she's pregnant. now what?

by Holly M. Duncan, M.Ed., LPC

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She's pregnant. You're shocked.

When your daughter breaks the news to you, try not to overreact! Your initial response will have a significant impact on your future relationship with your daughter. If you have already blown it, it is not too late to show her that you care.

Yes, it is normal to feel shocked and disappointed. But remember that she, too, is facing an overwhelming situation. Put yourself in her shoes and try to understand her fears.

Bottom line. Remain calm. Don't burn bridges by saying something today that you might regret tomorrow. More than likely, your family is facing a future none of you had planned. However, that does not mean your world is coming to an end. Though it's hard to imagine right this minute, good can come from this. Live one moment at a time.

She can't read your mind.

Your daughter needs to hear you say:

- "I'll always love you. No matter what."
- "We're here for you and will help you in whatever way we can."
- "It's not what we planned, but it will be okay."
- "We will get through this together."

You may be tempted to say, "Whatever you choose, we'll support you." But this could make your daughter feel that she has to chart her course alone. Sharing wisdom gained through your life experiences can be a valuable component in your daughter's decision-making process.

She needs you now more than ever.

- Reassure her of your unconditional love and concern.
- Affirm your confidence in her.
- Avoid blaming or having a condemning attitude.
- Help your daughter make a pros/cons list of her options.
- Trust God wholeheartedly.

You can be her advocate.

- Create a non-threatening atmosphere.
- Listen as she talks about her feelings and plans.
- Encourage her to make rational, thoughtful decisions.
- Respect her feelings about the baby's father.
- Understand her need for time and privacy.

Support your daughter by offering to tell close family members about her pregnancy. They may have suggestions you did not think of, and they might offer additional love, support and resources. Siblings may offer your daughter unique sympathy because they are closer in age.

As others hear the news, you will receive varied reactions and opinions. However, you are not obligated to act on every suggestion made by others. Concentrate on your family's future and well-being. Many parents would say that while the timing of their daughter's pregnancy was not what they had wished, they found great comfort in knowing that they

helped her plan a safe and secure future for her child—their grandchild. Work together to support one another and create a plan that will strengthen your relationship.

Even though your lives have been catapulted into unknown territory, remember that God is big enough to handle your fears, doubts and questions. Pain can be a catalyst for personal growth. Rest in the fact that His love is everlasting and unconditional.

Although this news may come as a surprise, be encouraged—many families have successfully navigated these turbulent waters and come out stronger on the other side.

You can get through this.

Face it together.

Many people will offer advice, but it's important to seek the wisdom and counsel of those who understand the unique dynamics of an unplanned pregnancy. Contact your local pregnancy medical clinic or pregnancy resource center for confidential and compassionate care.

What you are going through is not easy. There are no simple answers. Face this situation together. Talk with each other openly and honestly, but also respect each other's need for time and space. A family crisis has the ability to drive family members apart or draw them together.

It's not easy—
but it's possible.

If you need further guidance and encouragement, Focus on the Family has a staff of licensed, professional Christian counselors available to talk with you at no charge.

Just call 800-A-FAMILY (232-6459)

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