Teen Parenting Inclusivity in sexual health classrooms

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Shifting Our Mindset
Teen Parenting is Not the Problem!
"How our political culture has responded to the ancillary problems of poverty, sexuality, gender relationships and the like" is what makes young parenting difficult.

– Frank F. Furstenberg
What is Stigma?

**Stigma** is the extreme disapproval of (or discontent with) a person or group on socially characteristic grounds that are perceived, and serve to distinguish them, from other members of a society. Stigma may then be affixed to such a person, by the greater society, who differs from their cultural norms.
Adolescent pregnancy rates are going down, ....but unmarried births are rising.

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Figure 1: Pregnancy Rates for Adolescent Females by Age, Selected Years 1972-2010

Figure 2: Percentage of All Births that Were to Unmarried Women, by Race and Hispanic Origin: Selected Years, 1960-2014

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* Rates computed by dividing the number of abortions to females under age 15 by the total number of females ages 14 years.


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Teen Parenting Is Not The Problem

and sexual activity has remained relatively stagnant...
Teen Parenting Is Not The Problem

Commonly cited fact:
Only 38 percent of teen mothers complete high school while less than 2 percent go on to obtain a college degree.

Another angle:
Among those who drop out of high school, teen mothers are actually more likely to complete their GEDs (5.5% for all dropouts, 19% of teen moms).

Sources:
https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/dropout08/findings5.asp
Commonly cited fact:

Teen mothers are about 15% less likely to be employed, about 12% less likely to participate in work-related activities, and about 10% less likely to work full-time.

Another angle:

When analysis controls for poverty indicators, the loss in earnings young mothers face dissipates by age 30 when compared to mothers who delayed childbearing.

Commomly cited fact:
Almost two-thirds of young mothers rely on public assistance within the first year of their child’s birth; 41 percent of mothers who gave birth before age 20 live below federal poverty guidelines.

Another angle:
Over 80% of teen mothers live in poverty BEFORE they become a parent. It is economic inequality and poverty that lead to these challenges young parents face, not parenthood itself.

What are Risk & Protective Factors?

**Risk Factors** are individual, social or environmental characteristics or conditions that may lead to a person experiencing teen parenting stigma.

**Protective Factors** are characteristics or conditions that may discourage or protect a person from experiencing teen parenting stigma.
The Socio-Ecological Model

- **Individual**
  - (age, sex, gender, attitudes, beliefs)
- **Relationships**
  - (Peers, family, partners)
- **Communities & School**
  - (local policies, services, media)
- **Societal & Environmental**
  - (attitudes & ideology, national policy)

**Process**

- **People**
- **Context**
- **Time**

Addressing Teen Parenting Stigma Holistically
How Do Young Parents Experience Stigma?
Mixed Messages: The Current State of Teen Pregnancy Prevention in Travis County, TX

- Focus groups conducted in 2013.
- Asked young parents about how others reacted to teen pregnancy, knowledge about sex prior to pregnancy, parenthood challenges, and teen pregnancy prevention recommendations.
- Used risk & protective factors in analysis.
- Surveyed local service providers (medical, education, social services)
- Volunteer-based and unfunded
“Cause like I had told myself I would never have kids and so and I wasn’t the type, like people put you in a box, you know, there’s a type of person who gets pregnant, everyone thinks that way even though they don’t want to admit it that’s the truth and if you get pregnant you’re supposed to be a ho and that’s not how I was. I was like really book smart and like you know so I didn’t think it would be me. “

“Yeah, that’s what a lot of people think—that once you become pregnant and starting having family your life is ruined and you can’t be anybody anymore.”

“…I will make time to like go to parenting classes because I am only 16 going on 17 and I don’t know what to do...”

“Like she just felt as a mom like she should always have control of the baby and like only she could take care of the baby and I’m not allowed to take the baby out...”
How Do Teen Parents Experience Stigma?

“I got really like depressed about it because my whole family just put me down [by saying], ‘oh you messed up your life, you just went downhill, you are not going to be able to go to college, to have a career, and do the things you wanted to do, or like go to prom and stuff like that.’ So I got really, really depressed. It took awhile... to accept the fact that I was pregnant and get over it, of being depressed and actually see the positive side of it.”

“See, I want my baby mama to live with me, but her mom don’t let her. See what I’m saying, she’s still trying to control her life... ”

“I told a girl that I considered my best friend. And then as soon as I told her it didn’t even take her five minutes I think to tell everybody. And then everybody knew so I stopped talking to her because I considered her my friend, but she wasn’t really my friend.”
“...I know they have programs for teens and dads like to find a job or something but they always told me that I wasn’t in need or I didn’t go to an at-risk school... I would go to places and they would be like, ‘no, you are not at risk.’

“And it’s like with the program you got to be 18 or older for them to actually, to help you— Oh you came here young; you got to be a certain age...And then I had the baby and then they start like really helping me out.”

“...nobody there is pregnant and if you do get pregnant, you’re forced to leave, like you can’t stay there.”

“I tried to get food stamps, but they said my mom makes too much...”
How Do Teen Parents Experience Stigma?

“I watch the deleted scenes (Teen Mom)... where it’s all the good parts (about being a parent).”

“Young moms especially don’t know about postpartum depression and they’re like the number one target to have postpartum depression, they have so much of a cause... resentment [is] a big one, everyone telling [you] because of this kid you are not going to follow your dream. Everyone tells young moms that.”

“This situation is permanent you no longer have an option. You’re a parent let’s figure out how to make this a good situation not bad this and bad that. Let’s figure out how to make this a positive thing. Like how to make this child’s life easier and better and not have to hear negative people all the time. “

“If you’re not doing it their way then you’re not doing it right. Because you’re young so you don’t know. “
Shifting Our Language
Young Parents

- their children
- their family members
- their friends
What do we risk?

- Shaming young parents
- Labeling young parents
- Influence on family members of young parents
- Influence on friends of young parents
Language Considerations

- Shift language away from teen pregnancy being a problem, mistake, burden, devastation, negative consequence

- Be aware of gender roles, expectations, and stereotypes

- Be aware of comparing pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections

- Be conscious of curricula that overshare statistics that may not be helpful/relevant in the eyes of youth
Shifting Our Approach
SAMHSA’s Guidelines for a Trauma Informed Approach

- Safety
- Trustworthiness & transparency
- Cultural, historical & gender issues
- Empowerment, voice & choice
- Peer support
- Collaboration & mutuality
What if I told you, I have no regrets? That my life is more productive, purposeful, and powerful because of my son... that I look at him everyday and am thankful that I chose not to listen to those who said we'd fail.

What if I said I've finished high school, college, and then some... and that my son, now 17, carries 3.6 GPA, plays baseball, volunteers monthly, and is one of the best people I know?

What if I told you, there are others like us? #NoTeenShame

I am not a mistake or a public health issue. I am a girl. I am awesome... human. My mom gave me life at 17 but gives me love and purpose everyday!

#NoTeenShame

Source: noteenshame.tumblr.com
5 DAILY AND NECESSARY AFFIRMATIONS

For Every Young Mother & Every Young Father

Both my child and I are capable of accomplishing great things.

I am both worthy and deserving of love, support and respect.

Chosen families are as valid and important as biological families.

My new path may look different but this path is mine to follow.

I will keep my support system close... with their love, I can do this.

#NOTEENSHAME

Source: noteenshame.tumblr.com
5 Ways to be an ally to young parents

1. Conduct an internal reflection of your views on teen pregnancy and young parenthood and challenge any negative perceptions
2. Be an active voice against harmful campaigns, strategies and media
3. Ensure your messaging excludes stereotypes, shame, and narrowly framed data sources
4. Invite young parents to the table and give them meaningful and genuine roles to help shape your work
5. Respect young mothers and young fathers and believe in their ability to make the best informed choices for themselves and their families

#NOTEENSHAME
5 Ways Organizations & Adults Can Respect Teen Parents’ Work

1. If you are considering a project involving teen parents, include them in the process. Give teen parents meaningful seats at the table and let them help shape the work in its entirety.

2. Be willing to work on your internal attitudes towards teen parents by listening, learning, checking yourself, and not taking criticism personally.

3. Paying young parents for their work is necessary and professional.

4. Be comfortable with the amount of personal information young parents are willing to share, even if it’s not all you wanted or expected.

5. Treat young parents as you would other professionals and adult parents, while also willingly supporting their challenges.

#NOTEENSHAME

Source: noteenshame.tumblr.com
HOW TO RESPECTFULLY TALK ABOUT

Teen Pregnancy Prevention

1. Avoid using stereotypes, racism, sexism, classism, ableism, shame, stigma, or any comparisons to other groups of people.

2. Ensure that conversations are genuinely open and honest. Expect difficult questions and prepare to answer them directly.

3. Focus on the need for accurate information regarding LGBTQ-inclusive sexual education and dialogue on healthy relationships, safe sex, and consent.

4. Be aware of the potential macro-influences on teen pregnancy such as abuse, poverty, homelessness, sexual exploitation and lack of access to resources, healthcare, and quality education.

5. Acknowledge that young people have the right to autonomy and agency over their own sexual health.

#NOTEENSHAME
Adopt a **gender-transformative approach** to break down rigid, binary concepts of gender and gender stereotypes, and build in inclusive approaches for more advanced conversations around gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation.

Provide **educational and occupational opportunities** that address realistic pathways for youth to achieve adult status.

Implement **youth-driven services** that involve peer educators.
## Shifting our Language

Use this worksheet to practice changing curricula language shaming teen parenting to language that is positive and affirming of all youth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Language</th>
<th>Reframed Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What can you do to make sure you don’t get pregnant, get someone pregnant, or get an STD, like HIV?</td>
<td>SUGGESTION: Change to two questions &amp; allow discussion for each. How can you make sure that a pregnancy is planned? How can you protect yourself from transmitting a sexually transmitted infection?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The more you know about the consequences of sex, such as pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, the better you will be at avoiding them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In this program, we will talk about teen pregnancy, STDs, and HIV – the virus that causes AIDS, all of which are having a devastating impact on youth. It turns out that more youth today are getting pregnant and infected with STDs like HIV than ever before.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you are going to have sex, you have to worry about unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV. To avoid these problems, you have to use effective methods to prevent pregnancy and infections.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It [sex] can lead to the consequences we talked about earlier such as pregnancy and STDs, including HIV. These consequences can alter your life and get in the way of your goals and dreams.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
...the most important thing I would like you to remember is that unplanned pregnancy, STDs and HIV are having a very negative impact on young people. If we do not work together to stop the spread of these conditions, we will all suffer the consequences.

**Take the proud and responsible path!**
Choose not to have sexual intercourse of any type (abstinence) and get the skills to practice the method effectively. Or, if you decide to have sexual intercourse, protect yourself against unplanned pregnancy and STDs by using an effective method of birth control and condoms.

Unplanned pregnancy, STDs, and HIV are consequences of unprotected sex that can make it harder to reach your future goals and can damage your health.

Many women who have had multiple early pregnancies say that while it was manageable to have one baby, having two made their lives incredibly difficult. Therefore, it is important to avoid a repeat pregnancy and practice abstinence or safer sex.

[after a game demonstrating how quickly STIs can be transmitted] Now you don’t have a disease and you haven’t become pregnant again because you are a proud, responsible, and protective mother.
Young Parent Stigma: A Socio-Ecological Model

Risk & Protective Factors

What you can do:

Risk & Protective Factors:

What you can do:

Risk & Protective Factors:

What you can do:

Risk & Protective Factors:

What you can do:

The University of Texas at Austin
Child & Family Research Institute
School of Social Work
Resources

#NoTeenShame campaign

http://noteenshame.tumblr.com/ & follow the hashtag on social media

is a movement led by 7 young mothers (Natasha, Jasmin, Gloria, Consuela, Lisette, Christina, and Marylouise) to improve strategic messaging campaigns and conversation around young parenting to a non-stigmatizing and non-shaming approach, while highlighting the importance of comprehensive sex ed. If you use Instagram or Twitter, search “noteenshame” and join the discussion!

The PushBack

http://thepushback.org

The PushBack blog creates “a space for young parents, and those who work with and for them, to tell the real stories of what their lives look like.” The blog is a project of the Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy that partners closely with the #NoTeenShame movement and allows space for the stories of young parents to be told unfiltered, from their own voices, and without attempt to fit into an agenda.

National Women’s Law Center, Resources for Pregnant and Parenting Students

http://nwlc.org/issue/pregnant-parenting-students/

Federal law guarantees pregnant and parenting students an equal right to education, and the National Women’s Law Center works to ensure that schools are following the law and giving their students the education they deserve. NWLC advocates for federal, state, and local policies and programs to support pregnant and parenting students receive the support they need to continue with their education.

Strong Families Movement

http://strongfamiliesmovement.org

The Strong Families Movement works to advocate for all families to have the rights, recognition, and resources they need to thrive. Strong Families creates resources and partners with organizations across the U.S. to share resources to build stronger families.

Title IX protections:

http://nwlc.org/resources/its-your-education-how-title-ix-protections-can-help-you/

Latinas & teen pregnancy/reproductive health, What’s the real problem?:

http://strongfamiliesmovement.org/assets/docs/NLIRH-Whats-the-Real-Problem-Poster.pdf

Mixed Messages: The Current State of Teen Pregnancy Prevention in Travis County, TX


Supporting Young Parents: Findings from Public Opinion Research

http://www.chla.org/webinars

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