

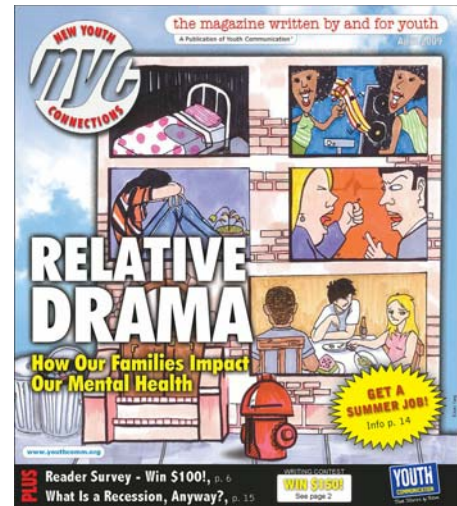
Tips for Teachers

April, 2009 *New Youth Connections*

www.youthcomm.org

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Note: Tips for Teachers is available at youthcomm.org and by e-mail. To subscribe to Tips, please send your email to lchan@youthcomm.org with “Tips subscribe” in the subject line.



Complete the Reader Survey: Win \$100

Please encourage your students to fill out our annual reader survey (page 6). They can win up to \$100 and help us improve the magazine. They can also complete the survey online at Survey Monkey: www.surveymonkey.com/NYCteen2009.

Apply for Our Summer Writing Workshop: Win \$1,200 Scholarship

We're offering full scholarships, worth \$1,200, to each of 10 teens accepted to our summer writing workshop, which will run Mon-Thurs, July 6-Aug. 13 (see ad on p. 24). This will be our 30th summer writing workshop. It's very rigorous but also lots of fun. Teens get a chance to work one-on-one with our two full time professional NYC editors and to bond with a great group of peers.

Enter Writing Contest: Win \$150

We have two writing contests (p. 3). They're great for motivating teens to improve their essay writing. See below for details and lessons to accompany the contests.

Sign up for a Summer Job

The Federal stimulus money makes it likely that New York will add about 10,000 summer jobs for teens this year (from 40,000 to 50,000), making it easier to get a job than in the past. Point students to page 14 for information about how to apply.

Lesson Ideas for the April Issue

Health Teachers: MySpace Activities

The New York City Department of Health created a fake page on MySpace in which actors portray real teens dealing with issues such as anger, abusive relationships, drugs, and depression. The site is: www.nycteenmindspace.org. There are seven “teens” on the

site. Each teen's individual site includes realistic video blogs in which they talk about mental health problems and stresses they face.

The first page of the site also includes links to information on teen dating violence, stress, depression, peer pressure, anger, and taking risks. Our writer, Boubacar Diallo, liked the profiles and thought they were helpful. (See "Fake Teens, Real Problems on MySpace," p. 7.)

Activity idea #1:

Go to the site, see the kinds of information it has, and develop your own activity based on topics you are currently covering.

Activity idea #2:

1. *Write a brief profile:* Tell students to go to the site and pick one of the teens. Click through to that teen's page and watch each of their videos. Based on the videos, on the front side of a piece of paper write a half-page profile of the challenge or problem this teen faces.
2. *Take the quiz:* Tell the teens to take the quiz. They should record their score and report back to you (e.g., 3 out of 5 correct).
3. *Write a letter:* On the back of the sheet of paper they should write a letter to one of the teens advising them on how to deal with their problem.
4. *Extra credit:* Go to one of the pages under Get the Facts and learn about dating violence, anger, depression, etc. Write a half-page description of what you learned.

Bullying Story & Activity

Anxious and Alone, by Anonymous, pp. 12-13.

1. *Discussion (before reading the story):* Ask students a series of questions to start a discussion about bullying:
 - Were you ever bullied, or did you know someone who was?
 - How did it make you feel? (Did you ever feel unsafe? Did it ever make you skip school or another activity? Did it have an effect on your physical or mental health? How?)
 - How did the bullying end? Did an adult intervene?
 - Is bullying really that harmful? (The answer to this question is "It depends." And it depends on a lot of factors, like how aggressive the bully is, how vulnerable the victim is, how long it takes someone to notice and put a stop to it, etc.)

2. *Read story:* Tell the class to read “Anxious and Alone,” on pages 12 and 13. Tell them you’re going to want to talk about this writer’s experience of being bullied: How harmful was it to this writer? (Note: There is no single bully in this story: The writer seems to have been the kind of kid who attracts abuse.)

3. *Discussion:* Ask students why they think this young person was victimized. (The author herself suggests it’s because she was quieter and more focused on school than her peers, and that it was made worse because she appeared anxious. Are people who appear meek more likely to be bullied? Why might this be? What do they think about this?)

--What could have been done to interrupt the author’s situation? By adults? By peers?

--How did being bullied affect the writer? Was it serious?

--What helped her? (Talking with parents; going to therapy; changing schools.)

4. *Brief writing or discussion activity:* Tell the students that they are observers in the writer’s elementary school. They’ve been brought in because the principal knows there is a problem but can’t figure out what it is or how to address it. They should write a “report” to the principal telling them what they have observed and how the school can intervene to help the writer.

Writing Contest #195—Win \$150!

Deadline: May 11, 2009

Contest question: Write a letter telling President Obama how the recession has affected you, a friend, or a family member, or about what worries you most about the economy. How do you think he could help families like yours?

1. *Warm-up:* Hand out the April 2009 *New Youth Connections* and ask the group to turn to page 15, where Christina Gee offers a cartoon interpretation of what a recession is and how it is affecting her. Here are some discussion prompts:

- What changed about Christina’s job over the past year?
- How would you describe her attitude about the economy at the start of the cartoon? Does it change by the end?
- What is her attitude toward President Obama?

2. *Discussion:* Ask your group what they understand about the economic crisis. Do they know anyone who has lost a job, taken a pay cut, had to move, leave school, cut back on necessities like food or medicine, or put off buying something? Have any stores or businesses closed in their neighborhood or near their school? Do they know anyone who has had troubles with a mortgage or lost a home? Have they heard their parents or other adults discussing issues like these? (You can list these items on the board before you address the group.) Let the discussion go for about five minutes.

3. *More discussion:* Then ask them if they have any concerns about the next two years of their life. Are they planning on starting college, going to a trade school, joining the armed forces, getting a job straight out of high school, etc?

Lead another 5-minute discussion.

4. *Solutions:* Ask them to name things they think President Obama can do about helping people keep or find jobs. Write three or four reasonable responses on the board and add one or two of your own.

5. *Write the essay:* Then ask them to write letters to the president, using these ideas or others in their letters. Require them to include at least one example of how something they think the president can do will help them, their family, or someone they know.

6. *Enter the contest:* Send completed essays to: Youth Communication, 224 W. 29th St., 2nd fl, NYC 10001.

Writing Contest #196—Win \$150

Deadline: June 29, 2009 [Note the late deadline. This is a great activity for the last few days of school, when you still have students, but there's not a lot to do.]

Do you ever feel like you lead a double life, or have more than one personality? Write about a time or situation that shows how you've sometimes acted differently depending on who you were with.

One of the things the teens should take away is that it is normal for people not to be consistent in their behavior or to act out every emotion they have.

1. Write these situations and places on the board:

In class (in school)

At home with family

At an after school program

Hanging out with friends

Working

Playing sports

Being frisked by the cops

Coming in way after curfew to mom

At church or other religious place

At a club or party

Write these aspects of behavior on the board:

Language (e.g., formal or casual, cursing or not, etc.)

Dress

Talking (volume, amount, subjects)

Feelings

2. *Discussion*: Have students look at the lists and talk briefly about how they behave differently or play different “roles” in different settings.

3. *Read “Too Nice for My Own Good,”* by Orubba Almansouri, page 5—and *Discuss*
Ask someone to read aloud the two paragraphs under the subhead “Private Tears.” The first paragraph describes her public reaction to the slap, while the second describes her crying in her room afterward. Say to the group that this is an example of acting differently depending on the circumstances. (The first sentence might raise some questions about the slap. If so read the section above the subhead to satisfy any curiosity.)

3. *Mad Libs*: Ask them to name some important people in their lives (these should be generic labels: parent, aunt, uncle, friends, family, teacher, church member, coach, boss). Then ask them to complete one or more of these sentences (have them already written on the board):

____ Name _____ thinks I am ____ adjective _____

but he/she doesn’t know that I am sometime real ____ adjective _____.

For example, I once _____.

4. *Freewrite*: After they complete a sentence, ask them to free write about the sentence they completed for 3-5 minutes. Tell them that free writing means they can write anything that comes to mind; the only rule is that they can’t stop writing.

5. *Enter the contest*: Teens should now have enough information to write a contest entry. Send them to us at: Youth Communication, 224 W. 29th St., 2nd fl, NYC 10001.

Getting Help/Building a Support System

In This Together, by Shameeka Dowling, p. 3

We all need a support system when things go wrong. Sometimes we’re not consciously aware of the people we depend on, and who we would turn to in times of need. This activity will help teens identify those people.

1. *Discussion*: Ask teens who they would talk to if they needed help in the following areas (write these on the board):

- Homework
- Boyfriend/girlfriend problems
- Getting a job
- Feeling low
- Money

- Getting health care
- Death of a loved one
- Getting information about college

2. *Read story*, “In This Together,” p. 3. Tell the students that they are going to read a story by a teen who draws strength and support from her family, and who really needed it when two family members died. Read story aloud, or have students read it silently.

3. *Discuss*: Ask students to name the people who supported Shameeka. (Grandpa, Grandma, crazy cousins and aunts, et al). Who does Shameeka support? (Her sisters?)

4. *Support structure activity*: Point out that Shameeka is lucky to have the support of a large family. Not everyone does. But we all have some people who support us. Ask students to look at the illustration for the story. Tell them to write their own name on the top person. Then, tell them to look at the categories on the board (homework, etc.). Ask them to write the name of one person inside of each figure in the illustration, and how that person is helpful to them.

5. *Discussion*: Ask for volunteers to name people support them. If they are comfortable, ask them to say what the person does.

Note: As you walk around the room, notice if some teens have a very hard time finding people to put in the “support structure.” Consider talking to them afterwards to find out if they have the support they need.

Optional: Have students write a letter to Shameeka telling her about their support system.

Ask the students how and when they provide support.

Stopping Sexual Abuse

Alone with My Abuser, p. 22-23

This is a very difficult story to read, and is somewhat graphic (about masturbation) in the beginning. Read it first before using it with your class to be sure they are mature enough to handle it. If you decide to read it, here are some things to think about.

--Many abused children are afraid to tell because they think they will “ruin” the family, as did this writer. But when she tells, things improve. Why? (Because her mother believes her and takes action.)

--In what ways does speaking out turn out to be difficult or troubling for the writer? (Her stepfather swallows pills; her sister cries for her dad; she has to repeat her story many times.) Does she feel speaking out was the right decision nonetheless? Why?

(Yes, because she protected her sister and herself; she was proud to be the one who spoke out when others didn't)

--By telling, does the writer protect just herself, or others too? (Her younger sister; other potential victims of same abuser)

--The writer thinks her stepfather did a horrible thing, but she still has some affection for the good things he provided for her. Is it possible to have such divided feelings about a person?

--At the end of the story, the writer says, "Silence will never again be an option." Underscore this for your class. (Sexual abuse is far more widespread than most people acknowledge, and all too often the silence of the victim—and sometimes people around her or him—allow it to continue. This story can help victims break the silence.)