel to a state where abortion is legal  
277 will cost a lot of money, not to mention the cost of having the  
278 abortion. Abortion costs vary widely depending on the type of  
279 abortion, ranging anywhere from \$600 - over \$2,000. Depending on  
280 how far along the pregnant patient is will determine the type of  
281 abortion. Abortion can be divided into 2 categories, surgical  
282 abortions and medical abortions. Surgical abortions are  
283 necessary for pregnancies after 11 weeks and are performed at an  
284 abortion clinic or hospital. Surgical abortions cost much more  
285 than a medical abortion. Medical abortions should only be  
286 performed within the first 11 weeks, according to the FDA, and  
287 are often performed at home.

288 Both surgical and medical abortions are considered medical  
289 procedures. Like with any medical procedure, there are risks and  
290 side effects. It's important to know what those risks and side  
291 effects are so you can make an informed decision.

292 Surgical Abortions - Like most all surgeries, a surgical  
293 abortion is an extirpative procedure. Meaning, it is a removal  
294 process. Oftentimes, anesthesia is taken, medical instruments  
295 are used to open the cervix, and surgical tools are used to  
296 remove the pregnancy from the uterus. Because these types of

297 abortions are surgical, the cost is significantly higher. Some  
298 potential side effects to a surgical abortion include heavy  
299 bleeding, fever, cramps lasting more than 48 hours, pain that  
300 gets worse instead of better, or foul-smelling discharge. Some  
301 of the more dangerous risks include infection, incomplete  
302 abortion (meaning parts of the fetus are left in the uterus,  
303 causing the need for a secondary procedure), damage to the  
304 cervix, perforation of the uterus (meaning a hole in the  
305 uterus), scar tissue on the uterine wall, both of which could  
306 affect future pregnancies. Abortion is also linked to an  
307 increased risk for mental health issues, as well as a risk in  
308 future wanted pregnancies.

309 Medical Abortions – So let's look at medical abortions. This  
310 type of abortion is most commonly known as the Abortion Pill.  
311 It's called a pill, but it actually involves a series of two  
312 types of medications. The first medication is used to block  
313 progesterone which is what feeds the pregnancy. This stops  
314 pregnancy development, so the fetus expires. The second  
315 medication induces contractions to empty the uterus. Because  
316 oftentimes this procedure is done at home, patients are  
317 instructed to sit on a toilet once the contractions begin and  
318 after the uterus is emptied, to flush the pregnancy down the  
319 toilet.

320 There have been recent advertisements that say the abortion pill  
321 is safer than Tylenol, like this video, (Show Video) This is  
322 misinformation and entirely false! Those who spew this  
323 misinformation try to argue that there were more deaths  
324 associated with the widely used pain reliever every year than  
325 reported with the abortion pill. They conveniently ignore the

326 fact that Tylenol is being sold and used tens of thousands more  
327 times a year than the abortion pill. The reality when considered  
328 in terms of death per dose, the abortion pill was considerably  
329 more dangerous and about 833 times more lethal. The danger of  
330 this type of misinformation concerning the abortion pill is that  
331 it's misleading for women who have the right to know what to  
332 expect with the risks and side effects of the abortion pill.

333 Charlotte Lozier Institute reports that the abortion pill has a  
334 complication rate four times that of surgical abortion. So,  
335 let's talk about these potential risks and side effects.

336 • Despite the fact that it is 4x riskier than surgical  
337 abortion, women are left alone to manage their own abortion.

338 • 8-10% of all medical abortions fail or are considered  
339 incomplete, requiring a surgical abortion to complete the  
340 process.

341 • Strong abdominal cramping, heavy bleeding, nausea and  
342 vomiting are extremely common.

343 • Other risks include hemorrhaging (meaning bleeding is so  
344 bad it requires medical attention), infection, severe pain and  
345 cramping, fever, chills, headache, dizziness.

346 • The risk to emotional trauma also increases because most  
347 women are not expecting to see the results of their pregnancy  
348 and then are left to deal with disposing it.

349 I should warn also, although it is illegal in the state of  
350 Alabama to have the abortion pill mailed to your home, many  
351 websites offer such services. However, such companies are not  
352 governed within the jurisdiction of the United States and are

353 purchased from foreign internet sources and from other countries  
354 that do not have the same safeguards in place as our FDA, which  
355 desires to protect your health. In other words, you are putting  
356 yourself at even greater risk when you purchase the abortion  
357 pills online.

358 Should you take the risk, get pregnant and are considering  
359 abortion, our organization can provide a pre-abortion screening  
360 at no-cost, which includes a pregnancy test, ultrasound and STD  
361 testing. But before you are in that position to make a decision,  
362 you need to ask yourself, is it worth the risk?

### 363 **Adoption**

364 Let's talk about adoption. Adoption is the permanent and legal  
365 transfer of parental rights from a child's biological parents to  
366 adoptive parents. Adoption is complex and has its own lifelong  
367 impact on everyone involved.

368 Some teens choose adoption for the following reasons:

- 369 • To continue their education and career goals after the baby  
370 is born
- 371 • Not ready to be responsible for the physical, emotional,  
372 and mental well-being of a child
- 373 • Knowing your baby is with a loving and safe family
- 374 • Knowing that your baby's adoptive parents can provide many  
375 opportunities for your child

376 Unlike abortion which can be very costly, the adoption process  
377 is completely free to prospective birth parents. In some cases,  
378 you can also get financial assistance throughout your pregnancy.

379 In addition, with adoption, you avoid the physical risks and  
380 side effects associated with abortion, however, there is still a  
381 loss involved. As such, many birth parents who place their child  
382 for adoption experience some form of grief. To carry a child for  
383 9 months and then give that child to another family to raise and  
384 care for is no easy thing.

385 There are other psychological effects to consider:

- 386 • A loss of identity
- 387 • Anger
- 388 • Denial
- 389 • Guilt and shame
- 390 • Loss of energy
- 391 • Trouble maintaining relationships
- 392 • Lack of concentration
- 393 • Fear of judgment
- 394 • Feelings of anxiety

395 Modern adoption has helped navigate some of these common  
396 emotional effects. With modern adoption, birth parents now have  
397 more rights than they did in the past. You can be in control of  
398 the whole process. As a birth parent, you can choose your own  
399 adoptive family. Maybe you want the dad to like sports so he can  
400 teach your son or daughter how to throw a ball. Or maybe you  
401 want them to live close by or the opposite, you'd prefer they  
402 live far away. You are in the driver's seat. You can also choose  
403 how much contact you want with the child. You can decide if you

404 want frequent visits throughout the child's life, or just  
405 periodic updates on how the child is doing. You can be a little  
406 involved, a lot involved or not involved at all. With modern  
407 adoption, the options are wide open.

408 This does not eliminate all emotional risks, but studies show it  
409 helps the grieving process knowing you play a role in the long-  
410 term welfare of your child.

411 In truth, when you are involved in a pregnancy as a teen, there  
412 are no easy options. If you're not ready to parent, adoption  
413 allows you the opportunity to continue working towards your  
414 personal life goals while avoiding the physical and emotional  
415 health risks involved with abortion. But adoption is not without  
416 its own risks and undoubtedly one of the hardest decisions to  
417 make. You've got to ask, is it worth the risk?

418 If you're ever in a pregnant situation and trying to choose  
419 between adoption, abortion or parenting, our organization can be  
420 a resource of information for you, at no cost, to help you make  
421 the best choice for you.

## 422 **Parenting**

423 So, you got pregnant and decide to parent. All parents must  
424 navigate challenges while raising a child, but if you're a  
425 teenage parent, you have extra challenges to navigate. Trying to  
426 finish school while looking after a baby is just one of those.  
427 Let's take a look at some other challenges involved, should you  
428 have sex, get pregnant, and decide to parent.

429 Teen mothers face many physical, psychological, social and even  
430 spiritual challenges.



431 • Inability for planning and decision making

432 As a teenager, you're still learning how to plan and make  
433 decisions. Most of your planning consists of plans for the  
434 weekend, or decision making on how to win Friday night's  
435 football game. Some of you may be thinking about where you want  
436 to go to college or work when you graduate. The point is, you're  
437 still learning how to make good decisions. But now that you're a  
438 teenage parent, you've got to plan and make decisions that not  
439 only impact you, but you've got another life that's impacted, a  
440 baby.

441 • Lack of parenting skills

442 Let's face it, all new parents have skills they must develop and  
443 learn in preparing for parenthood, but at the age of 15 you are  
444 at a disadvantage in having a solid set of parenting skills. On  
445 a positive note, our organization can offer you parenting  
446 classes at no cost to assist you.

447 • Higher risk during pregnancy and birth

448 Don't get me wrong, it is possible for teens who become pregnant  
449 to experience a healthy pregnancy, however, studies show being  
450 pregnant as a teenager puts you at higher risk for having a baby  
451 born too early, with a low birth weight and in some cases, even  
452 fetal death.

453 • Mental health problems (depression, anxiety, shock, low  
454 self-efficacy, isolation)

455 Teen moms are twice as likely to experience postpartum  
456 depression as their adult counterparts.

457 This increase in depression can lead to difficulty bonding with  
458 your child, overwhelming fatigue, anxiety, panic attacks,  
459 isolation, and thoughts of harming yourself or your baby.

- 460 • Increased burden of responsibility

461 Most teen moms have a difficult time meeting the needs of a  
462 child, keeping up with housekeeping, going to school and being  
463 present with friends. It can be done, but it's not easy to raise  
464 a child while maintaining good interaction with friends,  
465 continuing your education or being employed. Which leads to the  
466 next challenge.

- 467 • Disruption of education and employment

468 Only about 50% of teen mothers receive a high school diploma by  
469 22 years of age. Teenage childbearing is also associated with a  
470 significant reduction in annual wages and income. Which then  
471 leads to the next challenge.

- 472 • Financial problems

473 Teenage mothers are more likely to live in poverty and depend on  
474 public assistance.

- 475 • Social stigma

476 Sadly, teen moms not only have to contend with all these other  
477 challenges of raising a child, but they are also routinely faced  
478 with a social stigma and false perception by culture of being  
479 troubled, dependent, irresponsible, promiscuous, or incompetent  
480 parents.

- 481 • Family conflicts

482 Parenting a child as a teen not only affects you, but it changes  
483 your whole family dynamic. Your mom or dad are now impacted by  
484 your choices, and they too must make adjustments in their life  
485 to accommodate a baby.

486 Let's just clarify. Having a baby as a teenager isn't the worst  
487 thing that can happen. Should you take a risk in the game of sex  
488 and end up pregnant, you can raise a child successfully and even  
489 complete your education and in some cases, doing so will even  
490 set you up for greater success in your life because of the  
491 challenges you overcame, but it has its risks and difficulties  
492 that one must consider and decide, is it worth the risk?

493 If you're pregnant and are thinking of parenting, our  
494 organization has resources available to you at no cost. We offer  
495 free parenting classes to equip you with parenting skills. Upon  
496 graduation of the classes, you can earn a brand-new car seat and  
497 a complete layette set for your baby. Like I said, it may not be  
498 easy to raise a child as a teenager, but there are resources  
499 available to assist you.

500 Alright guys don't think you're off the hook just yet, because  
501 we're talking about the risk for teen moms. Let's look at what  
502 parenting looks like for teen dads. In many cases, you deal with  
503 some similar things.

504 • Such as decision making at your age. Teen males are just  
505 now starting to develop higher levels of critical thinking and  
506 problem-solving skills. In normal development, your decisions  
507 are typically applied to education, extracurricular activities,  
508 and social life, definitely not parenting decisions.

509 • Family conflict is not just something teen mothers have to  
510 deal with. Guys, your parents may not be ready to become  
511 grandparents either. Many teen dads have the desire to help care  
512 for the mother and his baby, but he's limited by his own lack of  
513 independence while living under his parent's supervision.

514 • If you're planning to be an involved father, you may also  
515 experience an increased burden of responsibility. The  
516 responsibilities of parenting should come before hanging out  
517 with the guys on Friday night. If it doesn't, this can be a  
518 major friction point with the teen mom.

519 • You've now got to make some major life decisions. Do you  
520 forego higher education and get a job to help support your  
521 child? Depending on your involvement in your child's life, this  
522 can seriously impact your choices on education and occupation.

523 Let's just address the obvious here. Should she decide to  
524 parent, her body, her choice, some guys think they have the  
525 choice to simply walk away from all responsibility, but what you  
526 don't have a choice in is child support. When court ordered,  
527 you're required to pay and the courts can take it out of your  
528 paycheck, your retirement, your unemployment check, even your  
529 tax returns. If you earn \$30k a year and pay child support for  
530 one child for 17 years, it could cost you over \$500K. Let's just  
531 say you have 6 kids; you may be paying more than \$1.1 million by  
532 the time they're 18. Is sex at your age really worth the risk of  
533 a pregnancy and the responsibilities that go with parenting?  
534 Think about it.

#### **Mental Health Risk Category**

536 \*The first time a student lands on an emotional risk, the  
537 following statement should be made.

538 Unlike unplanned pregnancy, which predominantly affects straight  
539 or heterosexual couples, mental health risks can impact anyone  
540 no matter their gender or sexual orientation. As a matter of  
541 fact, according to the CDC, teens that identify as gay, lesbian,  
542 or bisexual experience mental health problems at a rate twice as  
543 high as heterosexual youth and are 4 times more likely to  
544 attempt suicide. Add to the emotional risks associated with  
545 early sexual activity, and you put yourself at an even greater  
546 risk.

#### 547 **Increased Depression & Anxiety**

548 Teenagers today are dealing with an increase in depression and  
549 anxiety more than any previous generation. Mental health is one  
550 of the biggest struggles of your time. More teens are on  
551 antidepressants and anti-anxiety medications than ever before as  
552 you cope with everyday life.

553 Let's face it, this time in your life, as teenagers, is one of  
554 the most difficult to navigate. You've got pressure from  
555 parents, teachers, friends, dating partners, and our culture to  
556 be something. Not to mention your own internal struggles of am  
557 "I good enough" or "Do I measure up?" Sometimes those external  
558 pressures conflict with your own internal struggles and how  
559 you're feeling in the moment, leaving you feeling depressed and  
560 anxious. These feelings can often lead you to take actions that  
561 relieve that anxiousness and make you feel better. Or least what  
562 you think will make you feel better. . . sex.

563 Unfortunately for you, there's a direct link between sexual  
564 activity and the increase of depression and anxiety. This link  
565 is supported by clinical experience. Doctor Meg Meeker writes,  
566 "Teenage sexual activity routinely leads to emotional turmoil  
567 and psychological distress... [Sexual permissiveness leads] to  
568 empty relationships, to feelings of self-contempt and  
569 worthlessness. All, of course, precursors to depression."

570 And here's the trap, depressed girls are more likely to engage  
571 in sexually risky behavior, which then leads to greater  
572 depression. Do you see the vicious cycle. Add to that, in that  
573 brief moment of pleasure, our emotions deceive us because we  
574 want to feel wanted, loved or valuable. It's often the letdown  
575 after the act that will spin you into a depressive tailspin.

576 Sex is meant to build up a healthy loving relationship, but it  
577 doesn't serve the same purpose with hook-ups or high school  
578 dating. Instead, it can produce feelings of regret or worry,  
579 which actually increases your anxiousness, especially when you  
580 have to contend with the thought of contracting an STD or  
581 getting pregnant.

582 Sex, for now, is just not emotionally beneficial for teens. Not  
583 while you're still trying to navigate the everyday struggles of  
584 these teenage years.

### 585 **Decreased Self-Worth & Self-Esteem**

586 The fact is, most teens are trying to figure out who they are,  
587 who they want to be, and how they feel about themselves. Each of  
588 you has a unique personality, but so often, demands placed on  
589 you and who you ought to be can leave you feeling insecure  
590 because it doesn't always match with who you really are. Our

591 culture does not make this process easy, because it sends  
592 messages that indicate you should not be happy with the way you  
593 are. Our society is always playing on your

594 insecurities as they try to sell you something that will make a  
595 better you. More make-up, better clothes, better body, nicer  
596 things, better athlete, etc. They say you're never enough just  
597 the way you are.

598 Self-doubt, low self-expectations, feeling purposelessness...all  
599 real scenarios for each of you in different ways. This can often  
600 produce a desire to find approval and acceptance in destructive  
601 ways. Some people choose careless sex to feel accepted or loved.  
602 Some people give in to the peer pressure and have sex, so they  
603 don't feel left out. Some people pursue sex because they don't  
604 feel successful anywhere else in life. All this stems from their  
605 perceptions of self-worth and self-esteem. But sex doesn't give  
606 us the satisfaction we think it will in building our self-  
607 confidence. It actually does the opposite.

608 When sex doesn't produce this internal confidence, we begin to  
609 tear ourselves down. We become more sexually active and jump  
610 from relationship to relationship trying to build ourselves up.  
611 This is a perpetual loop of self-destruction. Like someone  
612 seeking pleasure through drugs and alcohol, it can become  
613 addictive and abusive. Abusive to others we love and definitely  
614 abusive to ourselves. In the end, what we thought would increase  
615 our feelings of self-worth actually serves to tear us down even  
616 more. What drives you to have sex in the first place can end up  
617 making you feel used, abused, and unwanted. Add on an STD or  
618 unwanted pregnancy, and your self-worth plummets even more.

619 Sex can benefit a strong loving bond in a committed  
620 relationship, but it will never be the glue that keeps us  
621 together. And it is definitely not an avenue for personal  
622 reassurance of your worth and value as a unique, one-of-a-kind,  
623 individual. That comes from having confidence in your own gifts  
624 and talents just as you are.

### 625 **Increased Suicidal Thoughts**

626 This is a tough but necessary conversation to have. No one likes  
627 to think about self-harm and suicide, but it is happening at  
628 alarming rates amongst teens. Suicide is the second leading  
629 cause of death among teens and young adults. Given that 42% of  
630 high school students express deep sadness and hopelessness, it's  
631 no wonder over 20% of you have seriously considered suicide.  
632 This may even be higher depending on your sexual orientation.

633 Many of you may have never had suicidal thoughts. However,  
634 research shows that teens without suicide ideas can begin  
635 developing those thoughts after having engaged in risky sexual  
636 behavior, while many will struggle with ideas of self-harm well  
637 into their young adult years.

638 When it comes to mental health, the temporary pleasures that sex  
639 offers will not offer lasting positive effects. Once the thrill  
640 of the high is over, it's right back to reality. You may feel  
641 great in the intimacy of the moment, but then it is gone. Once  
642 that fleeting moment is over, you have nothing tangible to show  
643 for it, unless of course it leaves you infected with an STD or  
644 an unplanned pregnancy. With no lasting feelings of pleasure and  
645 oftentimes a series of bad relationships, it's easy to see why  
646 some teens consider self-harm and suicide as a possible escape.



647 If you have ever found yourself grappling with overwhelming  
648 sadness or hopelessness, please reach out to a friend or mentor.  
649 A teacher, counselor, pastor, anyone...just reach out. There are  
650 plenty of people that want to help you find a way out of those  
651 dark times in life. And no matter how hard you try...there is  
652 nothing that can numb the pain enough for you to be happy.  
653 Drugs, alcohol, and even sex become nothing but an escape from a  
654 harsh reality...until they don't work anymore. Don't choose  
655 something as permanent as suicide as a way to cope with  
656 temporary struggles. You can make it through this and there are  
657 people that want to help.

658 **End of Game**

659 These are just some of the risks involved in sexual activity.  
660 With pregnancy, you may be limited to 3 possible outcomes, but  
661 with STDs, we only covered the 6 most prevalent and dangerous.  
662 In actuality, there are over 25 STDs you must contend with  
663 should you take the risk and have sex.

664 **Nonconsensual Sex**

665 Remember when we started the game, I stated we were under the  
666 general assumption you willingly chose to play the game. In the  
667 reality of life, there are some who have not willingly chosen to  
668 play but have been forced to play. This is called nonconsensual  
669 sex, which we commonly call rape, sexual assault or sexual  
670 abuse. In any of these situations, it's important to tell  
671 someone you trust and seek help. You may be afraid to tell  
672 someone, or you may have been threatened, but telling someone  
673 can be what protects you. If the person you tell doesn't believe  
674 you, tell someone else, a teacher, a counselor, a pastor, or

675 even the police. Or you can tell me, and we can get you in touch  
676 with Baldwin County's Sexual Assault Response Team. Secondly,  
677 it's important to ensure the well-being of your health by  
678 getting tested for an STD and for an unintended pregnancy. We  
679 can do that at our office confidentially, in a judge-free,  
680 compassionate environment and at no cost to you. We care about  
681 you, and we want you to get the help you need.

## 682 **Legal Age of Consent**

683 Now, it's important for me to address the legal age of consent.  
684 In other words, you may want to play the game, and you may be  
685 willing to take the risk, but can you do so legally? Anyone  
686 under the age of 16 in the state of Alabama cannot legally  
687 consent to sexual activity. This also means if someone older  
688 than 16 has sex with someone younger than 16, they could be  
689 charged with statutory rape.

## 690 **In Summary**

691 We have one more game to play, but before we do, I'm sure there  
692 are some of you in here who may be thinking, "Alright, so  
693 there's risk involved in having sex. But who's to say I'll get  
694 an STD or get pregnant or have any negative emotional  
695 consequences. I could have sex and not suffer from any of these  
696 things." And you're right, maybe that's a possibility, but  
697 that's a pretty big maybe and lot to gamble on when the odds are  
698 not in your favor. Especially considering you have a 50% chance  
699 of contracting an STD by the age of 25, a 25% chance of getting  
700 pregnant by the age of 20, and a 40% chance of experiencing some  
701 form of mental health issue. Do the math, that adds up to 115%  
702 percent. At the beginning of class, I said that some risks are

703 worth taking but sometimes it pays to play it safe. The key is  
704 knowing when to take the risk and when to play it safe. Based on  
705 our statistics, I'm thinking it's much safer not to play games  
706 with sex. Which leads me to our next game.

## 707 Playing It Safe

### 708 **STD Risk Avoidance - The Benefits in Marriage**

709 When you enter a long-term, committed relationship such as  
710 marriage without STDs involved, then you're offered 100%  
711 protection against STD infection.

712 This means that either you and your partner were both virgins,  
713 or if you had prior sexual activity, you have both been tested  
714 and cleared with a clean bill of health.

715 The only exception is HPV since there's no test to find out your  
716 HPV status. So, your safest bet is no sex until a long-term,  
717 monogamous relationship. Once you choose monogamy, meaning only  
718 one sexual partner for life, then no STDs can present  
719 themselves. Phew, that's one less medical or health concern you  
720 have to worry about.

721 And the benefit of frequent sex in marriage is that it actually  
722 improves your immune system. Research has shown that healthy sex  
723 among married couples results in them taking fewer sick days.  
724 How about that?!!

725 Studies reveal that when you compare marriage to any other type  
726 of relationship status, single, dating, cohabitating, divorced,  
727 widowed, marriage, by far, has the lowest STD infection rate.

728 And when infections were present within marriage, those married  
729 admitted to sexual partners other than their spouse. So, if you

730 want to avoid STD risks, wait until you're in a life-long,  
731 committed relationship.

### 732 **Pregnancy Risk Avoidance - The Benefits in Marriage**

733 Most people who choose a lifelong commitment to marriage have  
734 agreed upon the idea of growing their family through childbirth.  
735 There are exceptions when a pregnancy is unplanned in marriage,  
736 but a married couple is much more equipped to handle a pregnancy  
737 than you are as a teenager. Let's just look at a few benefits to  
738 pregnancy within marriage.

739 • Health during the pregnancy - Studies show that married women  
740 seek earlier prenatal care and are prone to make healthier life  
741 decisions for their pregnancy, such as stopping smoking,  
742 drinking, and eating healthier. Early prenatal care results in a  
743 healthier pregnancy which results in a healthier baby.

744 • Wanted pregnancy - Married women are more welcoming of a  
745 pregnancy, even surprise pregnancies, largely due to her social  
746 and emotional support, primarily from the father of the baby,  
747 her husband. Married women report higher levels of wanting  
748 pregnancy when compared to cohabitating or single pregnant  
749 women.

750 • Two income security - Most modern homes today are typically  
751 two-income families. In a marriage, the combined income provides  
752 better financial security and makes the couple less reliant upon  
753 outside assistance programs.

754 • Fatherly involvement - Dads play a critical role in raising  
755 children. Research shows that if the father is present and  
756 involved in the pregnancy and child rearing experience, meaning

757 a two-parent home, then the pregnant mom gets more relaxing  
758 leisure time, experiences less stress, and has less chance of  
759 dealing with postpartum depression. Kids benefit too. For kids  
760 raised in a two-parent home, they experience less emotional  
761 struggles, perform better in school, and are less involved in  
762 dangerous risky behaviors like drugs and alcohol.

763 It is important to note that it's not just any two-parent home  
764 that offers better outcomes for children. Studies emphasize that  
765 the marriage of the parents needs to be healthy and maintain a  
766 positive home environment. In these cases, the child always  
767 fares better than homes full of conflict or homes broken  
768 altogether.

#### 769 **Mental Health Risk Avoidance - The Benefits in Marriage**

770 When two people choose to commit themselves to one another for  
771 the rest of their lives, they are agreeing to promote the health  
772 and well-being of their partner. This naturally leads to greater  
773 mental health in lifelong, committed relationships. And get  
774 this, the odds of divorce are lowest when one has zero or one  
775 premarital partner. Let's just look at a few of the benefits to  
776 one's mental health when they decide to wait on sex until they  
777 are married.

- 778 • When your emotional security is not based on sex, money or  
779 other temporary life circumstance, than greater is your  
780 relationship stability. In other words, a lifelong, committed  
781 relationship enhances your emotional security which increases  
782 your relationship stability.
- 783 • Being close to your partner can ease the pressures of stress  
784 and there is nothing more intimate than sex. Research shows that

785 married couples experience less stress than cohabitating  
786 counterparts.

787 • Married young adults aged 22-26 report higher life  
788 satisfaction than those in other types of relationships or no  
789 relationship at all

790 • In a study by the National Institute of Health, social  
791 scientists have discovered that marriage offers better mental  
792 health over all ages.

793 Mental health advantages increase as individuals move from less  
794 attachment to more attachment. The greatest attachment  
795 relationship is marriage, thereby, marriage has the most mental  
796 health benefits.

797 • Healthy romantic relationships in a lifelong commitment  
798 heightened feelings of self-worth.

799 • All of these studies show that individuals with more positive  
800 mental health are those who choose to marry, thus resulting in  
801 greater mental health. Meaning, depressed or unhappy individuals  
802 are usually not motivated to move into a lifelong, committed  
803 partnership, which validates that fact that involving sex in  
804 relationships that don't deserve it only makes matters worse  
805 when dealing with mental health issues.

806 • Overall, despite higher rates of divorce, marriage still  
807 proves to be the most emotionally, valuable and longest lasting  
808 monogamous relationship in America.

809 At the end of all benefits to marriage, state the following:

810 Just to recap, here are a list of evidence-based benefits of  
811 engaging in sex in marriage:

- 812 • It boosts immunity
- 813 • Lowers blood pressure
- 814 • Creates better intimacy
- 815 • Relieves pain
- 816 • Decreases depression
- 817 • Relieves stress
- 818 • Improves fertility
- 819 • Makes for better sleep
- 820 • Increase cardiovascular health
- 821 • Makes you feel better about yourself
- 822 • Burns calories
- 823 • Relieves headaches
- 824 • Increases mental health
- 825 • Increases sexual desire
- 826 • Lowers risk of heart attack
- 827 • Reduces risk of both breast and prostate cancer
- 828 • Improves the marriage relationship
- 829 • Improves overall brain function
- 830 • Leads to longer life

831 Wow! Sex in marriage actually helps you live longer. You, see  
832 I'm not here to tell you not to have sex or that sex is bad.  
833 Just the opposite actually. Sex is amazing and has incredible  
834 benefits, when saved for the right time, in a lifelong,  
835 committed relationship.

836 If you're considering the quality of your relationship and sex,  
837 and you desire the best, all research indicates that sex within  
838 marriage provides just that. In addition, these studies validate  
839 that a person's feelings of love, intimacy, mental health, and  
840 physical health are better suited for lifelong committed  
841 relationship where sex offers the greatest benefits.