

To hear from other teens, visit **STAYTEEN.ORG**.

To help incorporate eating better and getting physical exercise into your life, visit **GETUPANDDOSOMETHING.ORG**

To find health services near you, call The Delaware Helpline:
1-800-464-HELP toll-free or dial 2-1-1

for additional health tips, visit **KIDSHEALTH.ORG/TEEN**



DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
Division of Public Health
Center for Family Health Research and Epidemiology



UNIVERSITY OF
DELAWARE
College of
Health Sciences
SCHOOL OF NURSING

Planned Parenthood
of Delaware

By putting together this plan, I am taking charge of my future. Now nothing can stop me from making healthier choices and living the life I want!

Thanks to A. Noyes and M. DelDees for creating the Teen Plan Cover Concept.

KEEP OUT!!!

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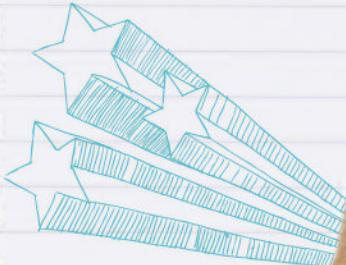
MY LIFE PLAN

MY LIFE.
MY PLAN.



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My teen years are a great time in my life—I have lots of fun things going on and a world of possibilities lie ahead of me! As I'm discovering what's in store and figuring out what kind of person I want to be, I know I'll be faced with plenty of choices. This booklet can help me make healthy decisions along the way.

My goal is to enjoy this exciting time. And take charge of my health so I can live the life I want.



What is a Life Plan?

And why should I care now?

Now's the time to start deciding what you want for your life, and that's where the life plan comes in. It'll help you take better care of yourself and set goals. And, most important, it'll help you understand how a pregnancy will affect your goals.

Being a parent could be years away for you. Be informed so you can take the best care possible of your health—and stay true to your dreams.

This guide will help you get started. That way, when the time comes, you'll be ready.

There are steps you can take to be in the best health.

Consider all of the following:

1

Decide what you want from life.

- Do you want to go to college?
- What career are you interested in?
- Do you want to be in a relationship?
- Do you want a family someday?



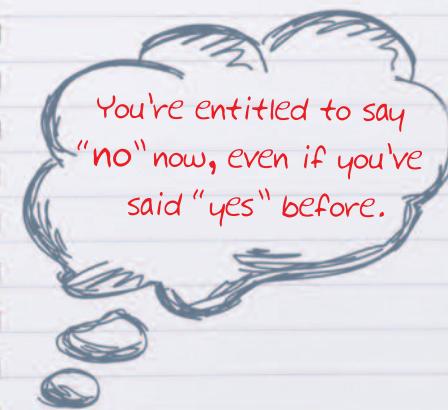
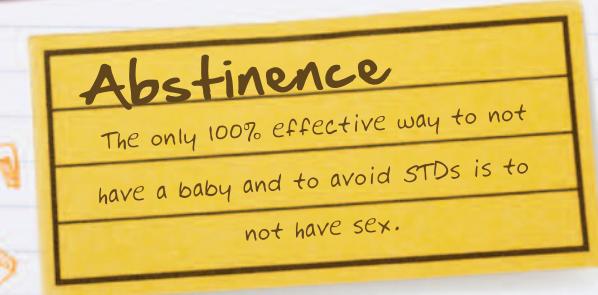
Abstinence

The only 100% effective way to not have a baby and to avoid STDs is to not have sex.

2

Develop healthy relationships.

- Be in touch with your feelings and know what makes you happy.
- It might seem like everybody's doing it, but they're not. It's perfectly OK not to have sex. And if your boyfriend or girlfriend pressures you or doesn't understand, you don't have to be with them.
- Are there people you can talk to when you're feeling sad or stressed? Don't be afraid to lean on a parent, relative or friend. And let them do the same.



8 in 10 girls
and 6 in 10 boys
say they wish they
had waited until
they were older
to have sex.



3 Make a Reproductive Life Plan.

- Do you think you want children someday? How many and when?
- Do you have a plan to prevent pregnancy?
- What's your strategy—abstinence or birth control? Discuss both with your health care provider (doctor, nurse, counselor) and your parents.
- Stick to your decision. Don't let anyone pressure you into doing something you're not comfortable with.

4 Live a healthy life.

- Eat a healthy diet.
- Exercise 3–5 times a week.
- Stay away from alcohol, smoking and illegal drugs.
- See a health care provider for regular checkups.

5 Be proactive.

- Make sure all of your shots are up-to-date.
- Get screened for chronic diseases and health conditions.
- Take care of health problems—don't ignore them.
- Wait until you're ready to have sex. Ask yourself, "Am I responsible and ready for a sexual relationship?"
- If you're sexually active, get tested for STDs and always insist on using protection. Be sure your partner is tested too.

6 Learn your family's health history.

- Find out what health problems, if any, exist in your family, and who has these problems. For example, you should be aware of diabetes, asthma, heart disease, depression and babies born prematurely or with birth defects.
- Discuss these health issues with your health care provider—they could affect you and the children you might have someday.



I will:

- Work hard in school and stay on track to receive my diploma.
- Start thinking about what kind of work or career makes me feel good about myself.
- Decide whether or not I want to go to college, and I will talk to my school counselor for guidance and information on the application process.
- Get help if I feel depressed, anxious or sad for long periods of time. (The Delaware Helpline is a free service that can help you. Call 1-800-464-HELP, dial 2-1-1 or ask your health care provider.)
- Get help if I feel hopeless or think about hurting myself.
- Get help if someone is physically or mentally abusing me. (The Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence offers a 24-hour domestic violence hotline. In Kent and Sussex Counties, call 302-422-8058. In New Castle County, call 302-762-6110. In Northern Kent County, call 302-678-3886.)

- Talk to my health care provider about birth control if I'm thinking about having sex.
- Take the time to really think about how a teen pregnancy could affect my life and my goals.
- Talk to my partner about practicing safe sex and getting tested for STDs.
- Start to eat better.
(mypyramid.gov offers great ideas for healthy eating.)
- Exercise more.
(getupanddosomething.org has tons of tips.)
- Stay away from alcohol, smoking and illegal drugs.
- Make and keep regular appointments with my health care provider and dentist.
- Ask my parents and family members about what types of health problems run in my family.
- Make a promise to myself to stay healthy because it will make me feel good about myself. It will also help me have the best chance of having a healthy baby when the time is right.

3 key goals
I want to focus on
+ notes

Based on the steps and checklist, I've thought about what's right for me and agree to make at least 3 life changes a priority right now. I will write them down here, because that's the first step to making them happen. I'll also be sure to take notes on any good info and advice I receive along the way.

1

2

3



The Reality of Teen Pregnancy

- Being a teen parent will force you to grow up fast. You have plenty of time to be a grown-up—why rush it?
- Think about it—being a teen parent is like babysitting all day, every day, and not getting paid.
- Parenthood is the main reason why most teen girls drop out of school.
- A baby won't solve relationship problems or make your partner stay with you. Most teen fathers don't marry the mother of their child.
- Graduation, college, parties, spring break, sleeping in... all the fun things you're looking forward to will have to be put on hold, maybe even forever.
- The majority of families begun by a young unmarried mother are poor.
- Babies are expensive. Costs can add up to \$10,000 in the first year alone. Without a degree or a job, how would you pay for that?

