Where are you going in life?

It's your choice!

You make choices every day. Some are easy and others can affect you for the rest of your life. If you are having sex or thinking about becoming sexually active, there is a lot to think about.

Remember, half of all pregnancies are surprises.

You hold the map to your future. Which road will you take?

Many women want to become a mother when they are ready. Making sure you are ready is the hard part. You have to think about what is important to you now and where you want to be years from now. Becoming sexually active and having a baby are big decisions that change the direction of your life.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU NOW?

- ❑ Boys/having a boyfriend
- ❑ Spending time with friends
- ❑ Clothes/fashion
- ❑ "Freedom"
- ❑ Finishing high school
- ❑ Going to college
- ❑ Having money
- ❑ Being healthy
- ❑ Having sex
- ❑ Looking good
- ❑ Being in love
- ❑ Getting married
- ❑ Family
- ❑ Going to parties
- ❑ Choosing a career
- ❑ Working
- ❑ Being a mom

Many of these things would be a lot harder or impossible if you had a baby now.

HOW WOULD YOU FEEL IF YOU FOUND OUT YOU WERE PREGNANT TODAY?

- ❑ Shocked
- ❑ Happy
- ❑ Scared
- ❑ Angry
- ❑ Excited
- ❑ Confused
- ❑ Stressed
- ❑ Depressed
- ❑ Loved

WHO WOULD YOU TURN TO?

Even when you are a strong and independent young woman, it is so important to have family and friends to count on for extra support. Who do you turn to when things get too tough for you to handle alone?

- ❑ My family
- ❑ My friends
- ❑ Boyfriend
- ❑ Teachers or counselors
- ❑ Pastor or other trusted adult
- ❑ Rely on myself
- ❑ I don't have anyone to turn to

Having a baby requires a lot of support. Many women end up raising children on their own. If you were pregnant, would your baby's father stay with you and support the baby?

Are you Ready to be a Mother?

THE TRUTH IS . . .

If you are having sex, you can get pregnant. You can also get a disease passed on by having sex, like life-threatening HIV and AIDS. Are you using protection to keep from getting pregnant and to protect yourself from getting a sexually transmitted disease (STD)? Every time? No matter what your partner says? If not, take action to protect yourself.

A MOTHER'S JOB IS NEVER DONE

Babies are cute, but they need a lot of care. They need to be fed, diapered, comforted, played with, nurtured and dressed. Taking care of a baby is a lot of work, all the time, 24/7. Being a mother means waking up in the middle of the night to feed, change and meet the baby's needs.

It takes money to buy the things a baby needs. That means money you have to earn and cannot spend on yourself. Think about it:

- ❑ Cost of child care or cost of car payment
- ❑ Pack of diapers or a new sweater for you
- ❑ New shoes for the baby or cute new shoes for you
- ❑ Food for the baby or Friday night pizza with friends
- ❑ Home alone with a sick baby or watching movies with friends?

Spending time with friends is really important. Motherhood can change that. Would your friends want to hang around you and your baby instead of going out on a Friday night?

Pregnancy and raising children can be full of challenges. There are often unexpected complications and expenses including premature birth, sick babies and sometimes babies born with special needs. It takes a lot of maturity to handle these difficult issues.

Ready?

IF YOU THINK YOU ARE READY TO GET PREGNANT NOW, prepare yourself. Make an appointment with a doctor and begin taking a multivitamin with folic acid everyday to prevent birth defects. Are you ready?

If you need to talk to someone about these decisions or about planning a pregnancy, call 1-800-FOR-BABY. Trained health specialists can help answer your questions and tell you about other available resources.

ARE YOU READY TO GET PREGNANT?

Are you ready to pay your own bills, pay for child care, afford health care and support the baby?

Do you have your diploma, a good job, a place to stay and the emotional support you need to raise a baby?

When you make good choices and are ready, having a baby can be wonderful. But if you are too young, alone or not ready, it can be really hard. Having a baby might seem like fun, but it will change your life and is a lifetime commitment. Think about it.

When do you think would be a good time for you to have a baby?

WHO ARE YOU?

Do you feel like you are expected to look or act a certain way because of what you see in magazines, TV, movies or the Internet? Even songs on the radio suggest to you how you should feel.

Everybody wants to feel good about themselves, but the messages you get can be confusing. When you wake up in the morning, how do you feel about yourself?

Life is a journey ...
the road you take is up to you!

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON YOUR HEALTH, RAISING CHILDREN AND MOTHERHOOD CALL

NC FAMILY HEALTH RESOURCE LINE

Calls are toll-free and confidential

1-800-367-2229

TTY for the hearing impaired 1-800-976-1922

NCPH

NORTH CAROLINA Healthy Start FOUNDATION

www.NCHealthyStart.org

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Are you Ready?

Life is a journey ... *where are you going?*

FIRST STEP