



Tips for Teachers

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

May/June 2004

RESPONDING TO ADVERSITY

Story: "Facing Reality," on page 3
By Tania Morales

Tania suffers from a disease which puts her in a wheelchair and undermines her speech, fine motor control, and other abilities.

Tania is responding to enormous adversity. In her case the adversity relates to the loss of physical skills that she, and most of us, take for granted. It's also related to the way in which the skills make her seem different from everyone else, to the loss of her mobility, and to fears about further deterioration.

Experts who study reactions to loss find that people tend to go through predictable phases. There are different names for the phases—and the phases aren't completely linear; there can be lot of back and forth among them. However, the basic idea of the phases is well-established. For many people, naming the phases can help them better understand and cope with their own losses or those of others in their lives. (For example, it can be very frustrating to be trying to help someone who is in denial, but it can be

easier if you know that this is a phase they have to go through.)

Lesson—Understanding The Phases of Loss

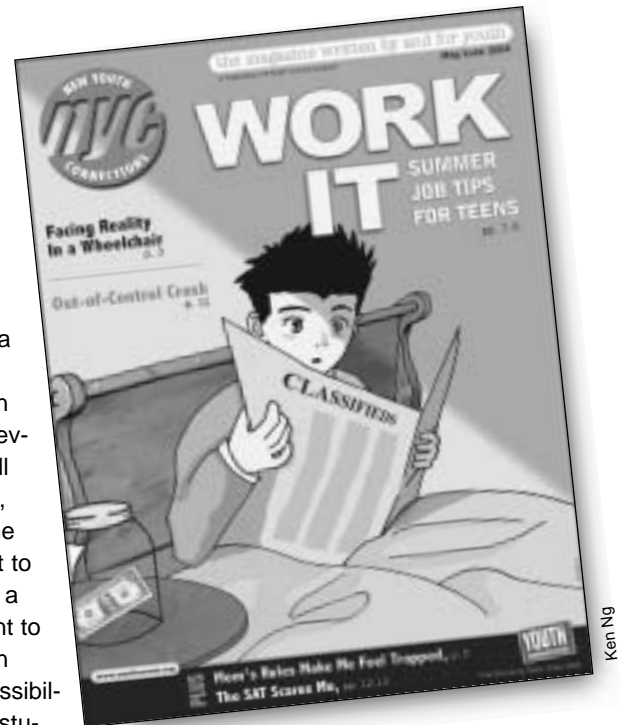
1. Ask your students to think of a time when they lost something emotionally important and write it down in their notebook. If they can think of several examples, that's even better. Tell them that once they pick a final idea, they will write a short essay about the loss. Note: Some students may want to write about something as serious as a death of someone who was important to them, but that is not required or even necessary. There are many other possibilities; share some of these with your students to get them thinking. The "loss" of a family member or best friend because of a move. The loss of a boyfriend or girlfriend.

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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Gary Smith



Ken Ng

Loss of faith in someone who betrayed you. Even loss of hope, such as a time when you were sure you were going to fail an important class.

2. List on the board the common phases that people go through when responding to a loss: confusion, denial, anger, depression, acceptance and resolution. Give a very simple example to explain the phases. For example, a good student feels a loss if she fails a test. Upon getting the test back, she might at first be confused ("I must have gotten someone else's test.") Then in denial, ("No, this can't have happened.") Then angry—maybe at herself, or at the teacher. Then depressed, ("I'll never pass this class.") Then acceptance and resolution, ("I have to study differently next time.")

3. Tell the students to look at the loss they've written in their notebook and jot

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www.youthcomm.org

down some of their reactions when they were in the different phases. They should give an example of a time they were confused, angry, depressed, in denial, etc.

4. For homework: Ask your students to read *Facing Reality* (pp. 3-4) for homework. (The story is probably too long to read in class.)

Tell students that as they read the story, they should write the “phases” in the margin each time they see the writer going through one. When she’s angry, they would write “anger” in the margin. When she’s in denial, they write “denial,” etc. Note that the phase may be expressed in a single sentence or in a section of several paragraphs. Here are a few examples. You might show the students one to get them started. Denial (“There is nothing wrong with me”), anger (“Sometimes I felt angry or very sad”) depression (“I rarely went outside except for church and school”), acceptance, and resolution (“I now know that I have to have more confidence in myself and look at people and at life with my head up”).

5. In class: Spend 15-20 minutes going over the story with the students, having them show you the phases that Tania went through. This will insure that students understand the concept of the phases, and show them through specific examples. Then tell them to write their essays. Note: This can be treated as a short writing assignment with just one or two paragraphs for each phase, or the basis for a longer essay like Tania’s, depending on your time and goals.

STORIES ABOUT DIVERSITY

This issue contains several stories by and about young people who are different from a significant number of their peers.



Gary Smith

They are bound to be provocative. You can use them to help promote tolerance and as the basis for discussions and debates about peer pressure, being true to yourself, how we treat others who are different, and whether one should stick with one’s traditions or go with the flow.

“**Facing Reality,**” on page 3. Tania Morales writes about adjusting to her wheelchair and coming to grips with a disease which is eroding her other abilities as well. Your students will be inspired by her courage in facing up to her illness. Note that Tania has at least two struggles. Her internal struggle is to come to terms with the illness and its effects on her. Her external struggle is to be accepted and included. Peers play an especially important role in that struggle. Would your students feel comfortable including Tania? Being girlfriends or boyfriends with her? Why or why not?

Writing Contest

Page 2. This issue’s contest prompt is:

“What is the hardest decision you have ever made? What did you decide, and why?”

Pre-writing group work—Ask your students to identify in general what makes decisions easy or hard or something in between. Chances are some will say that hard decisions involve loss, pain, bad feelings, etc. for the decision maker and for the people affected by the decision. They also involve difficult choices, such as choosing the “least worst” of two bad choices (e.g. you really want a date for the prom, but you don’t like either of the people who’ve invited you), or even having to select among several good choices (two people you really like *both* invite you to the prom). Depending on the discussion, you can raise the issue of conflict. There can be external conflict (e.g., you and your girlfriend both want to go to the prom with the same date) or internal (e.g., you can’t decide who to go with).

If you want to use a story to illustrate these concepts, have your group

read “Holding On to Who I Am” on page 22. Zaineb Nadeem relates how she refused to give up her traditional clothing, start dating, or discuss sex with her fellow students. In exchange for deciding to hold on to her traditional values she felt “like an alien, and lonely.” She was in conflict with her peers who wanted her to change while she wanted to adhere to her home country’s values. And she was in conflict with herself: She wanted acceptance, but the cost seemed too high.

Before they start writing their entry, urge your students to make a simple outline or some lists to help organize their thoughts. They should name the conflict. Then list the people involved. What events led up to the decision? List the alternatives to the decision they made. List the positive results of the decision. List the bad feelings it may have caused.

Deadline: June 25, 2004



Karolina Zaniesienko

“**Holding On to Who I Am,**” on page 22. Zaineb Nadeem refuses to give up her traditional Pakistani outfits and continues to speak Urdu despite her friends’ calls for

her to shake off the old country's culture. This story lends itself well to a debate. Divide the class in half and one side must defend Zaineb's position, while the other half should critique it. Her story raises important questions about being true to oneself, the extent to which one should assimilate when moving to a new culture, the pressure to belong, etc.



“Forced to Marry Young,” on page 22. Sadia Jahangir is shocked when her 17-year old friend returns to their native Pakistan for an arranged marriage. The arranged marriage doesn't shock her; she expects her own parents to choose her husband. Sadia's upset because her friend is so young and her education might be jeopardized. Like the previous story, this also lends itself to a debate. At a time when 50% of “love” marriages end in divorce, might it make sense to let parents figure out who you should marry? It might save a lot of grief in the long run.

Discussion Questions Linked to “Forced to Marry Young”

If you have teens in your group or class from Pakistan, India or other countries where arranged marriages are common, you may want to ask them about how the custom works.

1) Ask your group how many of them would be willing to marry someone chosen by their parents. How many of them would not marry someone if their parents strongly disapproved or even threatened to

never see them again? How many would marry someone from a different race? What is the most important reason for marrying someone?

2) As your students read the story, ask them to look out for the following:

- Where in the story does Sadia explain why she will marry someone her parents choose? Are her arguments convincing or sensible? (Her arguments start

in the first column under the subtitle **Our Parents Pick Our Spouses**. Also see the sidebar in the lower right corner of the page entitled “Arranged Marriages, Part of My Tradition.”

- Where in the story does her friend express her feelings about her upcoming arranged marriage? (See the second column under the subhead **I Wanted to Die**.)
- What kind of relationship does Sadia have with parents and how does this influence her feelings about arranged marriages?

“They Called Me a ‘Crack Baby,’” on page 6. Antwaun Garcia's mother used drugs before he was born and neighborhood kids labeled him a “crack baby” as he struggled to read Dr. Seuss in the fourth grade. Antwaun relates how he overcame this stigma with the help of his relatives. Many people still believe that taking crack during pregnancy caused the same kinds of problems as drinking alcohol (which causes permanent cognitive damage). That's a myth. Crack certainly contributed to some horrific parenting, but

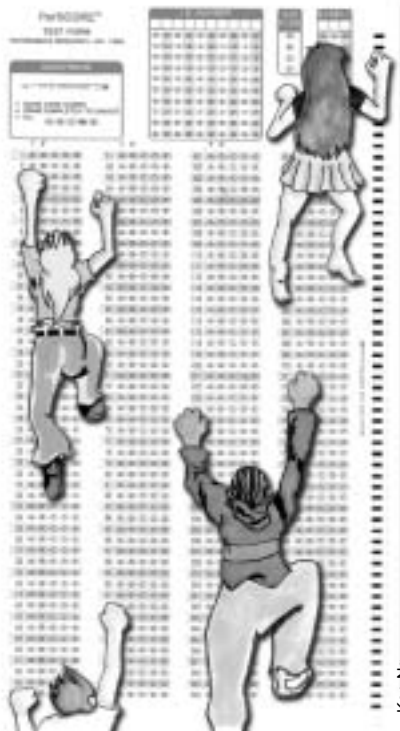


fortunately using it during pregnancy apparently didn't damage the child. Antwaun is just one of thousands of kids who have been unfairly stigmatized (by adults and peers).

“My Crushing Secret,” on page 10.

The anonymous writer admits to himself and others that he is bisexual but only after he suffers from a great deal of denial, fear and anxiety. This is a fairly classic coming out story. One thing to point out to your students is that the writer doesn't just pop out of the closet one day with a neon sign announcing that he's gay or bisexual. It's a long process of accepting himself, and of revealing the information to people who he feels will accept him.





Ken Ng

The SATs and Standardized Testing

SAT Anxiety on pages 12 and 13.

Amy Lu takes an inside look at SAT prep courses and isn't sure they've helped her. She also steps back to examine their fairness and talks to college admissions officials about how important scores are in the application process.

Discussion points: In "Is the SAT Fair?" Amy points out that females, minorities and economically less well off teens score lower on the SAT, on average, than their whiter, richer counterparts. Given this gap, do your students think that colleges should still use the SAT in the admissions process?

In "How Important Is the SAT?" Amy talks with admissions counselors about



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Summer Illustration Workshop

We are running an illustration workshop in August. See page 23 for how to apply. Note: This workshop is at the end of the summer, because the teens prepare illustrations for stories that their peers have developed in our writing workshop, which runs for the previous six weeks. **But the appli-**

cation deadline is July 1.

It can be hard for some students to apply for something that seems so far away—at the end of the summer. If you have teens who like to draw, please give them extra encouragement to apply for this workshop—now.

how they choose applicants. If your students were running an admissions office how would they pick applicants? Do they see any value in applicants taking the SAT?

Note: One important lesson your students can learn from these articles is that SAT scores are only one factor in the admission process.

"Schools Under Pressure," on page 17. Sam Greenlee points out that it's not just students who are facing test pressures. Under President Bush's No Child Left Behind law, schools and entire school districts are facing tremendous pressure to raise test scores. The goal is to make schools better and more responsive, but critics say this is not the way to do it. What do your students think?

SUMMER JOBS SECTION

Your students will get a lot of practical advice about looking for a job when they read these stories on pages 7-9.

Discussion Prompts: "Why do you think they call it work?!"

Students often have unrealistic expectations about jobs. You might have your students read the speak out (p. 9) and make a list of all of the complaints that the teens give, like routine work and boredom, rude customers and clients, annoying co-workers. Through discussion, you can



Martell Brown

gently introduce them to the real world, and help them to understand that a major part of "work" is learning the social skills to deal with those kinds of challenges, which exist on almost every job.

You might also ask them to read Jordan Yue's story, "Speeches and Bingo," p. 8. What would be their biggest complaints about that job? What were Jordan's? How did he deal with them? What did he get out of the job? How did his attitude help or hinder him?

Health Resources

Page 16: We list dozens of health providers that will be providing various services over the summer. You may want to keep a copy of the list if you are teaching this summer.