



**IF I WERE JACK: AN
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE
ABOUT YOUNG MEN &
UNINTENDED PREGNANCY**

**INFORMATION FOR
PARENTS & CARERS**





INFORMATION FOR PARENTS & GUARDIANS

AN EDUCATIONAL
RESOURCE ABOUT YOUNG
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PREGNANCY

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PARENTS' & CARERS' INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

Most parents/carers express an interest in the resources that their teenagers are using to learn about relationships and sexuality, and research has shown that they play a key role in ensuring that teenagers make healthy decisions about relationships and sexuality. The *If I were Jack* interactive video drama (IVD) offers an excellent starting point for discussion about unintended teenage pregnancy and its consequences. The purpose of this document is to provide parents/carers with information about the resource and other pregnancy-related issues so that they can think about some of the issues raised in the IVD prior to a structured opportunity for discussing the film with their children (included in the resource as part of the students' homework).

OVERVIEW OF THE RESOURCE & ITS KEY MESSAGES

- Your child will be using an educational resource named *If I were Jack* during four- six lessons at school.
- The resource focuses on unintended pregnancy from the perspective of young men (but is also suitable for use by young women). The reason for the focus on young men is that they have been neglected in relation to pregnancy education even though they play an obvious role in the prevention of teenage pregnancy and research shows that they also influence young women's decisions regarding avoiding unintended pregnancy.
- The resource includes an interactive video drama (IVD) consisting of a short film which tells the story of a teenager, Jack, who has just found out that his girlfriend Emma is pregnant.
- The young person watches the film (ideally at a computer on their own) and as the story unfolds questions appear on the screen which they must answer before continuing. The resource encourages the young person to put themselves in Jack's shoes and to consider the impact that an unintended pregnancy might have on their own life.
- The IVD is accompanied by other classroom-based activities (such as group discussion, role play and individual worksheets), which encourage pupils to think about and plan to avoid unintended teenage pregnancy.
- One of the activities includes a homework exercise in which pupils are asked to encourage a parent/ carer (or other trusted adult such as a grandparent, aunt/uncle or older sibling) to watch the IVD and then answer a number of questions on issues raised in the film. The aim is to provide parents/carers and teenagers with an opportunity to communicate about relationships and pregnancy.
- The interview questions are outlined in the *If I Were Jack* Factsheet.
- The resource has a number of key messages:
 - o With the correct information and opportunity, young men and young women can make safe and responsible decisions relating to relationships, sex and pregnancy.
 - o Young men, as well as young women, have roles and responsibilities with respect to relationships, sex and pregnancy.
 - o Unintended teenage pregnancy can be a stressful experience for some people that may involve difficult decisions and potentially negative outcomes.
 - o It is important for young people to consider their personal values and beliefs regarding relationships, sex and pregnancy and to make a plan for positive experiences that are in line with these.
 - o Confidential and impartial support and information is available locally and online for young people in relation to all aspects of their sexual health.
- While the resource encourages discussion of the options that may be open to a young person if they experience an unintended pregnancy (i.e. keeping the baby, adoption and abortion) there is no suggestion that any of these options is optimal. Rather, the resource directs the young person to consider all of the options and their consequences, thereby encouraging reflection on how their decision might be affected by their own individual and familial values.

HOW CAN WE REDUCE TEENAGE PREGNANCY?

Is teenage pregnancy a problem in your area? What are some of the things we can do to prevent it? Listed below are some of the factors that research tells us can help to reduce teenage pregnancy:

- Encourage formal relationships and sexuality education in schools and other settings such as youth clubs or church groups;
- Spend time with our teenagers engaging in activities that help us build close relationships with them;
- Talk with teenagers frequently and openly about relationships and sexuality;
- Let teenagers know what our values and expectations are in relation to relationships and sexuality;
- Encourage teenagers to delay sex until at least the legal age of consent (16 in the UK);
- Ensure we provide adequate supervision for our teenagers;
- Ensure that we talk to our sons as well as our daughters about issues such as pregnancy;
- Limit our teenagers involvement in other risky behaviours such as alcohol and drugs and be cautious of allowing our daughters to have relationships with individuals who are older than them;
- Encourage investment in public facilities for teenagers that are not based around alcohol/drug use, such as sports and recreational facilities; and
- Practice what we preach – model healthy relationships and openness about sex and relationships.

HOW SHOULD WE GO ABOUT TALKING TO OUR CHILDREN ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS, SEX & PREGNANCY?

How might we bring up the subjects of sex, love and relationships? How can we deal with uncomfortable conversations with our teenagers about relationships and sexuality? The experts suggest that we should...

- Start early – beginning with age-appropriate conversations when children are young;
- Don't have one big 'talk' but frequent conversations so that relationships and sexuality are discussed in the same way as other topics;
- Use opportunities in everyday life to discuss sex and relationships e.g. after your teenager has watched *If I were Jack*, when something happens on the TV or to a neighbour or friend; your own experiences etc.;
- Ensure the conversation is a two-way dialogue and not a lecture; and
- Think about your values and expectations and let your teenager know why you think the way you do.

USING THE 'IF I WERE JACK...' RESOURCE TO HELP DISCUSS PREGNANCY WITH YOUR TEENAGER

The If I Were Jack resource provides an excellent opportunity for you to talk to your teenager about relationships, sexuality and pregnancy.

- Tell your teenager what you think about Jack and Emma's situation and why you think what you do.
- Tell them what you would do if you were Jack or Emma's parent. Tell them what advice you would give them and why.
- Ask your teenager how they would feel if they were Jack or Emma. Do they think having a baby would make a big difference in their life? What do they think would be the hardest thing about having a baby? Have they thought about the social, emotional and financial consequences it might have?
- Ask them what they think they would do if they were in that situation. What would they do next?
- Ask them if they have a plan to avoid an unintended pregnancy. Ask them to specify their plan or help them to make one.

For more information visit: www.qub.ac.uk/if-i-were-jack/resources/parents



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