




thriv·ol·o·gy

Companion Guide for Professionals

*If you're a young parent, consider
sharing this guide with the professionals
who support you as you explore the
Curiosity Deck together.*



This guide is for supporters of young parents—nurses, doulas, case managers, peer mentors, and many more. Use it with young parents as you have conversations after birth sparked by the Curiosity Deck.

Research shows that when young parents receive holistic, nonjudgmental support, they develop higher parenting confidence, stronger peer networks, and healthier parent-child interactions.¹

As you explore the Curiosity Deck with young parents, remember to recognize the unique strengths young parents bring to their journey.

Regardless of age, young parents are **capable of sharing a strong bond** with their children. They take on significant responsibility early and work hard to care for their children.

Many young parents are **driven to build a stable and healthy future** for their family. Parenthood can be a catalyst for growth, helping them focus on their educational and career goals.^{2,3}

Young parents have the **right to make their own choices** about their bodies, health, and families. By honoring their autonomy and being a supportive partner, you can create a trusting relationship to help them thrive.

Scan to hear Divine, a young parent, as she reflects on what she wishes her postpartum journey had been:



Start the conversation

Share a Curiosity Deck with a young parent. Explore the deck together and open the conversation.

Introduce the deck:

- During prenatal, postpartum, mental health, or other appointments
- When a young parent seems hesitant to ask questions
- As a take-home resource

How to introduce:

Ask permission and normalize curiosity, like *“Sometimes new parents have questions about their body, emotions, or sex after having a baby. I have a few cards here that cover those things. Do you want to pick one together and talk through it?”*

Follow up:

“Last time, we looked at a card deck about postpartum health for new parents. Did any of them spark a question you’d like to discuss today?”

Best practices:

- Start with what they're interested in. Ask what they already know and want to learn more about.
- Be invitational, not directive. Ask, *"Would you like to talk about..."*
- Give them time to read and reflect on the cards before making decisions.



When they start the conversation

Did a young parent bring you a card or question? Even if you don't have the full deck, listen, affirm, and explore what the topic means to them.

Hear from Divine about how professionals can be there for young parents:



What it means:

They're advocating for themselves and trusting you.

This is powerful.

It means they feel safe enough to speak up, name what they need, and believe you will listen.

How to respond:

Start with an authentic affirmation, like, *"I'm so glad you brought this to talk about. Thank you for trusting me with this."*

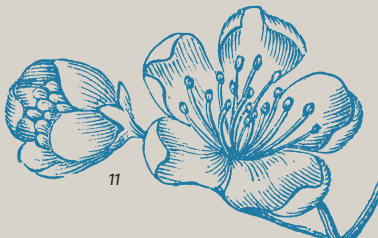


Best practices:

- Be a trusted partner; young parents are often looking for a teammate. You may hold authority in your role, but prioritize what feels right for their life.
- Spend time with the card they chose. Before jumping to a solution, listen to and empathize with the feelings behind their question.
- It's okay not to have all the answers! If a topic is outside your expertise, connect them with a specialist or a trusted resource, and be sure to follow up later.

Self-reflection for professionals

- Am I offering this young parent the same options and respect I would give an older parent?
- Am I focusing on the needs and wants of young parents, or am I pushing my own goals for them (like specific birth control methods)?



Good to keep in mind

- Discuss sex and future pregnancy on *their* terms. Never assume they want or need contraceptives, especially right away. If/when they're ready, share all options and let them choose.
- Believe in young parents' ability to thrive and parent well. Regardless of whether their pregnancy was planned or not, offer the support and space they need to grow into their role as parents.

- See the whole person, beyond their medical needs. Ask about their life, feelings, relationships, and dreams—whether those are about parenting, finishing school, or starting a career. You could ask, *“What is one thing you’re really proud of this week?”*
- Create open communication. Encourage them to share their thoughts in whatever way feels safe. Some may prefer talking, while others might like to write things down or record a voice memo.

Expand the conversation

Gift the Curiosity Deck to a young parent and pass on this guide to another professional.

Broaden young parents' support networks by referring them to supportive professionals you trust, such as case managers, doulas, lactation consultants, mental health professionals, peer mentors, and others. Research shows that referrals to social services help young parents navigate parenthood with more confidence.^{4,5}

Call or message the professional while the young parent is with you, introduce them personally, and follow up to ensure they stay connected.

Listen to how a warm referral kept Kiria and her daughter safe:



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Scan to view the Curiosity Deck, citations, resources, and more:

