

Pregnancy Advisory Centre:

Unplanned pregnancy

A Guide for decision making:

To find out that you are pregnant when you have not planned for it can leave you feeling confused and unsure of what to do next. You may experience a variety of emotions and feelings including: shock, denial, anxiety, fear, ambivalence, happiness, excitement, anger or depression. It is important to explore your emotions and feelings as these are likely to assist you in your decision making regarding your pregnancy. It is important that you also seek non-judgemental, objective, and accurate information about the options you are considering. It may also be helpful for you to obtain emotional support during this time, (possibly a trusted friend or family member) to discuss, explore and reflect on your options and decision. Prior to involving someone else in your decision it might be useful to consider what impact their point of view may have on you. If the person you choose to speak to has fixed ideas about what is right or wrong when considering pregnancy options then their input may create additional stress for you, therefore contacting a neutral counsellor may be more beneficial.

Research highlights the importance that the decision about your unintended pregnancy needs to be made by you, free from coercion and pressure (from others). It is common to feel conflicted about which option to choose. If you take your time and seek information about your options you may get to the point where you can look back and say, "It was the best decision for me at that time". Experiencing 'reasonable doubt' is absolutely normal.

Very few people get through life without being confronted with challenging circumstances and then potentially need to make hard decisions. Making a decision about your pregnancy can be difficult and complex - one which may raise questions about your future goals, your values, and your current relationships. Making decisions can sometimes seem overwhelming, however it is important that you actively make a decision and not ignore your situation. Choosing not to make a decision is actually making the decision to continue with the pregnancy.

This guide is designed to outline options and discuss possible associated feelings so that you can begin to make a decision. It may be useful to write down your thoughts and feelings as you complete the exercises below. This may take one or two days to complete.

It is suggested that you try and work through this guide on your own at first, and then, if you want to, you can work through it again with your partner, man involved in the pregnancy, parent, or other support person such as a friend or counsellor.

The first step in making a decision is identifying your options. The following is a list of some of the more common options for unplanned pregnancy (please personalise with other options):

- terminate the pregnancy by having an abortion
- continue the pregnancy and parent the child on your own
- continue the pregnancy and parent the child with your partner/ the partner involved
- continue the pregnancy and place the child with a friend/ family member to raise
- continue the pregnancy and place the child for adoption

Write down how you feel about each of the options that you are considering. If you would like more information about these options, the following agencies may be helpful:

Information about abortion:

- Pregnancy Advisory Centre 7117 8999
- Lyell McEwin Health Service 8182 0255
- Flinders Medical Centre 8204 5197
- Noarlunga Health Service 8384 9233
- Regional services please follow this link:

<https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/services/health+services+for/women+health+services/unplanned+pregnancy+services/unplanned+pregnancy+services>

REMEMBER: when you make phone enquiries, you can remain anonymous if you wish.



Counselling services in relation to unplanned pregnancy:

- Pregnancy Advisory Centre 7117 8999
- SHine SA 3 metropolitan locations 1300 794 584
- Pregnancy, Birth & Baby Helpline 1800 882 436
- Women’s Health Service Dale St Port Adelaide 8444 0700

Information on Pregnancy and Parenting:

- Child and Youth Health Services Parent Helpline 1300 364 100
<http://www.cyh.com/Default.aspx?p=1>
- Pregnancy, Birth & Baby Helpline 1800 882 436
- Metropolitan Youth Health Services
<https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/services/health+services+for+youth+health+services/youth+health+services>

Information on Adoption:

Department for Child Protection: <https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/adoption/placing-a-child-for-adoption>

You may discover other information by talking to someone you know who has been in a similar situation. However, keep in mind that *your own experience is unique to you and may be quite different from others.*

Options for decision making

Look at the options you have identified and try to imagine the possible outcomes of each. Remember to be realistic and as specific as possible. Make a list of pros and cons for each option (using the table below) including the practical and emotional impact each might have on you. Dividing the “impact” column into short-term and long-term effects may also assist.

Option	Pros	Cons	Impact

Take some time now to think about what your ideal situation is for being pregnant and for parenting a child:

When would it be? At a particular age? At a particular point in your study or career? That you would be in a healthy relationship free from conflict and abuse or single? Or other important factors

Where would you be living?

What role or support would your partner/partner involved take?

What role or support would your parents/ family or significant others take?

Describe the situation that actually exists right now:

What are the differences between your ideal and actual situation?

Please note, sometimes "ideal" scenarios may not come true, so think about what you can manage and make work and what would not be okay for you.

Now try to imagine yourself back in time - perhaps 3 months before you were pregnant:

What was important to you then?



What were your goals or dreams at that time?
 What were your views on unplanned pregnancy at that time?
 How did you feel about each of the options for an unplanned pregnancy?

Picture yourself now:

What is important to you?
 What are your goals and dreams? Have they changed?
 What are 2 or 3 things that matter most in your life now?
 What are 2 or 3 things you hope to achieve in the next 2, 5 or 10 years?
 Have your views on unplanned pregnancy changed?

Now imagine yourself one year from now:

What are your biggest fears surrounding each option?
 What is the best thing that could happen for each option?
 What do you imagine each option will bring to your life?

Option	Biggest Fear	Best Outcome

At this point you may start to feel that you are 'leaning toward' one option over another, if this is the case just sit with that feeling for a moment.

List the important people in your life who are presently involved in your decision:

What advice or opinion has each given you and why do you think they feel this way?

Significant Person	Advice/Opinion	Why they feel this way

How does each person's influence affect you?

Are you feeling pulled towards their opinion or do you think you may be rebelling against it? As stated above, it is important that you come to your own decision and not make a decision simply in reaction to the opinions of others. As this can be a highly emotional time, it is vital that your decision is the best choice for you and not a 'knee-jerk' reaction to appease someone else, or to 'get back at' or 'go against' another person. You are the one who will live with the decision you make so it is important to *make a choice that **you** can live with* irrespective of what others may say.

It is common to have doubts or second thoughts after coming to a decision about the unplanned pregnancy. By taking the time to carefully go through the decision making process you will know that you have done the best you could under the circumstances and this may help bring some sense of closure for you.

If you are still torn between two options, you may find this final exercise helpful. This exercise can be completed over two or more days.

For each day, assume you have chosen one option. From the moment you wake up, concentrate on the details of carrying through with that option (i.e. make the necessary appointments, read about or call for information). Try and "live" with the option as realistically as possible for the entire day. At the end of the day, take some time to write down your thoughts and feelings about what happened to you during the day.

What information did you find out?
Was it what you expected?
How do you feel about this option now?
How strong are your feelings about this option?

Day One:

Feelings	Information

On the second day, repeat the same exercise with another option and again try to spend the day doing things that make this second option "real" for you. Try not to let your mind wander back to what you experienced the previous day so that you can assess your feelings about this option without immediately comparing them to your feelings about the first option.

Day Two:

Feelings	Information

After you have recorded your thoughts and feelings at the end of the second day, take some time to compare the two experiences and decide which one you feel more comfortable about.

These ideas and exercises are a guide only, but may be useful in assisting you to come to a decision that you feel is right for you and your circumstances.

Useful guides to explore your values:

<https://www.thewomens.org.au/health-information/unplanned-pregnancy-information/how-to-make-a-decision>

<http://www.childrenbychoice.org.au/if-youre-pregnant/im-not-sure-what-to-do/making-a-decision>

This information was adapted from: Planned Parenthood, Edmonton, Canada, 2001-2002. www.ppaeb.ca and reviewed by Pregnancy Advisory Centre March 2021

For more information

**Pregnancy Advisory Centre
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Telephone: (08) 7117 8999 or Free Call 1800672 966 (country callers only)

<https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/pregnancyadvisorycentre>



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