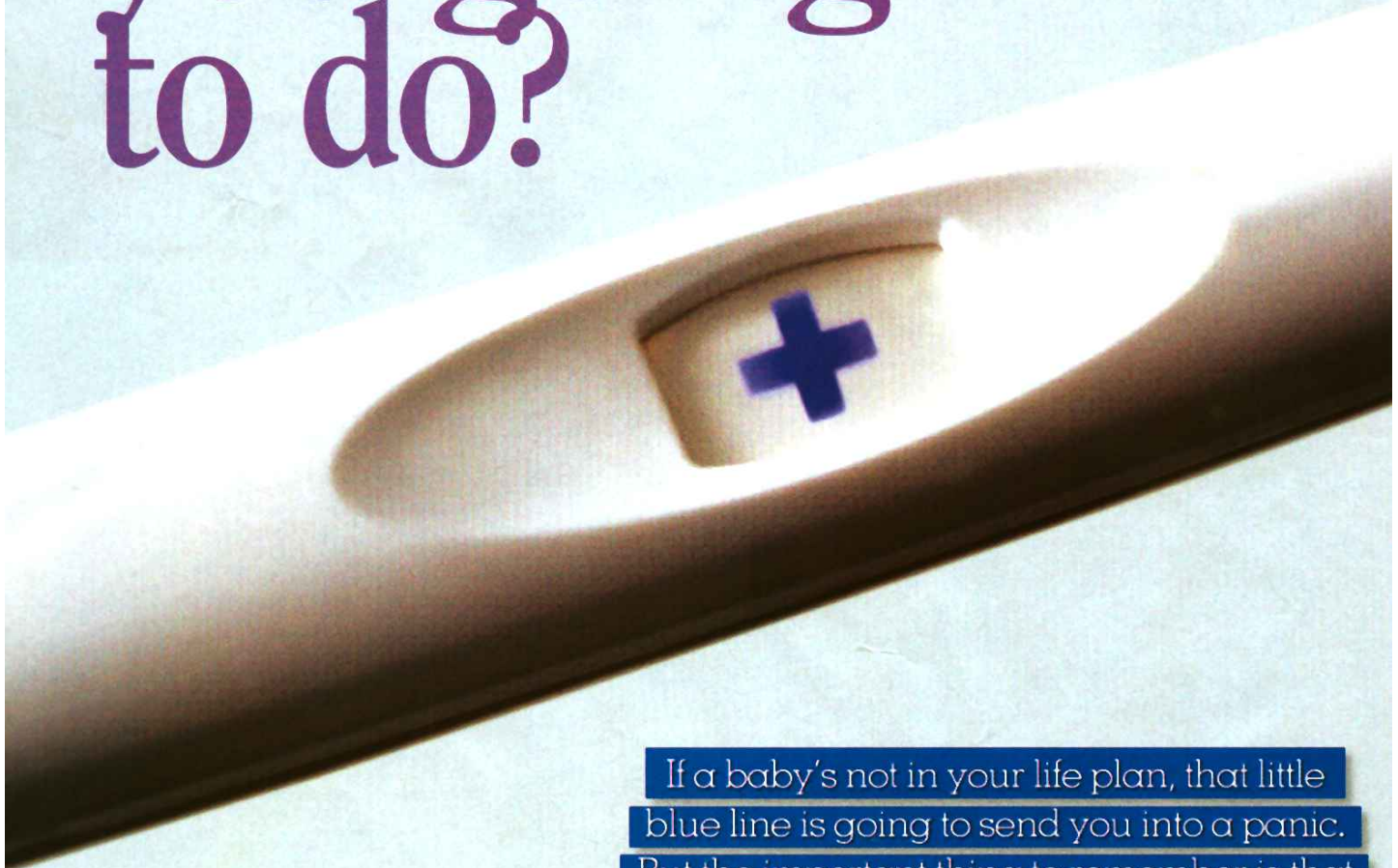


Pregnant!

Now what are
you going
to do?



If a baby's not in your life plan, that little blue line is going to send you into a panic. But the important thing to remember is that you've got choices. We talk to three young Kiwi women who each made a different decision about their pregnancy.

Decision #1: Abortion

Emma*, 20, chose to have an abortion when she found out she was pregnant a few months ago.

THE GUY

I met Paul* when I was dropping my boyfriend off at tech. We started talking and I liked him straight away – he was so funny and we had so much in common. Paul lived in another town and after speaking to him on the phone for a few weeks, I decided it was time to take things further with him. I broke up with my boyfriend and would drive to see Paul every weekend. We had so much fun together. I had just gone back on the progesterone-only pill, which you have to take for at least seven days before it effectively stops ovulation. I didn't realise just how important those seven days were. We started having sex and after four or five weeks I decided to move to his home town.

THE BREAK-UP

While we were arranging the move, I didn't visit him for a few weeks because I was saving money, but I began to notice that he was becoming really distant. Eventually I confronted him and his reply was he thought we were moving too fast and that we should just be friends. I drove back home heartbroken.

THE TWO LINES

A week later I was still feeling hurt and trying to get myself together and I was due to

get my period. I was never late and knew exactly when to expect it, but I waited and waited and it never came. After a week of waiting I went to buy a pregnancy test. Two little lines appeared on the stick... it felt unreal. I couldn't quite believe it.

THE DECISION

My first thoughts were happy and I felt almost excited, then I started crying and freaking out. I couldn't tell my parents – my dad would not only kill Paul but he would be so disappointed in me. The next day I told Paul and his reply was, "You have to have an abortion. It will ruin my life. I don't want kids." That really hit home and I got angry, although I had to understand he was probably just as scared as I was. I felt like it



places and I was only just getting my feet on the ground as an adult – there was no way I could have been the mother I wanted to be at this age.

"I felt overwhelming sadness, but also relief that it was all over."

was my fault and that no one would understand. Most of all I felt embarrassed that I had been so stupid. I had a lot of thinking to do. Eventually Paul and I decided on abortion. At first I made the decision because I felt I had to, but eventually I realised it was the best option – I had just started an amazing job that was going to take me

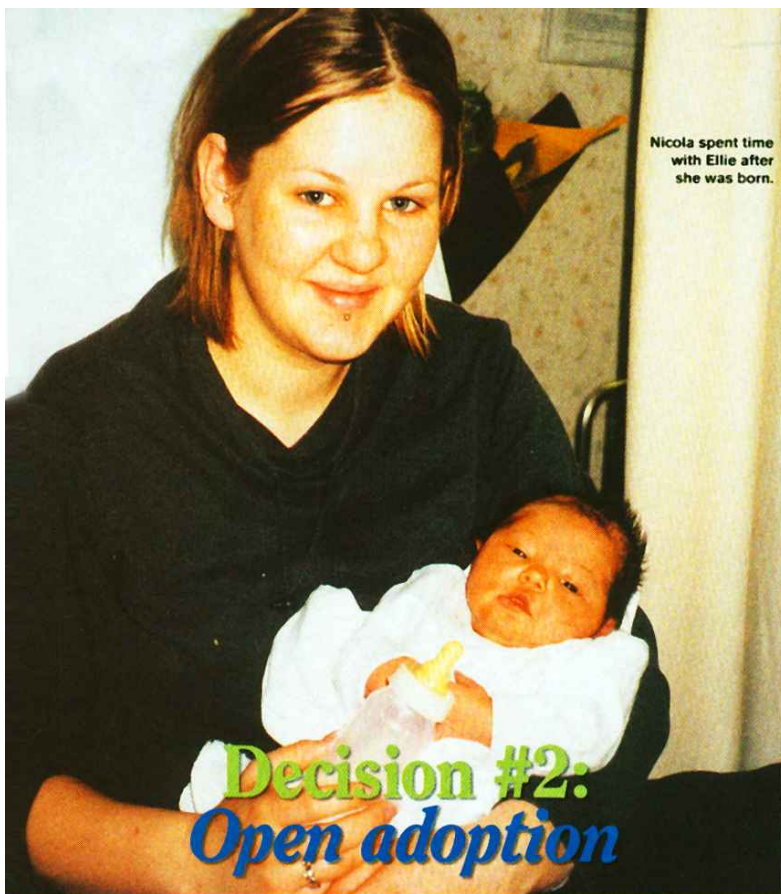
THE DAY

My hospital appointment finally happened when I was 11 weeks pregnant. When I arrived and saw all the girls in the waiting room, all there for the same reason. I didn't feel so alone. But when they put the drip in my arm and gave me the drugs, I felt shaky and nervous. Then I was taken into theatre. Once it was over (it didn't take very long) I was disorientated

and burst out crying. I couldn't stop. My body was shaking and I felt overwhelming sadness, but also relief that it was all over. I was sore afterwards and felt dozy and upset – I would just randomly cry and feel down and not know why. I haven't spoken to Paul since the day of the termination. It's been a month now and I'm happy I did it. I'm happy my youth is still my own and I'm not tied to a man who isn't going to love me for the rest of my life. It's a horrible experience and I wouldn't wish it on anyone but everyone has freedom of choice and in this case it was the best life decision I have made. I do not regret it at all.

**Names have been changed. →*

For more information on abortions in New Zealand, head to www.fpanz.org.nz



Nicola spent time with Ellie after she was born.

Decision #2: Open adoption

Nicola, 22, gave up her daughter Ellie, now four-and-a-half, for open adoption.

THE REALISATION

I was a typical 18-year-old girl – I was never home, always with friends, and I looked forward to the weekends so that I could hang out, drink and have fun. I thought life was great until I discovered I was pregnant. My first thought was, 'Could I really handle the responsibility of raising a child without the father?' I wasn't married. I didn't have a steady job, and I wanted my child to have a devoted mother and father who could spend lots of time with him or her. I was just out of polytechnic, where I had trained to become a chef, and I had so many things I wanted to do. I couldn't picture doing them while raising a child. I was freaking out. I didn't want to face the possibility of being pregnant.

THE DECISION

After taking a pregnancy test which, of course, was positive, my mother made an appointment for me to get a scan to check how far along I was. The tech looked at the screen and determined I was 35 weeks... seven months! I was freaking out. The next scariest thing was telling my friends about what was going on. I remember lying in bed at night wondering what people were going to think of me and how they were going to judge me because of my decision to adopt. I went alone to meet with a midwife, and explained to her my interest in adoption. She had a friend who had placed her daughter for adoption, and she soothed my fears. After searching the Yellow Pages for an adoption

agency, I finally found out that Child, Youth and Family (CYF) deal with adoptions. I called their number and things moved quickly after that. They sent me a package with forms to fill out on things like family history and information about me, and they told me to set up my first appointment.

I knew nothing about the "open" part of adoption at that point but being able to choose the couple who would adopt my baby sounded more appealing than a closed adoption.

THE FAMILY

When I went to my third appointment at the agency, my counsellor gave me full profiles on five families. I chose the adoptive parents about two weeks before my daughter was born. They had everything that I was looking for – they didn't have any kids yet, they went to church, liked to go camping, were very close to their families, and lived in the country.

THE BIRTH

I woke up in September with a funny feeling in my tummy. I arrived at the hospital around 8pm and gave birth to Courtney Leigh (Ellie's birth name) at 6:40am with no drugs. She weighed 7lbs, 5oz (3.3kg). I changed her, fed her, woke up with her, and went to sleep with her. I cannot really describe the emotions I was feeling – I was so happy to see Courtney Leigh in my arms, but yet sad at the same time. I knew that in a couple of days she would be going to

a foster home. When we left hospital I was allowed to take her out for the day before we dropped her off at her foster house. I decided not to sign the form to hand her over until my parents were back from holiday, so they could meet her while she was still mine.

THE AFTERMATH

Those first few days were extremely hard. I felt so confused and sad. But after a few days I started getting up and moving around and doing things. During that first week of being home, I went in for my first grief counselling at CYF. At that session I reflected about what had happened. I told my counsellor that it felt like a very surreal experience. I said to her, 'You go to the hospital being pregnant, do all the work, but do not end up going home with the prize.' A month after Ellie was born I had a visit with her family. That opened up the relationship between myself and them. We have visits, phone calls, emails, cards and all the normal family stuff. Ellie is now almost four, and so far, things are going better than I expected. I am very lucky. I found two people who have kept their promises to me, have included me in their life, and have allowed me the joy of watching Ellie grow up. I do not regret my decision and I wouldn't trade having them in my life for anything.

The Adoption Option Trust was established in 2005 to promote adoption as an option for unexpected pregnancy. Head to www.adoptionoption.org.nz for more information.

Decision #3: *Keeping the baby*

Fashion designer Sera Lilly, 22, fell pregnant at 17. Her daughter is now five.

THE SHOCK

I fell pregnant when I had just turned 17 and started at a new school. It was really unplanned (I don't think anyone plans it at that age!) and I remember I was quite scared but kind of excited at the same time. It was more like a shock thing – I didn't really realise at the time that you actually get a child. It sounds funny, but you think 'I'm going to have a baby'. You don't realise that you are going to have this responsibility for 15, 17 or 20 years.

THE DECISION

After I found out, I told my parents. Mum and Dad said they'd support me in whatever I wanted to do and I spoke to counsellors who gave me all my options, such as termination, adoption and keeping the baby. It wasn't a really hard decision for me. I thought 'I can't really not have it, but the hard part was telling my parents I wanted to keep it. The baby's father was not supportive at all. I guess we were both young and it's easier for guys to say 'don't have it' because they're not actually the ones who are pregnant. They don't feel the same emotional aspects of it that women do.

THE PREGNANCY

After I made my decision I had a really easy pregnancy. When I was four months along I signed up to do a make-up artistry course so I was really focused on that and didn't

mind too much about not going out drinking with my mates – I've never been a big drinker anyway. I did get some odd looks because I was so young but I think when it's a baby, what can you really do? Mum and Dad were really supportive and excited.

THE BIRTH

I didn't really think about giving birth until it was happening. I didn't go to parenting classes or anything, and I wasn't one of those mothers who had the textbooks and made decisions on how I wanted it to go. I was planning it with my mid-wife and she said, 'You don't know what's going to happen,' and I was just like, 'Can you get it out as soon as possible?' I don't think I really comprehended what was going to happen. Luckily it was a really easy labour, it only took an hour and a half until Stella was born.

"I'm glad I made the decision to keep Stella. I love her more than life itself."

THE BABY

The first couple of weeks were hard. Because of my age I didn't have a car so I couldn't really go out and do anything. I think that's when it sunk in that I had a baby and I couldn't just go to Mission Bay for a coffee with my friends. But she



Sera Lilly decided to raise her daughter Stella.

was a really good baby. She slept a lot so I did get to go out on a few Saturday nights with my friends, but I was constantly worrying about her. Stella definitely made me grow up quite fast.

and now I have my own label and shop on Ponsonby Road in Auckland. I'm definitely glad I made the decision to keep Stella. I love her more than life itself. She's five now and has just started school. I've just had my second child, Kingston (a little boy), and am getting married next year to a gorgeous guy, Maka, who Stella calls dad. I wouldn't change a thing. By the time I'm 30 I'd like to have two more shops in New Zealand and possibly have showed at Australian Fashion Week. If I could give advice to other young mothers it would be to decide for yourself, regardless of what other people want, because there is nothing worse than regretting your decision. It's not that hard to have a baby. Life does go on.

THE YEARS AFTER

After I had her, I stayed at home for two years and starting designing clothes, but I didn't think it would go anywhere. Then I enrolled to do a Diploma of Fashion at AUT, won some competitions,