

**Supporting a Friend When She's Unexpectedly Expecting****May 5, 2017**

I had been brought up to believe that life is always a gift, but it certainly didn't feel like one when I gazed in shock at a positive pregnancy test. As a mom who had my first baby in college, I know that an unexpected pregnancy can sometimes bring fear, shame, and doubt.

However, I also know that an unexpected pregnancy can bring joy, excitement, awe, gratitude, and deeper love than I knew was possible. About nine months after looking at that pregnancy test, I received the very best gift I have ever been given: my daughter, Maria.\* An unexpected pregnancy might be confusing along the way, but life—though at times difficult—is ultimately beautiful.

Perhaps one of your friends has become pregnant unexpectedly. As someone who has been there, I encourage you to support her in her new journey of being a mother; it's important that she knows you are thinking of her and supporting her.

An unexpected pregnancy can send a woman into crisis mode. If your friend just found out she is pregnant, she may not be thinking clearly, and she may feel she has no control over anything at the moment. When a woman experiencing challenging circumstances confides she is pregnant, the reaction of the first person she tells tends to set the tone for her decision-making.

Avoid responding with shock or alarm, and be calm and understanding. Be aware of how she is responding to you. Listen to her and let her know you love her, you are there for her, and it's going to be okay. Pay close attention to her emotional state, and act accordingly.

Depending on where she is emotionally, it may or may not be helpful to congratulate her at that time. However, it is always important to affirm that every person's life—including her child's and her own—is precious and beautiful no matter the circumstances.

Pay attention to what might make her feel most loved. One person might appreciate encouraging words, while another might feel more supported if you help with specific tasks. Don't be afraid to ask her if she needs help with anything or to make specific offers to help. For example, you might offer to help with cleaning, finding a good doctor, or running to the store to pick up the one food that won't make her feel sick. (But remember to read her cues, and make

sure you're not being overbearing.) Simple things—letting her know that you care and are always ready to listen, that you are available to help her, that you are praying for her—can give hope and courage when she might otherwise feel alone.

The most important thing, though, is to pray; it's the most effective way we can help. Pray for her, for her child, and for guidance in how you can give her the best possible support.

Your support might be the only support she receives. Even if we never know how, the smallest things we do can change someone's life. You can make a difference in her life. Will you?

*\*Name changed for privacy.*

*This issue of Life Issues Forum has been adapted and shortened from “10 Ways to Support Her When She’s Unexpectedly Expecting,” originally published in the 2015-16 Respect Life Program. Please visit [www.bit.ly/10WaysRespectLife](http://www.bit.ly/10WaysRespectLife) for the original version. A directory of pregnancy services can be found at [www.heartbeatinternational.org/worldwide-directory](http://www.heartbeatinternational.org/worldwide-directory).*