



Maggie Kennedy

IN Process

Creative Expression from Our Teens



A Monroe County Youth Council
Impact Project from Team Mental Health

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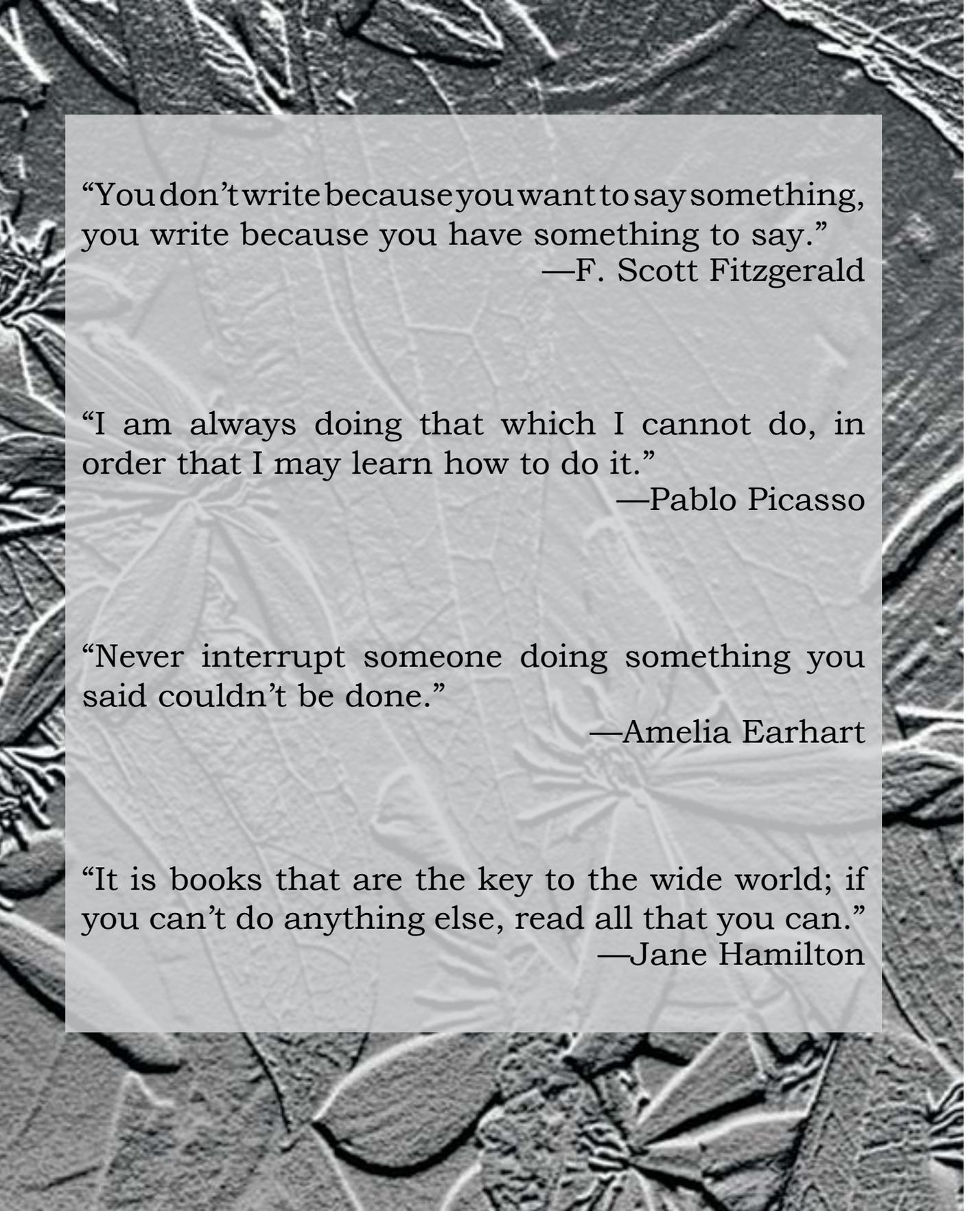


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“It is today that we create the world of the future.”

—Eleanor Roosevelt



“You don’t write because you want to say something,
you write because you have something to say.”

—F. Scott Fitzgerald

“I am always doing that which I cannot do, in
order that I may learn how to do it.”

—Pablo Picasso

“Never interrupt someone doing something you
said couldn’t be done.”

—Amelia Earhart

“It is books that are the key to the wide world; if
you can’t do anything else, read all that you can.”

—Jane Hamilton

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	11
<i>Dee Burt</i>	
On the Subject of Self Concept . . .	14
<i>Ellen Bergan</i>	
Abuse Has No Place in Love	15
<i>Maggie Kennedy</i>	
I Want to Know	16
<i>Michael Battista</i>	
What Would You Do?	17
<i>T. F.</i>	
Crisis	18
<i>Phiona Raffington</i>	
The Monster In My Head	19
<i>Lois Ann</i>	
Hear Her Cries	20
<i>N. B.</i>	
Nobody	20
<i>V. Shah</i>	
Dear Future Teenagers of the World	21
<i>Abigail Quesenberry</i>	
Depression	23
<i>Maggie Kennedy</i>	
Hello, My Name is Death	24
<i>Annie Lindsey</i>	
Experiencing Friends Going Through Depression, and Suicide	25
<i>Kyle Janis</i>	
My Confession	27
<i>A. Z.</i>	
Masks	28
<i>Blaze M.</i>	
Wonderful Lady	29
<i>Maddie McMullen</i>	
The Truth	30
<i>Ainsleigh Cherry</i>	
We Exist	32
<i>Elizabeth Grace Pursley</i>	

I Do Not Exist	33
<i>Ryan Quade</i>	
This Is a PSA	36
<i>Ryan Quade</i>	
Self-Image	37
<i>Mallory Humphrey</i>	
I Can't	39
<i>Kayla Ratliff</i>	
The Little Voice	40
<i>K. G. Adams</i>	
Gender Roles and Bullying	41
<i>Serena Fox</i>	
Letter to Future Youth	43
<i>Molly Wagschal</i>	
Who Knows	46
<i>Anonymous</i>	
3 a.m.	47
<i>Anonymous</i>	
Hmmm	48
<i>Anonymous</i>	
Dear Future Parents	49
<i>Sujin Woo</i>	
The Baseball of Chicago	51
<i>Anonymous</i>	
Give Her Life	52
<i>N. B.</i>	
Beautiful	53
<i>Natasha Moe</i>	
Caution Mirror	56
<i>Caitlin Lewis</i>	
When Did It Happen?	57
<i>A. W.</i>	
Mistake	58
<i>Abigail Guthrie</i>	
Player	59
<i>Phiona Raffington</i>	
Poison	60
<i>Abigail Guthrie</i>	

Silly Little Girl	61
<i>A.W.</i>	
I Need My Label	62
<i>N.B.</i>	
Untitled	63
<i>Kayla Ratliff</i>	
Carnivore	64
<i>Anonymous</i>	
Fury	64
<i>Anonymous</i>	
Deep Sea Diver	65
<i>Anonymous</i>	
The Voyage of Life	66
<i>Robyn Brown</i>	
Sad	67
<i>Jennifer Grubbs</i>	
I'm From	68
<i>T. F.</i>	
Help Them Find a Voice	69
<i>Maggie Kennedy</i>	
Darkness	70
<i>Celestina Garcia</i>	
I Hate Myself	71
<i>A.W.</i>	
Victim	72
<i>Maggie Kenned</i>	
Cover Page	73
<i>Kyle Janis</i>	
Dear Future Teenagers of the World	76
<i>Abigail Quesenberry</i>	
Your Love	78
<i>Phiona Raffington</i>	
Forget	79
<i>Abigail Guthrie</i>	
Dare to Be Different	80
<i>Kayla H.</i>	
Acrostic Swan	81
<i>Anonymous</i>	

Love the World	81
<i>Anonymous</i>	
Can Self-Compassion Improve Well-Being in Teens?	83
<i>Emily Campbell</i>	
Resources	86



Baileigh Grace Goodlett

INTRODUCTION

Dee Burt

We're all on Earth for a purpose and must keep that truth at the forefront of our minds and inside the depth of our hearts. When one suffers, we feel it. When another celebrates, we feel that too. So, is it our moral duty to care or is it instinctual?

When the call went out to get on board with the Monroe County Youth Council (MCYC), many answered: over 300 high school students, adult community leaders, organizations . . . all with energy and a passion to accomplish meaningful tasks for the good of all. The real gift is in the giving and that's exactly what Global Youth Service Day is—a glorious gift to the MCYC teams, volunteers, and recipients alike.

Team Mental Health (TMH) tackled a big assignment: design an outside mural facing the B-Line trail, organize fifty high school volunteers, and paint the 3,500-square-foot wall one short day in April. The mural was custom fit for The Warehouse, a community center located at 1525 S. Rogers Street. (The Warehouse staff, including Ben Arthur, Graphic Designer and Lexi Summers, Coordinator, generously primed the wall white until 1:30 a.m. a couple of nights before Global Youth Service Day.)

Why? The Warehouse needed a fresh design to welcome the community inside where sports, activities, and acceptance abound. People just need to *Come On In*, as the mural invites.

In addition to painting walls and collecting art and poems for this book, Team Mental Health participated in the *Bloomington Out of the Darkness Community Walk*, an American Foundation for Suicide Prevention event that takes place every fall across the country. Their dedication to promote mental health continues with *Be A Hero For Zero*, an Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention event May 9 where this book will be introduced by the team and our sponsors. All proceeds from this run and book will remain local. There may never be a world without suicide, but TMH and many others know that making an effort counts.

Team Mental Health created this anthology to raise awareness of bullying, rape, abuse, addiction, relationships, and suicide. Why? The issues are heavy ones that most people don't want to talk or hear about, but are nonetheless critical to our community's wellbeing.

As you read *IN Process*, imagine the courage of the authors and artists as they share their emotional work. And if you're compelled, start a conversation and see where it leads.

IN Process: Creative Expression from Our Teens



The Warehouse facing the B-Line Trail
Located at 1525 S. Rodgers St., Bloomington, IN 47403
Online at BtownWarehouse.com

A Monroe County Youth Council Impact Group Project



Team Mental Health and student volunteers celebrate the completion of their mural.

Team Mental Health Members Front row, left to right:

Will Robinson, Sajnee Desai, Karlee Bland, Ellen Bergan, Arianna Shamloo, Christa Parkes, Davis Joseph (not pictured)



*On the Subject of Self-Concept . . .
Ellen Bergan*



*Abuse has no place in love.
End abusive teenage relationships.*

Maggie Kennedy

I WANT TO KNOW
Michael Battista

Feeling is difficult when everything is lies.
Media encroaches on everything like flies.
Indoctrination says to tell our sins bitter goodbyes.
What is truth, what is false?
Please tell me, while I have a pulse.
“That’s wrong, stop now, you’re our plight.”
While the others say what’s felt is right.
I need an explanation,
Just let me stop this contemplation.
Am I sinner, or am I saint?
Tell me the colors I need to paint.
Black and white, or pink gold and blue?
Just give me the reason, give me what is due.
I’m tired of readings, I’m tired of show,
Just tell me, I want to know!
'Cause when I see their smile, look into those wondrous eyes,
I can’t tell what’s truth or lies.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

T. F.

What would you do if you had to go to school and get bullied every day?

What would you do if your past was worse than the movie that gives monsters nightmares?

What would you do if you were a drug addict at 12 years old?

What would you do if you had to cut yourself just to feel you are still alive?

What would you do if you tried to kill yourself at 5 years old?

What would you do if you covered the bruises with make up?

What would you do if whoring around was the only way you could feel love?

What would you do if no one cared?

What would you do if you were left all alone??

What would you do if you would rather die than be happy?

What would you do if your only love left you like that?

What would you do if you were going through family Hell?

What would you do if drugs were the only thing that helped cause you were completely numb?

What would you do without anyone?

What would you do if you were abused and neglected?

What would you do if you had to live in a mental hospital?

What would you do.....?

If you had to walk a few miles in my shoes?!?!?

CRISIS
Phiona Raffington

As I glare past the window I visualize the blending hues of our sensual aurora
that never had its chance of being
slather unto the opaque skies.
My whole mind is tired from how hard I try not to feel what I have been feeling . . .
but it gives up on me . . .
and an icy hot tear slowly pools up and sheds...
I begin to cry.
I begin the cycle of inner conflicting hell
Self control! Self control! Is what I repeat to tell
It's okay . . .
It will all be alright?
I think when I say what's on my mind it starts hate within your deep eyes.
Let my words tangle in your tresses my love.
Let it fill the air with the characters you never would have even thought of.
But that's ridiculous! Just look at me...
I'm not such the precious darling you thought me to be.
My past made me the woman you embrace today . . .
with my fire and heat within my heart that never subsides when felt threatened.
Oh...it never delays
But this is where I'm frightened.
I'm terribly afraid.
I heard you liked the quiet ones
But my voice shall never be unheard.
To apologize for my emotions? That's just absurd
But I will always feel remorse for building our safe bridge just to burn it all down.
What was once a bubbly gleeful smile quickly morphed into a hidden frown.
All the little butterflies that were gently placed in my mind wilted away
and now their wings are scattered, torn,
and harder and intangible to find
Where's the rain!? Where's my sun?

THE MONSTER IN MY HEAD

Lois Ann

This oblivion you have subjected me into is
no longer fun.

I'm here.

I always was.

But you forget me . . . just because?

Of course. This always happens.

I'm going to burn it all down.

I'm glad you could have seen this magical
city before I ruin this town.

Every bit of sanity that I possess
Is starting to be eaten away by stress.
It's like a monster is chasing me,
And its starting to feel like I can't breathe.

I try to run.

I try to flee.

But the monster in my head
Starts whispering to me

I want it to leave.

I just want it to go,

But I just can't

Let these feelings show.

For if I do,

I have a fear

That people will laugh at me,

And never come near.

I want to tell someone.

I want them to know.

But I think if I tried,

My lungs might explode.

Time to set aside how I feel.

I will stand up tall and figure out how to
deal

With all of these emotions, the pain I
suppress

Of being scared of what I do not possess.

No more fear.

I'm tired of stress.

I'll wipe away my tears,

And get away from this mess.

HEAR HER CRIES

N. B.

Swimming in the sea of blue
Drowning to the sound of you
Yelling, screaming, in her face
Needing to get out of this place
New girl in a school of pain
Bruises on her “ugly” face
Cuts and scratches up her arms
Her mind is so very dark
Crying with her make up smearing
Over and over just keep hearing
All the girls calling her names
Filling her with self-hate
Little can they truly see
The wonderful person she used to be
Until this earth took her by surprise
She was gone in the blink of an eye



Nobody
V. Shah

DEAR FUTURE TEENAGERS OF THE WORLD

Abigail Quesenberry

As I'm writing this letter and thinking of all the pathetic (kinda hilarious) events that has happened to me over my early years as a teen, I've decided that I won't tell you, a stranger, all the embarrassing moments that happened to me but instead, I'll give you some advice. I'm hoping you'll come away feeling less anxious about your own future pathetically filled teenage years. And most importantly I want you to finish this letter having a better understanding that coping with your own awkward adolescent years is what shapes you into a responsible adult.

First things first, your teenage years will be a mess. Don't think that it's avoidable because I'm here to tell you that it won't be. I think our teenage years is a time for young people to learn how to deal with stress, anxiety, and depression all in one place, high school. There's just no escaping that, sadly. But don't also think you'll be absolutely miserable. There are plenty of clubs and sports with amazing people in them so I'm sure you'll find something to enjoy. But this letter is for all the bad scenarios, I wouldn't be able to write this letter otherwise.

Next on the list, body confidence. Never feel ashamed of your GROWING body when changing in the locker rooms for gym, or any time for that matter, do not feel ashamed that your body is different. Your body is most certainly valued and never feel that it isn't only because you don't look like others. Let's face it, you're unique because of that! And a piece of advice for bullies or just plain rude people? Don't listen to them. And I know that's sort of cliché and almost always ignored in your regular teen movie, but it's so true and probably the most underrated piece of advice. Even now when I watch teen flicks I cringe at the fake representation of teen bullies (take that amazing observation and run).

Now being a teen is absolutely frustrating as I've previously somewhat mentioned before. Things like your body growing awkwardly into the first phase of adulthood, your personality is (hopefully) evolving into something more "mature", your friends are constantly changing, and your having to

IN Process: Creative Expression from Our Teens

deal with functioning only on a two hour nap you took in study hall because you accidentally spent the whole night watching Keeping up with the Kardashians, and on top of all that your family seems like it's starting to fall apart. All of that is okay, that's what teenage years is all about, finding the best way to cope with different scenarios, it's kinda what sculpts you into the adult that you will soon be.

And the most important tip that I could think of, don't stress. Life will be full of all these crazy, miraculous, anxiety filled, tormenting events, well, that's what I'm told anyway. I'm only fifteen so I have a couple more years before I can believe my parent's whole spiel about the teenage years zipping by.

Good luck,

Abigail

“Worry never robs tomorrow of its sorrow, it only saps today of its joy.”

—Leo Buscaglia



You're a victim of your own mind.

Depression is an illness,
not just a phase.

Maggie Kennedy

HELLO, MY NAME IS DEATH
Annie Lindsey

My hope is that you become my friend
But for that, your life must end
Don't be afraid, it will all be okay
Unless that is, you decide to stay

If you come with me, I'll put your pain to a stop
Just pull the trigger and drop
I will be here as soon as you fall
And you won't need to worry at all

Not what they say, not what they do
None of it can get to you
Not if you come with me, my friend
Because I can make it all end

They won't bother you anymore
And your heart will no longer be sore

Hello, my name is Death
And I sure hope you become my friend.

EXPERIENCING FRIENDS GOING THROUGH DEPRESSION,
AND SUICIDE
Kyle Janis

Dear People Around the World,

This is a story about how I reacted to a friend committing suicide and how suicide is a serious concern in our world today. This story takes place when I still lived in Iowa City, Iowa, in 2006–07.

When I first started going to Sunday School, I was about 6 years old, in kindergarten, and did not have very many friends. On my first day, I was a nervous wreck. All of the other children were in their little groups, while I was all by myself playing with a toy race car. One of the teachers, who was a freshman at the local high school, came over to talk to me. Her name was Tonya Nicholson. Every Sunday from that day forward, I was always happy to see Tonya in the Sunday school room. She always sat next to me, and talked to me. Each week it was good to see a familiar face, and I knew I could trust Tonya.

As weeks passed, I started making more friends, and I did not talk to Tonya as much as I did before. I was happy to finally be a part of the groups in the Sunday school room. The next fall, I noticed Tonya was not in the room very often. When she was there, she seemed very sad and seemed like she did not want to be there. I did not think to tell anyone because I did not realize there was a problem. At that age, I had no idea what depression or suicide was. Near Thanksgiving, a couple of weeks went by where I never saw Tonya in Sunday School or at the regular church services. Again, I never told anyone, because I thought maybe she had moved on to volunteer somewhere else or she was simply very busy.

On the night of December 1st, 2007, my mother came up to my room with shocking news. She told me that Tonya had been in an accident, and that she had died. Since I was only seven years old, I had only had the experience of one person close to me dying, so I had a very hard time accepting that Tonya had died. Years later, I learned my mom actually had a difficult time telling me the truth. Tonya had committed suicide.

Now that I am a teenager myself, I realize that suicide is a serious problem among teens and the third leading cause of death within this age group. It is important that parents and teenagers learn to recognize the warning signs of suicide and what to do to help. Some of these warning signs could include talking about suicide or death, pulling away from friends or family, or even disengaging in sports or other activities. If a parent thinks there is a problem, they should get the teenager to a doctor and, most importantly, keep lines of communication open. If a teenager thinks their friend has a problem, they should talk to their parents or another trusted adult for help. Most importantly, a threat of suicide should be taken seriously, and not thought of as just a way to get attention.

I wish someone had been able to recognize the signs of suicide and depression that Tonya might have shown and had been able to prevent her death. The loss of anyone through suicide leaves a hole in many hearts and leaves those left behind wondering what they could have done to change things. If only teenagers would realize their problems are only temporary, maybe they would not choose suicide as a permanent solution. Having gone through this experience, I will always keep a close eye on my friends and do what I can to help. That is the least I can do for Tonya.

MY CONFESSION

A. Z.

I've been up
Sippin' on this cup
Drinking all the memories away
Until I wake up the next day
Then boom back to reality
Back to all the pain
Wishin' life was just a game
The battle just goes on
This war has just begun
I feel like my life is done
But then I see the light
And I've gotten the courage to fight
Fighting for my life
Causing people strife
Hurting people who mean the most to me
My mom got the worst of it
I can't believe I put her through all of that
shit
But she stuck beside me
Supporting me all the way
Thinking her real son went astray
That he'd be back the next day
But now it's been over a year
And I've ended up here

Facing all my problems
Digging through my past
Thinking every day that I would last
Until I hit rock bottom
Thinking that this is it
I quit
I'm ready to take my life
But as I reach for that knife
I think of my mom and think of my dad
And all the memories that we had
The knife slowly slips out of my hand
The tears start flowin' down my face
I've got people telling "you won the fight"
The fight against life
The fight against depression
I guess in a way this is my confession
The truth of my life
The weight I carry on my shoulders
Feelin' like a boulder
But I feel the weight had lifted
The light is gettin' brighter
I'm a fighter
A true survivor



*Masks by Blaze M.
John Rud, MAAT, Instructor*

“The saving of our world from pending doom will come, not through the complacent adjustment of the conforming majority, but through the creative maladjustment of a nonconforming minority.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

WONDERFUL LADY

Maddie McMullen

Writer's note: This is my own version of "Phenomenal Woman" by Maya Angelou

I may not be a barbie doll,
Their legs are long and lean.
Their plastic, perfect, curvy figures
Are no more real than dreams.

I do not lack the confidence
To hold my head up high,
And when they ask me how this is,
I say the reason why—

It's my smile and my stride,
It's the look in my eyes,
It's the grace of my walk,
And the sass of my talk

I'm a lady,
Wonderfully
Wonderful lady,
That's me

I don't care about what they think,
Their opinions voiced, I only blink.
They do not see their careless lies,
Their words hurt, don't they realize?
They ask me how I stand so tall,
And I tell them what I know—

It's the swing of my hips,
The hop of my skip,
The love in my heart,
I've known from the start,

That I'm a lady,
Wonderfully
Wonderful lady,
That's me.

I'm not a model,
I don't hold my tongue.
I'm a little impatient,
And slightly high strung.
I am myself.
I cannot lie
Sometimes I think,
Why do I try?
But then I think,
What makes me strong?
And I say—

I'm fierce and tough
I'm fast and smart
My smile pierces through the dark
My voice is strong
My actions, bold
My life is young
My heart is gold

I'm a lady,
Wonderfully.
Wonderful lady,
That's me.

THE TRUTH
Ainsleigh Cherry

My heart is grey and blue
Just like the moldy dew

My head is slowly throbbing
And mother can't stop sobbing

I don't remember what happened
I just know that everything blackened

Who knew that'd be our last chat
With someone we never thought would do that.

I'm sorry if this is making you blue,
But honestly, it's the sad truth—

My thoughts are ticking like a clock that can't stop counting
One tick, two tick, three tick, four

I wondered if he counted the same way before he let go
One breath, two breath, three breath, four . . .
I wonder if people even cared how he mourned . . .

Drowning himself in more sorrow counting the days
One day, two day, three day, four . . .
How many days until I'm a dead corpse?

I'm sorry if I come off too direct
But please don't act like I'm some sort of reject.

I may be in my youth,
But at least I know the truth.

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I've seen a lot of suicide notes and pictures on social media. It's an everyday thing that I've learned about through social media posts and I wanted to say how I feel about it. I've never been in this situation, but it's interesting to try to put myself in that type of situation and write about it. I've always felt deeply for other people, and I feel like I can spread how I feel through my poetry.

The idea I'm trying to convey in my writing is that suicide is a serious thing that happens in everyday situations and I wanted someone to feel how upsetting it is through my poetry. I honestly feel so much for families who go through a suicide in the family, or with a friend. I wrote this that way I can spread how serious it is and for adults to actually understand as well.

Ainsleigh Cherry





We Exist
Elizabeth Grace Pursley

I DO NOT EXIST

Ryan Quade

Hello there
My name is Summer
And I do not exist

I am asexual
So I'm immature
I haven't tried it yet
So how could I *possibly* know?
Oh not to mention I'm young
I am asexual
And I do not exist

I am aroflux
I clearly just never grew up
I must be a late bloomer
Oh I'm just **shy**, really
And hey,
I'll find someone someday
I am aroflux
And I do not exist

I am non-binary
I'm just making it all up
I just *HAVE* to be special
It's just boys and girls!
Oh wait,
Don't forget the **freaks**
I am non-binary
And I do not exist

My brain is very sick
I'm just overreacting
Y'know, to *everything*
It's all in my head
But that's not the problem
Oh, no, not at all
I'm just weak
And just a teenager
My brain is very sick
And I do not exist

You know...
I don't like not existing
So let's try this again

I am asexual
I do not experience that "magical thing"
Called sexual attraction
It's simple, really
I am not a cell
And I'm not just a prude
I am asexual
And I exist

I am aroflux
My romantic orientation
Well, it's complicated
It changes, sometimes often and sometimes not
But it's consistent with the aromantic spectrum
You know what that means?
I don't get crushes often
That's it
I am aroflux
And I exist

A Monroe County Youth Council Impact Group Project

I am non-binary
My gender does not fit
The typical labels society gives us
I'm not a **boy** or a **girl**
But something else entirely
I'm still not sure what
But I will figure it out
I am non-binary
And I exist

My brain is very sick
The voices scream at me
But they force me to hide
I twitch and I shake
I cannot sleep and I cannot breathe
I cannot handle things
At least not the way you are expected to
My brain is very sick
And I exist

Hello again,
Dear stranger
My name is Ryan
And I hope you don't mind,
But I'll tell you a secret:
I exist.

This poem was inspired by my personal struggle with being accepted for what who I am and what I struggle with. Many people like me are invalidated just because people don't believe that we exist or that we are real people, and that's something that is definitely not okay. This is why we need education about all kinds of different things, not just the things I've covered. No one should ever feel like they are not real or that they are broken.

THIS IS A PSA

Ryan Quade

We talk about bullying
In school
On TV
Everywhere, really
But there's something
Something we don't talk about

No one talks about the kids
The kids like *me*
The kids who bully themselves
The kids who cry
If they get less than an A
The kids who tell themselves
That they're just not good enough
Or that they shouldn't be here anymore

Why don't they talk about us?
Because, you know,
If they did talk about us
Maybe we wouldn't feel so . . .
Unaccepted
Freakish
Crazy
Are they afraid of us?
Do they *actually* want us dead?
NEWSFLASH GUYS!
You're sending the wrong message

When news anchors sympathize
With the parents of a teen
Over their child's suicide
When it's those parents' fault
That their kid is dead

When everyone complains
About how "selfish" those kids are
Those kids who killed themselves
Without even thinking about that kid
And what they had to be going through

When a teen opens up
FINALLY
About the things they think
The things they do
And their parents just send them away
Because they're scared
For their reputation
You say you care
You say you'll listen
And sure we understand it's hard
But can't you try
TRY
To not be hypocrites?

We'd really appreciate it

SELF-IMAGE

Mallory Humphrey

The constant struggle for teenage girls to see themselves as beautiful is what mainly motivated me to create my artwork. Over the last few weeks, our class has been discussing these many issues both girls and boys go through. The one that stood out to me most was self image.

My artwork presents a teenage girls face with different size holes in place of her missing features. Those holes represent the emptiness she feels for those features and the longing for perfection. Trying to convey the feelings they feel and how they view themselves was the point in my art. The holes highlight to the new issue of how social media and magazines make women feel. Seeing these “beautiful” woman everywhere in images makes women believe they don’t fit into the “beautiful” category.



The Challenge

Sometimes the phrase, “just be yourself,” leaves us feeling stuck.

The Science

We grow by stretching beyond what we consider our core selves.

The Solution

Act as if you already had the qualities you want to develop in yourself.

More at <http://www.fulfillmentdaily.com/simple-strategy-be-most-authentic-version-yourself/>

“We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be.”

—Kurt Vonnegut, *Mother Night* (1966)

“I am always doing that which I cannot do, in order that I may learn how to do it.”

—Pablo Picasso

“You are today where your thoughts have brought you; you will be tomorrow where your thoughts take you.”

—James Allen

I CAN'T
Kayla Ratliff

If I could,
I would,
But I can't,
So I won't.

For how I was torn,
For how I could've sworn,
That you were the truth,
But I can't.

If I could say it,
Say sorry,
I would,
But it's impossible.

For my cries,
For the words of discontent,
I wish so much to say sorry,
But I can't.

I'd say sorry,
For my insecurities,
For my pain,
For my sorrow.

For the dreams,
For your heart that is hollow,
For my wants,
For what I see,
In forever,

For the trouble,
For what we did,
For me,
For everything.

It will take a never-ending apology,
For now I wish I could, but I can't.

For telling you my fears,
For trying to hide my tears,
For every message that you and I sent,
For every lie you told,
For every lie I believed,
But I can't.

THE LITTLE VOICE

K. G. Adams

She looks in the mirror
And only sees
What other kids say
Every single day

“She’s ugly
She’s fat
She doesn’t want to date
Why should we wait
To taunt
To harass
To say what we please
We must always tease”

But somewhere deep down
A little voice says
“*You’re beautiful, sweetie*”
I wish you could see”

Your gorgeous braced smile
Your generous heart
It’s been such a while
Since I’ve seen you smile

It’s not all about
The clothes and the hair
It’s about shining light
In the dark of the night

She takes a closer look
At her freckles and braces
Her long dark hair
There’s beauty there

She smiles and beams
For the first time in years
Could it be?
Really she

Be beautiful after all?

“You are beautiful
An individual creation
Be proud of who you are”

GENDER ROLES AND BULLYING

Serena Fox

It is largely assumed that among Millennials, there is very little of the sexism and rigid enforcement of gender roles that plagued earlier generations. Thanks to the feminists of the 1960s and 1970s, girls and boys are given the same rights. Girls are told they can do anything boys can, and that is the truth. But there is one area where a sexist double standard—and a very damaging one—still stands.

Though teenagers' ideals today are considered to be the epitome of what feminists have worked for, middle and high school students still police each other into gender stereotypes, and often do so by bullying behavior. Girls are constantly told, not only by the media and adults but also by their peers, they have to look perfect and be perfect. Any nonconformity, rule-breaking, or criticizing authority is presented by their peers as near-sinful and immediately puts the girl who does such a thing at the center of bullying and ostracization, for the same "crimes" that boys are rewarded for with a laugh or the admiration of their classmates. A teenage girl commonly receives frosty looks and even cruel comments for the same behaviors that for boys are considered cool and transgressive.

Why do teenagers, who have been raised to be feminists and believe that girls and boys are equal, still police such gender roles? They have been brought up as accepting, and will likely grow up to be accepting. So what causes this window of judgment and sexism? Teenagers are desperately looking for classifications and ways to sort everything. This is why, for instance, they organize themselves into rigid cliques based on interests and styles, or why they're so quick to degrade one another for deviating from the norm. This also causes teenagers to sort behavior and its appropriateness by gender. Therefore, even the most feminist-minded teenagers still leap to criticize the student that doesn't fit the established gender ideal.

IN Process: Creative Expression from Our Teens

If teenagers could realize and accept that femininity does not equal perfection, and masculinity does not equal transgressiveness, the phenomenon of the judgmental sexism in schools would disappear. Of course, as long as there are teenagers, there will be the anxiety of fitting in and staying in one's place, whether it be clique, gender, or popularity. But perhaps if we were taught to separate these characteristics from gender, the problem of sexist bullying and double standards perpetrated by teenagers would cease to exist.



LETTER TO FUTURE YOUTH

Molly Wagschal

Dear Adolescents of the Future,

Navigating through these teenage years can be difficult due to a multitude of reasons. There is academic pressure, social anxiety, brain development, etc. Adding to the complexity is the ubiquity of social media and other similar distractions in this digital age. It can all be overwhelming at times, but chances are you will survive and move on to the next era of your lives with a heightened education, developed social skills, and the other positive results of your current hardships.

Here is something to think about: is adolescence actually more difficult of a stage than adulthood, or do we just think it is because we have never experienced anything else? It seems that many adults forget about the difficulty (of lack thereof) they experienced when they were between the ages of 12–19, and they are unable to recall whether or not adulthood is harder. Certainly there are hardships to consider in both stages of life, but how does having the freedom and rights that come with turning 18 compare with having the rights to food and shelter that accompany childhood?

When I am experiencing a difficulty of teenage life, I usually find it helpful to “remove” myself from my problem, as it were, and think about it on a larger scale. For example, you may have gotten a disappointing grade on a math test, but how does that compare to children in parts of the world who cannot go to school at all because they have to work? I almost always feel that my issues are less of a big deal than I had initially thought when I think about them in this way. Perhaps it would be helpful for you to do the same.

I believe one of the greatest stressors for teenagers is academic pressure. There is constant emphasis on getting into universities and focusing on a career path, even as early as in middle school. There are many concerns that go through the minds of students frequently. Will I get into a university of my choosing? Will I find a career? Will I pass the SAT? Should I take this honors class to get the weighted credit instead of a class I may enjoy

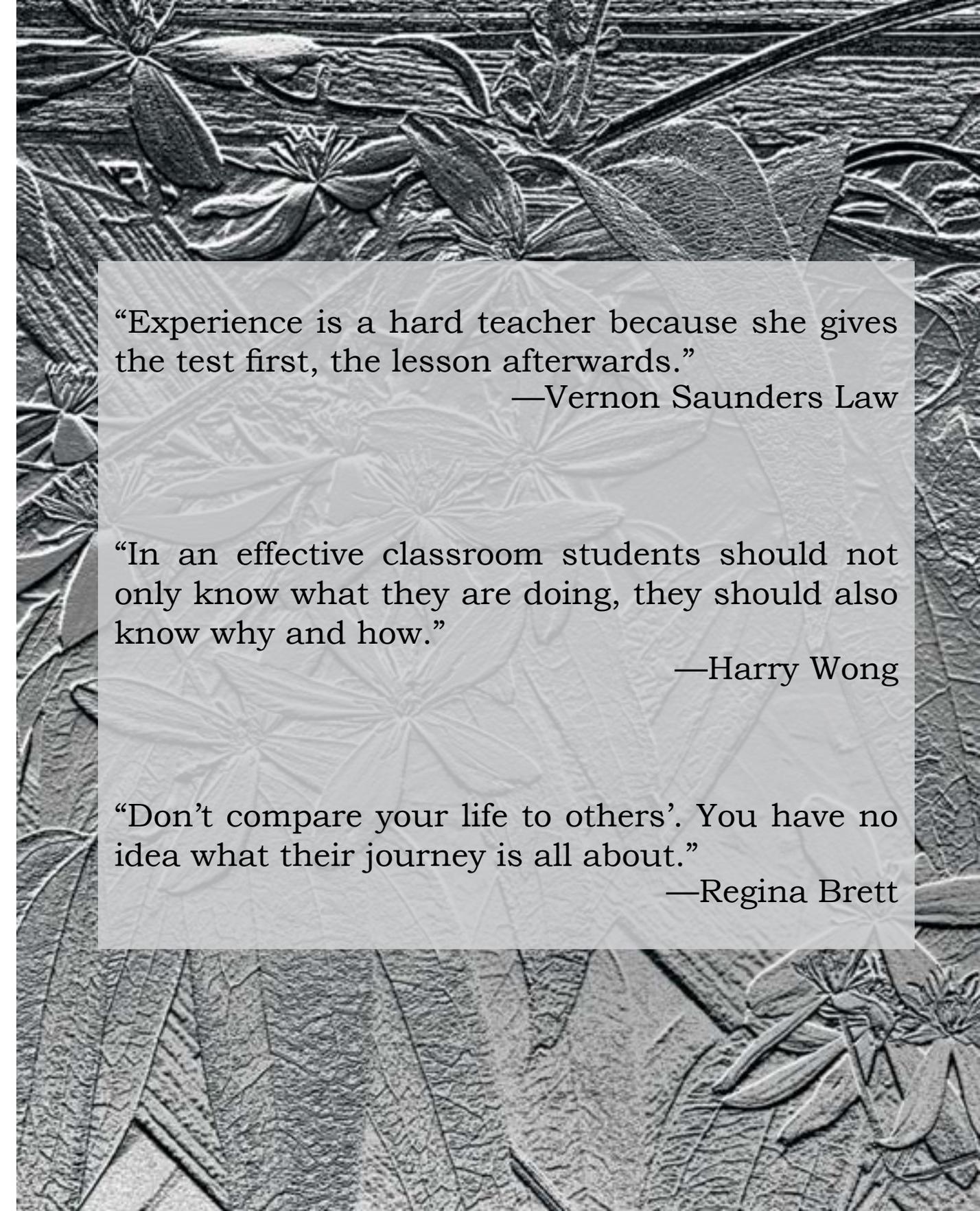
IN Process: Creative Expression from Our Teens

more? The worries can seem endless. I suggest taking some time to not think about academic pressures. School is a very prevalent part of teenage life, so it is easy for academic issues to dominate a student's thought. Try to do an activity where your mind is relatively clear or occupied with something else. Some examples are reading, sports/exercise, musical endeavors, yoga, meditation, cooking, etc. For me, playing violin is an escape from the academic pressures of life.

I hope you follow these few tips for getting through teenage life, and I hope they are beneficial to you. So far in my life, I have found that although the goings can be tough, the experience is ultimately worth the struggle.

Sincerely,

A fellow adolescent



“Experience is a hard teacher because she gives the test first, the lesson afterwards.”

—Vernon Saunders Law

“In an effective classroom students should not only know what they are doing, they should also know why and how.”

—Harry Wong

“Don’t compare your life to others’. You have no idea what their journey is all about.”

—Regina Brett

WHO KNOWS
Anonymous

It's been three years and I still haven't been able to shake

This empty feeling that I am . . . nothing

and I shouldn't

be having this feeling because

I should be better I should be better I should be better

than this I should be better I should be better I want to be better than this I should be

better I should be better I should be better I should be better I . . .

I want

to be better

Please help

Me get better

Because part of me still believes

I should

not

—who knows



*3 a.m.
Anonymous*



*Hmmm
Anonymous*

DEAR FUTURE PARENTS
Sujin Woo

I am a fourteen-year-old girl in high school, more specifically, ninth grade. School is very stressful for most people in high school and how parents support their kids is very important. People in high school are reaching the age of where they're trying to find themselves and they can "break" very easily. If a parent doesn't support/understand their teens well, they, the teens, can feel very stressed and pressured. Here are some ideas on how to help your child/children with their teenage lives:

School

When your child goes to school, they can feel very pressured. I can relate, partly because I am a normal teenaged person. School may not seem very stressful at some points in time, but when all five teachers gives your child three hours' worth of homework, it can be very stressful.

When your child has a lot of homework, DO NOT restrict their freedom, but do make sure that they finish their homework. For instance, when I'm doing one hundred and fifty math problems for my final review, sometimes I get very frustrated. When I get frustrated, I usually stop doing my homework and start doing something else. I then come back and finish the homework because my mom reminds that I need to finish the homework.

If a parent restricts the teen's freedom, such as their phones or going outside, the teen's stress level shoots up. They feel frustrated and unmotivated, which causes them to not care about their grades, which leads to bad grades. Teens need to have some sort of a stress reliever and if the parents cut them off from their stress reliever, they explode from stress. So overall, do not restrict their freedom and remind them every so often that they should finish their homework.

Body Image Issues

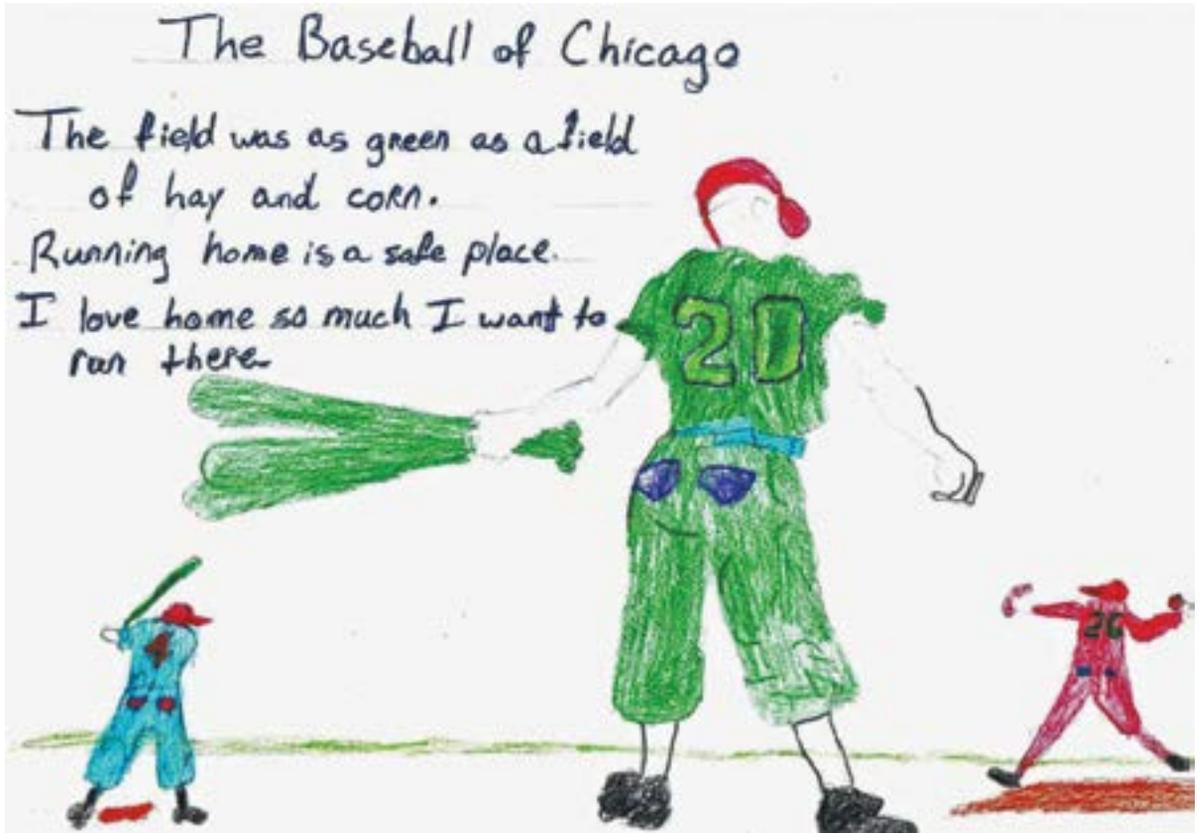
When children enter their “teenage years”, things can get awfully stressful. (As I have stated above.) They have to worry about school and another problem: how they look. Back when they were in elementary school, they didn’t care that much in appearance, maybe a few new clothes to show off every so often. After elementary schoolers enter middle school, they go through a serious change.

In my personal experience, all of my friends started to seriously worry about what they looked like on the outside. I’m not saying that it’s a bad thing, partly because most girls go through this phase, but it is a big change in how people, both girls and boys, see themselves. The one big problem is when people start paying too much attention to how they look. Some people start this “problem” in middle school, some in high school.

What basically happens is that they start thinking that they are overweight, or that they don’t look like others, more specifically celebrities or people on magazines. When some people see super skinny people on the internet, or in a magazine, they feel that they aren’t fitting into the social mandate that the people in the magazines/internet are setting. They have a need to change the way they look, which, most commonly, lead into eating disorders or mental problems, such as depression.

The way you, the parents, can help your child with this is to tell them that it’s all fake and that they shouldn’t have to worry about things like that. Another way to help is to have them talk it out with their friends. Why I ask you, the parents, to do something like this is because teens usually feel more comfortable talking with their friends. Talking with their friends also helps eliminate pressure from others at school to fit in with this “social mandate.” Seeing other people at school who are as skinny as the people in magazines/on the internet pressures people, in a way, to follow this social mandate.

Overall, make sure you have a very trusting relationship with your child/children so that they can talk out their “problems” and so that they can have a stress relieving environment at home.



*The Baseball of Chicago
Anonymous*

GIVE HER LIFE

N. B.

Empty soul
Empty stomach
Feeling few things
Eating near nothing
Crying for help
With silent screams
Look in the mirror
Hear her lies
Starving for hope
Starving for life



BEAUTIFUL
Natasha Moe

Her name was Bella, and she was not particularly extraordinary. When she was just a little girl, she did have a certain light in her eyes, skip in her step, and strange, child's wisdom that shined in her words. Few people ever saw this, because after noticing her pigtails, wide eyes, and Barbie dolls most people only oohed and aahed over her petite features, and only cooed at her more if she attempted to speak, which is why one day she gave up on talking and settled for smiling demurely.

Bella had a lovely childhood. She had a myriad of friends, a loving family, and she loved her life. Everything was wonderful, until she made the grave mistake of becoming a teenager.

Everything was to be perfect. She decided long ago she would attract someone rich with her breathtakingly good looks, marry, and live happily ever after. Sadly, the universe seemed to have other ideas, for as she began high school, she realized how unsightly she was with her too short legs, too long nose, too large waist and too small eyes. She despaired at the thought that her inadequate physique had doomed her to a loveless life of spinsterhood.

Soon, Bella grew envious of her friends for being so perfect. Resentment bubbled deep within her, like a simmering volcano that yearned to erupt, which was why even as she smiled to their faces, minutes later she would belittle behind their backs. Her friends often joined her in this delicious cruelty, and together they never ran out of people to slander.

Life passed by in a monotonous blur of gossip and makeup and pretty dresses, but this young lady was far from happy. She knew that just as she mocked her friends, her friends mocked her, but she knew she deserved it. If she tried harder Bella knew she could attain perfection. People were always telling her she could be anything, so why shouldn't she be perfect?

However, young ladies mustn't act miserable. When Bella allowed herself to act forlorn her ever loving family continually, anxiously bothered her, so each day she straightened her hair and dressed up in pretty clothes and

piled makeup on her face and smiled and told herself she wasn't wearing a mask, and even if she was, then it was at least a pretty one.

Bella often wondered how she could do better. How could she be beautiful? How could she finally look like one of the Barbie dolls she had played with a lifetime ago? It was with this in mind that Bella decided to take her life in her own hands and abstain from eating for a while.

Bella had stuck with her diet and she thought she had done very well. She hadn't been happy with her body yet, although the diet had lasted much longer than expected. At first, she thought it would last a week or so, but it had been some months since she began. She began having dizzy spells eventually, but when she fainted one day at school, her family suddenly had her going to therapists. She knew they were overreacting-she still had more weight to lose, after all.

But that fateful faint affected her life in a far worse way than getting a shrink. Gossip had spread like an explosion. Just drop the match and boom; down went her social life. When other kids gossiped behind her back, she told herself they were just like the old ladies who had once proclaimed her adorable like she wasn't even there, but Bella couldn't help but think the other students were far more malicious.

Unable to deal with the recognition and shame of being "the one with the eating disorder" Bella took a week off of school. Each day her once cheerful parents watched her eat, and Bella desperately reached out to the friends who hadn't left her.

Things didn't seem to be the same after that. Bella figured time would turn things back to normal, but until then she had to deal with teachers watching, students whispering, and random strangers giving her the support someone probably told them she needed, despite the fact that she was perfectly happy, thank you very much.

It was a perfectly innocuous afternoon when Bella's life as she knew it changed. After a tiring day of feeling as if people were watching her, Bella went to her friend Sheila's house. She had barely begun her favorite pastime, posting mean comments on people's Facebook pages, when Sheila's friend, Big Bertha, noted that Bella's second best friend twice removed had gained weight. At first, Bella simply laughed with the others, but then she realized

A Monroe County Youth Council Impact Group Project

that her friend really had gained weight, and she looked chubby. And her hair was frizzy and too long.

Under that picture was a group photo. Too tall, bad skin, frizzy hair . . . They all looked terrible in their own, pathetic ways. She had always said people looked bad, but she had just been making things up. But it was true, all of it. Below there was a picture of the prettiest girl in school, but Little Miss Perfection had smudged makeup and messy hair. Everyone was hideous, and there was exactly nothing they could do about it.

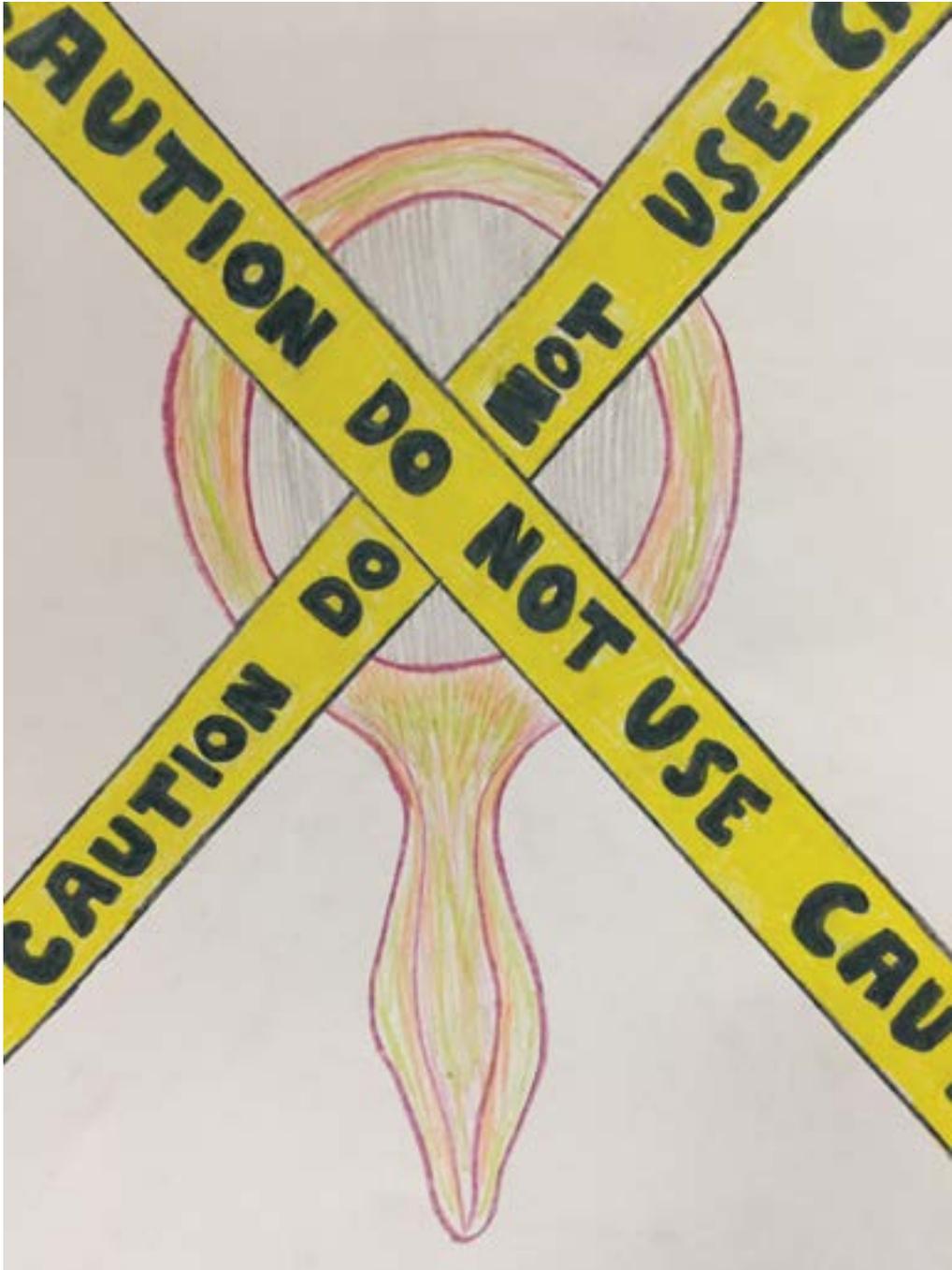
Bella tried not to laugh, she really did, but she was powerless against it. Too-gleeful giggles burst from her lips, and great gales of laughter soon followed. Her friends exchanged uneasy glances as the laughter continued unbidden. Bella couldn't breathe, and her sides were on fire but she couldn't find it in herself to care. She just laughed and laughed at the great joke the world had played on her.

“What’s so funny?” pondered the one with the bad nose job.

“Are you okay?” wondered the face smothered in makeup.

“Is she . . . laughing?” asked the girl who sucked in her gut.

“No, she’s crying, I think,” said the one with a bad perm.



Caution Mirror
Caitlin Lewis

WHEN DID IT HAPPEN?

A. W.

When did we stop wearing
Little sandals?
When going to bed early
Became good?
When did play dates
Become dates?

When did we as teens use
Labels?
When weight stopped determining our
Ideal image?

When did we start looking
In the mirror.....
And become afraid of the
Image?

And when.....
Did death.....
Become realistic?

MISTAKE
Abigail Guthrie

As he looked at me,
I felt a thousand knives
Leaving wounds
Deeper than I prepared for.
But those eyes
Promised me more than I could ask.
I fell for his eyes.
I expected to feel
Wanted and secure,
But it was only fun to him.
No feelings were shown.
I didn't see emotions.
I only saw his skin
And our clothes as they fell to the floor.

PLAYER
Phiona Raffington

So much pain for someone so young
So much air to breathe but none circulating through my lungs
So many lakes of tears I cried for multiple days
My future that's hard to see makes my existence become so very crazed
So much I expected from you
But never once did you respect me enough to reveal the truth
Its never easy to forget those who gave you so much to remember
But who says that we cant keep them in our hearts
The memory of them that would remain forever
Terrible but sadly so true
What I only had was the thought of
"you"

POISON
Abigail Guthrie

Some things are beautiful
On the outside,
But deadly
On the inside.
When you first meet,
They're almost perfect.
It's scary.
You get close.
They learn your imperfections.
Your secrets.
You trust them, though.
Then, comes the fall.
They tell.
Someone.
Anyone.
People hear.
People know.
Because of one person.
It feels like you've been bit.
The poison
Surges through your veins.
You lose trust.
You can't trust.
You don't get close
To anyone, Even when some try.
You push everyone away.
Because of the actions
Of one person,
One poison
Forever in your body.

SILLY LITTLE GIRL
A. W.

Silly little girl, don't fool yourself;
They've seen your scars,
Just don't want to help.

Little do they know, how much could you change,
With three little words.....
"Are you okay?"

I NEED MY LABEL

N. B.

Stolen heart
Sullen eyes
Broken smiles
Angry lies
Feeling nothing
Lows and highs
Emotions overwhelming
Truly realize
Maybe she does
Have a disorder
Doctor what is it called
Oh, it's Bipolar

UNTITLED
Kayla Ratliff

Mommy, mommy
I'm breaking down
Mommy, mommy
I'm about to drown
Mommy, mommy
Soon I may be wearing a hospital gown

Mommy, mommy
I'm only 15 years old
Mommy, mommy
I'm broken and cold
Mommy, mommy
Can everyone see me crying . . . it can't be controlled

Mommy, mommy
Look! I see a butterfly
Mommy, mommy
I hope you don't find me when I die
Mommy, mommy
My whole life has been lies.

Mommy, mommy
I went into the bathroom during class today
So no one could see me burst out crying
As I pounded my fist against the tiled wall
A girl walks in and enters the other stall
I flush the toilet and pretend to stand up
I clean my eyes up
I look in the mirror
I blink 30 times
You can hardly tell
I'm not fine.

CARNIVORE
Anonymous

it's stupid
it was stupid when i felt it
wriggling underneath my skin as
i walked the halls of junior high,
itching to break free as
i pushed it back down, unable
to accept the fact that
maybe
something was wrong
it was stupid when it began
collecting my insecurities,
piling them on to my shoulders
and feasting on my doubts,
mutating into a carnivorous
leech
and hollowing my heart
it was stupid when it became
the monster that left me
shaking at the end of the day,
smothering my body and
laughing as i broke down over
the smallest things:
spilling a glass of water
dropping a book
it's stupid now, four years later, as
i lay in bed
too tired to get up
too tired to function
too tired to fight the beast that
has consumed all that i do

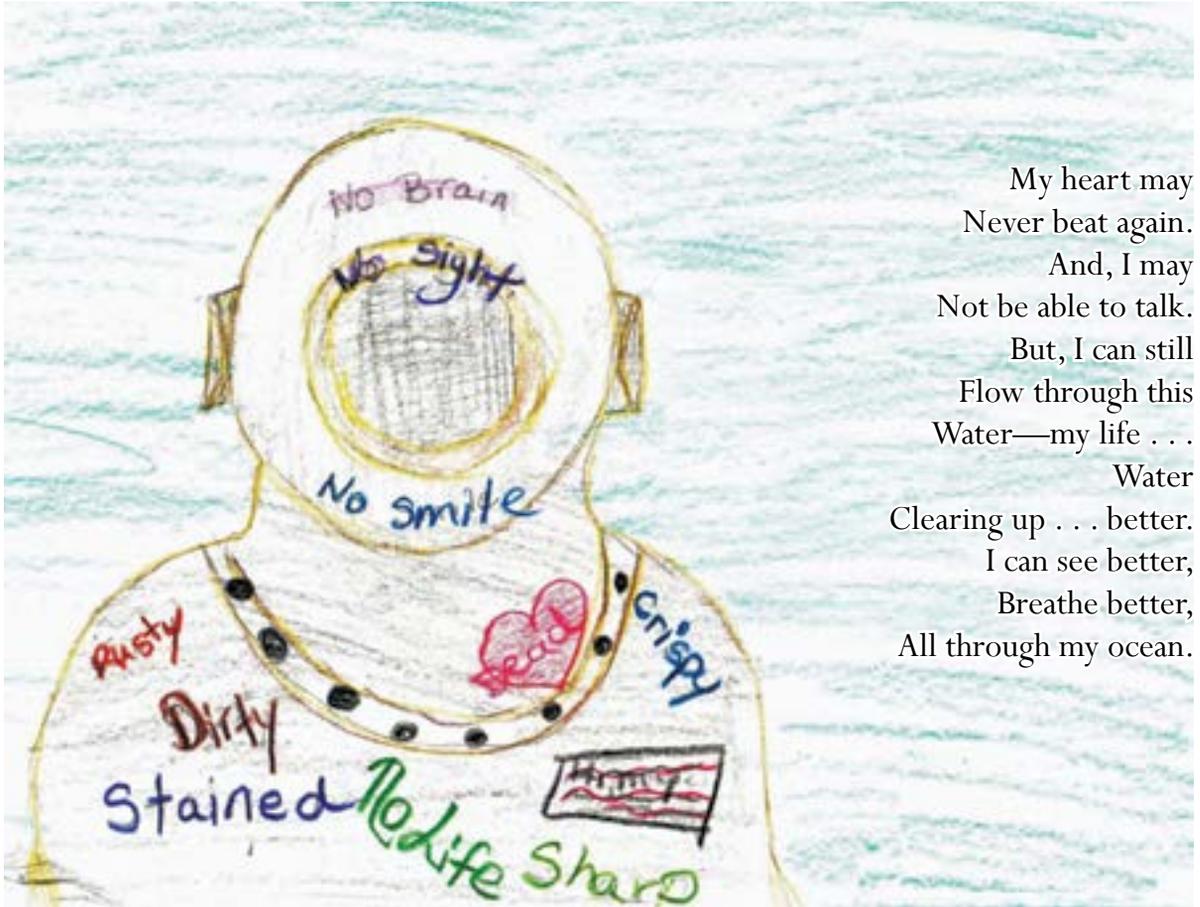
all that i am
but i can feel it leering,
goading me on when i take
its rusted words and leave them
scraped into my
skin
and sometimes
i wonder
maybe it isn't that stupid after all



Fury
Anonymous

DEEP SEA DIVER

Anonymous



My heart may
Never beat again.
And, I may
Not be able to talk.
But, I can still
Flow through this
Water—my life . . .
Water
Clearing up . . . better.
I can see better,
Breathe better,
All through my ocean.

THE VOYAGE OF LIFE
Robyn Brown

Life is like a ship.
Some days there are storms
But it is quite a trip.
There are many different forms
And you need to be equipped.

Some days storms are there,
Full of destruction,
But they can be rare.
Sometimes there is instruction,
By those who actually care.

During storms you get tossed around.
You don't know which way is up,
And you think you might be drowned.
You've fallen behind and you can't catch up.
The ship moans and groans, full of sounds.

The days can be bright and sunny,
And full of laughter.
They can be as sweet as honey
Just remember what it was like thereafter.
Life can seem funny.

Through the storms be consistent and strong.
Try your best to make it through,
Even when the days are long.
Enjoy the bright sunny skies, too.
Life is a ship on a voyage and you are the captain, it's where you belong.

SAD
Jennifer Grubbs

Sad
Left all
alone, with
no one to care.
How did this happen?
To someone so fair.
I tried so hard to fit in.
It didn't work. This
is the END.



I'M FROM
T. F.

I'm from Hell,
From disappointment, and depression,
I'm from the worst place in Bloomington
Where there is darkness in day.
It feels like my demons.
Screaming at me,
I'm from the black rotten tree,
Where darkness is happiness
I'm from yelling, fighting, and
Drug abuse from not only me,
But my family too,
I'm from the Abuse,
And the tears,
From "you're useless" and "I can't even look at you"
To "you're full of demons" and "we need to get you help"
I'm from the dark nights
Alone in the miserable hospital bed
From the family fights,
To the listening to momma crying at
Night, while I listen to daddy
Doing horrible things to her
And I cried
With her as I got the same done to me
I'm from never being good enough,
From lies, and bad memories,
From Logan, cause he was
All I ever wanted
I'm from Hell,
And yes I'm severely,
Broken hearted.....

80,000 young adults were affected by abusive relationships last year...



Help them find a voice.

Maggie Kennedy

DARKNESS
Celestina Garcia

It's a weight on your shoulders
And chains on your arms
And your legs

Suffocating
Paralyzing

It's a cold, dark room
A fearful place
A prison cell

Binding
Confining

It's a voice in your ear
A malcontent
A deceiver

Venomous
Malicious

It's a pain in your chest
Overwhelming
Yet empty

Exhausting
Draining

Yet you force yourself on
Because somewhere
There must be light

I HATE MYSELF
A. W.

I hate myself, why can't you see?
There's a pretty you,
And a ugly me.

Hazel eyes, brown hair.
Why do they say it looks
Like I don't care?

Chubby arms, chubby thighs,
They say I look good.
They're all full of lies!

Yet they say;
"You should be yourself!"
How long will it take for them to realize.....

I HATE MYSELF!



Maggie Kennedy

COVER PAGE

Kyle Janis

I was inspired to create this story because Tonya's death really touched me. At the time of Tonya's death I was really too young to understand what had happened. I have thought more about it over the years and realized Tonya must have been depressed. As we have talked about teen issues in class, I have become more interested in the topic. I feel like my story presents a great example of how it is not easy to recognize symptoms of depression, which is why parents need to confront their teen and talk with them if they suspect their teen is depressed.

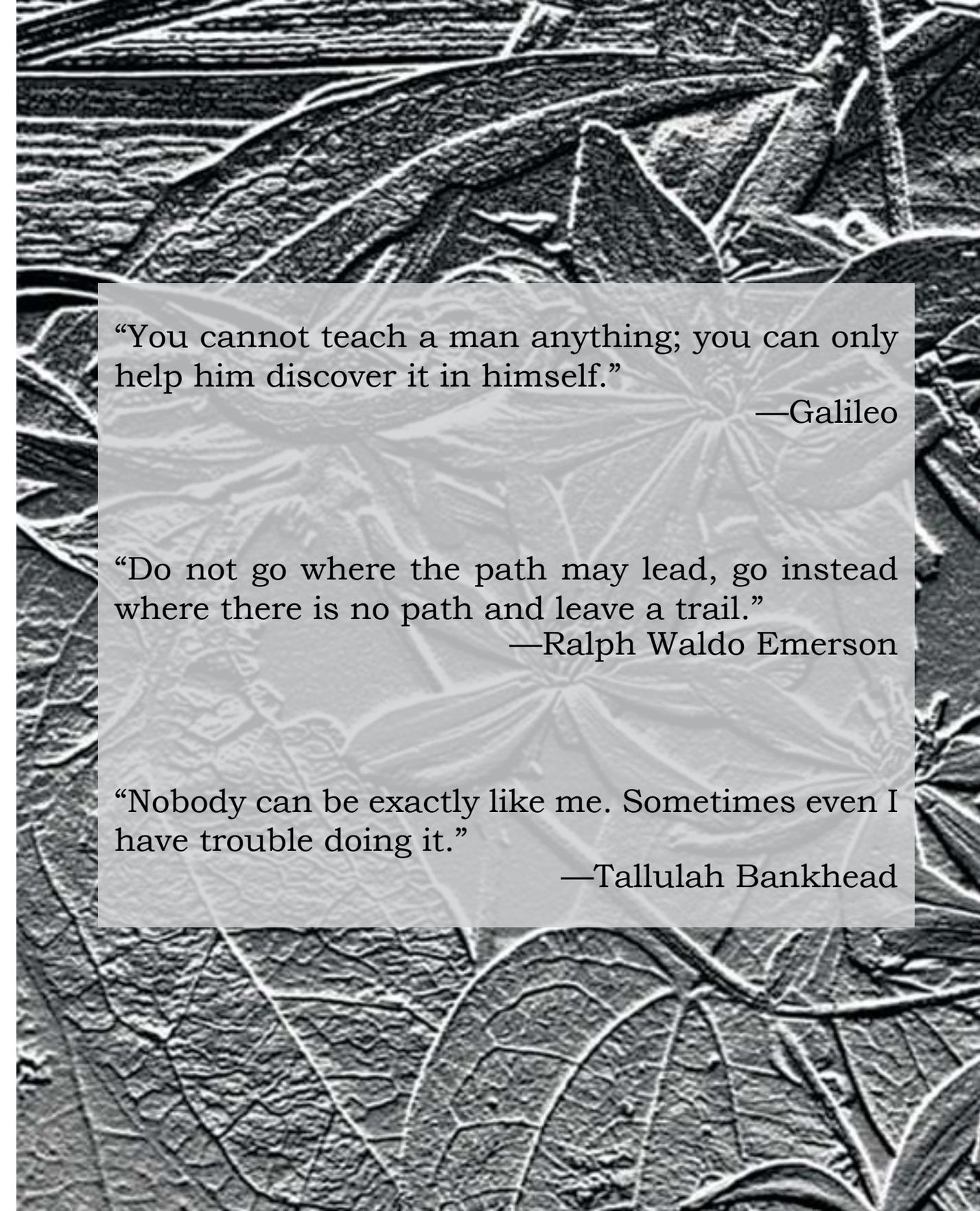
My submission is related to the course content because over the last few weeks we have been discussing body image and how teens view themselves. I know that teens who focus on body image in a negative way may become depressed as shown in the article "Body Image Pressure Increasingly Affects Boys." This article talked about how there is an increase in boys who are concerned about their body image and how negative body image can lead to depression. The article also mentioned the problems girls have with body image pressure. The article this week titled, "Cyberbullying and Teen Suicide," talks directly about this topic and gives specific ideas about what can be done to try and help. In general, we have talked about the erratic emotions that some teenagers go through and how this can lead to depression and suicide.

The theme I am trying to convey is that depression and suicide are serious. By talking about how parents need to take action if they notice their child is acting strangely or presenting symptoms of depression, I am expressing how important the subject is. By actually making a personal connection with someone who has committed suicide, I am showing how hard it is to lose someone to such a horrible factor that can be avoided and fixed.

IN Process: Creative Expression from Our Teens

Tonya's death had such a widespread effect on many in my town. Iowa City is not a large town, so her death hit everyone hard. Many of the staff in my elementary school were touched by her death since she had previously attended that school. Every year my church in Iowa City has a shoe drive for the needy based on Tonya's love for shoes. As I reflect on Tonya's death, I wish she could have known that so many people cared about her and loved her, and I wish just one person could have given her the help she needed.





“You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him discover it in himself.”

—Galileo

“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Nobody can be exactly like me. Sometimes even I have trouble doing it.”

—Tallulah Bankhead

DEAR FUTURE TEENAGERS OF THE WORLD

Abigail Quesenberry

As I'm writing this letter and thinking of all the pathetic (kinda hilarious) events that has happened to me over my early years as a teen, I've decided that I won't tell you, a stranger, all the embarrassing moments that happened to me but instead, I'll give you some advice. I'm hoping you'll come away feeling less anxious about your own future pathetically filled teenage years. And most importantly I want you to finish this letter having a better understanding that coping with your own awkward adolescent years is what shapes you into a responsible adult.

First things first, your teenage years will be a mess. Don't think that it's avoidable because I'm here to tell you that it won't be. I think our teenage years is a time for young people to learn how to deal with stress, anxiety, and depression all in one place, high school. There's just no escaping that, sadly. But don't also think you'll be absolutely miserable. There are plenty of clubs and sports with amazing people in them so I'm sure you'll find something to enjoy. But this letter is for all the bad scenarios, I wouldn't be able to write this letter otherwise.

Next on the list, body confidence. Never feel ashamed of your GROWING body when changing in the locker rooms for gym, or any time for that matter, do not feel ashamed that your body is different. Your body is most certainly valued and never feel that it isn't only because you don't look like others. Let's face it, you're unique because of that! And a piece of advice for bullies or just plain rude people? Don't listen to them. And I know that's sort of cliché and almost always ignored in your regular teen movie, but it's so true and probably the most underrated piece of advice. Even now when I watch teen flicks I cringe at the fake representation of teen bullies (take that amazing observation and run).

Now being a teen is absolutely frustrating as I've previously somewhat mentioned before. Things like your body growing awkwardly into the first phase of adulthood, your personality is (hopefully) evolving into something more "mature," your friends are constantly changing, and your having to deal

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with functioning only on a two-hour nap you took in study hall because you accidentally spent the whole night watching *Keeping up with the Kardashians*, and on top of all that your family seems like it's starting to fall apart. All of that is okay, that's what teenage years is all about, finding the best way to cope with different scenarios, it's kinda what sculpts you into the adult that you will soon be.

And the most important tip that I could think of, don't stress. Life will be full of all these crazy, miraculous, anxiety filled, tormenting events, well, that's what I'm told anyway. I'm only fifteen so I have a couple more years before I can believe my parent's whole spiel about the teenage years zipping by.

Good luck,

Abigail

YOUR LOVE
Phiona Raffington

. . . captured within those grainy pixels
I find my eyes stuck reminiscing through pictures
. . . but you said that “we were a thing.”
But now that’s the past.
You said you loved me
. . . but sadly your love refused to last.
I can still remember how glaring at your eyes made me fall in love. . . .
I thought your arms were strong enough to gently catch me.
Weren’t we fitted for each other like silk gloves?
Ever entranced with your image splattered across my scars,
I finally thought I could be
in a soft basket that knew how to cradle a heart.
Where passionate kisses replaced my breath
Soft traces of your hands caressing my bare flesh
My nerves have never before been more delightfully stimulated
to one simple touch.

FORGET
Abigail Guthrie

Tears roll down my cheeks.
It's pointless.
Stupid, really.
We all make mistakes.
Some worse than others.
Still, all mistakes.
We can't help but hate ourselves
For everything we've done.
Failed.
Quit.
So what's the point in trying?
You never run out
Of redo's.
Just start over.
Press the restart button.
The memories of failure will fade.
New memories will take their place
As long as you try.



*Dare to Be Different
Kayla H.*

ACROSTIC SWAN

Anonymous

So you see it's beautiful
With the shining feathers,
As it flows through the water,
Now it's gone and growing.

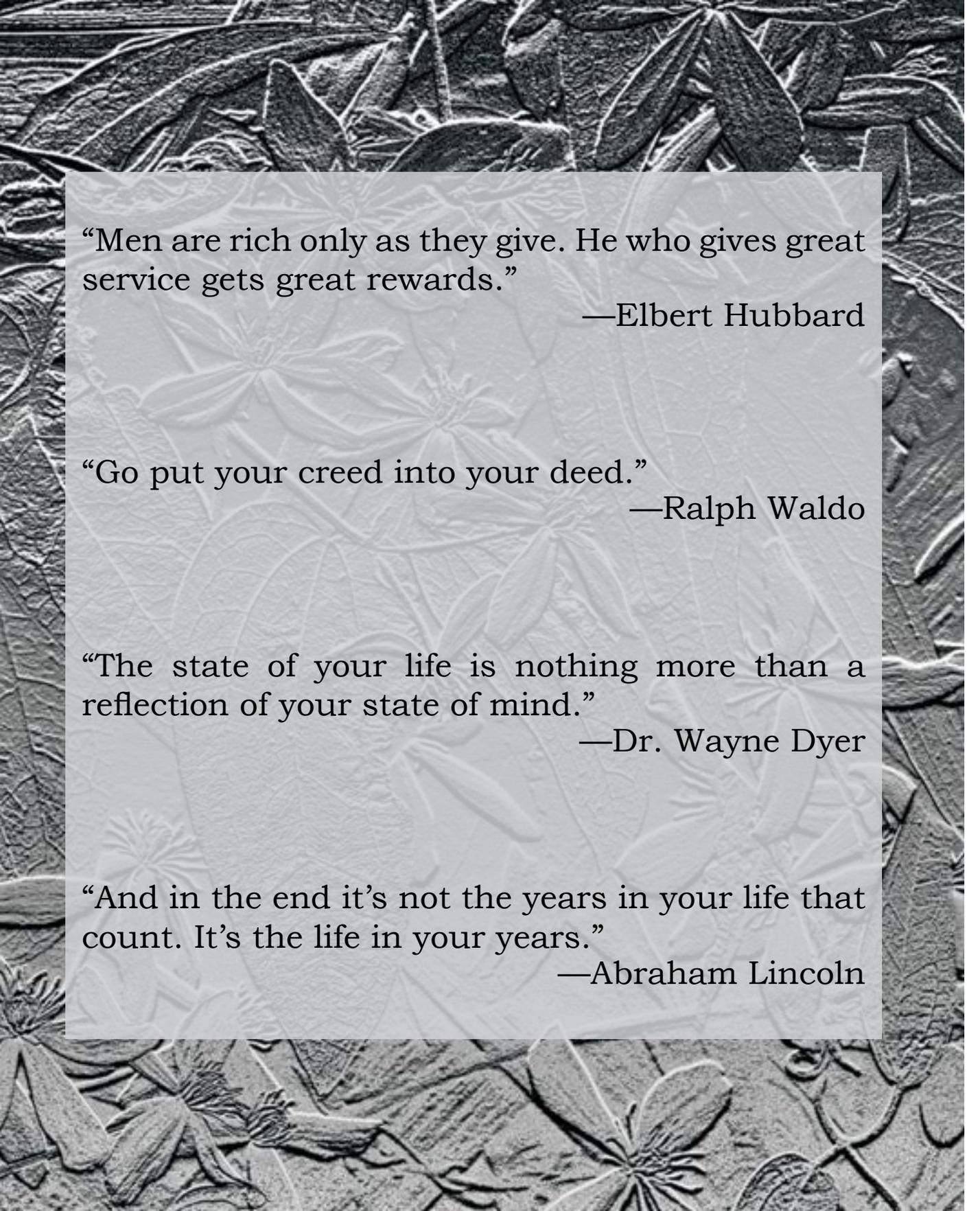
Love yourself.
I'll be there for myself,
Very and every beautiful day.
Evermore for evermore

For family and self
Or my love to share
Right to you and me. And

Live to be yourself.
It will help you through life
For you and me
Every single day.



Love the World
Anonymous



“Men are rich only as they give. He who gives great service gets great rewards.”

—Elbert Hubbard

“Go put your creed into your deed.”

—Ralph Waldo

“The state of your life is nothing more than a reflection of your state of mind.”

—Dr. Wayne Dyer

“And in the end it’s not the years in your life that count. It’s the life in your years.”

—Abraham Lincoln

CAN SELF-COMPASSION IMPROVE WELL-BEING IN TEENS? Emily Campbell

Teenagers today face many challenges, often including intense expectations and pressures from their parents, teachers, and friends. Sometimes, however, their harshest critics are not any of these other people, but themselves. Could self-compassion help?

Pioneering researcher Kristin Neff defines self-compassion as treating oneself with kindness and care rather than judgment, being mindful of one's own painful feelings, and understanding one's suffering as part of the common human condition. While many studies have found it to be associated with well-being in adults, few researchers have investigated if this is true for young people as well. Now two new studies suggest that self-critical teenagers can also benefit from a dose of self-compassion—and this might be especially true for high-school girls.

In the first study, published this year in *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, Karen Bluth and Priscilla Blanton surveyed students in middle and high school about their levels of positive and negative feeling, perceived stress, and life satisfaction—as well as self-compassion. Overall, they found that self-compassion was associated with higher life satisfaction and lower perceived stress and negative feeling.

Then they compared boys and girls. There were no gender differences in middle school and no differences between boys in middle school vs. high school, they found. But the high school girls were another story.

Compared to both their male counterparts and to the middle school girls, the high school girls felt significantly worse and more stressed out. They were also less satisfied with their lives and much less self-compassionate. According to researchers, the high school girls “reported being more self-judging, feeling more isolated, and having more difficulty maintaining a balanced perspective in the midst of challenging circumstances.” This finding concurs with other research that has found higher depression rates in adolescent females compared to males as well as lower self-compassion among adult women compared to men.

Although this study couldn't determine the causal direction of any of these relationships, the authors suggest that a program to build and develop self-compassion in younger adolescents, especially girls, could help prevent the apparent self-compassion decline. Such programs have shown promising results in adults, and could help enhance the emotional well-being of teens as they navigate the challenges of adolescence.

The second study, conducted by Sarah Marshall and colleagues, tried to address the issue of causality by seeing how both self-compassion and self-esteem might relate to well-being over time. Low self-esteem has long been associated with reduced mental health in young people, and so well-meaning adults have tried to increase it. Unfortunately, self-esteem involves comparisons to others, and recent research has found that too much can lead to narcissism and avoidance of growth opportunities.

The researchers surveyed over 2000 ninth graders in Australia, measuring their self-esteem, self-compassion, and mental health. They went back to the same students a year later, asking similar questions. While both self-esteem and self-compassion on their own were associated with improved mental health in tenth grade, the researchers found an interesting interaction: high self-compassion seemed to protect against the harmful effects of low self-esteem.

For the students with high self-esteem, self-compassion levels didn't make much difference; they all, on average, showed improved mental health the next year. But for those with low self-esteem, low self-compassion predicted reduced mental health a year later, whereas high self-compassion protected against this drop. (Though boys did report higher mental health than girls, on average, this effect was the same across both genders.)

This result makes sense since self-compassion, unlike self-esteem, would allow the students to accept their shortcomings with kindness, rather than judging themselves or avoiding their flaws. High self-esteem can be great, but teenagers—like all of us—often encounter situations that cause them to doubt themselves. In the face of these struggles, the authors propose, self-compassion could be a key to teens' maintaining a healthy, balanced view of themselves and their lives.

Although more research is needed, it's clear that self-compassion shows a lot of promise as a way to help teenagers become happier and healthier. Through all the challenges they face, they may not come out on top every time—and that's OK.

About the Author

Emily Campbell is the research assistant for the Greater Good Science Center's education program and a Ph.D. student in education at UC Berkeley.

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RESOURCES

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Emergency Help.....	911
Bloomington City Police	812.339.4477
Monroe County Sheriff.....	812.349.3332
Indiana State Police-Bloomington	812.384.4624
Indiana University Police.....	812.855.4111
Ellettsville City Police	812.876.2272
Suicide Prevention Life Line.....	1.800.273 TALK (8255)

LOCAL RESOURCES

Information Referral Network.....	211
IU Health Bloomington Hospital	812.336.6821
IU Health Behavioral Services.....	812.353.5010
IU Health Psychiatric & Counseling.....	812.353.3450
Centerstone	812.339.1691
Indiana University Health Services	812.855.4011
Indiana University Counseling	812.855.5711
Ivy Tech Counseling & Outreach.....	812.330.6287
Meadows Hospital.....	812.331.8000
Mental Health Alliance	812.339.1551
National Alliance on Mental Illness.....	812.339.5440

LOCAL SUPPORT GROUPS

Bloomington Depression & Bipolar	
Alliance Support Group	812.332.7164
Bloomington Survivors of Suicide	812.335.8555
Family Support Group.....	812.339.5440
Suicide Prevention Coalition	812.349.3851

STATE & NATIONAL RESOURCES

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention—Indiana (afsp.org/Indiana)	317.774.1377
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention-National (afsp.org)	1.888.333.2377
Department of Mental Health and Addictions.....	317.232.7800
Indiana Suicide Prevention Coalition.....	260.481.4184
Mental Health Association Indianapolis	800.555.6424
National Alliance on Mental Illness-Indiana.....	800.677.6442



BLOOMINGTON MEADOWS HOSPITAL



