

# POWER TO DECIDE

## TLC's "Unexpected" -- Season 4 Discussion Guide

### About the show:

[Unexpected Season 4](#) follows young couples and their families as they navigate pregnancy and parenthood. Plus, this season Jenna and Aden, Myrka and Ethan, Tyra and Alex, Lily and Lawrence, and all their parents have to deal with the added stresses of pregnancy, birth, and young parenthood during the pandemic. Unexpected is a journey of love and concern, fear and hope. We'll see all the ups and downs. From baby showers and gender reveals to attending doctor's appointments alone, every step of the way will continue to define each family's evolution.

Get more information about the show at [tlc.com/tv-shows/unexpected/](https://tlc.com/tv-shows/unexpected/).

### About this guide:

Power to Decide created this discussion guide in collaboration with TLC to help open lines of communication between young people and their parents, mentors, and champions. Check out our partnership resource page: [powertodecide.org/unexpected](https://powertodecide.org/unexpected).

Watch Unexpected with the young people in your lives together or separately and then sit down to talk through these discussion questions.

**Talking is power.** You can help the young people in your life have the power to decide if, when, and under what circumstances to get pregnant and have a child. Having the power to decide increases young people's opportunities to be mentally and physically healthy, to complete their education, and to pursue the future they want.

- ✓ Download this Discussion Guide in a PDF.
- ✓ Find more information and helpful links at [powertodecide.org/unexpected](https://powertodecide.org/unexpected) and [TLCme.com/familyresources](https://TLCme.com/familyresources).
- ✓ Join the conversation on social media and make sure to tag @TLC and @Power to Decide. Plus don't forget to use the hashtags #Unexpected and #TalkingIsPower.
- ✓ **Watch full episodes on the Discovery+ app or visit [TLC.com/Unexpected](https://TLC.com/Unexpected).**

### Discussion Questions:

#### Pregnancy and the Power to Decide Your Future:

- None of the young parents in Unexpected planned to get pregnant. In fact, 9 in 10 teens say they are not ready for a pregnancy right now.
  - What steps should you take if you're not ready for pregnancy and parenthood? How might these change over time?
  - How do you think a pregnancy would affect your life right now? How would your daily routines change? How would your relationships change?

- Some of the teens' parents in the show feel that no matter what they said or didn't say, their children were going to have sex.
  - Why do you think they feel this way?
  - What do you think teens need most from their parents and the adults in their lives when it comes to making decisions about sex?
- Do young men and young women get different messages from parents and society about sex? Pregnancy? Birth control? Parenthood?
- Jenna and Myrka have huge arguments with their moms about how parenthood at such a young age will change their lives. Myrka's relationship with her mom is at the breaking point. Lily and Myrka build strong bonds with their partners' parents.
  - What advice would you give to the moms of the teens in Unexpected?
  - Do you think that being a grandparent change these moms' relationships with their kids?

**Takeaway:** All young people should have the power to decide if, when, and under what circumstances to get pregnant and have a child. This includes the power to say no to sex, even if they've said yes before. If you're not ready for a pregnancy right now, you can decide not to have sex at all; or make the choice to use contraception carefully and correctly—every single time. The best time to figure out how you'll handle a sexual situation is before you're in it.

### **Relationships:**

- Lily is having her second child and has learned a lot about parenting and the decisions she needs to make for her children.
  - What do you think might be easier for her? What might be harder?
  - How does having Lawrence involved change things for Lily?
- When you have a child together, even if your relationship doesn't last, you are still connected for life--like Lily and James.
  - Which relationships in the show do you think are the most supportive? Why?
  - What do you think makes a relationship healthy?
- The young moms in Unexpected talk about feeling lonely and losing friendships. Tyra wants to experience college like her peers who aren't parents and takes a trip with her cheerleading team--without Alex.
  - If one of your friends or relatives became a teen parent, what would you do to support them?
  - Does watching Unexpected change the way you think about teen parenthood? How?
- If you could give relationship advice to one of the young couples this season, what would you say?
- What qualities are "must-haves" to make a relationship strong and healthy? How do you build good communication in a relationship?

**Takeaway:** Young parents need all the support they can get for themselves, their babies, and their futures—including access to the right birth control methods to help them plan and space future pregnancies.

## The Power of Parents, Mentors, and Champions:

- A “champion” doesn’t have to be a parent. They can be a mentor, teacher, aunt, uncle, or other trusted adult who has open, helpful conversations about sex, love, and relationships. Myrka relies on Ethan’s parents because she can’t go to her own mom.
  - What advice would you give to a teen who is sexually active but afraid to talk to their parents or guardians?
- Do you have adults in your life (aside from parents) whom you consider to be your “champions”? Who are they and why?
- What can parents and champions do to be more “askable”?
- Teens say that parents and champions are most influential on their decisions about sex; but adults don’t realize how powerful they are. Why do you think that is?
- Michelle, Ethan’s mom, worries that Ethan and Myrka think they’re ready for parenthood but they don’t realize the huge stress and responsibilities ahead.
  - What can parents and champions do to prepare their teens for adult responsibilities?

**Takeaway:** Talking is power. Communication and trust are the keys to a successful relationship at any age. Conversations about sex, relationships, pregnancy, and birth control can be awkward, but they are always worthwhile, and can be life-changing. Don’t wait for the young person in your life to come to you. If they have questions about sex, don’t assume they’re already doing it. There’s no such thing as “THE Talk.” Instead think of it as an 18+ year conversation that changes as young people and relationships change. Help the teens in your life make a plan and talk through the ways that they will stick to that plan in the heat of the moment.

## Covid-19 and Reproductive Well-Being:

When Season 4 of *Unexpected* was being filmed, the pandemic was in full swing. Every family’s experience has been affected—from giving birth without families present to cancelled birthing classes to interrupted plans. Here are some helpful resources about protecting reproductive health and well-being during the pandemic:

- [How You Can Access Telehealth Today](#)
- [Find a Clinic Near You](#)
- [Coronavirus is Giving Us Even More Reasons to Love Our Birth Control](#)

## Facts About Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy

- The US has seen a 67% decline in the teen birth rate since 1991, including dramatic declines in all 50 states and among all racial/ethnic groups.
- Progress is not victory: roughly 1 in 4 girls in the US gets pregnant by age 20.
- The vast majority of teen pregnancies are described by teens themselves as unplanned.
- Young people who have sex without protection on a regular basis have an 85% chance of pregnancy within a year.
- Daughters of teen mothers are more than 3 times as likely to become teen moms themselves.
- 30% of teen girls who drop out of school cite pregnancy or parenthood as a reason, and less than 2% of young teen mothers get a college degree by age 30.
- Ensuring that all teens have quality information and access to birth control is one of the best strategies to boost the graduation rate.

### **Why Talking Is Power:**

- 9 in 10 young people say it would be much easier to avoid sex and postpone pregnancy if they were able to have more open, honest conversations with their parents about these topics.
- More than 6 in 10 young people have learned something useful about sex, love, or relationships from popular media such as TV shows or movies.
- 9 in 10 adults think that young people should have a trusted adult or network to provide them with information and guidance on topics like sex, love, relationships, or birth control.
- Talking openly with teens about birth control encourages young people to be safer when they are ready to have sex (it doesn't encourage them to start having sex).

### **Important Links**

- [#TalkingIs Power: resources to have open, honest conversations. Start early, talk often.](#)
- [By and for Teens: The Talk Everyone Should Have With their Partner](#)
- [From a Sex Educator: 5 Ways Parents Can Discuss Sex, Love and Relationships](#)
- [Birth control from the boyfriend's perspective](#)
- [How to be an "askable" parent](#)
- [What to do if birth control fails](#)