

## Aren't I Too Young?

Here I am a typical 16-year-old girl. I know everything. My parents really don't know what they're talking about because it's a new time, new world, new rules. *My* rules.

Getting high, at the very least, seven times a day, once before class in the morning, then at lunch break, afternoon break, after school, and at least twice in the evening. My whole world was getting high. If I found a quarter, the first thought in my mind was, "all I need is another \$4.75 to get a joint." I would search, steal, and lie to get it. I would stay up or go out as late until I found some—day after day, until I got bored. I had to get high to be normal. It wasn't giggly fun anymore, so I upgraded. First it was oil, hash, perks, then mushrooms and ecstasy. I was falling fast into a hole I couldn't pull myself out of alone.

The norm was party hard on the weekend—whatever was the cheapest way to waste away the rest of the crappy week. One week was particularly bad. My parents and I, as usual, were on very different levels of what was acceptable, and there was plenty of arguing. My friend, Nadine, convinced me to go to this party. I agreed. Half-sloshed, I met a guy. His name was Travis. He was older (20), different, and certainly not like all the other guys I knew. We totally hit it off that night, met the next day, and before we knew it, we were dating. Of course, with absolutely no approval from my parents (16-year-old baby of the family dating a 20-year-old guy)! We continued to date. We were both in a difficult place ... lost ... and it was as if we found each other and kept each other from drowning in the mud, like Forrest Gump and Bubba leaning against each other to sleep—we stayed afloat.

He did his military thing and I was in high school. I had no idea what he was doing; I just knew he put on a uniform every Thursday, and we couldn't

hang out. Life went on.

Everything was perfect. I now had someone to talk to, someone to share myself with, someone to party with. All we did together was party or stay at his house and drink and get high and watch movies. Then I'd go home and wait to do it all over again the next day. We didn't really know each other. I think we were both too hurt or too scared to let each other in. Our relationship was satisfactory to our needs and wants. We were sexually active and I knew I wouldn't get pregnant because that only happened to other girls—I was going to finish high school, go to university, and be something great, but that was later—I was just having fun for now.

August 2002. I started getting cramps. I thought for sure it was my appendix or bladder, something hereditary. My doctor ordered an ultrasound. When the nurse stared intently at the screen, I knew something was wrong. I thought something was wrong with my bladder, but she turned the screen around and pointed to a little dot on the screen, "That little squiggly line in the middle of the circle . . . that's a baby, you're pregnant." My heart dropped. I never knew tears could fall from my face so quickly. The first words that came out of my mouth were, "is it too late to have an abortion?" She said, "no." I was only six weeks along. At this point, Travis, my boyfriend and the baby's father, was living in Borden, taking a course for the military to become a mechanic, coming home only on the weekends, staying with me and my parents. I wasn't sure what to say to him. He came home that day—my 17th birthday was that weekend. I blurted out the news with many tears. The amount of sorrow, confusion, and fear was so thick in the air that it felt like a really foggy night with your brights on, unable to see, guessing how to steer. He wasn't shocked. He agreed to support whatever decision I made.

I made the appointment. I was getting an abortion. This was something I had been strongly against, ever since I was a kid, and something I argued against in debates at school and with friends. But, suddenly, everything changed radically.

On the Sunday night I was laying with my mom, hoping to feel comforted. She asked me if I was pregnant, I'm sure hoping I would laugh and tell her she was crazy. I replied "yes." She cried. I cried. We cried. We had a *real* talk for the first time since I was 13. I decided that night I would keep the baby. Travis agreed and we decided to get married in December 2002, finally getting serious about our lives.

The military wouldn't move me until paper work for our marriage went through, so I lived with my parents for another three months. My mother's worst nightmare was coming true—seeing her little girl walk around with a big belly.

Being able to spend time with Travis only on weekends didn't help us get any closer. And I was still getting high all the time, it being the only thing that kept my mind off my belly getting bigger and bigger. I was about to become a *mom!* The most responsibility I had ever had was getting to McDonalds on

time to start work, something with which I struggled! I was so scared—so ill-prepared. I knew nothing. I even failed my high school parenting course! All I was sure about was that I wasn't going to kill an innocent baby—that my baby would grow up to be a person, a friend, a human being.

Shortly before I moved to Borden someone mentioned to me (true or not) that if they found traces of drugs in my baby at birth, the Children's Aid Society would become involved, and they would probably take the baby away. I was so frightened it was as if someone had kicked me in the face. I didn't want to lose my baby. I was starting to feel kicks and be comfortable with the idea of being a mom, excited to meet him or her—this was *my* baby. I had to clean myself up—not for me, but for my child. It was no longer an option! I quit smoking cigarettes, quit smoking weed, and I even stopped swearing!

I finally moved to Borden, Ontario—a military base—near the end of March 2003. I was in a new world that wasn't mine anymore. I didn't know anyone but Travis. Everyone around me was military, something extremely new to me. We lived in a PMQ (married quarters) on base. The only time I got out to do anything was when we started going to our church in North Bay, the church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. The majority of the people in the church were fairly young families. I started to ask a lot of questions, getting feedback from moms that had experience, and reading a lot of magazines and books on parenting. I started learning and continued researching how to be a good mom, but no book could prepare me for an actual baby. At the same time, I found myself getting to know Travis for the first time. We had never done anything recreational, or productive together. It was as if I had started dating my husband! I fell in love with him, and he was a totally different person, a person I admired.

Ryan Joseph Emile Pilon was born May 24th, 2003. After a scare (the cord was around his neck) he was born perfectly healthy and very cute! I was immediately in love with him. I was still very scared, but Travis being the amazing man that he is, helped us develop as a wonderful family.

Travis was transferred to Petawawa, Ontario, so we moved four months after Ryan was born. Another new area, but this time I had Ryan. It no longer felt like I got pregnant and we were just “dealing with it.” This time, it felt like we were starting a family, a little unexpected and very early though, nonetheless, true. I was no longer interested in the life I once led and enjoyed. It was as if someone had pried my eyes open until I was willing to see, and then thanked them for helping me to see, forever indebted and grateful. That person was God.

We decided after Ryan was about nine months old to have another child and so we started trying. I soon learned through a friend at church that there was a young parent support program in the area that offered free childcare and available courses to complete high school. I jumped at the opportunity and started the program. I met people my age and learned about the area and the support and help available to me as a mom.

I saw a lot of girls still living “the life” *with* children, ultimately pushing their child aside to please themselves—getting nothing but brief moments of fake happiness with others, while their child was learning how to say “mommy,” learning how to walk, read, smile, and giggle with someone else. I knew from that moment on I would try my best to be fully dedicated to my son Ryan, and to my future children, giving them the most memorable childhood I was able to give ... remembering that *mom* was there.

Soon after we had a baby girl—Jordan Morgan Jean Pilon, born on April 27th, 2005. There was now chaos in our little house, with a few new friends from church and school that visited and helped.

We had been clean from everything since I was four months pregnant with Ryan, and counting. We had a family and we were embracing it. We enjoyed our moments together, creating more, moving past the hard days or weeks, learning.

We were invited to the Dominican Republic for Travis’s brother’s wedding in January 2006. We gratefully attended that wedding and returned home with yet another blessing, although this particular pregnancy was not all ribbons and lace. The summer following was extremely trying on our marriage and we went through a very rough patch. But the worst is over and we are recovering beautifully with the help of family and friends, and first and foremost, God.

We just gave birth to another baby girl, Skyra Jessie Michaela Pilon, on November 9th, 2006. Absolutely gorgeous and a true blessing to our family and marriage.

I look at my son, now almost four years old, and I will never be able to thank my mom enough for talking with me that night and, in a way, smacking me upside the head. The way his perfect, little, innocent face looks at me and says “mommy ... I love you” makes me so unbelievably grateful that decided to “keep the baby.” My life would not be the same without them—all my children. My life.