

Unplanned Pregnancy: Parenting

Grade 11 and 12, Lesson #10

Time Needed

One or two class periods

Student Learning Objectives

To be able to...

1. Consider whether he/she might want to ever be a parent (biological or otherwise) and, if so, articulate at least three of his/her own criteria for the kind of parent he/she would like to be.
2. Articulate at least three of his/her own criteria for the kind of person he/she would like to find to be the other parent of his/her child(ren)...if parenthood is in his/her future.
3. Recognize common stereotypes about fathers and describe the hurt they may cause (to all: the child, the father, and the mother).
4. List at least three concrete things a father can do to parent actively.
5. List at least three concrete things a mother can do to act as a father's ally in active parenting (given that society/friends/family will probably assume that the mother is the primary parent).

Agenda

1. Explain the lesson's focus and relevance.
2. Use a focused writing exercise and discussion to help students begin to articulate their criteria for "good" parenting, and especially, fathering.
3. Use discussion, Transparency 1, and the lyrics of "Baby Needs a Parent" to explore the relationship between gender roles and parenting.
4. In six Caucuses (cooperative work groups), have students examine the role of fathers and consider how anti-father stereotyping and prejudice can be overcome. Have spokespeople report.
5. Assign homework and summarize the lesson.

Materials Needed

One set of ...

*Parenting Transparencies 1 and 2 **

One per student of ...

Parenting Plan Worksheet

Family/Friend Homework Exercise: On Parenting

Four or five sets per class of ...

Caucus Worksheets

Signs, posted around the perimeter of the classroom, numbered 1-6

Optional video or audio cassette ...

Video: *Opening Doors*, Audio cassette: *Uniforms* – both available through Moose School Records, P0 Box 960, Topanga, CA 90290; 1-800-676-5480, www.PeterAlsop.com

* Alternately, beginning in late 2006, all FLASH transparencies will be available as PowerPoint files on the FLASH web site: www.metrokc.gov/health/famplan/flash

Activities

1. Explain the focus of the lesson and its relevance to your students' lives:

We've studied abortion and adoption. Today we're focusing on the third legal option in a pregnancy: parenthood. I realize that not everyone in the class will ever become a parent. Most of you will, and many of those who don't become biological parents, will find other ways to parent (step, foster, or adoptive parenting; being active aunts or uncles to the child of a brother or sister or close friend; teaching or working in a day care setting; etc.). This lesson is for everyone who will ever love a child.

Many people think of raising children as a mother's responsibility and role. You've seen TV shows and commercials that portray fathers as bumbling idiots. You've heard people disrespect single fathers, assuming that they all "split." You've probably been in the room when a friend or family member was holding a baby and the baby started to cry ... and even though both Mom and Dad were present, they automatically handed the crying baby to its Mom. You may have even seen women laugh at the awkwardness of their babies' fathers.

Everybody gets hurt by those kinds of stereotyped assumptions:

- *Many kids wish they had more of a relationship with their Dads or biological fathers.*
- *Many women feel overwhelmed with all the responsibility and wish their children's father(s) would be more actively involved.*
- *Many men feel left out and angry. They hunger for more involvement with their children.*

So this is a lesson about parents, but especially about fathers...

- *to help the men in the class think about whether they want to be fathers, and if so, the kind of fathers they would like to be (and practical tips about how to be that kind of father),*
- *and to help the women in the class think about the kind of father they might like for their future children, if any, even those who will raise a baby primarily in a lesbian relationship or as a single parent (and to offer concrete ideas about how to support his being that kind of Dad).*

2. Hand out the **Parent Plan Worksheet**. Allow four or five minutes for students to complete it.

Write two headings on the blackboard: FATHERS and MOTHERS. Ask the men in the class to shout out their answers to questions 5, 8, or 9. Record their answers under the heading "FATHERS". Then ask the women in the class to shout out their answers to those same questions. Record them under the heading "MOTHERS".

3. Explore briefly the relationship between gender roles and parenting: Note any similarities and differences between their lists, without imposing value judgments on those similarities or differences.

Put **Parenting Transparency 1** on the screen. Ask, "Can two dads or two moms or a single parent provide both types of love?" Ask people for examples from their own experience of families where both kinds of parenting happen and families where they don't. **If necessary, remind people to protect confidentiality by not naming names.**

Then share the lyrics of Peter Alsop's song "Baby Needs A Parent", either by reading them aloud, as a poem, or by playing that song on his video "Opening Doors" or his audio cassette "Uniforms".

Baby Needs a Parent

by Peter Alsop

*Baby don't need no silver spoon,
Don't need no rub-a-dub-dub,
Well it's apparent that a baby needs a parent who,
Can give that baby some love.*

*Now every baby's got one mama [sic],
And every baby's got one pop [sic].
These days some babies live with one or the other,
Cause the parents get all split up.*

*Well if the baby's only got one person,
to guide that baby along,
Well you might think that's a one-sided baby,
But maybe you might be wrong.*

*Oooh, everybody says that a baby girl,
Needs to learn a woman's gentle touch;
And a boy needs a man to raise him,
And to show him how to be tough.*

*But you know a baby can grow up gentle,
when a gentle daddy takes good care,
And a baby can grow up strong and brave,
When a strong and brave mama is there.*

*Oh, baby don't need no silver spoon,
Don't need no rub-a-dub-dub,
Well it's apparent that a baby needs a parent who,
Can give that baby some love.*

*Now every baby's gotta have at least one person,
Who can be both gentle and strong.
Well if the mama and the daddy can both do that,
Then that baby's never gonna go wrong.*

*Oh, baby don't need no silver spoon,
Don't need no rub-a-dub-dub,
Well it's apparent that a baby needs a parent who,
Can give that baby some love.*

* Reprinted with permission, from the audio cassette "Uniforms" and the video "Opening Doors", by Peter Alsop. Copyright 1980, Moose School Music (BMI). Available through Moose School Records, P0 Box 960, Topanga, CA 90290; 1-800-676-5480, www.PeterAlsop.com

Note that the remainder of the Worksheet is more personal and that you will not ask that people share it aloud. Encourage them to share it with friends and family later.

4. Save at least twenty-five minutes for this second part of the lesson. (A whole class period is ideal.) Have the class divide themselves into six “caucuses” or work groups, by putting Transparency 2 on the screen and pointing out that you have posted six numbers around the perimeter of the classroom.

Acknowledge that people may fit into more than one of the caucuses listed on the Transparency. If they fit into more than one, they should choose whichever one they would like to represent today. If any one caucus has more than six members, you may want to divide them in half, so that each individual has more responsibility for the final product.

Hand each caucus one copy of their Caucus Worksheet, to complete cooperatively. Allow about ten minutes for caucuses to complete their tasks and choose a spokesperson. This will allow fifteen minutes for the spokesperson to report.

Some people may prefer to work individually on one of the Worksheets. In case they ask to do so, you will need a few extra copies. Provide them their own copies and respect their choice not to report back to the whole class afterwards.

5. Assign homework and make sure people realize that it is due tomorrow.

Then close with clarification about the lesson’s meaning:

This lesson focused on fathering, because fathers deserve to parent and kids deserve their love. But it did not mean to imply that a baby needs two parents to grow up emotionally healthy. Clearly, babies with two moms or two dads or with a single parent can be happy, healthy, well-adjusted people. It is just that, too often, our stereotypes and prejudices prevent fathers, especially those who live apart from their children, from actively participating in child-rearing. And everybody loses out.

Parenting Transparency 1

***“It is not a question of right
or wrong but of difference that
a mother seeing her small child on
the jungle gym is more likely to say
‘Be careful!’ while the father
may say, ‘Can you climb to the top?’
The mother who asks
‘Where does it hurt?’ is not wrong,
but neither is the father who says,
‘You’re okay, shake it off.’
Here is the point
Pity the boy or girl who does not
receive BOTH of these types of love.”***

**David Blankenhorn
as quoted by William Raspberry**

Parenting Transparency 2

SIX CAUCUSES

- 1: People who have no fathers or who have never really known or spent time with their fathers ... and who wish they had had more of a relationship with them
- 2: People who have spent time with their fathers and feel they have a good relationship with them (father or step-father, foster father, etc.)
- 3: People who are tired of seeing fathers, especially teen and non-custodial fathers, stereotyped, discounted and disrespected
- 4: Guys who hope to be active fathers
- 5: Girls who hope to share parenting with an active father
- 6: Open to Anybody

Parenting Plan Worksheet

NAME _____ DATE _____ PERIOD ____

1. Do you have any children yet? _____yes _____no
(If "no" go to question 2; if "yes" just answer questions 5-7.)
2. Do you think that you ever would like to have a child? _____yes _____no
(If "no" go to question 3; if "yes" skip to question 4.)
3. Why do you think you will not want children? List your reasons.
(Then just answer question 8.)

4. Why do you think you will want children? List your reasons. (Then skip to question 9.)

5. What three words describe the kind of a parent you try to be?

6. What do you like best about being a parent?

7. What is the hardest thing about being a parent?

8. a. GUYS: What three words would you use to describe really wonderful fathers?

b. GIRLS: What three words would you use to describe really wonderful mothers?

9. What three words describe the kind of parent you hope you will be?

Caucus Worksheet - Group 1

1. We — the publishers of this curriculum — realize that many mothers do a fine job on their own or with the support of friends, family or a second mom. But, for some of you, not having an active father may have felt like a loss. There may have been disadvantages in not knowing or getting to spend time with your father. **What would you like to say to every man who becomes a father? Agree on a statement to future fathers. Write it here:**

2. One young father said, *“I can’t live with her because I can’t give her the money the state can, and then when I try to be with my daughter, it’s like ‘You don’t know how to hold her: you’re never around.’ And you know, she’s right.”** What is his daughter missing? List, from your own experience and the lives of your friends, the possible costs or disadvantages to a child of not having an active father.

* Quoted by Kelly Riggle Hower in an unpublished paper entitled, *“Sustaining a Culture for Families: Who Nurtures Our Children?”* Antioch University, 1991.

Caucus Worksheet - Group 2

1. Having an active father in your life means different things to different people. You all had one and had a good relationship with him. **What would you like to say to every man who becomes a father? Agree on a statement to future fathers. Write it here:**

2. In his book, *The Birth of a Father*,* Martin Greenberg says, to new fathers, *"The more varied and diverse your ways of sharing and being with your child, the more intense will be the relationship and the more fun it will be for both of you."* He gives this example, *"Singing to your newborn is a unique way of sharing yourself. In reaching out to him with your voice, you are developing a particular way of relating to him. As you sing a special song to him, it will eventually become 'his song'. He will begin to associate the song with his father, and later ... he will [feel] loved and cared for when he hears his tune."* Another example, *"Being in touch ... means having conversations with her as well as feeding and diapering her."* **List, from your own experience and your imaginations, specific ideas for new fathers about how they can "be there" for their children. Include creative ideas for being actively involved with infants and also with older children and teens.**

* Avon Books, NY, 1985.

Caucus Worksheet - Group 3

1. Cecilia Worth says, in her book *The Birth of a Father*,* *"Fathers [are often] credited with only secondary status, their ideas and efforts dismissed."* She quotes one Dad who found that even doctors can have this attitude: *"Our pediatrician asked me to have my wife call if there were further questions during one illness. Needless to say, I made sure I called."* **What would you like to say to this doctor about his prejudices about fathers? Agree on a statement. Write it here:**

2. There is a poster that is supposed to discourage teenage women from getting pregnant. It shows a young man in a track suit holding a trophy, and reads *"If you think he runs fast now, just tell him you're pregnant."* Posters like these reinforce our *"cultural stereotypes [of] babies who are balls and chains, women who are victims and losers, and men who are creeps and deserters."*** **What other stereotyped expectations of fathers are we taught by the media and our society? List as many as you can:**

* McGraw-Hill, NY, 1988.

** Kelly Riggle Hower, unpublished paper entitled, *"Sustaining a Culture for Families: Who Nurtures Our Children?"*, Antioch University, 1991.

Caucus Worksheet - Group 4

1. Sometimes a man's own feelings get in the way of his fathering. Cecilia Worth interviewed hundreds of men for her book **The Birth of a Father**.^{*} One man, Seth, *“fully expected to help care for his baby, not simply pitching in to give his wife a break but in his own right as a father. But, like many fathers, he arrived home with a three-day-old baby ... [and] realized that what he didn't know about baby care suddenly seemed immeasurable. Doing everything right struck him as crucial. ‘I was afraid of looking incompetent’ he explained.”* **List the feelings and values a man might have that could get in the way of his parenting his children.**

2. Sometimes, it isn't a man's own feelings and values that stop him from actively parenting. It is other people's attitudes.
 - a. His job doesn't allow him any time off when the baby is born, to get to know each other.
 - b. The baby's mother grabs her away from the father the minute she starts to cry.
 - c. The child's teacher calls the house to discuss a problem Johnny is having, and automatically asks to speak with Johnny's mother, even though Dad answered the phone.

Choose one of these situations and agree on what you think he should do about it. Write your suggestion here:

^{*} McGraw-Hill, NY, 1988.

Caucus Worksheet - Group 5

1. According to Martin Greenberg, author of *The Birth of a Father*,* *“many new fathers will not ... get involved with their newborn infants until they feel they have permission from [the babies’ mothers].”* He says it’s as if the new father is saying to the mother, *“You come first. It’s your relationship with the baby that really counts.”* Greenberg says that, if the Mom doesn’t actively draw him into the circle (and maybe this is especially true if the couple isn’t married and the father is a teen), the Dad “is likely to continue hanging back, feeling unnecessary and unwanted.” Studies confirm Greenberg’s observation. **What would you say to every new Mom about the baby’s father? Agree on a statement and write it here:**

2. Greenberg asks the rhetorical question of new moms, *“How can you let [the baby’s father] know that there is a space available for him?”* Two of Greenberg’s answers: *“Any early opportunity that he has to hold, touch and carry the baby [is vital]. Simply say, ‘Isn’t she beautiful? She’s so much fun to hold. Why don’t you try?’”* and *“Above all, don’t criticize.”* **List below other ideas of ways that mothers, especially single mothers, can act as their children’s fathers’ allies. How, specifically, can a woman support his right to a relationship with the child and the child’s right to a relationship with him?**

* *Avon Books, NY, 1985.*

Caucus Worksheet - Group 6

1. It's always difficult to be a new parent. It has to be even harder when it wasn't your choice. Suppose your best (male) friend didn't mean to start a pregnancy and knew that he wasn't ready to be a father. His girlfriend or wife got pregnant. He really wanted her to have an abortion or make an adoption plan, but she decided to raise the baby. Here he is, a new father, like it or not. He comes to you for advice, saying "*I believe that my child deserves an active father, but I just don't feel ready. What should I do?*" **Agree on what you will say to him. Or write down different people's ideas:**

2. Sol Gordon says, "*Love can afford to be blind only on the first day of it.*" * Probably a lot of people wouldn't sleep with someone, if they thought first about the possibility that this person might end up being the mother or father of their child. **List the clues a person might have about what kind of parent their boyfriend or girlfriend might make:**

* *The Teenage Survival Book*, Times Books, NY, 1981.

Family/Friend Homework Exercise: “On Parenthood”

Below are some questions about parenthood and your own feelings, goals and values. Read them and think about them. Write your answers. Then, talk them over with a family member or another trusted adult or with a close friend. Together, sign the homework confirmation slip at the end. Turn it in for credit.

1. If someone I loved was planning to have and raise a baby that she and her partner hadn't planned ... (circle one answer, or write your own)
 - a. I would know in my heart it was the right choice for her no matter what her life circumstances and I'd try to support her 100%.
 - b. I might have concerns, depending on her life circumstances and parenting skills, but I'd try not to show them. I'd try to support her 100%.
 - c. Even if I believed in my heart it was the wrong choice in her situation, I'd support her the best I could anyway.
 - d. If I had serious concerns, I would feel it was my responsibility to express them. But I wouldn't try to stop her.
 - e. If I knew in my heart it was the wrong choice, I'd try my best to stop her.
 - f. If I knew in my heart it was the wrong choice, I'd do anything I had to to stop her.
 - g. _____

2. What about your own life? Answer each of the following questions to begin your own “reproductive life plan”:
 - a. Do I want to have children? _____
 - b. If so, why? What makes me want to have a child(ren)?

 - c. If not, am I the kind of person who will need to find other ways to nurture (take care of people or animals)?

 - d. What kind of parent do I think I would be? What are my strengths and possible weaknesses as a parent?

- e. If I do want children, how old would I like to be when my first is born? _____
How many would I like to have? _____
- f. Do I think I will get married? _____ If so, why? What makes me want to marry? If not, would I want any long-term relationships?
- g. If I had a child and I didn't live with the other parent (for whatever reason), would I still want to share parenting? _____ If not, would I want to be the one who did the parenting, or not? If we shared parenting, how do I imagine working it out?
3. If you were going to have a child, who would you choose to be the child's other parent? Suppose you got to interview people as potential parents of your future child. For each question below, how would the "right" person would answer it?
- a. Do you ever feel as if having children would interfere with your plans or your enjoyment of life?
- b. How much money do you earn? Would you want to work outside the home if we had a small child? If you would prefer to stay home, for how long? How would you feel about my working or staying home?
- c. Do you enjoy infants? What kinds of things have you done with infants? cuddled? fed a baby? talked to them? What else?
- d. Do you like spending time with toddlers and young children? What have you done with them? read aloud to them? answered their questions? played games? What else?

- e. Do you like spending time with older kids and teens? What have you done with them? gone places together? joked and talked with preteens? taught them a new skill? What else?

- f. What do you believe about religion, especially as far as kids are concerned?

- g. Do children get on your nerves? How do you deal with noise, mess, and chaos?

- h. How would you handle it, if you told a small child to do something and he or she did not obey right away?

- i. What do you think is your greatest strength as a potential parent? Your biggest possible weakness?



Family/Friend Homework Exercise "On Parenthood" CONFIRMATION SLIP

FOR FULL CREDIT, THIS EXERCISE IS DUE: _____

The student wrote his or her answers to this "Family/Friend Homework Exercise". We discussed them together.

Date: _____

_____ student's signature

_____ signature of family member or friend