



journaling

**YOUR
NEXT
STEPS**



MY BRAVERY HAS NO LIMITS.

This journal is
dedicated to women
and girls facing tough
decisions. May you
find peace, hope,
and confidence
in your choice.



MY BRAVERY HAS NO LIMITS. MY STORY HAS NO LIMITS. MY
MY HEART HAS NO LIMITS. MY FUTURE HAS NO
LIMITS. MY STRENGTH HAS NO LIMITS. MY BRAV
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Find a Quiet Place

With this journal, we hope to give you space to reflect. You already know your options and the issues surrounding your unplanned pregnancy. We just want to help you think through them.

In preparing to have this baby, you can choose:

- ♡ Co-parenting
- ♡ Single-parenting
- ♡ Adoption (open, semi-open, or closed)

Be Honest

As you read the questions inside this journal, you may find it helpful to write down your answers. Or you can just think about them. You may even choose to share your thoughts with someone else. Most importantly, be honest with yourself.

Take a Deep Breath

For an unplanned pregnancy, there is no easy choice. But as you give your decision the time and consideration it deserves, you'll grow more confident, peaceful, and prepared for your future.

We assure you:

- ♡ You're not alone.
- ♡ You have options.
- ♡ Good things can come from this.

Find Your Strength

Repeat the following mantras to yourself throughout your journey.

My **Future** Has No Limits.

My **Strength** Has No Limits.

My **Bravery** Has No Limits.

My **Heart** Has No Limits.

My **Story** Has No Limits.

REMEMBER

If you have any questions about your decision, or if you just want to share your concerns, please contact us.

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Co-Parenting

OPTION NO.

01

Co-parenting can ease the burdens of parenting and heighten its joys. But if a couple is unprepared, the challenges of co-parenting can greatly compound the stress of child-rearing. If you're considering this as an option for your unplanned pregnancy, consider the following questions. They might help you decide if your relationship is grounded in the love, trust, and mutual respect needed for a lifelong commitment.

Are you in a relationship with the father of the baby? **Y N**

If so, for how long?

Have you discussed what co-parenting would look like with them? **Y N**

Will they be an active part of your pregnancy and delivery? **Y N**

Do you trust them? **Y N**

Are they someone you can always count on? **Y N**

Are they kind, considerate, and loving? **Y N**

Do they respect your opinions? **Y N**

What kind of parent and/or partner do you think they will make?

Are they supportive of your hopes and dreams?

My Thoughts About Co-Parenting

Benefits

What are the benefits of co-parenting with the father of your baby?

Concerns

What are your concerns?

OVERALL THOUGHTS ABOUT CO-PARENTING:

Single-Parenting

OPTION NO.

02

Babies and children give their parents tremendous joy, but the happy times can sometimes feel overshadowed by the constant needs. At some point, every parent faces sleepless nights, financial sacrifices, and emotional exhaustion. If you don't have a partner, you'll need lots of help and support. You can explore single parenting by answering the questions below and using the helpful planning tools at the end of this journal.

What kind of job will I have, realistically? Will I work to support myself and my child? **Y N**

Will the father of the baby help provide financial and emotional support? **Y N**

Will my child have a father figure who remains involved? **Y N**

What kind of life do I want for my child as they grow up?

If I choose single-parenting, what will my child's day-to-day life be like?

How will single-parenting affect my own day-to-day lifestyle?

Who will care for my child while I go to school or work?

How will I pay for childcare?

How will I find time for myself—for my studies, exercise, friendships, and recreation?

How will single-parenting affect my long-term goals for my life?

Am I ready to parent? **Y N**

OPTION NO.

03

Adoption

By choosing adoption, you show your child sacrificial love. You also show courage by carrying your child to term and choosing parents who are prepared to welcome your child into their family.

Adoption is not easy. Nothing worthwhile ever is. There may be challenges, difficulties, and even grief. But Gladney surrounds you with support and helps you create a very personal adoption plan. You can hand-pick your adoptive parents. You can talk with them, meet with them, and correspond with them through letters and photos as your child grows. And you'll always know that you chose the best life you could imagine for your child. The following questions will help you think through adoption.

A LOVE WITHOUT LIMITS.

What kind of life do you want for your baby?

Is it important to you that your baby be parented by a married couple? Why or why not?

If you were to choose adoption, what kind of parents would you want for your child?

How would adoption help you in reaching your personal goals and aspirations?



Ashley's Story

Finding Out

I was a regular high school senior growing up in Central Texas. I was involved in varsity sports and school clubs, and I wanted to go to college. I had an amazing family with the most loving and supportive parents any child could want. But for some reason, I was unhappy and insecure when it came to boys.

I had just returned from a school trip the night I found out I was pregnant. I confided my suspicions to two of my friends, and we went to Walmart to buy a pregnancy test. Lo and behold, I was pregnant! My friends were shocked, but as I remember it, I stayed fairly calm and even joked about saying good night to the baby. I didn't tell my parents immediately; I wanted to make a plan first. My mother and her brother were adopted from Gladney, and my mom often expressed that adoption had given her an amazing life. So even before I confirmed I was pregnant, I knew if I was, I would place my child for adoption.

Though my family could have helped me parent my baby, I didn't want that life for her or myself. I wanted my daughter to grow up in a stable, two-parent household that could give her everything

I had as a child. If I chose to parent my daughter, I knew that my parents would be the ones actually providing for her. I also knew that parenting would limit my choices for my own life.

Breaking the News

Telling my parents was the scariest thing I have ever done. I typed a letter and printed copies for each of them when I was about 10 weeks pregnant. They reacted so much better than I could have imagined—and actually expressed their pride in me for making an adoption plan. But it was hard to see their emotions. They understood the gravity of my decision and knew how hard things would be for me. My parents shed more tears for me during my pregnancy than I ever did. My tears came later.

Taking the Next Steps

Since my mom was adopted from Gladney, we contacted them. I also met with a school social worker and enrolled in an accelerated program to finish high school early. My Gladney caseworker, Holly, walked me through the entire adoption process, step by step.

“Telling my parents was the scariest thing I have ever done.”

When it came time to choose adoptive parents, I was so excited. Cindy and Raymond stood out to me as the obvious choice. They were so similar to my family, and I wanted my daughter to be in a similar environment. We first met on the phone and then face-to-face over lunch. After that, I did not see Cindy and Raymond again. I was content with my decision for adoption and didn't feel the need to stay in contact with them. I now regret not getting to know them better. However, I did make a post-adoption agreement with them to exchange pictures, cards, and letters.

The Birth

On a Friday in July, my daughter was born. My mom was in the delivery room, and in tears, the first thing I said to her was, “She's not for me.” Though I had incredible support from my family and close friends, spending time with my baby clouded my mind with “what-ifs.”

My Gladney caseworker counseled me, as did my high school social worker. Friends and family offered advice and comfort. My parents never faltered in their belief that adoption was the best option, and deep down, I knew my parents were not meant to raise this child. I was overcome with sadness at the thought of placing my daughter for adoption. But despite my emotions, I understood why I was placing her for adoption: I wanted her to have the best life possible.

Life After Adoption

Afterwards, I began my long journey of overcoming the loss associated with placing my child for adoption. I still had great support from my family and friends, but that did not change the emptiness I felt. And I still struggled with shame over disappointing my parents by getting pregnant. My caseworker from Gladney stayed in contact with me, and I will always remember how much she helped me through the whole adoption process. Leaving home and moving into my new college dorm was very difficult, and I was homesick my entire freshman year.

“Soon, my sadness over my decision grew to pride.”

Receiving updates from the adoptive parents helped me through my grief. Those letters and pictures helped solidify in my heart that I'd made the right decision. My baby looked so happy—a perfect fit in her family! Soon, my sadness over my decision grew into pride. When looking at her pictures, I was so proud of what I had chosen for my daughter. The journey was not easy, but it did get better. I formed a new normal and moved forward, never forgetting. Staying busy and having goals also helped me.

If there is anything I could tell Cindy and Raymond, it would be thank you and that it wasn't all for nothing. They allowed me the opportunity to make something out of myself.

And I did.



MY FUTURE HAS NO LIMITS.

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Identify Your Goals

What are your goals in life? How will you reach them? These are important questions to ask as you consider your options for your baby. Whether you choose to parent your child or to find a loving adoptive family, this chart will help you identify your personal life goals.

SITUATION	I HAVE	I WANT
High school diploma	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
College or vocational education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Medical insurance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Life insurance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Savings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Own a home	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rent an apartment or home	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Reliable transportation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Stable job with adequate income (see income equation)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Career with benefits & growth opportunity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Committed relationship with the child's father	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Good relationship with family members	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Time to spend with a child	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
A lifestyle of comfort & stability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

EXAMPLE INCOME EQUATION

$$\begin{array}{rcl}
 \underline{\$7.25} & \times & \underline{40} & = & \underline{\$290} \\
 \text{hourly wage} & & \text{hours per week} & & \text{gross income} \\
 \underline{\$290} & - & \underline{\$65} & = & \underline{\$225} \\
 \text{gross income} & & \text{taxes - 22.65\%} & & \text{take home pay}
 \end{array}$$

THOUGHTS ABOUT MY FUTURE GOALS:

CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF

TAKE A FEW DEEP BREATHS

Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose. Relax your shoulders. Exhale slowly through your mouth. As you blow air out, keep your jaw relaxed. Repeat this breathing exercise as needed.

Plan your finances.

If you decide to parent your baby, how will this decision affect your finances? This section will help you identify the costs of living with a baby in your life. If you need help completing this worksheet, feel free to call a Gladney options counselor.

ITEM	COST ESTIMATE	AVERAGE COST
Apartment rent (varies by location)	\$	\$900 per month
Electricity	\$	\$125 per month
Gas	\$	\$100 per month
Clothing	\$	\$100 per month
Baby clothing & nursery needs	\$	\$200 per month
Food	\$	\$350 per month
Formula, baby food & diapers	\$	\$235 per month
Car payment, gas, repairs, insurance	\$	\$400 per month
Personal needs: pampering & leisure	\$	\$200 per month
Prenatal & delivery payment plan	\$	\$100 per month
Medical, contact lenses, prescriptions	\$	\$50 per month
Medical for baby, check-ups & shots	\$	\$660 per month
Childcare, babysitter, day care	\$	\$400 per month
Cable, internet & phone	\$	\$90 per month
One-time utility deposits	\$	\$40 per month
Total monthly costs	\$	\$3,850 per month
Total monthly income (after tax)	\$	Varies

Final thoughts:

If you've worked through major portions of this journal, we congratulate you!

Making a good decision takes a lot of energy and careful thought. We hope this journal helped you gain clarity and move closer to making the right choice for you. Whatever you choose, Gladney cares about you and wants to help you make the best decision possible.

If you need more information about your pregnancy options, we'll do our best to help you find what you need. Our pregnancy line is open every day. Call or text anytime.

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While you are considering your choices, you may enjoy finding words of encouragement below. Wishing you peace on your journey.

E R I P S N I A
W E B Y J D Y E
Y M G N E E E A
N U F A P V O O
G X V O R I O W
S F H L E U Q L
U S J C P A O V
U E R U T U F C

**COURAGE. HOPE. FUTURE.
LOVE. INSPIRE.**



GLADNEY

Center for Adoption

For more information or to request adoption materials, please contact Gladney:

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