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Teenage Pregnancy

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Teenage Pregnancy

In my mother's side of the family, every daughter, from grandma to my older sister, has had child while attending high school. As a young child, I thought maybe I should have a child too in high school because I saw the rest of my family having children. I also saw in the females in my family the trials and tribulations that came with having children when they were still children. But my perspective changed drastically when I saw my older sister, Carissa, struggle to graduate after having my niece Cailyn at the age of 16. I also saw Carissa, and Cailyn's father, Chris, go through rough financial patches to raise their child. Then one of my closest high school friends got pregnant.

When I was younger, I never thought much about my view on teenage pregnancy. I just thought it was a normal thing for girls to do. I saw young girls in my neighborhood between the ages of fifteen and eighteen get pregnant, and with no support from the child's father or family. But in my family, any child that was brought into the world always received unconditional financial, mental, and physical support. My first reaction to babies was excitement about having a new family member. Everyone looked so happy with a newborn baby in the house. These little inferences shaped my way of thinking about teenage parenting.

My mother often told my brother, sister, and me stories about giving birth to and raising our half-brother, Albert. She was eighteen when she got pregnant and missed a lot of activities in her last year of high school. Even though my mother graduated and continued on to higher learning, pursuing a cosmetology license, that was not her ultimate career goal. My mother had wanted to join the police academy right after high school. But she couldn't, not with a fresh newborn son, and no support from the father.

When Carissa got pregnant, my mother was very disappointed and hurt. She felt like the stories that she told us hadn't been enough for my sister. The only thing different between my mother's experience and Carissa's was that Carissa had support from the father, Chris. They both worked minimum wage jobs, Carissa a sales associate at a hotel candy store, and Chris a McDonald's cashier. This was not enough to support their daughter, though, and they both knew it. Before having Cailyn, Carissa had wanted to go to a liberal arts college in New York City and become a fashion consultant and designer. Today she is going to graduate school and is still a hard-working mother for Cailyn.

Another perspective that hit home for me and changed my view on having children at a young age was seeing one of my closest friends get pregnant while we were in high school. It was the middle of our sophomore year, and my friend, Ariel, and I had just finished our third season of field hockey. Ariel felt some tough abdomen pain, and on the same day, she visited her doctor to see what was going on. Ariel was three months pregnant. She immediately wanted to get an abortion, but she was too young. After giving birth to her daughter the next year, Ariel thought about adoption. She went through various adoptees, but then suddenly realized she had grown attached to her daughter, Dreu. Ariel had the ambition, grades, and ACT score to get into a lot of colleges. Today, Ariel doesn't have a strong relationship with Dreu's father and is not attending college.

All these real life stories that I've seen have changed my perspective into waiting until I have a career, steady paycheck, and a man who wants to be in their child's life. I also have a nine-year-old niece who looks up to me, so I have to be an active role model for her. Even though you get attention from family and friends, having a baby young is not worth changing your dreams. Preventing a pregnancy means maintaining choice.

