

NOBy Erica Fernandes, 18
Staff Writer

Imagine finding out you are pregnant and knowing you cannot handle a pregnancy and having a baby. You agonize over what to do and finally decide to have an abortion, only to find out the guy who got you pregnant won't let you. No doubt, you would feel shocked and outraged that someone else was telling you what you could do with your body, right?

Luckily, this is a hypothetical situation in the United States. Only a woman can decide whether or not to have an abortion—although in some states, when a girl is under 18, her parents or a judge have a say in the matter.

A Difficult Decision

The decision to have an abortion is one of the hardest any girl or woman can make. She already has so many outside influences affecting her decision. Yet the final choice is so personal; it needs to be hers alone. While pregnancy affects the guy's and girl's families, it directly affects the girl or woman, so she alone needs to make the decision about her body.

The guy had just as much a role in the conception of the baby as the girl, but the fetus is inside the girl's body. Therefore, it is up to her to decide what to do about the pregnancy.

And while it does take two to tango, the consequences of pregnancy lie with the girl or woman. If she chooses to have a baby, her body takes on the stress and the emotional implications of pregnancy. She may not be in any mental or physical state to take on this burden. The guy bears no physical signs of pregnancy, while the girl bears the weight and stigma of teen pregnancy. While the guy can

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be supportive, the girl or woman deals with all the emotional and physical effects of a pregnancy.

We all remember the movie *Juno*, where Juno chose to continue the pregnancy and deal with the consequences of that decision. The guy, on the other hand, got to keep running track and didn't have to face disapproving comments or glances. Too bad that doesn't just happen in the movies. If the responsibility of caring for and delivering a baby all falls on the girl, why should the decision to have an abortion be anyone else's but hers?

The Woman's Choice Alone

Allowing men to consent to their partner's abortion would prevent many women from having access to their right to an abortion. What if the woman couldn't locate the guy who got her pregnant, wasn't sure which guy it was or was raped? Would she be forced to continue a pregnancy if she could not get his consent, or didn't know who he was? We would also have to think of this situation in reverse. If a woman did not wish to have an abortion and the guy wanted her to, could he force her to have one?

If two people take on the responsibility of having sex, they should discuss beforehand what they would do if she got pregnant. Too often these conversations happen after a girl is pregnant. A discussion

before you have sex will give both partners a chance to voice their opinions, and be better equipped to deal with something as life changing as an unexpected pregnancy. It'll also help remind both people how important it is to use condoms and another reliable form of birth control to make sure pregnancy doesn't happen in the first place!

If you and your partner don't agree on what you would do if a pregnancy happened, maybe you shouldn't be having sex, because you run a slight risk of pregnancy even when having protected sex. And once a girl is pregnant, it is her choice and her choice alone whether to continue a pregnancy or not.

Should a Guy
Have a Say
in Whether
His Girlfriend
or

On the Forums at Sexetc.org:

No. Men should not have a say in whether or not their partner has an abortion performed. It's the female's choice whether she wants to spend around nine months carrying the baby and then 18-plus years taking care of the child after birth. If men want to voice their opinion about it, they should talk about it in a calm manner with their partner and respect their partner's decision.

—Jason, 16, CA

YES

By Tate Hewitt, 18
Staff Writer



Katie is sitting silently in the clean, bleached-white room, waiting for the doctor. She counts the minutes as they pass by slowly, time stretched by both loneliness and the nervousness of getting an abortion. Her friend who brought her is in the waiting room; her boyfriend, Mark, is nowhere to be seen.

or Not
Has
Abortion?

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I've heard this story, or others nearly identical to it, and they almost always share the same reason for the partner's absence; he wasn't told, so he never had a choice to be there.

There are many reasons why a girl may not tell the guy who got her pregnant that she's having an abortion. Maybe Katie was too scared to tell Mark. Or maybe she thought that he would want to keep the baby, and she wasn't ready for that responsibility. Or maybe she didn't even consider his opinion because she always knew it was her choice.

Her Choice

It's hard to resist asking the question, was it only her choice? It takes two to make a pregnancy, and when a child is born, both parents are expected to be responsible and both have child custody rights. So, why wouldn't men be included in the decision to have or not have an abortion?

What if Katie wanted to have the baby, but her boyfriend wasn't ready to settle down? Mark has no choice either way, because his girlfriend has the sole choice when it comes to deciding what she does with her own body. If she chooses to continue the pregnancy, he is forced to financially support a child he didn't plan for. I can imagine Mark dropping out of school, getting a local job and leaving

his dreams behind because he can't pay for college and has to make child-support payments.

I understand that women deserve the right to decide what they want to do with their own futures, but when did they gain the right to control the futures of men? The decision to have a baby or not can alter a man's whole life, just as it can alter a woman's life.

A Joint Decision

Society has given women a choice in what they do with their bodies, and every year many women fight in order to maintain the right to make that decision. But in giving women this right, men are totally excluded from the choice about whether or not to have a child.

A relationship is a process of sharing: thoughts, laughs, memories. But when two partners decide that they are mature enough to pursue a sexual relationship, they better be prepared to share all the outcomes that can result from it. If they are not comfortable discussing what they would do if they got pregnant, how they feel about abortion and whether or not they agree about what they would do, they should not be having sex.



Read More at
Sexetc.org

For more info on pregnancy options and talking to your parents, go to Sexetc.org and search "I'm Pregnant." Want to talk to some of our experts? Go to Sexetc.org and find out when our next chat is.

I think that the guy should get to voice his opinion, but ultimately it should be the girl's choice. I mean, she's going to be the one who has to carry a child for nine months, deal with mood swings, cravings and general discomfort, and she's the one who will have to give birth. If she's not up for this, her boyfriend shouldn't be able to tell her she has to.

—Felicity, 19, Ireland

I think a guy should have some kind of say in this. However, the guy and the girl should know what they'd want to do if she got pregnant. That way they know if they're on the same page. If they don't agree, then why get into a situation where a pregnancy can happen?

—Danielle, 14, CA

There's no easy answer to this. Unless both parties want the same thing, it won't end well. That's why as a rule of thumb, if I'm dating a girl, before I even consider sex, I want to know her feeling on this topic.

—Kyle, 16, IN