

Relationships are complicated. It's important to be honest and realistic about your hopes, fears and expectations of your partner. Relationships become more complicated with pregnancy and/or children, so honesty is of the utmost importance. If you're nervous that a baby, abortion or adoption could harm your relationship, how does that influence your choice? Are you free to talk openly with your partner? Do they have your best interests in mind? Do your feelings about your pregnancy change if you and your partner were to split up? If you suspect that he was trying to get you pregnant to make you "stay," what will happen once a child is involved? Is it possible you want to have a baby to keep your relationship going?

Marriage. If you feel that marriage is essential to having a child, how would a breakup or divorce impact your decision? What if your partner was not interested in marriage at this time—or ever?

If you're not in a steady relationship, there are still 2 people involved. If you refrain from telling the other person, but will still be in contact with him, when/how will you share that information later? If you terminate the pregnancy or opt for adoption, how might the other person feel about not being involved in your choice?

Talking with your partner. Whether you're in a committed relationship or not, you should still talk with your partner. Use this brochure for guidance: you can each write your own responses to the exercises and questions, and share your responses. Don't gloss over the uncomfortable stuff. Discuss your financial and emotional expectations of one another. List some positive and negative aspects of your relationship, and talk openly about each item you've noted. Why are you together (or not)? Where do you see yourselves in a year or two with or without a child? If you're in a committed relationship, ask each other the question, "if we broke up, would we respect one another and act civilly for the sake of our child?" It may not be the most romantic conversation you'll ever have, but if you're unwilling to be honest now, consider what that implies about being up front with one another later.

We'd like to thank our pro-choice colleagues for their assistance in making this brochure. Much of the information here is available in more detail in the "Pregnancy Options Workbook," at www.pregnancyoptions.info.



Summit Medical Centers are state-licensed facilities and are handicapped accessible. We adhere to the highest standards of medical care for all our patients. Free on-site parking is available.

www.summitcenters.com

LOCATIONS

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I'm Pregnant... Now What?

If you have just found out that you are pregnant, you may be happy, shocked or angry—all of which is understandable. It's important to know that you have choices regarding your pregnancy, and that only *you* can make the best decision for yourself. The sooner you decide, the sooner you can responsibly move forward. If you opt to continue the pregnancy, you'll want to seek out prenatal services as soon as possible. If you opt for abortion, doing so earlier rather than later is safer and less expensive, and more preferable for your physical and emotional health.

At Summit Medical Centers we know that an unintended pregnancy can be shocking and overwhelming. Use this guide to begin sorting through your feelings or concerns. We welcome you to take advantage of our pregnancy options counseling services free of charge—and free of judgment or pressure. Our goal is to help *you* make the best choice *for you*.

First things first:

Take some uninterrupted space and time to think (no TV, no kids, no cell phones, etc). Even if you're overworked and busy, you owe it to yourself to think through this decision thoroughly.

Work your way towards answering these two questions: 1) Is this an ideal time to bring a child into the world through my body? 2) Am I genuinely prepared to raise a child in a responsible, nurturing and loving way?

The answers may not be as simple as "yes" or "no," so allow yourself to take your time. Without imposing notions of "right" and "wrong," be honest with yourself. What is best for you *right now*? What are you prepared to handle today? Sit with the answers before moving on to the next set of considerations.

Though you'll want to arrive at a "rational" conclusion, don't undermine your intuition. Take some time to dig beneath the surface. What does your gut tell you? Does it overwhelm you to think about balancing a child with work, school and finances—yet deep down, you don't feel that abortion or adoption are good choices for you? Or perhaps, though you may have familial, partner or financial support, something inside questions whether you can successfully nurture or raise a child right now? If so, you may want to consider abortion or adoption alternatives.

I get it, it's my choice. But how do I decide?

Regardless of how alone you may feel, Summit's compassionate counseling staff will meet with you free of charge—and free of judgment or pressure—at anytime. Whether you choose to parent, have an abortion, or seek adoption alternatives, we can help.

Start by saying it. If you've felt "shocked" since the news of your pregnancy, start by writing or saying your story out loud, alone or with someone you trust. This will help ground you and provide a foundation upon which to explore your options.



Who do you trust? Talking to someone you trust may not be the same as the first person who comes to mind. Is there a friend, family member, teacher or counselor who will respect your privacy and listen without judgment? Who will offer support and actively listen without offering unsolicited advice?

Understanding your emotions. List 5 feelings you have about your pregnancy without worrying about "right" or "wrong." Then write a few sentences about each feeling. For example: I feel "sad" because "I feel very alone." State whether anything else is contributing to that feeling. Have you felt this before? When? Tomorrow, repeat the exercise with 3-5 new feelings to explore.

Looking ahead. Write a paragraph about what your life would look like in 1 year with a child, and another about what life would look like in 1 year without a child. Repeat the exercise, considering your life 5 years from now.

Learning from the past. Review your emotional history over the last 3-5 years. List times you were extremely happy and optimistic, as well as times you were sad, lonely or depressed. What prompted longer bouts of happiness, joy, heartache or depression? How have you dealt with losing a job or loved ones? Breakups or illness? What lessons of strength or patience can you draw on to help you now? What might your past suggest about your ability to emotionally handle parenting, abortion or adoption alternatives?

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Having a child is a lifetime commitment. Whether your child is an infant, toddler, adolescent or teenager, parenting is a 24-hour/day job. Are you willing to sacrifice your free time, needs, wants and privacy for your child, and can you do this without resentment and anger? Are you patient? Do you enjoy children? How do you deal with anger and frustration? If you've been lonely at all during the last several months/years, are you considering having a baby to help you feel needed, or as a cure to loneliness or sadness?

Individual or "single" parenting. The job of a single parent can be daunting. All emotional, spiritual, financial and physical care responsibilities are up to you. Can you easily ask for help when you need it? At some point, all single parents will have to ask for help, whether financially, with child care or other concerns.

Spirituality and religion. Your relationship to your God or higher power is very personal. Are your religious or spiritual beliefs complicating your decision? Many of us feel a deep longing or heartache when we stray from our spiritual beliefs. Sit still and listen to your most intuitive self. What does *your God* say? What does your heart tell you? Discover your own truth and honor it.

Beliefs, values and unconditional love. What type of beliefs and values do you have? Will you support and love your children no matter who they become, even if their beliefs, religion or politics differ from yours? How will you feel if your child's sex/gender is different than what you had hoped for? Can you offer unconditional love and acceptance for a child who chooses a partner of another race, religion, sex or gender?

Telling your parents. If you're a teen or young woman, talking to your parents may be difficult. Even if you think you may disappoint them, talking to them may help you feel safer and more confident about your next steps. If the hardest part is getting the words out, write them a letter and then read it to them. If you fear that a parent may become violent, or physically or emotionally abusive, speak to someone you trust first for help and guidance.