

Learning Life's Lessons

Dear W.C.,

There is a teenage mother and father that need help. Could you please check on them?

A Concerned Neighbor

Dear Readers,

As we go through life and become older we seem to be smarter year after year. I never stop learning. There were many times I questioned why I had not figured something out earlier, before I made a foolish mistake. Life is a continuing lesson. Education is a gift that should continue our entire life. You can obtain education in a school environment and also there are life's lessons. Some people call it street smarts or common sense. These are lessons we learn living our everyday lives, lessons that we do not learn in school.

When I checked on these two young people I discovered they did in fact have a baby. When I think about life and how we continuously learn, I think about the many children in the world having children themselves. These teenagers decided that for a few moments of defying what advice "might" have been given to them, for a few moments they thought they were old enough and knew enough about life, about what they thought was a true, lifelong love, they changed their lives forever.

For two teenagers to have a child when they cannot afford to take care of that child, affects many lives, not just their own. Having a baby, bringing a life into this world, is a sacred event. This is where children should not only be told, "Do not have sex!" they should be told what it takes to provide for a child, the many sacrifices they will have to make, the often exhausting 24/7 care required of an infant, etc. etc.etc.

When I visited this teenage mother, father and little baby they were in such need, you could see they were totally bewildered. They had a unique situation where they still cared for each other and were still together. Often the teenage girls are left to care for the baby themselves as the teenage boys are not ready for that type of commitment.

I do not want to turn this column into a life learning lesson for

teenagers because we probably do not have many teenagers who read this column. As many of you probably know it is very difficult to tell teenagers to be careful, they are not financially ready, they are not old enough to experience all there is to experience in life. They often feel they are in a lifelong loving relationship, when actually the odds of them staying in that relationship for the rest of their lives is very slim. In 95% plus of the relationships the teenage father leaves the teenage mother. They cannot handle the responsibilities emotionally or financially. They just want to be a teenage boy. What the teenage girl gives up is far beyond what I could put in this short column.

So what did I find with these two young parents? The young father had a job earning less than \$7.00 an hour. It can take earning \$20.00 or more an hour to provide just the daily necessities. This baby did not have diapers because they could not afford diapers. There was not any proper clothing. There was not a proper, safe crib where the baby could safely sleep. There have been repeated warnings about infants being rolled over on by their loving mother or father and being smothered during the night.

I'm sorry if this article is disturbing, but this is not an isolated incident of teenage parents struggling. It is happening all around us and it is a fact that these young parents will have a much harder time supporting themselves throughout life. They will not have nearly the opportunities open to them in life that a teenager that goes on to complete their education and obtain a good job will have. It is up to us to educate them. There are sex education programs in most schools but they have to do more for the students than just preach safe sex. They need to know "why" they should abstain from sex. They need to be aware of the responsibilities that come along with all adult experiences. They need to convey what these two young people are going through, in addition to the numerous health issues that are out of control among teenagers.

As much love as they may have for one another, they were not able to provide for their child. She could not work because the cost of childcare is more than she could earn. She could not finish her education in order to be able to earn more because she did not have childcare. The parents of the teenagers said, "Hey, you made the mistake, you're on your own, get out." They were barely making ends meet themselves. Often even if the parents can help they feel the same, "You made a mistake, go live and learn the lesson and pay the penalty." This girl would cry on and off throughout the day wondering what she did to her life, wondering what she wasn't providing for her baby that she did love. She said that if she had to do it over again she would wait until she was older, until her boyfriend was

older, so they both could provide a good life for their child. I think they have learned that life lesson. Where was that thought when they were having sex? Were there any adults around who had told them that? Did it go in one ear and out the other? If they would have preplanned their life a little bit more they would be much happier. The teenage mom said, "Now I know what we should have done. We should have waited to have sex. We should have waited until we finished our educations, got good jobs, saved some money to get married, and done things right." I asked the young mother if she would mind if I passed along her message. Her reply was, "Please, please do." Then she began to cry as she said, "My baby is the one suffering because of my boyfriend and I being selfish."

The young father, who seemed too proud at first, told me he is supposed to be the man in the family, but admitted to going into the bathroom at least three or four times a day and crying tears of remorse for not planning properly. Tears of what happened to the life that he did not get to live, of the dreams he had that are now gone. He told me just when he was finally finding some freedom in his life, being able to drive at 16 years old, able to do what he chose with his time, he became a father. All of a sudden when he was beginning to have the freedom to live his life as a young person should, he had major adult responsibilities. As he sat there looking at me, tears filling his eyes, he said, "I love my baby. I love my girlfriend, but I wish we would have had some more years together before we brought this responsibility on. I feel like I'm caught in a trap, one I don't know how to get out of. I'm not capable of making enough money. I spend every moment of every day wondering how I'm going to make things better. I feel helpless and occasionally when I lock myself in the bathroom and cry I think of those times before the baby was born and how much fun we had. I wish we had been more responsible. I never knew playing around would cause so much pain."

Now if every sex education class in schools does not include that, then our education system needs to once again improve and get a little more serious because we have middle school children becoming pregnant. It is also up to us to love our children enough to make sure we are passing onto them this proper education. We cannot be too embarrassed to speak openly with our children about these subjects and stress the emotional, not just physical implications of this. Ask your school what kind of education is being offered. Are they offering a sex education program that only stresses safe sex practices? If we are going to offer an education we need to give the full picture. We have great schools. We need to get a better message across to our young.

In this situation we provided good food, diapers and clothing. Most of all we provided a network that was going to help all three of them. You know I like helping the elderly, handicapped and the children, those that cannot fend for themselves, and good fellow Americans that fall on hard times. I don't think God would want us turning our backs on these young parents and say, "You made your bed" or "You brought this into your own life". It is a test on our own hearts and souls to offer forgiveness, compassion, Caring and Sharing, and an education in prevention. Most important, the innocent baby who was born into this poverty situation needed our love and our help. God Bless you and thank you for Caring & Sharing.

Thank you for reading, please network our articles to your friends, business associates, relatives, neighbors, etc.

Health and Happiness, God Bless Everyone, WC

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A Special Thank You to: J.D. Development, MLH, Bill & Lois McEssy, Tom & Kathleen Murray, Dick & Jean Honeyager, Steve & Catherine Boho, Geneva Lake Development Corp., Tom & Mary Johnson, Flitcroft Septic Systems, Tom & Joyce Roche, James & Janice Batten, Joanne Zeasman, James & Karen Goodrick, Lu Schinke, Frank & Ann Huml, Lloyd & Carol Behrens, Shawn & Donna McLafferty, Peter & Sandra Douglas, Charles & Penny Gruetzmacher, Albert & Ellen Burnell, ALL of you who support The Time Is Now to Help donation boxes, and the businesses that allow our donation boxes. Anyone who would like a Time Is Now donation box in your business, please call (262)249-7000.

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