



my life. my plan: women

LESSON PLAN

Who: Young women of reproductive age.

What: This Reproductive Life Plan (RLP) is a resource to help women to consider IF and WHEN they want to have children, plan for pregnancy, or pregnancy prevention. Her choices are based on her values, beliefs and resources. The RLP helps her determine the factors and choices that may influence her decision.

Where: This can be used in any educational setting including one-on-one, small, or large groups.

Why: Delaware has the highest rate - 60% - of unintended pregnancies in the nation.

PRENATAL CARE IS NOT ENOUGH --- IT'S TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE. Healthy babies are an indicator of a healthy community/nation.

You can empower women to be in the driver's seat of their health care at all stages of life and place the emphasis on CHOICE not CHANCE. If there is no plan to prevent pregnancy, then make a plan for pregnancy.

How: The lesson plan can be completed in one session or over several sessions.

The RLP helps start a conversation to discuss choices (including if and when to have children) which can change the trajectory of a woman's life.

This resource assists health advocates (you!) to increase awareness in women that a pregnancy and parenthood timeline is within their control.

Learning Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- Understand what a life plan is.
- Learn how preconception planning can help them have a healthy family.
- Set goals and break them down into steps.
- Use the Reproductive life plan booklet to begin their own plan.

Materials and Preparation

- Orange Set Your Mind Set Your Goals (RLP) booklets for each participant
- My Life My Plan: Women PowerPoint presentation
- Copy of "Life Words" Worksheet for each participant
- Copy of "Unintended Pregnancies" Worksheet for each participant
- Copy of "Family Planning Methods" Worksheet for each participant
- Copy of "Birth Spacing" Worksheet for each participant
- Copy of "Birth Spacing Speaker's Notes"
- Copy of "Critical Periods of Development" Worksheet for each participant
- Copy of "Pregnancy and Substance Abuse" Brochure for each participant



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Introduction (slide 1)

Ask: “Do you know what a reproductive life plan is?”

Share: Because women are so busy wearing so many hats, sometimes we don’t take the time to consider what is important to each of us. A Life Plan is about your individual choices, rather than leaving things to chance.

Introduce the Life Planning Booklet (slide 2)

Give each participant a copy of the Reproductive Life Planning booklet.

Share: This booklet will show you how to create your own life plan and make the choices that are best for you.

Your Future (slide 3)

Ask participant(s) “Where do you see yourself in 3-6 months; 6 months to 1 year; 3-5 years? What does that look like?”

Explain to participant(s) that many people have things that they look forward to and planning can help them make their life look like they want it to. Life planning is about goal setting. Goals can help empower you. Try to make goals that are achievable and realistic.

Optional questions if time allows:

- What are your strengths to help you achieve your goals?
- What are your weaknesses that make achieving your goals more difficult?
- What is your story?
- How did you get to today?
- What are some roadblocks that may cause you to detour?
- What resources do you have to help you?

Ask participant(s) to give verbal response or write them on post-it notes and place on a large poster.

Life Words (slide 4)

Pass out the Life Words Worksheet or give participant(s) a piece of paper. Ask participant(s) to write down 3 words or phrases that would describe their life in the future. They can use the Life Words worksheet or write words from slide 4 onto another piece of paper.

Ask participant(s) to pair up with someone and discuss, understanding that this is personal and could trigger emotional responses for some participants.

Ask participant(s) to report back and discuss some of the answers.



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Your Choice: One Key Question (slide 5)

Refer participant(s) to page four of the booklet.

Ask participant(s) to think about the *ONE KEY QUESTION* – “Do you want to become pregnant in the next year?”

Yes/No (slide 6)

The question in the book is: Do you want to have children someday? Ask participants to choose and fill out the questions under Yes or No.

Explain that if their answer is “no” there are effective options and choices to prevent pregnancy.

If their answer is “yes” Ask: “In your opinion, what are some things that you might want to plan for before you become pregnant or a parent?”

Possible answers: committed relationship, safe place to live, career, financially stable, have a job, have medical insurance, be really ready, family and social support, etc.

Ask: “What would happen if someone became pregnant and a parent before they were ready?” and discuss.

Explain that if they are unsure of their answer, it is OK, but that it would be healthiest not to have sex *or* use birth control methods until they are ready.

Health Message (slide 7)

Ask: “Do you know the percentage of unplanned pregnancies in Delaware?”

Share: “In Delaware, close to 60% of pregnancies are unplanned.”

Ask: “What do your friends say about the reason there are so many unplanned pregnancies?”

Ask participant(s) to give verbal response or write them on post-it notes and place on a large poster.

Optional: Share worksheet, “Unintended Pregnancies”, as a conversation starter if needed.

Share: “There’s an expression often shared with women: If you don’t have a plan to prevent pregnancy, you have a plan to be pregnant. Having a PLAN helps one to have a CHOICE instead of leaving it to CHANCE.”

Bedsider (slide 8)

Explain if they are not ready to be a parent yet, bedsider.org has great information on preventing a pregnancy. Share that there are many options available that are based on a woman’s needs and wants and they should discuss what options would best fit their lifestyle with their provider.

Optional: Share worksheet, “Family Planning Methods”.



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Health Message (slide 9)

Ask: How long do you think you should wait before getting pregnant again?

Share: It's a good idea to wait at least 18 months before getting pregnant again to be in the best emotional and physical health for you and your children.

Optional: Share worksheet, "Birth Spacing".

Your Health Now: Diet, Exercise, Healthy Habits (slide 10)

Ask participant(s) to share some examples of healthy behaviors they engage in.

Examples: group exercise class, drink a lot of water, always get 8 hours of sleep, eat fruit and vegetables twice a day, etc.

Ask participants to come up with 1 habit that that is important to them that they do now and one healthy habit they would like to take on.

Possible activities with group: Provide a healthy snack or engage in a walk or short exercise.

Health Message (slide 11)

Ask: "When do most women learn that they are pregnant?"

Answer: When they miss a period.

Share: We know that even before a baby is conceived, your health habits could impact your future pregnancy and future baby. And, your health habits directly impact the development of your baby just days after your missed period.

Optional: Share worksheet, "Critical Periods of Development".

Health Message (slide 12)

Ask: What are some benefits of living a healthy lifestyle?

Share: Being overweight and obese can lead to diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease. Recent studies suggest that the heavier a woman is *before* she becomes pregnant, the greater her risk of pregnancy complications. Overweight and obese women who lose weight *before* pregnancy are likely to have healthier pregnancies. Regular exercise and a healthy diet can prevent many types of disease. Taking folic acid promotes women's health and promotes the healthy development of baby during pregnancy.

Share some links to support / promote healthy behaviors (slide 13).

The Skin You're In: Chronic disease, Immunizations, and Vaccines (slide 14)

Discuss the importance of managing chronic diseases such as high blood pressure and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) which can have serious effects on one's health today and in the future. Encourage women to see their health care provider regularly and stay up to date with recommended immunizations and vaccines.



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Family History (slide 15)

Explain that health problems can come from parents or other relatives. Knowing the health backgrounds of your family and any risks puts you a step ahead in understanding problems that could affect you, your future and any children you may have. If you don't know your family history, ask family members about their health history.

Instruct participant(s) to complete their health and vaccine history and family medical history at home. Ask them who could help them complete that information.

Participant(s) can list important notes such as medications and appointments on page 18.

Health Message (slide 16)

Ask: Is it ever OK to use alcohol, tobacco or drugs while pregnant?

Share: Drinking alcohol and using tobacco or drugs while pregnant harms your baby. If you are pregnant, might be pregnant, or are trying to get pregnant, STOP using alcohol, tobacco and drugs. Even if you are having sex without using birth control, STOP using alcohol, tobacco, and drugs. Or, start having safe sex.

Share: Use prescription drugs exactly as prescribed. Always check with your health care provider before stopping or making any changes with the medication you have been taking----even if you are pregnant.

Share: Smoking *before* pregnancy makes it harder for a woman to get pregnant. Smoking *during* pregnancy increases the chances of a miscarriage; and it nearly doubles the risk of having a low birth weight baby or baby born too early. Smoking *during and after pregnancy* is a risk factor of [Sudden Infant Death Syndrome \(SIDS\)](#). SIDS is an infant death for which a cause of the death cannot be found.

Share "Pregnancy and Substance Abuse" brochure.

Emotional Wellness / Inner Health: Balance, Purpose, and Emotion (slide 17)

Ask the question and discuss: "What does emotional wellness mean to you?"

This will open up the door to delve into how they find purpose and balance in their own lives. It may open the door to discuss how traumatic events may affect not only the choices that people make but how it may affect their ability to find purpose and balance.

Let the participants give examples of how they do this and then offer ways to achieve this.

Ask these questions and discuss: "What does stress look like to you? How do you handle stress in your own life? What are some examples of how to handle stress? How are some ways better than others?"

Place emphasis on the fact that everyone handles stress differently and that people's level of stress differs from person to person. This reduces the likelihood of passing judgment on any one person. Avoid using terms such as good/bad/positive/negative. This too avoids passing judgment.



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Ask the question and discuss: “Do you have someone in your life that you feel safe with, who you are connected with, and who can support you to share your feelings?” Let them know this can be a verbal sharing response or kept private.

Remind them that asking for help is not a sign of weakness but rather a sign of strength. Help can come from a friend, family member, or professional. If participants do not verbalize that drugs, alcohol, smoking can be *ineffective* ways to handle stress, the instructor may want to share.

Ask the question and discuss: “Do you know what resources are available to you if you don’t feel safe?” Again, let them know that this does not have to be a verbal sharing response.

Share the contact numbers for domestic violence and suicide / crisis (**slide 18**).

- Domestic violence issues:
 - Call the Delaware Helpline: dial 2-1-1.
 - The Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence offers a 24-hour domestic violence hotline.
 - New Castle County: 302.762.6110 (bilingual)
 - Kent and Sussex Counties: 302.422.8058 OR 302.745.9874 (bilingual)
- Suicide or crisis related issues:
 - Call 1.800.262.9800 or visit Delaware's Contact Lifeline at contactlifeline.org.

Goal Setting: Goals and Steps (slide 19)

“Uncover” each goal area and ask participant(s) to briefly explain each one.

Have the participant(s) complete the checklist on page 14, checking off those items that are important to them.

Have the participant(s) fill in their 3 most important goals on page 16.

Ask participant(s) to create 2 steps to one of their specific goals.

Ask the participant(s) to report back the goals that they created. What influenced the goals they chose?

Ask the participant(s) to report back on the steps that they created for their goal. What would happen if you tried to meet your goal without working on specific steps?

Point out that lots of us have ideas about what we might want in life but making a plan and breaking it into steps makes it easier to achieve.

Wrap It Up: What Do You Want to Work On? (slide 20)

Participant(s) can track their daily, weekly, and monthly progress towards their goals on page 17.

Encourage participants to visit and discuss their plan with their medical provider - Primary Care physician, OB/GYN, etc.

Remind participant(s) that wellness includes social, emotional and physical health.



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Health message (slide 21)

Ask: Do you think your plan will change in the future?

Discuss the need for frequent self-revaluations. Reassure participant(s) that their plan may change over time and that's okay.

Start on your path to healthy living by making some promises to yourself. When you lose focus, or are unsure of a situation, open the life plan to spark your passion for a happy and healthy life.

Learn from Each Other (slide 22)

Show participant(s) the link to Delaware Thrives where they can share their goals and see other people's goals.

Resources (slide 23)

If there is time, review some of the resources and their URLs.

Where to Order More Materials

To order more materials please visit <http://dethrives.com/order-materials/browse>.

Feedback

Please give us feedback on how this material worked for you by submitting a message on the Contact page of DE Thrives: <http://dethrives.com/contact>. We welcome successes and comments on what did not work.

We kindly ask that you refer to this My Life My Plan: Women tool as a work product of the Delaware Division of Public Health and the Delaware Healthy Mother and Infant Consortium.