



# Tips for Teachers

A Guide for Using *New Youth Connections*  
in the Classroom

May/June 2002

## Writing Contest— \$175 in Prizes

“If You Could Create An  
Invention To Help  
Humanity, What Would It  
Be And What Would It  
Do?”

Writing Contest, p. 2: Encourage your students to enter this month's Writing Contest, which offers \$175 in prizes. You may want to devote part of your class to discussing this topic before turning to the writing.

**Deadline: June 28**

## A note on the lessons

The following lessons are designed to promote reflection on issues raised by the stories in *NYC*. Each story is summarized briefly, followed by prompts that can be used to initiate discussion and/or brief writing assignments. In addition, role plays and group exercises are sometimes suggested for more active learning experiences.

## A note on the roleplays

You will need two or three teens to act out the suggested roleplays in front of class. Make sure the young people understand their roles by briefly reviewing the characters in the stories. Each participant has to try to convince the other of her point of view as described in the roleplay. Let the roleplay go on for about five minutes. Then have the class discuss what they've seen and relate it back to the themes in the story.

## A note on the group exercises

A note on the group exercises: These activities are designed to have students work together in pairs or small groups. They can then share their work with the larger group in a general discussion.

## THIS ISSUE'S THEME:

# Teens Making Choices About Love and Sex

Decisions about sex and sexuality often torment the minds of young adults. Some succumb to pressure, desire, or curiosity and have sex, even when they're not fully informed about the consequences. Others choose to become abstinent and remain virgins. In this issue of *NYC*, several writers examine the wide range of choices and consequences that accompany teenage sexuality. We hope you use these stories to spark discussion of a topic that we cannot afford to ignore.

## Stressed by Safer Sex

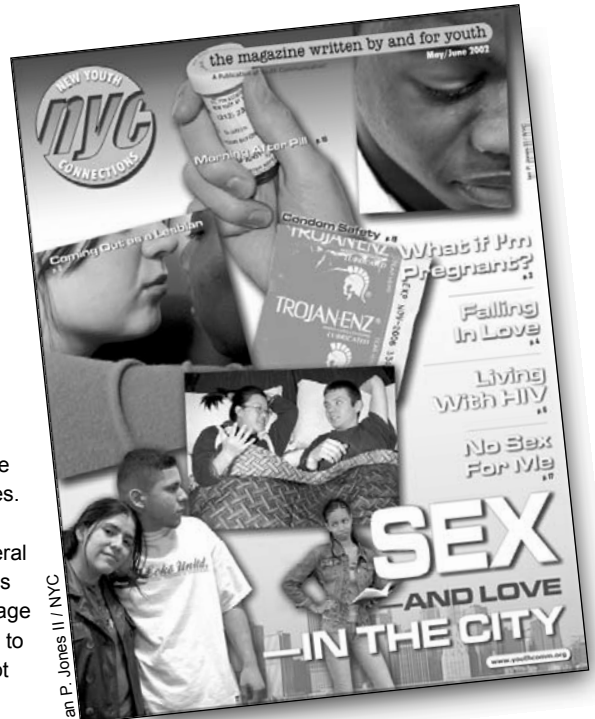
In “What If I'm Pregnant,” p. 3, Genevieve Santos goes through a scare when she has unprotected intercourse with her boyfriend. Her period is two weeks late, and she agonizes over possibly being pregnant. Genevieve vows to never make the same mistake.

## Prompts for discussion and/or writing:

—Genevieve's friend Samantha thinks she might be pregnant and Genevieve comforts her. Have you ever come to the aid of a friend who was pregnant or thought she might be pregnant? What did you do, and what eventually happened?

—According to Genevieve, girls who think they're emotionally ready for sex and who use protection still experience stress and anxiety over sex. When is someone emotionally ready for sex? What are the warning signs that someone might not be emotionally ready?

—Genevieve's friend Samantha has a



pregnancy scare, and afterwards decides that sex isn't worth the constant anxiety—she and her boyfriend decide to stop having sex for a while. Do you think it takes a real-life scare before someone changes his or her sexual behavior? Why or why not?

—Genevieve writes: “I've learned that being ready means accepting that sex can be stressful, whether it's safe or unsafe.” When does the stress of sex outweigh the pleasures of sex?

—Genevieve writes that it's important to get information about safer sex from trustworthy sources. Where do you go for trustworthy sources of information about sex? Why do you think they're trustworthy?

—According to Genevieve, a good source of information about sex is a health teacher or social worker/guidance counselor in your school. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

**Roleplay:** two students, Genevieve and a friend. The friend dislikes using protection and is willing to take the chance. Genevieve, based on her experiences, has a different point of view.

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

**Group activity:** students can work in pairs or small groups. The groups should suggest improvements in their school's sex education programs. Have the groups share and compare their ideas in a general discussion with the class

## Looking For Love

In "Messing Around's Not Match for Love," p. 4, Christian Galindo falls in love with Paula, and learns that a serious relationship is much more important than playing around. His commitment to Paula has taught Christian what love is all about.

### Prompts for discussion and/or writing:

—Christian's cousin fools around with a lot of girls, which makes Christian think that's how guys naturally are. Who influenced your views of sex? Was this person a positive role model? Why or why not?

—Christian tries to follow his cousin's advice, which is to have fun, fool around with a lot of girls, and not complicate his life, because serious relationships cause too many problems. Do you agree with this attitude toward sex and relationships? Why or why not?

—Christian has a close, serious relationship with Paula, and he's much happier than when he was just "messing around." What kind of relationship do you want? Do you want something similar to what Christian has with Paula? Why or why not?

—Messing around doesn't make Christian happy. But he also has conflicts with Paula that require a lot of work and compromise. Which do you find more difficult to deal with—the problems of playing around, or the problems of a serious relationship? Why?

**Roleplay:** two students, playing Christian and a friend. The friend thinks playing around is best. Christian thinks a serious relationship is best.

## Testing Positive for HIV

In "Positive," p. 6, the anonymous author describes his shock and fear at testing positive for HIV. He confronts many complicated feelings, including anger that his lover lied about not having HIV. The anonymous author gradually comes to terms with the ways HIV has changed his life.

### Prompts for discussion and/or writing:

—One reason that the anonymous author became HIV positive was that he gave into his partner's request to have unprotected sex. What do you think of the anonymous author's decision? After reading this article, has your attitude changed toward unprotected sex? If so, how? If not, why not?

—After the anonymous author thinks about his situation for a while, he calms down. What helps him calm down?

—The anonymous author decides against taking revenge against his lover. What reason does he give? If you were in his shoes, would you have made the same choice? Why or why not?

—What does the anonymous author learn



from his therapist, that helps him with his illness?

—What strengths does the anonymous gain from dealing with HIV?

—When the anonymous author finds out he's HIV positive, he feels as if his life has stopped. But, over time, he realizes his life will go on and he has a lot to be thankful for. Was there ever a time when you thought you had reached an end—a point where you felt life couldn't go on—but then realized it would? What was the experience? What changed your attitude toward it? How did the experience change your life?

## Out of the Closet

Destiny Cox, in "I Need a Girl," p. 8, writes about coming out as a lesbian. She's 13 when she realizes she's attracted to women, but isn't sure she's gay until she meets Keesha. And in "Telling My Parents," p. 9, Destiny runs into some rough spots when she reveals the news to mom and dad.

### Prompts for discussion and/or writing:

—What part of Destiny's story did you relate to the most? Why?

—Destiny has a crush on Keesha for a long time before she reveals her feelings, because telling Keesha is "risky." What risks did Destiny face by revealing her feelings to

Keesha? In what ways were they similar to the risks a straight teens faces? In what ways were they different?

—Keesha and Destiny hide their relationship when they're in public, for fear of being criticized. Did you ever have to hide a relationship from family, friends, or people in general? Why did you have to hide it, and what impact did it have on the relationship?

—Destiny's relationship with Keesha helped her to mature and gain confidence in herself. Was there a relationship (not necessarily romantic) that helped you to mature and gain confidence in yourself? What was it about the relationship that helped you?

—When Destiny reveals her sexuality to her parents, they tell her it's just a "phase." Have adults, family members, or friends ever told you that an important part of your life was just a "phase"? How did you feel about that response and how did you react?

—Are you comfortable talking with your parents about your sexuality? Why or why not?

## Close Call

The anonymous writer in "The Morning After," p. 10, has unprotected sex with her lover. She is terrified she may be pregnant, and can't understand why she engaged in such risky behavior. She takes emergency contraceptive pills to avert pregnancy and learns a lesson about responsible sex.

### Prompts for discussion and/or writing:

—The writer is well-informed about safer sex and considers herself a responsible person. Yet she still has unprotected sex with a guy she's casually seeing. Can any kind of sex education program or informational messages prevent that from happening? If so, how?

—The writer considers herself well-informed about safer sex, but still tries to convince herself that she can't be pregnant from unprotected sex. What common myths do teens have about sex? What do you think is the most harmful myth that teens have?

—After the incident with Dante, the writer doesn't ever want to repeat "the nightmare" of not using condoms. How do you define "safer sex"? What has influenced you to practice it?

## Staying a Virgin

Nethaniel Colón in "No Sex for Me" (p. 17) has felt the temptation to have sex, but has decided to abstain until marriage for reasons of health, fear of becoming a father, and because of religious beliefs. He has a serious, chaste relationship with his girlfriend Christine.

### Prompts for discussion and/or writing:

—Nethaniel has stayed away from sex

## A Quick Way to Get Everyone Writing:

We welcome letters to the editor and publish most of them (see p. 22). This is an easy way to involve everyone in a short writing assignment (and they will get the satisfaction of seeing their names in print). Writing letters can be an ideal “Do Now” exercise after your students finish reading articles in *NYC*. Use these prompts to get your students started (a few sentences on one or more of these points will be sufficient for a letter):

- “I liked/disliked the article because...”
- “A point I really agree with in the article, based on my experience, is...”
- “A point I really disagree with, based on my experience, is...”
- “A solution to one of the problems in this article might be...”

because he fears having a child, getting an STD, and/or receiving a beat down from his mother. Of those three fears, which can you relate to the most and why?

—What do you think of Nathaniel's decision to abstain from sex? Why kinds of difficulties would you face if you made the same decision? What kinds of benefits would you get out of it?

—Nathaniel has friends who thought they were in love with someone, but once the relationship got sexual, it “crashed and burned.” Why do you think that's the case?

—How do Nathaniel's male friends react to his decision? How do his female friends react?

—In your opinion, what are the most important things for building a close relationship with someone?

**Roleplay:** two students, playing Nathaniel and a friend. The friend thinks Nathaniel is crazy for being a virgin and missing out on a lot of fun. Nathaniel thinks his friend is missing out on a lot by being a player.

## Staying Protected

And on p. 19, Ashley Amey, in “How Reliable Are Condoms?,” looks at the effectiveness of condoms in preventing STDs and pregnancy, and describes how to use them correctly.

### Prompts for discussion and/or writing:

- Has Ashley's article changed your attitude toward condom use in any way? How?
- What common myths do young people have about condoms?
- Should condoms be more readily available to teens? How?

**Group activity:** students can work in pairs or small groups. Each group should come up with a sex education program and advertising campaign to increase condom use among teens. Have the groups share and compare their ideas in a general discussion with the class.

## OTHER STORIES



Karolina Zantesienko

## A Stranger to Dad

In “Understanding Father's Love,” p. 5, Chun Lar Tom feels distant from her stern father as she's growing up in China, but when she becomes ill one day at a street market, her realizes how much her father loves her after all.

### Prompts for discussion and/or writing:

—Chun Lar feels distant from her father. He is very strict and old-fashioned, and she feels uncomfortable talking with him. What is your relationship with your own father like? What would you like it to be?

—When Chun Lar gets sick and her father rushes her to the doctor, she realizes he really cares for her. It's a turning point in their relationship and they become closer. Was there ever a similar turning point in your relationship with your mother or father (or with another family member or loved one) that changed the way you saw that person? What happened, and why did your views change?

—Why is it often so hard for parents to communicate with and show love to their children, and vice versa? What could parents and children do to open up communication?

—Do you have good communication with your parents (or family members)? How do you define “good communication”?

## College Blues

In “Under Pressure,” p. 12, Nell Becker looks at the unrelenting academic stress she faces as she tries to gain admission to a selec-

tive college. The competition has turned her into a competitive over-achiever, and she questions whether the goal is worth the price.

### Prompts for discussion and/or writing:

—How much pressure do you feel in high school, either to do well in classes, get into college, or prepare for getting a job? Where does the pressure come from? How well do you handle it?

—Nell feels she has to be a “superhuman perfect student” to get into a selective college. Is what ways is this kind of pressure a positive thing? In what ways is it negative?

—Is Nell putting too much emphasis on getting into a particular kind of college? Why or why not?

—How do Nell's views of college change as a result of the pressure she feels? How have your views of college been changed by the application process? What kind of college do you want to attend, and what do you most want to get out of the experience?

—Nell worries that her grades don't accurately reflect her attitude toward learning. Do your grades reflect your interests and ability? Why or why not?

—Is there something phony and dishonest about doing extracurricular activities just so they will look good on your college application? Why or why not?

—Has the pressure to get into college changed the way you and your friends relate to each other? If so, how? If not, why not?

**Group activity:** students can work in pairs or small groups. The groups should come up with ideas on how colleges can evaluate students, in addition to grades and extracurricular activities. Have the groups share and compare their ideas in a general discussion with the class.

## Senior Blues

In “Smacked Down by Senioritis,” p. 13, Allajah Young describes the inevitable boredom of high school's final year, as she goes through the motions until graduation.

### Prompts for discussion and/or writing:

—Most of Allajah's classes and teachers during her senior year are not very challenging. Are you challenged by your classes and teachers? If so, why? If not, how would you like to see them changed?

—Allajah has shifted from an industrious eager-beaver to a bored and unmotivated sloth during her senior year. How have you changed as a student during high school, either for better or worse? What factors caused you to change?

**Group activity:** students can work in pairs or small groups. The groups should come up with ideas on how to improve the quality of classes and teachers in high school. Go around the room, have groups share their creations, and discuss.

## Land of Conflict: Israelis vs. Palestinians

Lucas Hartstone-Rose, in "Israel's Treatment of Palestinians Is Wrong," p. 14, and Sara Said, in "A Palestinian Teen Tells Her Story," p. 15, try to shed light on one of the world's most complicated and controversial conflicts. Related articles on pps. 14 and 16 provides additional historical background.

### Prompts for discussion and/or writing:

—What have you learned from these articles that you didn't know before? How has it helped you better understand the conflict? What are you still confused about?

—Lucas quotes Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who says that "a true peace can ultimately be built only on justice." What does that statement mean to you? How does it apply to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? How does it apply to issues in your own life?

—From the Israeli point of view, what is the biggest obstacle to peace? From the Palestinian point of view, what is the biggest obstacle to peace?

**Group activity:** students can work in pairs or small groups. Tell the groups they are in charge of coming up with a plan to try to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Each side has to give something up and be willing to compromise in order for peace to have a chance. The groups have to decide what each side will give up (and what they can't give up). Go around the room, have groups share their plans, and discuss.

## Enough About You...

In "Some Friend," p. 20, Anghela Calvo thinks she has a strong friendship with Sole until she realizes that their conversations are never about Anghela.

### Prompts for discussion and/or writing:

—Anghela doesn't have much in common with Sole, but they still become friends. Do you find it possible to have friendships with people with whom you don't have much in common? Why or why not?

—Have you ever had a similar experience, where you realized a friend wasn't really a friend? What caused you to realize that? Were you able to repair the friendship? Why or why

not?

—Sole is a very insecure person who hides her insecurity behind a fake confidence. How do your insecurities show themselves? How do they affect your friendships and relationships?

—Anghela regrets that she didn't tell Sole earlier how she really felt about their friendship. When you're having problems in your friendships, do you find it hard to tell your friends how you really feel? Why or why not?



Franz D. Bordes

## The Joys of Volunteering

In "My Library Life," p. 26, Marianna Rybak writes about gaining skills and maturity as she volunteers at her local library.

### Prompts for discussion and/or writing:

—Have you ever volunteered in your school, in your community, or any other place? What was the experience like? What did you get out of it?

—Through volunteering, Marianna realizes she has a lot in common with a girl named Shirley whom she had previously stereotyped, and they become friends. Have you ever had a similar experience, through getting involved in your school or community?

—Marianna gains a lot of skills through volunteering. What kinds of skills have you gained from volunteering or working at a job?

## A Favorite Dessert

In "Flipping for Flan," p. 28, Nurys Benzant writes about her love of flan, the Latino custard. She becomes skilled at making it for family and friends, and provides a recipe.

### Prompts for discussion and/or writing:

—Do you have a favorite food that is related to your ethnicity or culture? What is it and why is it your favorite?

—Because Nurys had a few bad cooking experiences, her family expects it to happen again when she cooks flan. How does your family react when you make mistakes? How does that attitude affect you?

—Nurys is happy that she can please people with her cooking. Do you have a particular skill that your family or friends value? How did you learn it?

**Group activity:** students can work in pairs or small groups. Groups should share favorite family recipes (or recipes for any favorite food). Go around the room, have the groups share their culinary creations, and discuss.



Gary Smith



**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.

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