

Birth of My Family

A Young Mothers Story

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Pregnancy was the last thing on my mind. I denied all the clear signs. I was sick a lot but told myself it was just a bug that was going around. I convinced myself that overeating had caused me to gain seven pounds in five weeks. My older sister Maria and I shared a bedroom and bathroom. She blew me away one day when she asked if I was pregnant. I denied it at first, but later that day asked her not to tell anyone. She bought a pregnancy test and left it on the dresser. I took it. No surprise, it came out positive. Still, I didn't comprehend being pregnant. I knew who the father was. My boyfriend. I told him. He reacted just like you would expect a seventeen-year-old boy to react. We were both just clueless juniors in high school.

I was scared. My mom didn't know, my boyfriend started acting weird, and my changing body was difficult to disguise. Each day I felt more alone than the day before. I knew I needed help but was afraid and embarrassed to ask. On the way to the mall after school with a girlfriend, I saw a place I'd never noticed before, a pregnancy resource center. It was next door to a dentist's office. I remember thinking, "If my tooth hurt I would go to that dentist. I'm pregnant . . . why not go to that pregnancy resource center?" After shopping, I confided in my girlfriend that I was pregnant. She told me she already knew. That afternoon we decided to check out the pregnancy resource center.

At the pregnancy center, I learned I was further along than I thought. A few weeks later, while sitting in an algebra class, I felt my baby fluttering in my belly. It was the first time I felt a connection with the child. The baby moving inside me took some getting used to, but I quickly began to like the feeling. My body really looked pregnant now, and my boyfriend was acting like he couldn't handle this anymore. We each felt very different about the pregnancy. In his mind, it seemed like I was the only one who was pregnant. I was committed to parenting my child regardless. He didn't share my commitment. The long-term prospects of our relationship were not good. I wish he could have felt what I felt when the baby moved inside of me.

On a hot summer morning, my mom and I were putting away groceries when I realized I was standing in a puddle of water. She knew right away. That evening I was nursing my newborn son, Gabriel. My boyfriend was there. He seemed to switch between two personalities. One that adored his son Gabriel and another who wanted to run as far away as he could. We were not getting along, but I tried to remember that he was Gabriel's father.

My counselor at the pregnancy resource center also came to the hospital that night to visit with us. Everyone at the center had been so helpful. I don't know how I could have done this without them. My counselor had encouraged my boyfriend and I to attend a group hosted by the center. It was called Birth of a Family. I liked the idea but my boyfriend would never commit. The whole time I was pregnant he just acted like he wanted totally out of the situation. There, in the hospital on the night Gabriel was born, just before she left, my counselor suggested joining their Birth of a Family group again. The room got quiet except for hospital noises.

After my counselor left the room, my boyfriend and I had the first serious conversation ever about the future. We were just two kids that were supposed to begin our senior year of high school in two weeks. This wasn't what we thought life would be like. We talked about how unprepared we were. Then it occurred to us that we were asking the wrong questions for the wrong reasons. Gabriel was there in our arms, right now. He wasn't just going to wait around for us while we got it together. He was going to grow up regardless. Until that moment, we had never considered anything but our own selfish agendas. We decided to give Birth of a Family a try.

Three weeks later my boyfriend, our son, Gabriel, and I went to our first Birth of a Family group meeting at the pregnancy resource center. There were two other couples, three single moms and several older couples there. My boyfriend was pretty uncomfortable that first night. I was surprised he actually showed up.

We were hooked on Birth of a Family the very first time we went. It was like they knew us. My boyfriend and I both grew up without our fathers in our homes. Our moms were great, but we had never experienced a family where fathers, mothers, and children lived together in one home. No wonder we had struggled so much with the idea of being a family.

Even though he was still a little nervous, I could see my boyfriend beginning to change. By our third meeting with the Birth of a Family group I hardly recognized the lost boy I had begged to go with me. The lights just kept coming on.

One of the older couples in the Birth of a Family group took a special interest in us. We later learned they were trained Family Coaches who attended just to encourage and support other people like my boyfriend and me. They had been married for longer than we had been alive. They had problems and challenges, but they worked it out. They told us how unprepared they felt, just like us. My boyfriend and I wondered how they managed to stay together so long. Both of our fathers left our families. It was the first time we had ever gotten an inside look at a family that stayed together.

Everyone usually hung around for a while after Birth of a Family meetings ended. After our sixth time with the group I turned to hand my son, Gabriel, to our Family Coaches. When I turned back toward my boyfriend he was kneeling near me, reaching for my hand. Even though I knew exactly what was happening I could not believe it. I could hardly see my boyfriend through the tears in my eyes. He asked me to marry him and committed to becoming the best husband and father he could be. In just a few weeks, he had transformed into just the kind of man I wanted my husband and the father of my children to be. He wasn't perfect. He was just willing to commit to a lifelong relationship with his wife and children and to do all he could do to care for his family, no matter what we faced.

We finished high school that year and completed all the Birth of a Family meetings. Our friends from Birth of a Family and our families helped us arrange the best wedding ever. We've been married for two years, Gabriel has a little sister named Lois and their daddy is home with us. Our Family Coaches stay in touch with us. We still need a lot of advice. I never imagined I would be able to say this, but we can do this. We can have a family that stays together.