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## MY PARENTING PLEDGE

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### **About the Organization**

Education for Successful Parenting (ESP) is a nonprofit organization launched in 2005 to offer pre-parenting education to teenagers and young adults. In addition, ESP offers educational programs for parents of teens, pregnant and parenting teens, foster youth and caregivers, and health and social work professionals.

### **About the Founder and Author**

Ms. Randi Rubenstein founded Education for Successful Parenting (ESP) to bring a blend of health and planning perspectives to pre-parenting education. Prior to ESP, she had senior-level roles in several health research and education organizations. Ms. Rubenstein has a Masters of Science degree in Public Health from UCLA. It was her experiences as a foster and adoptive parent that inspired Ms. Rubenstein to assist adolescents in life-planning, enabling them to create stronger foundations and healthier beginnings for all children and families.



## 5. Timing and health

### Here are the facts:

- Being a parent is an enormous responsibility 24-hours a day, 7-days a week
- Teen parents and their children have more health and life challenges
- Prenatal exposures to alcohol, drugs, and tobacco can cause permanent damage
- Early prenatal medical care and good nutrition can prevent infant health problems
- Because many pregnancies are unplanned, it is important for both the future mother and father to develop a healthy lifestyle throughout their child-bearing years.

**Planning and preparing ahead of time will give my future child the best start in life.**

**Here is what I plan for these specific activities:**

Yes	Maybe	No	
			I plan to <b>postpone pregnancy until I am self-sufficient</b> and can take care of myself.
			I plan to <b>avoid risky behaviors</b> that could lead to an unintended pregnancy.
			I plan to <b>avoid illegal activities and incarceration</b> , making me unavailable for parenting my child.

### For Females:

Yes	Maybe	No	
			I plan to <b>not smoke cigarettes</b> , before and during the pregnancy.
			I plan to <b>not drink alcohol</b> if possibly pregnant and while pregnant.
			I plan to <b>not take illegal or street drugs</b> , before and during pregnancy.
			I plan to <b>take daily multivitamins</b> with folic acid supplements, before and during pregnancy, to prevent neural tube defects.
			I plan to <b>avoid obesity</b> to prevent medical complications during pregnancy.
			I plan to <b>visit a doctor</b> for preconception and prenatal health advice.

### For Males:

Yes	Maybe	No	
			I plan to <b>not pressure anyone I date into drinking or doing drugs</b> .
			I plan to <b>support a low-stress lifestyle for my partner</b> , free of abuse.
			I plan to <b>not smoke cigarettes during the pregnancy</b> to prevent exposure to second-hand smoke.

### The "Safe Haven" Laws

What can you do if you and your partner suddenly find yourselves with an unplanned pregnancy? Unfortunately, without a plan, some new parents panic and abandon their newborn baby. To avoid these tragedies, most states now have "safe haven" laws, allowing distressed new parents to surrender their baby to a safe place, like a hospital emergency room or fire department, without legal penalty.

There are **many options available** to you, and many community health and financial resources to assist you. One well-known organization that works to prevent the abandonment of babies is the **National Safe Haven Alliance**. If you are overwhelmed and scared about what to do, you can call their toll-free crisis line any time **(1-888-510-BABY)**. It's totally confidential.

## 7. Protect

In the United States, our children are at much greater risk of dying due to **accidents** and **homicides** than children in other industrialized countries. The leading causes of accidental deaths are: **motor vehicle accidents, drowning, burns, guns, and suffocation**. A leading childhood illness, asthma, is affected by exposure to **secondhand smoke**. Our rates of **child abuse** are also extremely high compared to other nations. **All these conditions are preventable!**

Yes	Maybe	No	To protect my child's health and safety, I plan to:	Need More Info
			Properly secure my child with a <b>car seat or seatbelt</b> in a car	
			Supervise my child while near <b>water</b> and while swimming	
			Keep <b>plastic bags</b> and <b>curtain cords</b> out of infant/toddler reach	
			Store <b>medicines</b> out of the reach of small children	
			Store poisonous <b>household cleaners</b> and <b>insecticides</b> safely	
			Keep <b>guns</b> out of our home or stored in a locked cabinet	
			Have <b>smoke detectors</b> in the home	
			Identify and remove <b>hazards</b> from our home	
			Get help for any <b>addictions</b> that I may have	
			Be <b>sober</b> while "on duty" caring for my child	
			Control my <b>anger</b> or get help with anger management	
			Refrain from <b>smoking cigarettes</b> around my children	
			Learn <b>CPR and First Aid</b>	
			Only leave my child in the care of <b>trusted adults</b>	
			Never leave my child under age <b>9 alone</b> at home or in a car	
			Arrange for <b>adequate supervision</b> of my child at all times	

### Applying my protective skills in real-life situations

**Case 1** - You are bathing Jan, your 2-year old, in the bathtub. The doorbell rings. You think it could be a delivery of an important package you've been waiting for. What should you do?

**Case 2** - Your partner gets angry easily. This morning your baby was crying and your partner started yelling and then hit Baby Zoey. What would you do?

**Case 3** - Your 4-year old child, Riley, is asking whether he can stop using a car seat and ride in the car with just a seatbelt like a big kid. How will you decide if that's OK?