



# Tips for Teachers

A Guide for Using *New Youth Connections* in Schools and After-School Programs

January/February 2009

## IN THIS ISSUE

### Writing Contest #193—Win \$150!

Deadline: February 16, 2009

**Contest question #193:** Write a letter to your parents telling them what's going on in your life that they should know about—but don't.

**1. Introduction:** Note: This is one of the most popular contests. It's a great way to get kids writing—especially students who are often resistant to writing.

Tell your group that they have chance to win cash prizes for submitting contest entries. Tell them that many of the letters for this contest reveal private information so the essays will be published anonymously, and we'll change details to conceal the writer's identity. The winners' names will be chosen at random.

PS: If you send a class set please make sure each entry has a name and address. (The name and address should be on a separate piece of paper so we can place them in a hat from which we draw the winners.)

Please tell your students that the letters need not be about dramatic or sensational situations like contracting AIDS or contemplating suicide. Any situation or feeling can produce a letter that's likely to be published: breaking a plate, anger about not getting a gift, cutting a class, unspoken love for the parent or a sibling. On a humorous note, one year we published a letter from a son confessing that he was a

Martian. (NOTE: Some of the young people in your class or group may not be living with their biological parents. Remind everyone that they can write a letter to a guardian as well.)

**2. Warm-up discussion:** Why don't we tell our parents everything? Ask your students, "What are some reasons for NOT telling your parents everything that's going on in your life?" (Possible answers might include "to stay out of trouble," "because they wouldn't understand," "I need privacy," "I don't know what I want yet," "I don't know how to say it right.")

Ask them, "What things in general are teens reluctant to tell their parents?" List their answers on the board.

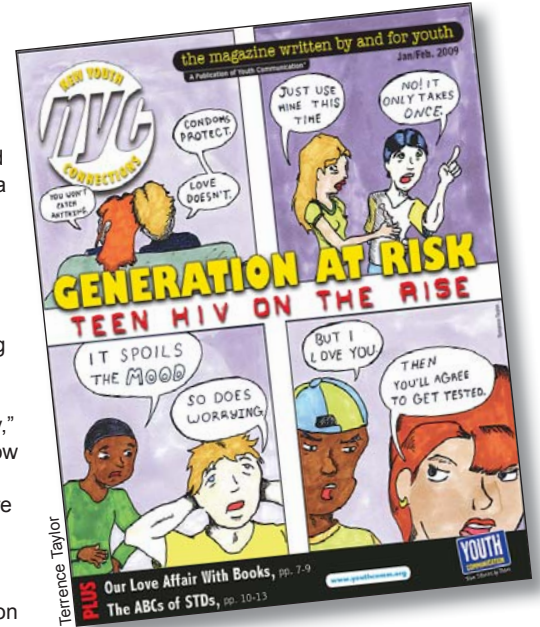
**3. List of secrets:** Next, ask them to list on a piece of paper as many "secret" things as they can, while assuring them that nobody will see any of the items except the one they finally choose to write about. You might want to list some of your own "secrets" you kept from your parents when you were a teenager (sneaking out at night, seeing the boy/girl they told you not to see, discovering your sexual orientation, dreaming of a career that no one thought you could have, wanting to change your name, etc.).

**4. Choose one to write about:** Now, they look at the list, and choose the one item that gets to them the most. And for that one they should ask, "Why don't my parents know this? What stops me from telling them? Why SHOULD my parents know this? Have I kept it from them for their sake, or for my sake? Would it comfort me, in an ideal world, to have them know? Why? Do I need their help, their protection or advice, or do I need them to step aside and let me be?"

Maybe the scariest one isn't the one the parents should know about, not right now. In that case, they can move along the list until they reach something that feels right. In either case, when they answer the above questions, they'll have the core of their letters.

**5. First sentences to get them going:** It might also help to give them some first sentence ideas. Here is a list from previous letters.

- I'm writing you this letter to confront you about how I am feeling.
- This is something that you never knew.



- There is something I would like to tell you.
- Ma, I am writing this letter to let you know all the things I did that you didn't know about.
- First of all, I want to say, "I love you."
- I have been more or less honest with you all my life.
- I guess I'd like to think that I tell you everything but...

### Writing Contest #194—Win \$150

Deadline: March 30, 2009

**Contest Question #194: What does it mean to do the right thing?** Pick *one* of the following words and describe a time you, or someone you know, acted on it, and how things turned out: Loyalty \* Courage \* Compassion \* Honesty \* Fairness \* Generosity \* Faith \* Forgiveness

#### 1. Win this Contest! (appeal to the judges)

Remind your students that *fellow teens* read and judge all the entries. Their essays need to appeal to people just like them (not to teachers, for example).

**2. Brainstorming:** On the board, write the contest question and the eight words. As a group, briefly review each of the words and what they mean to the students. For example, loyalty could mean sticking up for a long-time friend who is ostracized from the group. Or it could

**Tips for Teachers** is written for the bulk subscribers to *New Youth Connections* to help them use the magazine more effectively with teens in their classes and programs.

For more information, contact:  
**Youth Communication**  
224 W. 29th St., 2nd fl.,  
New York, NY 10001  
212-279-0708 ext.100  
youthcomm.org

Tips for Teachers is also available on our website at:  
**www.youthcomm.org**

mean not snitching on someone who committed a crime. Courage could mean withstanding peer pressure to have sex, or it could mean going against your parents' rules and having sex, or it could mean telling your partner to wear a condom.

Let students define the meaning of the terms for themselves; don't judge their definitions or examples. We're running this contest to try to get a sense of how *teens* define these terms in action.

**3. Pre-writing:** Ask each student to pick a word that calls to mind an event from his or her life or that of a friend or relative and write the word at the top of the page.

Then students should make notes to themselves about the event. Here are a couple of suggestions for getting started.

*The five Ws and the H:* Have students write these words down the left side of the page:  
Who  
What  
Where  
When  
Why  
How

For each word, they should write everything they can think of about the event, such as all the people involved (who), where it happened, etc.

*Senses:* They can make a separate list using the five senses:

Smell  
Sight  
Taste  
Touch  
Hearing

For each sense they should write something about the event, e.g., "I could smell the cigarette smoke in the room...."

*Highlight the conflict:* Most of the things we do each day are not "right" or "wrong." Going to McDonalds is not "doing the right thing" com-

pared to going to Burger King. When we "do the right thing" it is usually implied, at least, that there was another course of action we could have taken that would *not* have been the right thing.

Ask students to write down the *right thing* the person did, and the *wrong thing* they might have done. Then, ask them to write some of the possible *benefits* of doing the wrong thing. For example, if the "wrong thing" would have been just have sex without the condom, the benefits might be that you wouldn't have to confront your boyfriend (and risk losing him). You wouldn't have to have a discussion about sex; you could just do it. You wouldn't have to argue about whether you loved him, or whether he was "clean."

Tell students that showing how someone was tempted to do the wrong thing, or how doing the wrong thing would have been easier, or more lucrative, for example, will make the fact that they did the right thing seem more impressive.

**4. Write the essay.** Tell the students that with their 5Ws and the H, the sensory descriptions, and the conflict, they have all the ingredients of a good essay.

Many students can now just begin writing. For students who need more help, you can suggest an outline:

*Beginning:* Name the word and what it means to you.

*Middle:* First, describe the scene in which they or their friend act on the word (e.g., at a table in the cafeteria; in a bedroom). Then describe the conflict. Imagine what the person was thinking; what temptations there were to do the wrong thing. Finally, describe how the person did the right thing.

*End:* Describe how you felt about doing the right thing (or about your friend doing the right thing). Did it make you feel proud? Relieved? Any regrets? Would you do it again?

## The "Runaround HIV Transmission" Activity

**Aims:** To assess teens' awareness of how HIV is transmitted. To encourage group members to think about a variety of transmission routes.

### Story to use: "What Do We Need to Know?" p. 23

**1. Before the activity:** Get two large pieces of paper (easel pad paper, for example). Mark one 'STRONGLY AGREE' and the other 'STRONGLY DISAGREE'. Attach to opposite sides of your room. Read the true/false questions and answers below to yourself.

**2. Introduce the activity:** Tell your group that some people are confused about how HIV/AIDS is spread. They are going to read three short interviews of people who know a lot about how HIV/AIDS is transmitted. But before they do that you want to see what people in the group think about some statements.

Point out the signs. Explain that you will read a series of statements. After each statement, each person is to consider whether they agree or disagree with it, and move to the appropriate side. It's OK to stay in the middle if they are uncertain.

**3. The activity:** Read the first statement. Once everyone has moved to their sign, ask for a volunteer from the "Agree" group to state why he or she is standing where there. Do the same for the "Disagree" group. Then read the corresponding answer from the answer sheet below.

Repeat the procedure with as many statements as time allows.

Re-assemble as a group and hand out the *New Youth Connections* issue. Ask them to turn to page 23, the story headlined "What Do We Need to Know?" Depending on your group you can read the interviews aloud or have them read it silently. After that ask each individual to identify one piece of information they are confused about. Ask members of the group to clarify the issues involved and intervene yourself where necessary.

**4. Conclusion:** Tell your group they are always welcome to ask you questions outside the group meetings. Ask them to turn to page 17. Point out the list of health resources for young people. Tell them that these groups can answer their questions and provide them with confidential medical and counseling services.

### True/False Question Sheet

1. If you stick with one partner you won't become infected with HIV.
2. If you have sex with people who look healthy, you won't get HIV.
3. If you only have sex with people you know, you won't become infected with HIV.
4. You can become infected with HIV from kissing.
5. A man can become infected with HIV if he has oral sex with a woman.
6. A woman can become infected with HIV if she has oral sex with a man.

## Get More Teaching Resources at the Youth Communication Website ([www.youthcomm.org](http://www.youthcomm.org))

- You can order dozens of books and teacher guides on topics your students are interested in.

- You can download over 250 stories from past issues of *New Youth Connections* and *Represent: The Voice of Youth in Foster Care*.

- You can download lesson ideas

from past issues of "Tips for Teachers."



- You can find out about writing workshops for young people in foster care.

- You can browse our book and DVD catalog and order from our e-store.

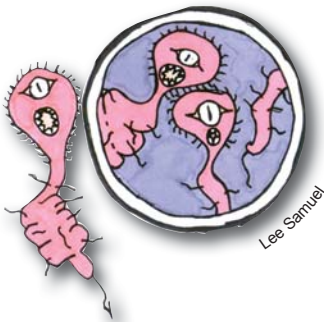
- You can have your students enter our writing contests.

7. Condoms can stop you from becoming infected with HIV.
8. Straight guys never have sex with other men.
9. If you and your partner get tested for HIV and you don't have it, then it's ok to have sex with your partner without a condom.

### True/False Answer Sheet

1. False. This depends on the partners involved, what they did before they met, whether either has unprotected sex outside of the relationship. Monogamy by itself offers no guarantees of safety.
2. False. A person can look healthy but still have HIV.
3. False. Knowing someone well offers no reliable guide to whether or not they are infected with HIV.
4. Depends. There is no evidence of transmission in this way, although kissing with sores or cuts in the mouth may pose some risk.
5. True. HIV is present in cervical and vaginal secretions as well as in (menstrual) blood, so there is the possibility of transmission this way.
6. True. HIV is present in semen and "pre-cum" so there is a possibility of transmission in this way.
7. True. Condoms used properly will help to prevent transmission of HIV from an infected partner to an uninfected partner. Condoms are not 100% safe though. Use a lubricant which is water based because oil based lubricants can weaken the condom. When buying condoms check the "sell by" date.
8. False. Some men who appear to be straight and think of themselves as straight do have sex with other men. They just don't identify themselves as being gay.
9. False. You both can contract HIV on Monday but your partner can contract HIV on Tuesday by not acting responsibly. You and your partner won't know it happened. And remember that not using a condom can expose you to sexually transmitted diseases other than HIV.

▼ Credit: We adapted this lesson with permission from AVERT, an international HIV and AIDS charity based in the United Kingdom, working to avert HIV and AIDS worldwide. Their web site, [avert.org](http://avert.org), contains more lesson plans and other resources.



Lee Samuel



Nelle McKay

### Hepatitis B

### STD Treasure Hunt The ABCs of STDS, pp. 10-13

**Aims:** To educate your group about sexually transmitted diseases and to give teens practice in scanning material for key information.

**Note:** Some of the clues have more than one answer. The last two questions can help you start a discussion about responsible sexuality.



**Before the lesson:** Copy the items in the list below on the blackboard.

#### Set up the treasure hunt:

- Divide class into a few groups of three to four.
- Give each group a single copy of the issue.
- Tell them they're going to have a treasure-hunt competition. Each group will race against the others to find STDs referred to below.

Suggest ways of making their search more efficient: "Mary, you take questions a, b and c and John will take etc. Mary, you write down the answers as we tell them to you."



- Tally the totals after 15-20 minutes. Have each group read their finds aloud and compare them to other groups, to achieve total coverage for the class.

#### Here are the items to copy down:

- Which STD
- a) can result in epididymitis, a testicular infection?
  - b) can have no symptoms and has no cure?
  - c) requires taking a combination of medicines?
  - d) can cause cervical cancer?
  - e) can cause blindness and insanity if left untreated?
  - f) infects one of five adults and adolescents?
  - g) can damage the liver?
  - h) is becoming more resistant to antibiotics?
  - i) can cause pelvic inflammatory disease?
  - j) has a vaccine associated with it?
  - k) may cause sores around the penis or vagina?

- j) Not having intercourse or other kinds of sex is the best way to avoid which STD?
- l) Condom use can reduce the risk of getting which STD?

### Discussion: More than One Way to Spill the Beans?

#### Keeping Quiet: Should I tell my friend his boyfriend's secret? , p. 6

The anonymous writer of this story is virtually certain that a friend's boyfriend is HIV+. Furthermore, his friend has told him that he is having unprotected sex with this man, and does not know that he is positive. The anonymous

writer of the story feels like it is not his business to tell his friend directly about the danger. He tries to make up for not telling him directly by frequently talking to him about safer sex practices.

Hand out these possible actions that Anonymous could take. Discuss them with your students. Which is best? Which wouldn't work? How do they compare with what he's doing now? What else would they suggest?



Lee Samuel

### Genital Herpes

- Anon writes him an anonymous note. What would the note say?

• Anon talks to someone about what to do. Tells a friend a hypothetical story that is real. Is there an adult to talk with? How can he locate a health professional about the situation?

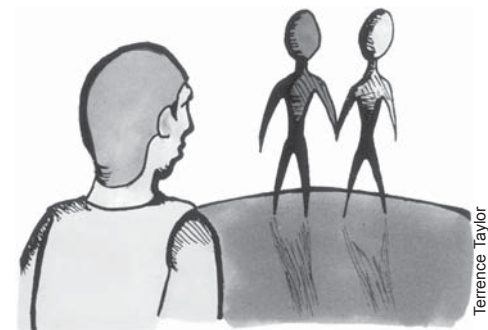
• Anon lies to KaJuan: "I have a friend who was seeing a guy and it turned out that guy had HIV but never told my friend and my friend believed him when he asserted his negative condition."

• Write KaJuan's boyfriend an anonymous note, threatening to expose him to KaJuan if he doesn't come clean.

### HIV



Lee Samuel



Terrence Taylor

# Practice Lesson for Regents Exam Listening Section

**Use story:** "Acting Is My Activism" on p. 5 of the Jan/Feb issue of *New Youth Connections*.

**What the teacher needs to know to use this lesson:** The Regents English exam has a listening section. A proctor reads the students an **Overview** (see below) and **The Situation** (see below). The proctor then reads a passage to the students, *twice*, during which time the students can take notes. The students then answer some multiple choice questions and write a report based on the **Situation**.

## Step One: Read the Overview and the Situation

(Note: During the real test the students have a printed version of the Overview and the Situation in front of them as the proctor reads the story. If you can't make copies of the overview consider writing the overview on the board, or just read it to them.)

Read this to your students:

**Overview:** You will listen to an article written by a teenager about her participations in a HIV/AIDS education program. You will then answer some multiple choice questions and write a report on the situation described below. You will hear the article twice. You may take notes.

**The Situation:** Your school wants to start a sex education program. Your class has been assigned to look at programs that teach teens about sexually transmitted diseases. You must write a report that describes the program in the story and then recommends or rejects starting a similar program at your school. Listen to this story and then use information from the story to write your position paper.

## Step Two: Tell your students, "Now I will read the passage aloud to you for the first time."

Multiple Choice Questions

**Directions:** Use your notes to answer the questions about the story read to you.

### 1) What was the writer's first reaction to the acting group when it came to her school?

- a) excitement
- b) skepticism
- c) hostility
- d) boredom

### 2) Why did the writer think this program was better than lectures about HIV/AIDS?

- a) The program was serious.
- b) It was short.
- c) It was realistic.
- d) It had people with HIV on stage.

### 3) What did the author find difficult at first about acting in the group?

- a) She was not like the character she played.
- b) There were too many lines to learn.
- c) She did not know much about AIDS.
- d) She did not like to improvise.

### 4) What was her main motivation in joining the acting group?

- a) to learn about sexually transmitted diseases
- b) to improve her acting
- c) to help other teens
- d) to get community service credit

### 5) What kind of behavior was the subject of the skit she described?

- a) drinking
- b) not using condoms
- c) ignoring good advice
- d) having sex with multiple partners

### 6) What does the verb "improvise" mean?

- a) to convey important information
- b) to enjoy being on stage
- c) to make something up on the spot
- d) to make people laugh

### 7) The expression "HIV does not have a particular face or race" most nearly means

- a) Black people are more likely than others to get HIV.
- b) Teens can get it as easily as adults.
- c) Anyone can get AIDS.
- d) It is hard to know when someone has AIDS.

NOTE: Below are the written instructions on the test about writing the report.

Follow the conventions of standard written English.

## Writing the Report

Your task: Write a report that either recommends using this education program in your school or argues against using it. Use specific and relevant information from the article you heard.

Here are the guidelines given on the actual Regents exam:

- Tell your audience what they need to know about the program.
- Give your opinions about the program.
- Use specific, accurate, and relevant information from the article to support your discussion.
- Use a tone and level of language appropriate for the high school sophomores who will read your paper.
- Organize your ideas in a logical and coherent manner.
- Indicate any words taken directly from the article by using quotation marks or referring to the writer.

Answer key to multiple choice questions:  
1) b 2) c 3) a 4) b 5) d 6) c 7) c