

COPING WITH AN EMOTIONAL CRISIS

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TEACHER'S RESOURCE BOOK

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COPING WITH AN EMOTIONAL CRISIS

ROBIN F. GOODMAN, PH.D., A.T.R. – BC DIRECTOR OF FAMILY PROGRAMS VOICES OF SEPTEMBER 11TH

Dr. Goodman joined VOICES to develop programs and consult on mental health issues related to those impacted by 9/11, especially the needs of children and their parents. Dr. Goodman is a licensed psychologist and art therapist with 25 years of experience working with children, adolescents and adults with emotional and behavior problems, trauma, medical illness, and bereavement. Among her varied positions, she was Behavioral Health Team Leader for the Pediatric Hematology/Oncology service at NYU Medical Center and Director of Bereavement Programs and AboutOurKids.org at the NYU Child Study Center. She was co-director of the clinical and research program helping bereaved children and spouses of the firefighters, police, EMS, and Port Authority who died on 9/11. She served as consultant to the Department of Defense on a project focused on military children and families and consults to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, where she directed the development and creation of childhood traumatic grief videos and a companion training curriculum.

Dr. Goodman has published, taught, and lectured widely on parenting, mental health, grief, illness, and art. Among her publications are: *Caring for Kids After Trauma and Death: A Guide for Parents and Professionals*, *Childhood Revealed: Art Expressing Pain, Discovery, and Hope*, and *The Day Our World Changed: Children's Art of 9/11*, *Turbulent Times Prophetic Dreams: Art from Israeli and Palestinian Children* and *Childhood Revealed: Art Expressing Pain, Discovery and Hope*, which contains art by children and teens with psychiatric or physical or physical illness.

Dr. Goodman is a magna cum laude graduate of Smith College, has a masters degree from New York University, and a doctorate from the Derner Institute at Adelphi University where she received the Kalike Research Award. Her diverse professional training includes Bronx Children's Psychiatric Center and Bellevue Hospital.

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Whether they spring from personal difficulties or large-scale disasters, emotional crises can be overwhelming for young people. Middle school students who face their parents' divorce, loss of a parent's job, harassment at school, death of a loved one, a natural disaster, or acts of war or terrorism can be profoundly impacted on a physical and mental level by such traumas. Without help dealing with dramatic life changes, traumatized young people may suffer nightmares, develop behavioral problems or turn to drugs, alcohol or aggression. However, with guidance, young people can learn to navigate an emotional crisis and emerge from trauma in a healthy way.

The range of emotions that are triggered by a traumatic event can be confusing for young people. They may feel shocked and numb, or they may be overcome with sadness and tears. In the aftermath, teens may struggle with anger, depression and fear. Common reactions include guilt that they didn't prevent the trauma from occurring, anger at a loved one who died or at a higher power for taking that person away, or an irrational fear that the trauma will happen again. The emotional disturbance may also manifest itself physically in headaches, stomachaches or difficulty sleeping.

At the same time that they are trying to cope with new, heightened emotional challenges, young people may also worry that they are somehow "different" or abnormal. They may assume they are supposed to feel or act a certain way, or become confused about how they should be dealing with the crisis. Some teens may feel it would be selfish to ask for the comfort they need, while others are afraid their friends will laugh at them if they seek solace. Because of such fears, young people suffering an emotional crisis often hide their true feelings, pretending everything is fine when it isn't. Keeping emotions bottled up, however, only makes things worse.

Teens who have survived an emotional crisis often remark that talking about the event was one of the most helpful coping actions they tried. Though it's difficult to put such intense emotions into words, talking about it with parents, siblings or friends provides a release for traumatized young people. Professional therapists, guidance counselors and group therapy sessions can also help teens come to terms with a crisis. Expressing oneself in words or music is another important way to release emotion—many teens report that writing poetry or songs and keeping a journal helped them get through a tough time.

In *Coping with an Emotional Crisis*, students will meet eight young people who were faced with traumatic events. As these real teens share their stories, viewers learn that the difficult emotions that may come from a crisis are normal. The teens prove that anyone can survive a crisis. By giving themselves time to heal, asking for support from friends and family, and expressing their emotions, young people will triumph over trauma and emerge even stronger than they were before.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After watching the video *Coping with an Emotional Crisis* and participating in the class activities included in this Teacher's Resource Book, your students will be able to:

- describe many of the common emotional reactions to a traumatic event
- understand that feelings of anger, guilt, fear and sadness are completely normal after a crisis
- appreciate that everyone copes with grief in his or her own personal way
- grasp the importance of talking about their emotions
- identify people in their lives to whom they can turn in a crisis
- use relaxation techniques to reduce anxiety in the aftermath of a trauma
- understand how to help a friend who may be going through an emotional crisis
- use active listening skills
- communicate their emotions and personal needs more effectively to their parents and friends
- use art, writing or music as a means for coping with a crisis
- explain different therapy techniques that can be used to treat emotional crises

The video opens with a sequence of young people describing their reactions to their own emotional crises. “Right when it happened, I totally shut down,” says one. “I was more upset than I’d ever been. It was devastating,” adds another. “I didn’t feel good for a long time,” says a third.

Viewers then meet Dr. Robin F. Goodman, clinical psychologist and consultant for the National Childhood Traumatic Stress Network. Dr. Goodman explains that an emotional crisis is a situation in which a teen feels overwhelmed and powerless. She notes that a crisis can range from a difficult but short-lived problem to a serious reaction to danger called *trauma*.

Next, some of the teens describe their emotional crises. Alex talks about learning of his stepfather’s death, while Ariana recalls rushing to the hospital and finding out her grandmother had just passed away. Another teen named Alex shares that his young cousin died suddenly. Sedrick, whose family was directly impacted by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, described the day as a reality check—“you may think that this can never happen to you, but it can.” Brianne tells viewers about losing her house, friends and her normal routine when she had to evacuate her home during Hurricane Katrina. Alice shares how she felt when her parents got divorced, and Sophie remembers a day when her father was missing.

“There are different kinds of crises that kids face,” Dr. Goodman tells viewers. Some are more common—like a pet’s death or moving to a new place—and others are more unusual. She explains that an emotional crisis can be a one-time event, such as a natural disaster, or a chronic experience like abuse. Regardless of the origin, these crises often make young people feel that they don’t have control over the situation.

The teens continue to talk about their initial reactions to a crisis. Their remarks include: “I didn’t know how to handle it,” “It was very surreal,” “You just feel empty,” “It made me feel really devastated and scared,” “I couldn’t sleep because I just kept thinking about it.” and “I didn’t eat for several days.”

Dr. Goodman emphasizes that there is no right or wrong way to handle a crisis. She describes several different types of reactions that teens may face. One is a physical response, such as having an upset stomach or a headache. Others may have an emotional response, such as feeling angry, sad or guilty. Further, there may be a mental reaction, in which the young person has trouble concentrating in school or overcoming his thoughts about the crisis.

Next, the teens share some of the emotions they felt during their crises. Alex says that after his stepfather’s death, “I felt almost angry at him for dying.” The other Alex also reacted to his cousin’s death with anger: “I just felt really angry at myself for not being around to play with him.” Of her parents’ divorce, Alice says, “I felt like it was my fault in a way.” Several of the teens admit that they cried often.

“People are afraid of crying, and they don’t always see that it’s helpful,” Dr. Goodman explains. “What you have to realize is that crying is just a way to express how you feel.” She advises young people not to try to stop themselves from crying. “Those emotions need to come out.”

Some of the teens admit that expressing their emotions didn’t come easily, and that they tried to hide their true feelings. “I didn’t want everybody to see that I was emotional for the first time,” says Sedrick. “I felt like if I told my friends, they would have laughed at me,” adds Alex. The teens then describe how attending funerals and asking for comfort from family helped them begin to move past the crisis.

The video returns to Dr. Goodman. She lists several actions that teens can take to feel better. First, they can get all the facts about the crisis. Second, they can “normalize” their feelings by talking to others and learning that their reactions are typical. Third, they can seek support from friends and family who will be there to listen.

Next, the teens share how expressing their feelings helped them heal. For some, talking to friends, family members or counselors helped. As Alex says, “Talking to my friend let out a lot of the emotions that I had kept inside.” For others, turning to music, keeping a diary and writing poetry, songs or stories proved to be therapeutic. “With rapping I had more power over it and I could control what I was saying,” Sedrick explains. Dr. Goodman adds that using creativity to express emotions makes them easier to deal with.

Alex then describes how he began cutting himself as he struggled to cope with the loss of his stepfather. “Whenever something bad would happen to me, I didn’t have any other way to deal with it,” he recalls. Dr. Goodman follows by saying that “sometimes when you’re trying to feel better, you do things that actually make the situation worse.” She lists examples of risky behaviors like drinking, using drugs or hurting yourself. Such actions may reflect feelings of hopelessness, efforts to forget about pain, or may simply be a cry for help.

The teens move on to describing the aftermath of their crises. Alex describes how therapy and the support of a good friend helped him cope. Sophie tells viewers that her father was found and ultimately recovered from a diabetic coma after being mugged, but that she still worries about him taking his medicine. Sedrick says that his mother was unharmed after the terrorist attacks, but that he remains paranoid that something could happen to New York. Alice explains that she took out her pain on her family by starting fights.

Dr. Goodman notes that the things that happen after a crisis can make the coping process even more difficult. “The first thing to do when you’re feeling upset is realize that it’s okay to get help. That’s the biggest first step,” she says. Teachers, parents and therapists can all help teens handle their emotional reactions.

Finally, the teens share what they learned from their difficult situations. Some say they learned to appreciate what they have, or that it's okay to trust people. "I've learned that I do have courage," Alice says. "Take the risk of reaching out to people," Alex urges. "When these things happen to you, it may be a bad time in your life, but it also helps you become a better person," Sedrick advises.

Dr. Goodman ends the program with words of encouragement. "We often don't realize how strong we are until we're tested," she says, adding that challenges help young people see their own power. Once faced with an emotional crisis, she says, "We find we really can survive those tests."

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STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Name: _____

Pre/Post Test

Decide whether the following statements are true or false.

1. TRUE or FALSE: Feeling overwhelmed or powerless during an emotional crisis is a sign of insecurity. _____
2. TRUE or FALSE: An emotional crisis can be short-lived or it can be long-lasting. _____
3. TRUE or FALSE: There is only one normal way for young people to handle an emotional crisis. _____
4. TRUE or FALSE: Your emotions don't have an effect on how you feel physically. _____
5. TRUE or FALSE: A person going through an emotional crisis may have trouble concentrating in school. _____
6. TRUE or FALSE: If you are upset, crying only makes things worse. _____
7. TRUE or FALSE: It's okay to ask for comfort during an emotional crisis. _____
8. TRUE or FALSE: Family members, friends and counselors are all good people to talk to about your emotions. _____
9. TRUE or FALSE: Expressing yourself by keeping a journal, writing stories, poetry or music is a good way to deal with upsetting emotions. _____
10. TRUE or FALSE: An emotional crisis ends when the difficult situation ends—there are no lingering emotions in the aftermath of a crisis. _____

The Answer Key for this activity appears on the next page.

Name: _____

Answer Key

- | | | |
|-----|--|-------|
| 1. | TRUE or FALSE: Feeling overwhelmed or powerless during an emotional crisis is a sign of insecurity. | FALSE |
| 2. | TRUE or FALSE: An emotional crisis can be short-lived or it can be long-lasting. | TRUE |
| 3. | TRUE or FALSE: There is only one normal way for young people to handle an emotional crisis. | FALSE |
| 4. | TRUE or FALSE: Your emotions don't have an effect on how you feel physically. | FALSE |
| 5. | TRUE or FALSE: A person going through an emotional crisis may have trouble concentrating in school. | TRUE |
| 6. | TRUE or FALSE: If you are upset, crying only makes things worse. | FALSE |
| 7. | TRUE or FALSE: It's okay to ask for comfort during an emotional crisis. | TRUE |
| 8. | TRUE or FALSE: Family members, friends and counselors are all good people to talk to about your emotions. | TRUE |
| 9. | TRUE or FALSE: Expressing yourself by keeping a journal, writing stories, poetry or music is a good way to deal with upsetting emotions. | TRUE |
| 10. | TRUE or FALSE: An emotional crisis ends when the difficult situation ends—there are no lingering emotions in the aftermath of a crisis. | FALSE |

Name: _____

Everybody has moments of tension, stress or worry eventually, but you can banish those bad feelings by learning a few relaxation techniques. You might be surprised how much better you feel after a few deep breaths and some positive imagery!

PART ONE

Your first step is to read the *Relaxation Techniques* fact sheet. Take a look at two examples of relaxation exercises that many people use when they're feeling stressed. One exercise involves gradually relaxing your muscles. The other involves imagining that you are in a peaceful place. Which one would be most relaxing for you? Explain why it seems relaxing to you.

PART TWO

Now that you have read two examples, it's time to write your own relaxation exercise—one that's personalized for you. Get started by answering the questions below.

1. What places make you feel most relaxed? Write down the most relaxing places you go to now or places you have been in the past.

2. What are the most relaxing places you can imagine? Write down a few calming places you have dreamed about, but never been to—a tropical beach? A snowy mountain cabin?

3. What activities make you feel most relaxed? Write down a few here.

This activity is continued on the next page.

Name: _____

Sometimes the things we worry about never happen; sometimes they do, but it doesn't turn out to be as bad as we feared. One surefire way to relieve stress is to plan ahead. No matter what you're worried about, you can come up with a way to deal with it ahead of time—that way, you'll be ready.

Erase your worries by coming up with a plan for some of your “worst-case scenarios.” Write down three things you're worried about. It can be anything—big or small. Then think of one way you can prevent it from happening, and one thing you can do to fix it if it does happen.

Sample:

Worry: “I'm worried I'll get a bad grade in math.”

Prevention: I'll sign up for a tutor once a week and set aside 30 minutes a day to review my class notes.

Fix-It Plan: I can take the class again in summer school so that I'm ready for next year's math class. I can work with a tutor to make sure I understand the work.

1.

Worry:	
Prevention:	
Fix-It Plan:	

2.

Worry:	
Prevention:	
Fix-It Plan:	

3.

Worry:	
Prevention:	
Fix-It Plan:	

Name: _____

Have you ever had a friend come to you for comfort during a tough time? What was the experience like? Reflect by answering the questions below.

Describe a time that a friend or family member turned to you for help with a problem or crisis.

How did you respond? Do you think you helped the person? Why or why not?

Looking back, would you change the way you responded? Should you have done more? Should you have done less?

Did your friend or family member tell you what kind of comfort he or she needed? What could the person have done that would have helped you comfort him or her?

Think about a time when you were facing a problem or emotional crisis. What could your friends or family members have done to help you? What kind of comfort did you need most?

Is it hard to ask others for comfort? Why or why not?

Name: _____

It's not always easy to start a conversation with your parents or other adults, even when you really need to talk about something. Maybe you're not sure exactly what you want to say, or you're afraid that your parents will get mad. Those are normal worries to have—but don't let anything stop you from expressing your feelings and asking for help when you need it.

Writing down your thoughts before you start a conversation is a great way to organize things and make sure you express yourself clearly. Use the space below to prepare yourself for a good talk with your parents or other trusted adults.

Choose one problem you'd like to discuss—it can be a difficult emotional crisis you are going through (such as grief over losing a loved one) or another issue (such as problems with friends). Then, prepare yourself to talk about it by filling in the blanks.

Topic I'd like to discuss:

The most important things I need to say:

This is how I'm feeling:

I'd like to ask these questions:

It would really help me if someone would:

If you're afraid you'll forget anything, bring this page with you when you start talking. For more tips on communicating with adults, check out the *Talking It Out* fact sheet.

Name: _____

When you're going through a tough time, it can be really helpful to write about your feelings. Expressing emotions is always better than bottling them up inside. Writing things down can help you work through confusing thoughts and feelings.

Think back to a difficult situation you've experienced—it can be anything, from the death of your favorite pet to your parents getting divorced. It doesn't matter how big or small the crisis was; what matters is how you felt about it. On a separate sheet of paper, write about the experience. Think about these questions as you write your journal entry.

1. What was the hardest part about the experience?
2. What changed the most?
3. How did your friends react? Your family?
4. Did you think it was your fault?
5. Did you think you were supposed to feel a certain way?
6. Was it hard for you to talk about the experience? Why or why not?
7. What surprised you the most?
8. Has the experience changed the way you look at things?
9. Who helped you the most to get through it?
10. What helped you the most to get through it?
11. What have you learned about yourself? About your family?
About your friends?
12. What advice do you have for other kids going through what you've been through?

Name: _____

In groups of two or three students, choose one situation below and prepare a role play to perform in front of your class. First, prepare by reading these fact sheets:

Helping a Friend
Dealing with Divorce
Moving Tips

Have each person in your group play one character (you can change the characters from males to females, and vice versa). Practice acting out the scene. Come up with your own ending. After you perform your role play for the class, ask your classmates for comments. What did they think about it? Can they think of other ways to handle the situation?

1. Steve's best friend Matt has been pretty down about his parents' divorce. Matt hasn't been doing his homework or coming to basketball practice because he "just doesn't feel like it," and he has been hanging out with Steve less and less. Steve knows Matt is upset about the divorce, but he doesn't know what to say. He asked Matt if he wanted to talk about it once, but Matt just said no and changed the subject. Steve wants to try again.
2. Lindsay's mom just got a promotion, but the job is in another state. The family has to move in a month. She'll have to say goodbye to all her friends and start again in a strange place. Her emotions are all mixed up: she's happy that her mom got the promotion she worked hard for, but she's also mad at her family for making her move, and scared to leave everything she knows behind. Lindsay really wants to talk to her parents about it.
3. Kirsten's best friend Lin calls her one night, crying. Lin's grandfather has just passed away. Kirsten knows the two of them were really close. Kirsten wants to help Lin, but she's not sure what to say or do.
4. Owen has been having a tough time at school. A few older guys have been bullying him with insults and mean pranks. He's told them to leave him alone, but they just laugh. Owen is too embarrassed to tell his parents what's happening, but the bullying is too much to deal with alone. He would like to talk to his teacher about it, but he doesn't know how to bring it up, and he's worried that the bullies will find out.
5. Faith has been having a hard time ever since her brother was diagnosed with cancer. He's in remission now. The whole family is overjoyed at this news, but Faith can't seem to get over her fears. She has nightmares about her brother dying or being diagnosed with cancer herself. Since he's doing fine now, Faith thinks she must be abnormal to still be struggling with it. She doesn't want to worry her parents by talking about her fears, but she's also concerned her friends will think she's being a baby if she talks to them about it. Faith doesn't know where to turn.

Name: _____

Large-scale disasters are rare, but they are devastating—both for the people directly involved in them, and for the rest of society. Even though you may not be personally affected by a disaster like the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 or Hurricane Katrina, the event can still make an impact on your life. You may be disturbed by news reports about the crisis, afraid that something similar could happen to you, or upset for the people who are suffering—and you may feel powerless to do anything about it. You *can* help, however, when a crisis occurs, even if you don't know any of the people who are directly affected.

1. Think back to a crisis or disaster that occurred in the past few years that did not touch you directly (*i.e.*, Asian tsunami in 2004, Pakistan earthquake in 2005, terrorist attacks of 2001). How did that event make you feel? How did you react when you heard the news? Describe your emotions and thoughts at that time.
2. Did you do anything to help the people who were affected by the disaster? For example, maybe you donated clothes, volunteered at a shelter, or gave money to help the cause. Describe what you did to help. If you didn't take any action, describe why not. Did you feel you couldn't make a difference? Were you unsure of what to do?
3. Looking back, what else could you have done to help? List ten actions you could have taken. The actions don't have to be expensive—for example, you could have asked all your friends to donate old toys or clothes for kids affected by the disaster, or volunteered to work at a relief agency for a day. If you get stuck, think about what actions you might have appreciated if the disaster had happened to you.

Save this list for reference. The next time you hear about a crisis or disaster, read it over for ideas about how you can help others.

Name: _____

ACTIVITY 10A
EMOTIONAL VOCABULARY

Talking about your feelings is a good way to deal with a traumatic experience. But sometimes it's not easy to express your feelings in the right words. A little practice will help you build your "emotional vocabulary." Identify the emotion that each person below is feeling. There may be more than one emotion that could apply to each situation, but choose the *best* answer. Use the word bank below to find the answers. NOTE: each word can be used only once.

- | | | | |
|---------|---------|-----------|---------|
| Angry | Fearful | Ignored | Proud |
| Annoyed | Sad | Jealous | Guilty |
| Ashamed | Happy | Lonely | Wanted |
| Excited | Hopeful | Overjoyed | Worried |

1. Bob just won a million dollar jackpot.	
2. Maddy told her little brother he couldn't come with her to the mall. Later, her mom says he cried when she left.	
3. Jack is hanging out with his friends, but they spend the whole time ignoring him and talking about their soccer team.	
4. Katie's best friend is spending all her time with a new girl who just moved to town.	
5. Paul's brother tries to make everyone laugh by telling dumb jokes and playing irritating pranks.	
6. When Maleek goes to a friend's party, his friend tells him, "I'm so glad you're here. It wouldn't be fun without you."	
7. Penelope has a huge science test next period that will determine her grade for the year.	
8. Juan is leaving tomorrow for a month-long vacation in Hawaii with his best friends.	
9. Lynn finds out she won a state essay contest. Her essay will be published in the newspaper.	
10. Meg's heart races whenever she travels by plane.	
11. Chad sometimes lisps when he talks. In the middle of giving a speech in class, he lisps and several people laugh.	
12. Javiera learns her friend is making fun of her behind her back.	
13. Tim, a dog lover, gets a puppy for his birthday.	
14. Persis just moved to a new town and doesn't have any friends to hang out with.	
15. Kevin's grandfather dies after a long battle with cancer.	
16. Andie, who has good grades, sends off her application to her dream college.	

The Answer Key for this activity appears on the next page.

Answer Key

This key reflects the *best* answer to each question. Answers that are similar, but not the best choice, appear in parentheses. Talk with your classmates about the choices you made. Did you all choose the same words? If not, what do you think caused you to choose differently?

1. overjoyed (excited, happy)
2. guilty (ashamed, sad)
3. ignored (angry, annoyed, lonely)
4. jealous (lonely, sad)
5. annoyed (angry)
6. wanted (happy)
7. worried (fearful)
8. excited (happy, overjoyed)
9. proud (happy)
10. fearful
11. ashamed
12. angry (sad)
13. happy
14. lonely (sad)
15. sad
16. hopeful

Name: _____

Have you ever heard the phrase, “Every cloud has a silver lining?” It means that good things can come out of even the most difficult situations. When you are going through a traumatic experience or emotional crisis, it can seem like everything is awful, but there are most likely some positive outcomes, too—you just have to look for them.

Read the following stories. On a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph for each describing the positive results that came out of each emotional crisis. How did each person change for the better? What did each one learn?

1. Dave’s Story

When Dave was 14, his house was completely destroyed by an earthquake. Luckily, he, his parents and his two younger brothers were uninjured. The next few months were really hard for the family. Most of their possessions were ruined and they had to live in a community shelter. While his parents were busy looking for a new house and replacing their belongings, Dave was put in charge of his brothers. It was his responsibility to get his brothers to school each morning and help them with their homework and school activities. It was really tough managing his own schoolwork and helping his brothers, but Dave did it. Two years later, the family is living in a new house and has replaced most of the things that were lost in the earthquake. Dave has a lot of freedom—no curfew and permission to use the family car when he needs it. His parents trust him to make the right decisions because he proved that he was responsible. Dave’s younger brothers turn to him for advice and love hanging out with him.

2. Stef’s Story

Stef, 15, and her sister Colleen, who is a year younger than her, used to argue all the time. They had different friends and avoided each other in school. But when their parents got divorced, things changed. Stef was really upset that her dad was moving out and afraid she wouldn’t see him very often. She felt guilty asking her mom for comfort, because her mom was having a very hard time dealing with the divorce herself. Stef talked to Colleen instead. Stef felt that her sister was the only one who could understand her feelings. Slowly, their arguments disappeared. Colleen helped her feel better, and Stef reassured Colleen, too. They began doing social things together and hanging out at school. Now, Stef calls Colleen one of her best friends. Stef still hates the fact that her dad lives in another state, but the family has begun to get used to their new situation.

This activity is continued on the next page.

Name: _____

People who are going through a traumatic experience often find it very helpful to get some kind of professional therapy. There are many different types of therapy—what works for one person might not be the best choice for another person. What kind of treatment or therapy options are out there?

Find out more by researching the different types of therapy. Choose five of the options below and write a brief two-paragraph summary of each one. Your paragraphs should answer these questions:

What is the treatment?

How does it work?

Who is likely to benefit from the treatment?

Use your school or local library, magazine or journal articles, and trustworthy websites. Keep track of your sources with a *Resource Tracker*.

RESEARCH OPTIONS

- Group therapy
- Art therapy
- Family counseling
- Cognitive behavioral therapy
- Medication
- Exposure therapy
- Relaxation
- Peer group therapy

FACT SHEETS

Name: _____

It's normal to feel stressed out once in a while, but you shouldn't let worry take over your life. Follow these simple tips to reduce your overall level of stress.

- 1 You'll feel less stressed naturally if you get enough rest, eat balanced meals, and exercise. Keeping your body healthy and fit does a great deal to keep your mind from stress.
- 2 Balance the stressful parts of your life with hobbies and interests that are less stressful. If you're a serious student, take a break and do something that isn't mentally taxing. If you're a competitive athlete, include another activity in your life that doesn't require you to compete.
- 3 Work off your stress by doing something physical. Run, mow the lawn, dance, lift weights, or take a brisk walk.
- 4 Talk out your stress. Find someone you trust and feel comfortable confiding in.
- 5 Do something for others. Tutor school children, volunteer at a hospital, make regular visits to a person who lives in a nursing home, tell your parents you'll cook dinner, offer to drive your little sister to soccer practice.
- 6 Give yourself permission to make mistakes. Remember, also, that it's okay to admit them. You don't always have to be perfect.
- 7 Remind yourself that you don't have to solve the world's problems today. You don't have to decide your whole future this minute. One bad day doesn't mean that only bad days will follow.
- 8 Set aside time to dream. To jump-start your imagination, try drawing or writing in a journal.
- 9 Keep life interesting. Try something new now and then. Make new friends, eat new foods, try a different hairstyle or find a new hobby.
- 10 Identify the sources of your stress. Ask yourself, "Is there anything I can do to reduce the stress in my life? Can I cut out or change any of the sources of my stress?"

What is positive imagery?

Positive imagery is a relaxation technique in which you use your imagination to recreate a scene that is very positive or relaxing. To practice positive imagery, go to a quiet place and lie or sit on the floor. Dim or turn off the lights. Breathe deeply. Imagine you are in a very peaceful, happy place. Think about all the details of that place: what sounds do you hear? What do you smell? What sensations do you feel?

Example of a positive imagery "script"

I'm lying on a warm, sunny beach in Tahiti. The clear ocean is in front of me, and a lush tropical jungle is behind me. I'm alone on the beach with no one to distract me. I'm very safe and happy. I look in front of me and see crystal-blue water. Light waves come lapping to the shore. Small colorful fish dart back and forth. A few puffy white clouds are on the horizon. I look behind me and see tall palm trees and other jungle plants. Bright birds are perched on some of the branches. There are huge pink and yellow flowers blooming. The jungle is cool and quiet. I hear the waves gently coming in to shore. The palm trees rustle in the breeze. Some of the tropical birds chirp and sing. I can smell the fresh salt water in the air. I can smell the sweet perfume from the huge flowers too. My body smells like coconut suntan lotion. I feel the warm sun on my skin. The temperature is perfect. The breeze is refreshing. I can dig my toes into the warm, dry sand. I feel totally relaxed. I could lie here all day.

What is muscle relaxation?

Muscle relaxation is a technique in which you progressively tense and then relax all your muscles. To practice muscle relaxation, go to a quiet place and lie on the floor. Dim or turn off the lights. Breathe deeply and evenly. Starting from the top of your head, tighten individual muscles, then release them. Be sure to include the forehead, ears, eyes, mouth, neck, shoulders, arms and hands, chest, belly, thighs, calves and feet. Slowly work your way down to your feet.

Example of a muscle relaxation "script"

Start with your head. Raise your eyebrows, then relax. Do it again. Wrinkle your nose and cheeks, then let them return to normal. Feel how much more relaxed your face is. Clench your jaw and squeeze your eyes shut tight, then relax. One more time. Try to pull your shoulders up to your ears; push your head down to your shoulders. Relax and repeat. Tighten up your arm muscles. Feel the tension, then relax. Do it again. Move down to your hands. Make a fist with each hand, then extend your fingers. Do it one more time. Now, on to your stomach. Tighten up your stomach and hold it. Let it relax as you breathe out. Repeat. Enjoy how much better you feel. Move on to your legs. Tense up your thighs, holding them tight. Let them relax. One more time. Now, clench your knees. Relax and repeat. Down to your feet. Curl your toes tight, then relax. Curl them one more time, then relax. Much better. Lie quietly, breathing in and out, enjoying your relaxed, stress-free body.

Name: _____

A traumatic experience can be very difficult to handle. Everyone reacts in a different way. It's important to remember that there is no "right" or "wrong" way to feel about a traumatic experience. The following are some ways that a young person might respond to an emotional crisis. They are just examples; don't worry if you don't feel the same way. Everyone is unique and deals with trauma in his or her own way. All of these responses are perfectly normal.

A young person might...

- Have difficulty sleeping or have nightmares
- Have difficulty concentrating in school
- Get angry or irritable easily
- Have recurring memories or thoughts about the trauma
- Have trouble telling safe situations apart from the trauma
- Avoid things, people, or situations that remind him or her of the trauma
- Feel jumpy and on edge
- Have headaches and stomachaches
- Feel like he or she is crazy or different from everybody else
- Feel embarrassed by his or her fears
- Feel like he or she is alone in his or her suffering
- Withdraw from family and friends
- Feel very guilty, that he or she should have done something to prevent the trauma
- Be angry at a loved one that died
- Fantasize about revenge
- Feel depressed, like nothing matters
- Lose interest in normal activities
- Try to numb the pain with drugs or alcohol
- Be afraid to ask for comfort
- Pretend everything is okay

Talking about your feelings with trusted friends and family, writing your thoughts in a journal, and getting professional therapy can all help you get through a traumatic experience.

Source: The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Name: _____

Strong feelings of sadness and anger are a normal part of any loss. There is no “right” or “wrong” way to experience grief—intense emotional distress after the death of a loved one—and there is no “right amount” of time to spend grieving. Mourning a loved one is a very difficult thing to do, and a person may experience a number of emotional changes as he grieves. In some cases, it may be helpful to consult a professional counselor for advice. The following are all examples of normal changes someone who is grieving might experience:

EMOTIONS: He may feel any combination of sadness, anger, anxiety, numbness, loneliness, guilt, powerlessness, shame, insecurity or remorse.

BEHAVIOR: Someone experiencing grief may act differently than she normally does. For example, she might lose interest in activities that used to be enjoyable, act angry or aggressive, have conflicts with others, act younger than she is, sleep more or less than she usually does, or eat more or less than usual.

RELATIONSHIPS: The grieving person might have trouble interacting with others. He might withdraw or isolate himself, have difficulty sharing his memories about the loved one, or have problems participating in group activities. Or he may cling to others.

THOUGHTS: She may have constant thoughts about death or about the loved one who died, become preoccupied with her health, or feel guilty that she is still alive. She might also feel confused and have low self-esteem. Grieving people may feel their loved one’s presence or experience vivid dreams about that person.

BODY: A grieving person might get sick more easily than he used to, feel tired, have more aches and pains, or startle more easily.

ACADEMICS: She may do poorly in school or have trouble concentrating.

With time and care, however, the bereaved person can feel better. Everyone grieves differently, but as the grieving person goes through this difficult process, he will:

- Accept the reality and permanence of the death
- Cope with the painful emotions
- Adjust to life changes
- Find meaning in the death
- Develop or deepen relationships that help him get through the grief
- Maintain a connection to the lost loved one through reminiscing and remembering

Source: The National Childhood Traumatic Stress Network

It can be hard to comfort a friend in need. Even though you feel badly for your friend, you may not know what to do, or which words to say, to make him or her feel better. Don't worry—just the fact that you care will help. Follow these tips for more specific advice on how you can help a friend deal with an emotional crisis.

- Don't be surprised if your friend's behavior changes. He may act very sad or angry, or withdraw from you for a while. This is a normal response to dealing with trauma—don't take it personally.
- Include your friend in social activities. Keeping up a regular routine can be really supportive in times of crisis and will help your friend feel normal and connected to others.
- Help out your friend and his family in small ways. Offer to run errands for them or babysit his younger siblings. Help your friend with his chores or bring him homework he missed at school.
- Encourage your friend to talk to an adult about her feelings. Let her know you don't think talking to a therapist is weird or that she's crazy.
- Get involved in community service together. Often, people going through a crisis feel powerless—making a difference for someone else in need can really help.
- Sometimes you'll need to tell an adult about your friend's crisis, even if she has sworn you to secrecy. If she talks about revenge or hurting others, is hurting herself (for example, cutting or burning herself), is being abused, or talks about suicide, you *must* tell an adult. You are being the best friend you can be by helping her get the treatment or therapy she needs.
- Be there to listen. Great listeners:
 - ... don't interrupt others
 - ... focus on what others are saying, not on what they will say in reply
 - ... ask politely for an explanation if they don't understand what someone has said
 - ... occasionally comment on how the speaker must have felt ("That must have been scary!" or "I bet you were mad" shows you understand.)
 - ... reflect back on what the speaker is telling them by repeating it back in their own words. This lets her know you're listening and gives her a chance to correct you if you've misunderstood.

Name: _____

When you are going through a crisis, it really helps to talk about your feelings with trusted friends and family members—especially your parents. These tips can help you express yourself clearly.

1. It's easiest to bring up a tough subject when you already have open lines of communication. Make a habit of talking to your parents about everyday things like school, homework, and what you and your friends did last weekend. Ask them how their day went too.
2. If you have something big to talk about, pick a time when your parents aren't busy doing something else to broach the subject.
3. Plan out what you want to say ahead of time. Use the *Talk About It* activity as a guide.
4. Think about how your parents might react and plan how you will respond to that reaction.
5. Tell them directly that you'd like to talk to them about something important.
6. Use "I statements," especially if you are disagreeing. This means starting your sentences with "I" instead of "you." An "I statement" expresses how you feel without putting the other person on the defensive. For example, "I'm really anxious about where I'm going to live when you guys get divorced" is better than "You guys are such jerks to be making me move to another house."
7. Fight the urge to yell or insult them. It's okay to be angry, but it's not okay to hurt someone else out of anger.
8. Remember, it's okay to stop and think before you speak. Take as much time as you need to find the right words.
9. If it's really difficult to bring up a painful subject with your parents, try writing your feelings down in a letter.
10. If you'd like to talk to an adult other than one of your parents, other good choices for a ready ear are school counselors, doctors, other family members, coaches, advisors, and your friends' parents.

Name: _____

Kids whose parents are getting divorced have to deal with a wide range of emotions. You're probably angry, upset or worried—or all three at once. Divorce is hard on everyone, including your parents, but you're not alone. Over time, you will adjust to your new family situation. Consider these tips:

1. Express your emotions. You may be feeling angry at your parents for putting you through the divorce, afraid they don't love you, or sad they are splitting up. You may have trouble believing the divorce is really happening, or you may feel you don't know your parents anymore. You may be jealous of friends whose parents are still married or ashamed that your parents couldn't work through their problems. All of these emotions are totally normal. It helps to talk about them with your parents, friends or other trusted adults.
2. Keep things as peaceful as possible. If your parents are fighting bitterly, ask them to calm down to minimize the stress on all of you. Ask them not to be mean to each other.
3. Ask your parents to be fair. Tell them you don't want to take sides or pass messages between them. Tell them you need to be able to spend time with each of them without the other feeling hurt or jealous.
4. Ask them to answer all your questions about the divorce: Why is this happening? Is one of you moving? When? When will I see you? Where will I live? Knowing the facts will help you prepare for those changes.
5. Remember that it's not your fault. Your parents' divorce is between the two of them, and you couldn't have done anything to prevent it.
6. Make an effort to keep in touch with both parents, especially if one moves farther away. Call and email each other often and stay up-to-date on daily activities.
7. Ask your parents if they will both come to your important events, like volleyball games or band concerts. Tell them it's very important to you that they attend and ask them to work something out.
8. Stick to your normal schedule as much as possible. Keep doing your favorite activities, spend time with friends, eat right and exercise.
9. Let others support you. Talk about your feelings with other family members, support groups for teens with divorced parents or a therapist. Talking things through will help you cope with the changes.

Name: _____

Moving to a new town is a stressful experience. Sometimes you're moving for difficult reasons, like your parents got divorced or one parent lost a job. Even in the best of circumstances, leaving your old friends, school and neighborhood and getting adjusted to a brand-new environment are bound to be hard. These tips can help smooth over the transition.

1. Talk to your parents about your feelings. Let them know what you're worried about, and don't be afraid to tell them you're angry or sad. Your parents will best be able to help you if you communicate with them.
2. Get ready for some unexpected changes. Don't expect your new school to be just like your old school, or your new neighborhood just like your old one. Try to be open to anything.
3. Find out more about your new home before the move. Find it on a map and figure out how far it is from your current home. If the town has a website, read about it. If the town has a visitor's center or chamber of commerce, call and ask them to send you some brochures.
4. Find out how you can stay involved in your favorite activities. If you play golf, find out what teams or leagues you can join. If you're an artist, find out where to buy your art supplies and classes you can take.
5. Also be open to new activities. Don't be afraid to try something you've never tried before. A new town can be a great new opportunity to explore.
6. Make a checklist of things to do before the move. That way, you won't forget anything important in the flurry of packing.
7. Keep reminders of your old home in your new room. Display pictures of friends or a pennant from your old school to make you feel more at home.
8. Stay in touch with your old friends. Call, email, and instant message each other—fill them in on your new house and school. Send pictures back and forth, and arrange a visit if you can.

Source: TeensHealth website, The Nemours Foundation

Name: _____

**POST-TRAUMATIC
STRESS DISORDER**

What is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?

Posttraumatic stress disorder is a psychiatric disorder experienced by some after experiencing or witnessing a life-threatening event. It usually (but not always) is developed within three months of the traumatic incident. PTSD can be successfully treated with several different types of therapy. PTSD was officially recognized as a psychological diagnosis in 1980.

Who gets PTSD?

Some people develop PTSD after surviving a traumatic experience, such as war, rape, physical assault, natural disasters, or a car crash. PTSD can also spring from witnessing a disturbing or frightening event, such as a school shooting, peer suicide, or violent crime committed against someone else. People of any age, even young children, can have PTSD. Both men and women get PTSD, although women are more likely to be affected than men. About 5.2 million Americans have PTSD at any one time.

What are the symptoms of PTSD?

Sufferers may have any combination of these symptoms:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| nightmares | insomnia |
| anger or irritability | constant alertness |
| feelings of detachment or numbness | aggression |
| avoidance of reminders of the event | difficulty trusting others |
| flashbacks to the event | vivid, intrusive memories |

How is PTSD treated?

A mental health professional will work with a PTSD sufferer to design a personal treatment. Some options include:

Cognitive Behavior Therapy: Correcting negative patterns of behavior and thought by teaching the person how to calm down using relaxation exercises and how to examine and challenge troubling thoughts.

Exposure Therapy: Reintroducing the sufferer to memories of the traumatic event in a safe, controlled setting. The therapist may ask the person to imagine the event or expose him to “triggers” (people, places, or things that remind him of the event) so he can learn how to cope with painful memories.

Family Therapy: Involving family members who may have been involved in the traumatic event too.

Peer Counseling/Peer Groups: Talking to other people who have had similar experiences. The groups may share their feelings and ways they have learned to cope.

Medication: Some sufferers take prescribed medication, like antidepressants, to control anxiety or sadness for a short time.

Name: _____

Turn to the fiction selections below for themes involving young people surviving an emotional crisis or coping with a difficult experience. If you're looking for advice and guidance, the non-fiction list is for you. These are just a few of many books on this topic; ask your librarian to help you find more. You can also consult <http://voicesofsept11.org/recreading.htm> for a greater list of age-appropriate reading materials.

Fiction

A Place Apart by Paula Fox. New York: Signet, 1982.

Bridge to Terabithia by Katherine Paterson. New York: Crowll, 1977.

Ice by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor. New York: Simon Pulse, 1995.

Ordinary People by Judith Guest. New York: Penguin Books, 1976.

The Outsiders by S.E. Hinton. New York: Viking, 1978.

Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson. New York: Puffin, 2001.

Tiger Eyes by Judy Blume. New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Books for Young Readers, 1981.

Whirligig by Paul Fleischman. New York: Dell Laurel-Leaf, 1998.

Non-fiction

The Divorce Helpbook for Teens by Cynthia MacGregor. Atascadero, CA: Impact Publishers, 2004.

My Feelings are Like Wild Animals: How Do I Tame Them? A Practical Guide to Help Teens (And Former Teens) Deal with Painful Emotions by Gary Egeberg. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1998.

Straight Talk about Death for Teenagers: How to Cope with Losing Someone You Love by Earl A. Grollman. Boston: Beacon Press, 1993.

Taking Good Care of Yourself: For Teens Going Through Separation and Divorce by Risa J. Garon. Columbia, MD: Children of Separation and Divorce Center, 1994.

When Life Stinks: How to Deal with Your Bad Moods, Blues, and Depression by Michael Piquemal and Melissa Daly. Sunscreen, 2004.

When Nothing Matters Anymore: A Survival Guide for Depressed Teens by Bev Cobain. Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, Inc, 1998.

When Will I Stop Hurting?: Teens, Loss, and Grief by Edward Myers. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004.

Name: _____

“The Bill of Rights of Grieving Teens.” The Dougy Center for Grieving Children and Teens.
www.dougy.org/default.asp?pid=8497582

Caring for Kids Guide, www.aboutourkids.org/aboutour/articles/crisis_index.html

“The Courage to Remember.” National Childhood Traumatic Stress Network.
www.nctsn.org/nctsn_assets/acp/ctg/CTGprintCurriculum.pdf

“Dealing with Divorce.” TeensHealth website, The Nemours Foundation.
www.kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/families/divorce.html

“Dealing with Divorce and Separation: A Guide for Teens.” The Center for Young Women’s Health, Children’s Hospital Boston. www.youngwomenshealth.org/divorce/html

“Divorce.” *It’s My Life*, PBS Kids. www.pbskids.org/itsmylife/family/divorce/article3.html

Childhood Traumatic Grief Educational Materials
http://nctsn.org/nctsn_assets/pdfs/reports/childhood_traumatic_grief.pdf

Goodman, Robin. “Caring for Kids after Trauma and Death.” Institute for Trauma and Stress at New York University Child Study Center.
www.aboutourkids.org/aboutour/articles/crisis_guide02.pdf

Hamblen, Jessica. “PTSD in Children and Adolescents.” National Center for PTSD, US Department of Veterans Affairs. www.ncptsd.va.gov/facts/specific/fs_children.html

“Helping Children and Adolescents Cope with Violence and Disasters.” National Institute of Mental Health: 2001. www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/violence.cfm#read/Now

“Helping Children Cope with Loss and Grief.” National Association of School Psychologists. www.nasponline.org/NEAT/griefwar.html

“Helping Your Teenager Cope After a Traumatic Event.” University of Pennsylvania Human Resources. www.hr.upenn.edu/emergency/Dealing_Trauma_Teen.pdf

“Let’s Talk Facts about Posttraumatic Stress Disorder.” American Psychiatric Association.
www.healthyminds.org/multimedia/ptsd.pdf

Mildner, Carolyn. “Coping with Death, Grief, and Loss.” University of Iowa University Counseling Service. www.uiowa.edu/~ucs/griefloss.html

Name: _____

“The Moving Blues.” TeensHealth website, The Nemours Foundation.
www.kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/emotions/moving.html

The National Childhood Traumatic Stress Network website. www.nctsn.org Padula, Marjorie. “Grief: A Natural Response to Loss.” University of Nebraska Medical Center. www.unmc.edu/olson/education/grief.htm

“A Real Illness: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).” National Institute of Mental Health. www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/nimhptsd.pdf

“Talking to Your Parents—Or Other Adults.” TeensHealth website, The Nemours Foundation. www.kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/families/talk_to_parents.html

Name: _____

OTHER PROGRAMS
FROM HUMAN RELATIONS MEDIA

<i>Drama Queens and Tough Guys: Helping Teens Handle Emotions</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>How Rude! Ten Rules of Common Courtesy</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>Fears and Phobias: Understanding Them, Defeating Them</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>In Search of Character (10 part series)</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>The Real Character/Real People Series: Profiles in Citizenship</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>The Real Character/Real People Series: Profiles in Courage</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>The Real Character/Real People Series: Profiles in Empathy</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>The Real Character/Real People Series: Profiles in Honesty</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>The Real Character/Real People Series: Profiles in Perseverance</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>The Real Character/Real People Series: Profiles in Respect</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>The Real Character/Real People Series: Profiles in Responsibility</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>The Five Life Strategies of Successful Teens</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>Social Skills Workshop</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>Surviving Peer Pressure: You Can Do It</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>Walk This Way: Exploring Tolerance, Diversity and Difference</i>	video/print or DVD/print

Visit our website for detailed descriptions of the above programs.

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