



GUARD YOUR HEART

GUARD YOUR MIND

GUARD YOUR BODY

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In this issue...



- Baby Bumps: A New Fashion Statement?
- Helping Teen Moms Achieve Their Potential



Baby Bumps: A New Fashion Statement?

By now most of you have heard about the small fishing town of Gloucester, MA. If not, the following is an overview of what put Gloucester on the map. Last week a story was reported by Kathleen Kingsbury with *TIME Magazine* about an apparent pact a group of teenage girls (all under the age of 16) made to get pregnant and raise their kids together. This year at Gloucester High School, there are at least 17 teen girls expecting babies (which is 4x their average number). Although some are now questioning whether this pact really happened, the reality remains that **some of them were intentionally trying to get pregnant**—showing up to their school clinic multiple times for a pregnancy test, and acting more upset when they weren't pregnant than when they were. Naturally, people want to find someone or something to blame for something this absurd. Many people have their own opinion of what could possibly explain this, but really there are many reasons that teen girls might think they want to get pregnant. One thing that has become more evident is that teen and out-of-wedlock pregnancy has become less shameful and more glamorized. This is seen everywhere, but one place that is notorious for giving teens a distorted view of reality is Hollywood.

Why do some teens think being pregnant is something to be desired?

You don't have to look very far to see a glamorized Hollywood star showing off their latest "baby bump". They appear to have it all together too—fashionable clothing, perfect hair, latest accessory, attractive men by their side (sometimes), and so on. But what does this type of publicity say to teenagers? Unfortunately, there are a lot of teenagers that see certain stars and think they want to be like them. This could mean getting a dress like Angelina Jolie, a handbag like Jessica Simpson, or maybe even a baby bump like Jamie Lynn Spears. However, what teens usually don't fully understand is that the majority of the pregnant Hollywood stars are unmarried and likely not as happy as they may seem. Sarah Brown from The National Campaign to Prevent Pregnancy stated this by saying, **"the celebrity glitz and the coolness of it all can be confusing to young girls. They may think that maybe they can have a bit of Hollywood too if they have a little bump."** Teens see the attention that Hollywood stars (especially the pregnant ones) get, and they want that. We as adults need to be aware of how much Hollywood (and the many other sources) are effecting today's teens. Talk to them often about sex and the real consequences of having sex before marriage, which Hollywood often fails to portray. Also, let daily news stories, new movie releases, and television shows be a teaching tool for teens. These venues can provide easy lead-ins to important conversations about what is right and wrong—real and glamorized.



The reality of teen pregnancy:

The reality is that about one in three teen girls in the United States will get pregnant at least once before the age of 20. Teens need to understand the consequences of having sex before marriage, including the possibility of getting pregnant. Besides the fact that they will quickly find out that having a baby is not "playing house," they also need to know what risks they are creating for their self and their baby:

- They are less likely to finish school
- More likely to have serious health risks from pregnancy
- More likely to face poverty and single parenthood
- More likely to have children with low birth weights and related health problems



This is just a very short list of the risks involved with teen pregnancy, most of you know how hard it is to be a parent. Talk to teens often about what being a parent really involves and encourage them to provide the best for their self and their future family by waiting to have sex until they are in a marriage relationship.

What if your teen gets pregnant?

If your teen is sexual active and gets pregnant or gets his girlfriend pregnant, they have to know that you still love them and are there for them. The key to parenting through disappointment is to separate the performance from the person. Your teen needs to know that you will remain committed to their welfare; that you still love them and you want what is best for them. Show them compassion while still letting them deal with the consequences from their choices. As a parent, one of the hardest things to realize is that your every single act or word is creating the mothers, fathers, wife or girlfriend and member of society that your child will grow up to be. Teen parents need to be encouraged to:

- Complete school & pursue higher education
- Provide love & care for their child
- Attend relationship & parenting classes

Becoming a teen parent is not the direction most parents would have chosen for their teen; but through encouraging them and helping them to stay focused, they can still achieve their goals, dreams and desires. They can achieve their potential—it will be hard and will take longer, but many of us are a walking example that it can be done! LIFEGUARD YOUTH DEVELOPMENT® can help through our nine month program for teen moms called Achieving Your Potential (AYP). This program helps teens reach their goals & dreams through being encouraged to stay in school, and by attending career, budgeting, relationship, & parenting classes. They are also matched with a mentor to provide an opportunity to share their victories & frustrations of motherhood and life. In fact, we are currently needing more mentors. If you or someone you know is interested, please let us know and we can get you more information!

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For more information call: 816-836-8336 - To unsubscribe, please email bgray@guardyourself.org