



Heather

Age 18

*“If You Silence Yourself, You are not in a Relationship”*

My name is Heather. I am 18 years old and a single mother of a 20-month-old daughter. I was 15 when I started having sex and by 16 I was pregnant.

It all started my freshman year in high school. I met the father of my daughter in freshman homeroom. He was 17 and seemed like a rebel in a way. I went to a Catholic elementary school with boring people who really didn't do anything exciting, so when he showed interest in me I decided to give it a shot. I should have thought about it a little longer though, I mean he was a 17-year-old freshman and didn't even have a driver's license. That should have woken me up but it didn't. I went against my better judgment and we started dating.

Five months after we got together, he persuaded me to have sex. At first I didn't want to because I was afraid of getting pregnant or getting an STD. Again, I went against the little voice in my head, didn't say anything, and we started having sex. It was fun at first and we had protected sex. I liked sneaking around. Then, one time, we had unprotected sex. After that, we never used a condom again and I wasn't on birth control because I was too afraid to talk to my parents. I wish I would have.

**He said "I love you," and I said it back but I never meant it, at least not in the sense of forever.**

Soon, sex seemed to run the relationship. I pushed my friends away and spent all of my time with him trying to make *him* happy. We had sex all the time, whether I really wanted to or not. He said "I love you," and I said it back but I never meant it, at least not in the sense of forever. I wanted to go to college for nursing and play volleyball. I'd



been playing for six years and I wanted to play through college. I wanted so much more than this relationship. Even though I was having these thoughts, I was still having fun with him, so I didn't say anything.

Even after a few pregnancy scares, we still didn't use protection. I don't even know why. Every time we had sex, I was always thinking, "I'm going to get pregnant if we don't start using protection." But again, I never said anything to him. Besides, he said he would "stop" before anything happened. So of course, I listened to him and not my own instincts, again.

**"I wanted so much more than this relationship, but again, I didn't say anything".**

Needless to say, 5 months later I became pregnant. At first, I was in denial. I had skipped two periods but I didn't want to face the facts. Finally my friend took me to a clinic with my boyfriend. I was definitely pregnant.

Now came the hard part, telling my parents. I knew that they had no choice but to support me because they had my sister when they were 18 years old, but I didn't want to see the hurt in their eyes when I told them. I can't describe what that was like. All their dreams for me of finishing school, getting a good stable job and starting a family were gone. And things would only get worse.

For the first four months of my pregnancy, I was sick every morning and after every meal. I was still in school and had to sometimes stay home because I was so sick. Finally the sickness subsided and everything was going okay. I was happy again even though people talked about me and I had lost a great deal of my friends. I still had my boyfriend and my family. Then, I became really sick and ended up in the hospital with IVs and medication all the time. I was miserable and in a lot of pain. I ended up missing a total of a month of school because I was sick all the time.



The side effects of being were also miserable. I had missed so much school that my workload was tremendous. I was so stressed out and overwhelmed. I had to catch up with my schoolwork and worry about my job and worry about my baby. I began pushing everyone away, especially my boyfriend. He said he would always be there and asked me to marry him. I said yes but I really wanted to say no (just like the pattern I always seemed to follow).

Soon, we started fighting and I wouldn't let him touch me. Then I had my daughter and things just got worse between my boyfriend and me. I wouldn't let him touch me and I was always yelling at him. He eventually started to yell back and would get angry if I didn't want to kiss him. Everything was falling apart.

I eventually broke it off with him 3 months after I had my daughter. I just didn't want him near me. I think in a way I blamed him for everything, even though we both had made the choice to have sex. We tried to stay friends but it just wasn't working. We both resented each other and couldn't get along.

Today, we still talk but only if it is about our daughter. I am still in school and am working towards my nursing degree but am having a lot of financial problems. I am unable to work because I am a full-time student, so I have to depend on Medicaid and my parents.

This is the hardest thing. I hate feeling dependant on others, but that is something that I have to do. I have only one really close friend who I can talk to, but I only see her once in a while because she is busy working and I am busy going to school and raising my little girl. I couldn't go to my senior prom or any other special events because my schedule was so full and the money is not there. Everything had changed. I love my daughter more than anything, but I wish I had waited.

Sincerely,  
Heather