


## 2. Will the Real Mother Please Stand Up?

### At a Glance...

When a teenager becomes a parent, her relationship with her own family members changes. If she lives with her parents or the father's parents, there may be conflict between the parents and the grandparents over how to raise the baby. This conflict may result in the grandmother becoming the main caregiver for the baby. It may result in the teen and her child being asked to leave the family home. If the teen parent lives with the baby's grandparents, she will need to learn new ways of dealing with family members to reduce conflicts and provide a safe and peaceful home for her baby.

**Time**   
 Approximately 1 hour

### Core Concepts

- A teen mother may face conflict between being a child to her parents and being a mother to her child.
- It is hard for grandparents to see their children trying to raise a baby when they are still teens.

- Sometimes grandparents take over the job because of concern for their children or grandchildren.
- Learning how to become a mother to her own child while being respectful of her family members is an important skill for teen mothers to develop.

### Objectives

- Participants will identify conflicts or problems they have with family members about raising their children.
- Through role plays, participants will try to see things from other family members' points of view.
- Participants will practice respectful and effective ways to communicate with family members about conflicts that come up how they are raising their children.

### Materials

- ' Flip chart or board and markers
- ' Paper and pencils
- ' "Who Does What?" questionnaire (G-2-a)
- ' "Parent-to-Parent Role Plays" (G-2-b)
- ' Parent-to-Parent Role Play Discussion (G-2-c)

## Ice Breaker



Have each participant to finish the statement, “The best thing about being a parent is . . .” Then have each participant finish the statement, “The worst or hardest thing about being a parent is . . .”

## Facilitator's Script



Today's lesson is called “Will the Real Mother Please Stand Up?” It is taken from an old TV game show called “To Tell the Truth.” On the show, three contestants would all pretend to be the same person. Panel members would ask questions of the contestants to try to decide which one of the contestants was telling the truth. After the panel members had voted on the person they thought was telling the truth, the game show host would say “Will the real \_\_\_\_\_ please stand up?” Sometimes the panel members got it right. Sometimes no one figured out who was telling the truth. The more panel members the contestants fooled, the more money they won.

Sometimes being a teenaged mother and living with other family members can be a little like that game show. It may be hard to tell who is the mother to the baby. The teenager who gave birth to the baby usually wants to take care of him or her, but the grandparents or older sisters and brothers may try to take over raising the baby. They may continue to treat the teen parent as a child. It is hard for a teen mother be the parent she wants to be and still keep peace with other family members.

Let's look at some of the issues you may face as a teen parent when dealing with family members, especially your baby's grandparents.

Give class members the “Who Does What?” (G-2-a) quiz and ask them to circle the answer for each question that most closely matches what is true for them.

After everyone has completed the quiz, lead the group in a discussion of their answers. Ask them to think about what this says about who is being a parent to their baby. As the group talks, make sure the information that follows is covered in the discussion. It may be best for the baby to have several persons who play the role of parent as long as they are consistent in their rules and expectations for the child, and everyone knows and agrees about what roles they play.

- **Mostly “A” answers** - If you circled the A answer for most questions, you are a very responsible parent. However, you are likely to get very stressed because of too much responsibility. Stress can make you get angry easily and can make it hard for you to think clearly at times. You may not be the best mother you can be to your child because you are not asking for the help you need.
- **Mostly “B” answers** - If you circled the B answer for most of the questions, you are being a responsible parent, but you are willing to have help when you need it. Every mother, regardless of her age, needs some help with taking care of her child. It is good to ask others for help sometimes. This will allow you to do something fun or to rest so you can be less stressed when you are taking care of your baby.
- **Mostly “C” answers** - Your baby has a very involved father. In most cases, fathers should be involved in their children’s lives. Even if the father is not living with you and the baby, he needs to have the chance to do some of the day-to-day care of the child. This includes such things as changing diapers, putting the baby to bed, feeding and bathing the baby, and playing with the baby. He also needs to help with other chores such as shopping or laundry. Fathers are much more likely to be involved with their children when mothers (and grandparents) encourage them and support what they do. Taking care of the baby helps to create a bond between the baby and the father.
- **Mostly “D” answers** - If your mother or other family members provide most of your baby’s care, you may be taking your family members for granted. Just because they are convenient and love the baby does not mean that family members should be made into substitute parents. Sometimes parents take over the job even when you don’t want them to. It may be hard to prove to them that you are a responsible parent, especially if you don’t agree with each other about how to take care of your child. It will take lots of work and talking honestly to prove to other family members that you take your job as parent seriously. When you do need help from family members, offer to do something for them in return. That will help them to see that you are not taking them for granted.
- **Mostly “E” answers** - Most teen parents do not have the money to hire someone else to provide care for their child. If you do hire someone else to take care of your child, it is important that you choose someone you can trust who knows a lot about children and how to take care of their needs.

What are some problems that you have with your parents, the baby’s father’s parents, or other family members regarding taking care of your baby?

As participants respond, list the issues on a flip chart or chalk board. Tell the group we are going to role play some problems that may come up between teen parents and their own family members. You may choose to use some of the issues they have identified on the flip chart, or you may use the handout G-2-b, *Parent-to-Parent Role Plays*, that are provided with this lesson. To do the role plays follow these steps:

- Have class members pair up.
- One person will play the role of the teen parent and the other person will play the role of the family member with whom there is a conflict.
- Have team members identify the problem(s) based on the roles they are playing.
- Give each team time to practice the role play.
- Have each pair to act in front of the class how the teen parent might talk with the family member(s) about the problem and how the family member might respond. Be realistic.
- If time permits, have each pair reverse roles and do another role play.

After each role play, ask the following questions:

- How did you feel when you were playing your role?
- Why do you think a person in that role might have those feelings?
  
- What were the issues or problems in the role you played?
- What could be done to help the situation?
- Can you think of other ways teen parents might be able to talk with their parents or other family members to make things better?

**Facilitator Note:**

If you have only one or two participants, you will need to do the role plays with them. If your class has both parents of teens and teen parents, be sure that the teens get to play another family member and the parents of teens get to play teen parents at least once.

The *Parent-to-Parent Role Play Discussion Guide* (G-2-c) is provided to give you some ideas about how to discuss each situation. You can have participants identify the issues and discuss how each situation might be handled. Allow class members to share their thoughts before you bring out any points from the discussion guide.

“I” messages are a good way to communicate when you have a conflict with someone. When you use “I” messages, the other person is less likely to become angry. This makes it easier to find solutions to your problems without arguing. Remember the formula for an “I” message.

Write the formula for an “I” message on the board or flip chart.  
I feel (insert feeling word) when (describe the problem).  
I would like (tell what you would like to happen instead).  
Look back at some of the role plays you did earlier. Allow class members to make up some “I” messages the teen mother can use with her mother or other family member for those situations. For information on how to use “I” messages and a handout of the “I” message formula (item 3e), see the lesson *Using “I” Messages* (page 45) from the Kid Smart curriculum. Also, check the lesson *Getting Connected With Your Child’s School* (page B-25) for more

### **Homework**

Have participants ask their mothers, other family members, or other adults involved in their lives the same questions you asked of them at the beginning of class:

- What is the best thing about being a parent?
- What is the hardest thing about being a parent?

This may give teen parents a chance to talk with family members about the joys and problems of being a parent. It may begin to help them relate to each other on a more equal level. If participants are willing, at the next class session ask them to share what happened when they talked with family members about these questions.

**Notes** 