

Challenges Young Moms Face in Eldorado Park

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Many young mothers in Eldorado Park face the challenges of raising children while dealing with poverty, unstable homes, lack of support, and limited opportunities. Some become mothers at a young age after growing up in homes affected by conflict, substance use, abuse, and a lack of basic necessities. For young women between the ages of 13 and 35, these circumstances can make the responsibilities of motherhood even more difficult.

Some young girls grow up without enough food, clothing, stability, love, or parental support. The environment they are exposed to can shape how they understand relationships, family, and their future.

In communities where gender-based violence (GBV) is common, violence can eventually become seen as normal. Some young women may also find themselves in abusive relationships or relationships with older men because they are looking for financial support, a place to stay, or a sense of love and security.

Education is an important part of changing these circumstances. Some young mothers lack the education, independence, and self-confidence needed to manage the challenges they face. Without opportunities to learn and develop themselves, it can be difficult for them to imagine a different future or make choices outside the circumstances they have grown up in.

Financial instability is another major challenge, particularly when the father of the child is no longer involved.

A young mother may be left carrying the responsibility of raising a child while she is still trying to understand motherhood herself. When she is unemployed and struggling to provide food and other basic needs, the pressure can become overwhelming.

Emotional support is also important. Many young mothers are not mentally or emotionally prepared for motherhood and may not know what it takes to raise a child. Without support from their families or communities, they are forced to go through the journey of motherhood while dealing with their own difficulties.

The lack of documentation for children can add further pressure. For a young mother who is already struggling financially, dealing with a child's documentation can create additional stress. These challenges can leave young mothers feeling trapped in difficult circumstances.

Self-love and confidence can help young mothers recognise situations that may place them at further risk. Financial hardship and the need for emotional support can make some vulnerable to relationships with older men. Some may seek these relationships

because they have not experienced healthy love or do not know what a healthy relationship looks like.

Parents and communities therefore have an important role to play in supporting young girls and young mothers. Parents can help young people understand the importance of education, while communities can support families and create opportunities for young mothers and children. Supporting young people can help build a future in which more children have the opportunity to become doctors, teachers and other professionals.

Ntombi Shabalala shared her experience of becoming a mother at the age of 16. She said she was not mentally or emotionally prepared for motherhood and that her family did not have space for a new person. She was still in school and was scared to tell her mother, who worked as a domestic worker. The family was already struggling financially, and she said that at the time she felt so overwhelmed that she wished the child would die.

Eventually, Shabalala gave birth, but motherhood changed her life. She could no longer do many of the things she used to do or spend as much time with her friends. She said some of their parents believed that she would influence their children to become sexually active and have babies.

Another woman, who asked to remain anonymous, became pregnant with her first child at the age of 20, two months before her 21st birthday. She said becoming a mother changed her life and emotions. She became angry because she had her own plans and dreams, but these had to be put on hold for a long time because of the responsibility of being a mother.

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