

Discovering the Real Me
Student Textbook 8:
Transitions and Transformations

Introduction

As a teenager, your life is going through many changes. That is why this book is entitled *Transitions and Transformations*. As Book 8 of the *Discovering the Real Me* series, *Transitions and Transformations* seeks to address some of the issues you may be facing now that you are an adolescent.

One major issue that adolescents face is the strong sense of growing independence from their parents. At the same time that they are becoming more and more able to do things on their own, adolescents still need the guidance and protection of the adults who care about them. Relationships with family—as opposed to relationships with friends and the desire for more independence—are explored in the chapters "Family or Friends", "I Hate You, Mom and Dad!", "Dangerous Attraction", and "A Life Changes".

Another major issue of adolescence is emerging sexuality. The chapter entitled "The Drive" likens the awakening of the sexual drive to the desire to drive a car—but warns that a person has to be mature enough inside to handle such a powerful force. "Dangerous Attraction", "Saying No", "Opposites Attract", and "I Hate You, Mom and Dad!" help clarify some issues relating to adolescent sexuality.

Most adolescents find themselves facing major changes in their friendships. "Who's the Loser Now?" explores the changeability of childhood friendship—how they may change in adolescence and change yet again in adulthood. "Opposites Attract" explores how a childhood friendship between a boy and a girl is challenged by pressures to "pair up" and start dating. "Pablo's Choice" pits a boy against his best friends when they want to watch a movie he knows his parents wouldn't approve of. "Giving" teaches some of the best and worst ways to try to make friends.

At your age, you are very concerned about how you are developing physically—whether you are "normal" and how attractive or physically fit you are. If you can't do all the things you want to do—such as play outstanding soccer—you may easily become discouraged. "The Loser" follows a boy's progress in a soccer game that his team is losing. He has to find self-confidence and self-control under the pressure of his own self-doubts, mistakes, and heckling from the spectators.

Since you are becoming aware of issues of justice and injustice and are concerned about the world you live in, it is important to talk about "The World Around Us" and become more aware of environmental issues.

The adolescent years are often very challenging. Your body, your brain, and your emotions are going through rapid changes, and there you are—right in the middle of it all! It is our hope that *Transitions and Transformations* can help you realize that you are not alone—and can provide you with fictional friends to learn from and identify with as they face issues similar to ones you may be facing.

Chapter 1: Pablo's Choice

Pablo was excited. Five boys from the neighborhood were going to Jim's house to watch a movie. Everyone was supposed to bring something to eat or drink for everyone to share. Pablo had a big bag of snack chips under his arm. It was like a daytime party!

Jim let Pablo in and said, "Great!" when he saw the big bag of snack chips. Everyone else was already there, with the curtains drawn to keep the sunlight out and make the TV screen brighter.

Pablo's heart raced with happiness. There was a lot of laughter, and there were all kinds of things to eat. A couple of the boys started throwing snacks at each other.

"Don't," said Jim. "My mom said we couldn't do this if we made a mess."

"So? She's not here, is she?"

Pablo said to Jim, "Your mom's not here?"

"No, she went shopping. She said we were old enough to be alone for a couple of hours."

They settled down, ripped open the other bags of snacks, and poured juice and soda.



The movie came on. Pablo had never seen it, and it looked exciting.

"Have you seen this before?" he asked Jim.

"No, but I heard it's really good."

Pablo wasn't so sure. Right away, a man and a woman who were not married were kissing passionately. Pablo felt uncomfortable. His parents were really strict about this kind of thing. He hoped the scene would end, but the couple kept going further and further until their activity was getting sexual. He closed his eyes, the way his parents had taught him to do.

"Just because there's dirt in front of you doesn't mean you have to look at it," they told him. Almost every other scene seemed to be the same.

"I thought you said this was an action movie," said Pablo to Jim.

"Here's an action scene right now."

There was an action scene, but then the movie went right back to another man and woman. Pablo was getting more and more miserable. If his parents knew he was watching a movie like this, he would be in big trouble. Yet there he was, sitting between his best friends in the world, and no one seemed to think anything of it. He wished Jim's mom were home. Would she really let them watch this?

Pablo got so uncomfortable he finally brushed the crumbs off his jeans and stood up.

"Where are you going?" demanded Jim.

"Oh, just to the bathroom," said Pablo. He didn't really have to go to the bathroom, but once he came out and was still on his feet, it was easier to walk to the door. His friends protested as he turned the knob and started to go.

He said, "This movie's giving me a headache. See you later."

Pablo really did have a headache. It was just too stressful to sit there and watch something that could get him in big trouble. The darkened room, no parents at home—he didn't like the whole feeling.

"I thought you were over at Jim's," said his mother in surprise when he came home.

He told her what had happened.

"I'm proud of you, son," she said. "It took some courage to walk out of there."

"Not really," said Pablo. "I didn't tell them why I didn't like the movie. I didn't really stand up for what I believed."

"You did okay," said his mother. "It might be easier to tell them individually how you felt instead of as a group."

Later on, he talked to his friends one by one and said, "That's not the kind of movie my parents want me to see. And I didn't like it myself."

The others said they hadn't really liked the movie either. They also said that when Jim's mom came home and saw what kind of a movie they were watching, she became really angry and sent them all home. Jim was in big trouble with his parents, and the other kids' parents weren't too happy either.

"We should have left when you did," his friends said to him.

Pablo felt exuberant. Now he really knew he had done the right thing.



As we enter adolescence (around 12 or 13), our life seems to speed up in many ways. Our world is expanding, and we start finding ourselves in many new types of situations, such as the one in the story above. We face things that we never had to be concerned about before. We're much more independent than we were as children. Our friends mean more to us than ever before and sometimes we are alone with them and have to make decisions without our parents there to guide us. Sometimes we have to face something called peer pressure.

Peer pressure means that people your age pressure you to be a certain way, act a certain way, dress a certain way, or to hold certain opinions. It can be good or bad.

Sometimes it's great to go along with peer pressure. It's great if your friends pressure you into joining in more activities that are healthy, fun, and good for you. It's great if your friends pressure you to dress nicely, to behave well, and to get good grades.

Sometimes, however, your peers pressure you in a bad way. They may pressure you to shut out someone you might like for a friend because they think that person is "not cool". They may

pressure you to wear clothes you don't really like, or to do things you don't really want to do, or even to do things that are wrong.

When we're teenagers, we tend to worry about being popular and fitting in, so it's easy to want our friends' approval of everything we do. Sometimes, though, their values may contradict the values of the people who are still the most important ones in our lives—our parents.



As adolescents, we feel the urge to be more independent, to start to “spread our wings”. At the same time, we need our parents more than ever to help us navigate the uncharted waters of growing out of childhood. We need the benefit of their experience and wisdom as we face difficult decisions. The reality of our world does not make it easy for teenagers to make the right choices. In many ways, the world tempts us to make choices that we may regret—choices involving school, money, smoking, drinking, and relations with the opposite sex.

Bad choices may be offered to us by the people we like and want to be liked by—our friends. But bad choices may cause a break in our relationship with our parents.

As we saw in the story, our parents still have a strong influence on our choices. Pablo's relationship with his parents and his agreement with their values are important parts of why he does what he does. In contrast, Jim seems to be going against his parents' wishes. Which of the two boys ends up feeling happier?

Our parents want to trust us with more independence, and we want more independence at this age. At the same time, our parents' views come from a lot of life experience. Also, they have spent a great part of their lives raising us, investing in us, guiding us, and clothing, feeding, and sheltering us. They love us and are concerned for our lives. It is wonderful when we agree with their values, but when we are not sure of ourselves, or when we are under peer pressure, sometimes we just have to trust our parents' words.

The adolescent years are likely to put some strain on our relationship with our parents, but we would do well to hold onto that relationship tightly. Our relationship with our parents is like a lifeline in a stormy sea. Holding on to our parents and what they believe can help us get through the many storms of adolescence and get safely to the shore of adulthood.

Questions for Reflection

1. Have you ever been in a situation in which your friends were doing something that made you uncomfortable? How did you handle the situation?

2. Do you think Pablo handled the situation well enough?

3. When a situation is uncomfortable and you feel bad peer pressure, experts say it is best to physically get away as soon as you can. How did Pablo do this?

4. Is it easier to share your values with your friends individually or in a group?

5. Do you agree with your parents' values?

6. Do you think you could stand up for those values if your best friends were going against them?

7. What's wrong with watching movies with sexual content? Have you ever thought about it? Have your parents ever said anything about it to you?

Exercise: “My Teenage Parents”

Try to imagine your parents as teenagers. What were they like? Were they serious about their schoolwork or did they just want to play? Did they have lots of friends, or were they shy and withdrawn? Were they confident or insecure? Did they have a clear idea of what they were going to do in the future? Did they obey their own parents, or were they more rebellious?

Now sit down with each of your parents and find out the truth. Were they really as you had imagined, or were there some differences? Perhaps at least one of them was completely different.

Reflection Exercise: “What Do I Agree With?”

Think about the things your parents value. Do they talk to you a lot about things like responsibility, hard work, faith, making money, owning nice things, getting a good education, having lots of friends, or succeeding in the business world? Do they urge you to dedicate your life to serving others and to being a good person? What kinds of things and people do they value? Do you agree with their values? Which of their values do you think are the best ones?

Chapter 2: Family or Friends?

“Aw, ma, why can’t I go? All my friends are going.”

Rajiv fidgeted with the fabric on the sofa as he sat across from his mother in the living room. He always got nervous in these confrontations with his parents, which seemed to be happening more frequently lately.

“Well, your father and I want you to spend time with the family.”

Rajiv looked up and met her earnest gaze. She was dressed in the traditional Indian sari. Rajiv loved his mother, but to him she was hopelessly old-fashioned, as his friends called it. They, too, were from Indian families. Some of them were choosing to rebel against their parents’ customs, while others continued to respect them. They all were struggling with many issues as they faced a changing culture.

The situation at hand was whether Rajiv would be allowed to go see a movie with some of his friends at the same time that the family, including Rajiv’s cousins, would be getting together in Rajiv’s aunt’s backyard.

“I’ve seen my family a million times, and I hardly get to see my school friends outside of school.”

Rajiv ventured this argument, but it was really no use. In Indian families, children did not contradict their parents. The parents’ word was final. His parents looked mildly surprised that he would even say anything at all, but then they looked at each other and kept silent. He knew what they were expecting him to do.

Rajiv went outside, where his friends were waiting in front of the house.

“Well?” said Deepak, known as D.P. to his friends. D.P. was the acknowledged leader of the group.

“My mom said no,” Rajiv responded dejectedly, eyes downcast.

“Oh, man,” cried D.P. “What’s wrong with her, anyway? It’s just a movie.”



They all stood around in silence for a few seconds.

“So, what are you going to do?” D.P.’s voice broke the silence.

Rajiv looked up in surprise. “What do you mean? My mom said I have to go to my aunt’s.”

D.P. said, “Your aunt lives right by the movie theater. When your parents think you’re playing with your cousins, just sneak out the back fence.”

“My cousins would tell.”

“What—can’t you tell them you’ll return the favor?” D.P. looked incredulous. “My family covers for me all the time—and me for them.”

“My family isn’t so ‘modern’ as all that,” said Rajiv.

"Listen, Raj, it's not like we're committing a crime or something. We're just going to see a movie."

"Still ..." Rajiv said. "I'll just have to miss it this time." He shrugged. "I have fun with my cousins."

"What! Are you going to be a mama's boy all your life? Stand up and be a man!"

With that, Rajiv stood up resolutely and looked his friend straight in the eye.

"No, D.P. My parents may be old-fashioned, but they're still my parents, and I respect what they say."

"Have it your way," D.P. said angrily. "Let's go, boys."

Rajiv knew he wasn't welcome to follow along as they all strode off. Wow. If it was that easy to lose friends, maybe it was good that he had all his cousins! If it was up to guys like D.P., he wasn't sure he'd have any friends at all.

Rajiv went along with his family to his aunt's house and, as usual, had a great time with his cousins. He loved his family. There was a big meal, music, and they lit big mosquito-chasing torches which made the backyard seem like an exotic place. Within the family, the kids had a lot of freedom, so they ran in and out of the house, tumbled in and out of the bunks in wrestling matches, played table football and billiards in the basement and basketball at the hoop attached to the top of the garage. With his cousins, he was allowed to go to the nearby park and play a thrilling game of hide and seek in the gathering darkness.

He couldn't even remember the name of the movie D.P. had been urging him to see. And the firelight of the torches, lighting up the smiling faces of his relatives, seemed warmer and more welcoming than the nearby neon of the theater mall.

Friends were great, and he was pretty sure he could get D.P. and the others to forgive him. They knew what Indian families were like, after all. Friends were great. But family was greater. And Rajiv knew it.



In the course of our lives, we make contact with many kinds of people and form many kinds of relationships. In the early years, the most important of these relationships are those with our own family—first with our parents and then with our brothers and sisters. Grandparents may also be in the picture, and perhaps also aunts, uncles, and cousins.

As we grow older, we naturally come into contact with people outside of our family—neighbors, schoolmates, and other acquaintances. Some of them become close friends. Others remain just acquaintances.

For many years, the relationships we have inside and outside our family exist in a happy harmony. As we enter our teenage years, however, tension may begin to emerge between these two types of relationships. It is not uncommon for teenagers to experience a pull in different directions between family and friends. Situations seem to emerge with increasing frequency in which our family would have us do one thing, but our friends would like us to do something else.

We start finding ourselves unable to please both at the same time. Repeatedly we are faced with a dilemma: To whom do we listen: our family (i.e., parents) or our friends? To follow one sometimes means to go against the other.

As we grow up, it is natural to begin to give greater weight to relationships outside of our family. Our destiny is to become independent adults, capable of making our own decisions and taking responsibility for those decisions. Although we will always treasure our family relationships, as we move out into the world, our inclination is to explore new relationships and meet new people. This is part of the growth process. As our world of relationships expands, we learn how to relate with and understand many kinds of people—people of different backgrounds, cultures, religions, and races. A mature heart should be able to embrace many types of people.

However, our very ability to make friends and to get along with bosses, co-workers, and people under us depends on—you guessed it!—our family relationships. In our family, we learn how to relate to people who are senior to us, people who are junior to us, and people who are our equals. We relate to boys and girls, men and women, old people, and babies. A family is a little version of the whole world—and if we love and trust the members of our family, we bring that warmth and trust into relationships with others outside of our family.

Some of the most noble and heroic people in the world became that way because they came from loving, supportive families. Scientists recognize that people of good conscience—those who are law-abiding and compassionate—got that way because they were strongly attached to their parents and family members.

Enjoy your family! It is the growing ground for all your relationships with the wider world of people. What is more, our family members are the ones who will be there for us during all the most important parts of life.

Questions for Reflection

1. Have you ever been in a situation like Rajiv? How did you handle it?

2. Do you feel sometimes that your parents are too confining?

3. Have you ever had to choose between friends and family?

4. Do you feel that sometimes your parents judge your friends unfairly?

5. Have you ever gone against your parents' wishes and done what your friends wanted you to do? What was the result?

6. Do you have fun with your family?

Exercise: Family Fun

You will have a small discussion with a small group (if available. If not, with your parent.) Share within these discussion groups the best time you ever remember having with your family.

Reflection Exercise: "My Friends and My Family"

Think of ten things you did or wanted to do with your friends in the past month. Make a list of what they were. Now, next to each one write down your parents' attitude toward each—strongly approved, mildly approved, neutral, mildly disapproved, or strongly disapproved. Next, write down their reasons for their attitudes. Finally, write down whether you agreed or disagreed with their reasons. Does this help you to understand your parents' perspective better, whether you agree with them or not?

Chapter 3: "I Hate You, Mom and Dad!"

"C'mon, Dad," cried out Emily to her father. "I'm thirteen years old now. I'm a teenager, not a baby."

With that, she stomped up the stairs, making sure each step was heard throughout the house. At the top of the stairway, she shouted, "I hate you!" and slammed the door.

Emily's father gazed at his wife and sighed. She shot back a sympathetic look. Their daughter's dramatic exit from the dining room was brought on by her father's refusal to allow her to date an older boy. In his mind, thirteen was too young to be dating at all, especially older boys. This boy, Carl, did not have a good reputation, either. There were rumors that he had gotten one girl pregnant.

The next morning, Emily appeared in the kitchen as her mother and father were sitting down to breakfast.

"Good morning, Emily," her father said. Emily mumbled something and opened the refrigerator.

"Breakfast is on the table for you, dear," her mother offered helpfully.



"I'm not hungry," Emily huffed, as she poured herself a glass of juice. Closing the refrigerator, she picked up her backpack and rushed out the door without saying another word.

On the way to school, Emily seethed. Why do they always treat me like a baby? she thought. Her friends were going out on dates. Why couldn't she? Why did her parents have to be so protective?

Then she heard a voice inside answer her own question: "They do it because they love you." As soon as she "heard" it, she knew it was true. Still, everybody else thought it was weird that she wasn't allowed to date. Well, not "everybody", she had to admit. Just the one whose opinions mattered to her most — Jill and her crowd, to be specific. Jill's parents let her do whatever she wanted. Jill had been dating since she was ten. She seemed so much more "grown up" than the other girls in their class.

On the way home, Emily couldn't shake those words that had entered her head: "They do it because they love you." When she got home, she hurried upstairs, avoiding her mother who was (thankfully) in the backyard. She stayed out of sight until her father came home, and she came down for dinner. All through the meal, she was unable to look at her parents. She answered their attempts at conversation with a few muffled grunts while staring at her plate.

Inside, Emily felt as if she were going to burst out crying. Yet she was not about to give in to them. She was going to make them pay for their unbending attitudes. But if they were the ones to have to pay, why was she the one who seemed to be suffering so much?

With sympathetic eyes, Emily's father could see his daughter's agony. Emily felt her father's eyes upon her but dared not look up at him. Suddenly, she heard his voice speaking to her.

"Emily, if we did allow you to go on a date with Carl, would you be ready to take responsibility for any consequences?"

Consequences? What was he talking about?

"It's just a date, Dad," she replied, finally looking up at her father.

"And dates can have unintended consequences, especially with a boy like that," he said firmly. "Are you ready to handle any consequences from a date with Carl all on your own?"

"No," admitted Emily, although she couldn't imagine what consequences he might mean.

"Then you're not ready to date," said her father. Emily couldn't think of an answer, but it was pretty clear her parents weren't going to change on this one.

She heard that Carl asked Jill out instead. Naturally! Jill always got everything, Emily thought jealously.

Two months later, she heard rumors that Jill was pregnant. A few days after the rumors started, Jill disappeared from school. Everyone said she had gone to live with an aunt until the baby was born. Then she was going to give the baby up for adoption, move somewhere else, and try to start over in life.



The news shook Emily to the bone. Her friend, Jill, was a mother at age thirteen? Cool Jill, getting all fat and going through the scariness of having a baby? (Emily had heard that it hurt.) Jill, having to live the rest of her life wondering where was the baby she gave up for adoption?

And Carl! Carl was kind of bragging about it. Not really bragging, but he just grinned when guys teased him. He didn't look sad or scared at all. He was already dating somebody else.

Emily hugged her books tightly to her chest. Maybe it was good to have strict parents after all!

In the previous chapters, we talked about becoming more independent from our parents and enjoying more freedom, yet at the same time having to take more and more responsibility for our decisions when we are with peers. In this story, Emily wants more freedom—she wants the freedom to date. She doesn't understand why her parents won't let her date an older boy—indeed, why they won't let her date at all. In the end, though, she realizes that she is not ready for accept the possible consequences of dating, especially dating a boy like Carl. Because she is not ready for the responsibilities that go with dating, she can't yet have that freedom.

As our freedom grows, so should our sense of responsibility. Freedom implies the ability to take responsibility for the results of our actions.

Some people think of the United States as the freest country in the world. The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution—its governing document—guarantees five freedoms to citizens. These are: freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, and freedom to petition those in power. These freedoms are very important to the healthy exercise of democracy and the protection of human rights. Throughout human history, people have fought and died for these rights, and many people in the world today still do not have them.

Each of these freedoms, however, comes with responsibility. For example, freedom of religion does not give one the right to offer human sacrifices! Freedom of speech does not allow a person to shout “Fire!” in a crowded movie theater (when there is no fire) or to spread lies about someone. If a person spreads lies about another person in public, that second person can sue the first person for slander. Freedom of assembly (meeting in groups) means that the groups meet together peacefully. It does not give people the right to get together and hold a riot! Freedom of the press and other media means that people expect the news to be reported truthfully and accurately. Petitioning those in power in order to right a wrong means being honest and accepting fairness.



In general, having more freedom means having more responsibility. This is true as we are growing up too. The more freedom we have, the more responsible we have to become.

In the story, Emily wants the freedom to date. What kind of responsibilities come with dating? With dating, there is a whole new kind of peer pressure that may be hard to resist. This involves relationships between boys and girls. A date is already a somewhat romantic setting. Are twelve- and thirteen-year-olds ready to deal with romance?

It seems in the story that Jill, who appears so much freer than her classmates, is not ready to deal with romance. On her date, she ends up having sex with a boy who doesn't really care about her and then having to bear the responsibility of having a child while she is barely more than a child herself. Not being able to handle the responsibility that goes with romance, she should not have enjoyed the freedom of being alone with a boy in a romantic setting.

Freedom definitely relates to what we do—our actions. It also relates to what we feel inside. For instance, if we are harboring unpleasant emotions of anger, dislike, resentment, holding a grudge, negative thoughts, fears, anxieties and worries, we are not really free. To be free of these things, we need to take responsibility for these feelings. No matter what someone else has done or said to us, we will not be free until we take the responsibility to forgive that person and stop holding a grudge against him or her.

Lasting freedom only comes with the taking of responsibility. Though they may seem contradictory, freedom and responsibility go together hand in hand.

Questions for Reflection

1. What goes along with freedom?

2. Jill was "free" of her parents telling her what to do and what not to do. Was she really free in the end?

3. Do you think Carl was as free as he acted?

4. Were Emily's parents good parents, even though they seemed to restrict Emily's freedom?

5. Should our freedom be controlled by rules? Why or why not?

6. Imagine you can have all the ice cream you want. You eat and eat and eat ice cream every day. In what ways might this lack of responsibility take away some of your freedom?

7. Are we really free inside if we are harboring resentment toward someone? Is it possible to move away from people or leave them and still not be free of them?

Exercise: “Responsible Use of Freedom”

Think about the responsible use of freedom in the following situations:

- On the playground
- Choice of language and what you say to others
- What you eat
- Playing a game or sport
- Watching TV or using the Internet

Name at least one way to use each freedom responsibly.

Reflection Exercise: “Am I Free Inside?”

Is there anyone against whom you hold a grudge? Ask your parent to help you to overcome these feelings through writing a letter to the person toward whom you are resentful.

Chapter 4: Dangerous Attraction

“He’s kind of cute, don’t you think?”

Marilyn held out a photo of a young man in his late teens to her friend, Janna.

“Marilyn, what are you doing? He’s a lot older than you. Why are you writing to him?”

“Well, when I met him at my sister’s wedding a couple of months ago, he seemed pretty nice. He asked me for my address, and we’ve been writing ever since. I kind of like him.”

“But how much do you really know about him?” Janna responded, giving her friend a concerned look. “You know, my parents would never allow me to write or talk with anybody they didn’t know. They would want to know all about him and his family and meet them as well.”

“Well, my parents met Peter briefly at the wedding. I’m sure they wouldn’t approve of my writing to him, though. They never approve of anything I do. But what’s the big deal? We’re just writing letters.”

Janna was not convinced.

“The problem is that all you know about him is what he says in his letters,” she said. “Didn’t you say that even the people at the wedding didn’t know much about him? What if he’s hiding something?”

“Jan, you know what? Someday you’ll make a great crime mystery writer—the way your mind works.”

“I’m just concerned,” Janna said. “That’s all.”

Two days later, out of the blue, Marilyn’s “pen pal”, Peter, a boy much older than her, showed up at her door while her parents were out.



“Hi, Marilyn. How are you doing?”

“Hi, Peter,” Marilyn said, feeling a mixture of puzzlement and happiness at seeing Peter.

“What are you doing here?”

“Oh, school’s out this week, so I thought I’d come see you.” Peter peered over her shoulder as if to see if there was anyone else in the house. “Mind if I come in?”

Marilyn hesitated. Then, seeing no harm in it, invited him in.

“Nice place you’ve got here,” Peter commented as he looked around the house. “Nobody else home?”

“No,” Marilyn replied cautiously. “My parents went out for a walk. They like to do things like that.”

“How’s your sister?” Peter said, settling himself on the living room couch.

“Oh, she’s fine. Settling into married life.”

Marilyn took up a position across the room on the piano stool.

"That's nice," Peter said, almost absentmindedly, as if he was thinking of something else. "Say, have you got something cold to drink? I'm really hot."

"Juice?"

"Great!"

Marilyn went into the kitchen to get it. When she came back, she noticed that Peter had unbuttoned his shirt down to the waist, revealing his chest.

"I hope you don't mind," he said. "It's so hot."

Without saying anything, Marilyn walked over to the couch with the glass of juice. After she gave it to him, he grabbed her arm.

"Sit with me, Marilyn. It's more comfortable than on that little stool over there."

The expression on his face was so suddenly intense, it scared Marilyn.

"I-I don't think so, Peter," she said. "I'd better not."

Peter wouldn't let go. "Why? What's wrong, Marilyn? I won't hurt you." He pulled her closer and closer.

"I can't."

She struggled to pull away and was about to scream when the door opened, and her parents walked in. Peter dropped her arm very hastily and looked embarrassed.

"This is Peter," Marilyn said. She tried to keep the great relief out of her voice. "We met at Margie's wedding. You met him, remember?"

Marilyn's parents were polite—just polite—to Peter, but they were certainly giving him questioning looks. For his part, he was almost pitifully glad to leave.

Marilyn's father said to him firmly at the door: "We do not allow young men in our house when we are not at home. I must warn you, now that we've told you that, if it happens again, we will have to consider it trespassing."

Even though Marilyn cringed at the strength of her father's words, she was relieved too. Peter looked truly cowed, and he promised it would never happen again.

"As a matter of fact, we think you are too old to be seeing our daughter at all," Marilyn's other said, in her "And that's final" voice.

"Maybe you're right," said Peter, and he walked away from their house quickly.

His letters stopped coming. Marilyn was relieved by that, too. She still sometimes felt a little scared if her parents weren't home or if she had to walk from the street after dark, expecting Peter to jump out of the bushes at her.

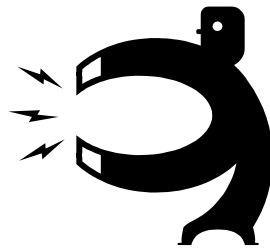


While a tiny part of her was flattered that she had been able to attract a boy older than her, and one as cute as Peter, whenever she remembered how much her arm had hurt when he had pulled her and the lustful look on his face, which had distorted his nice features, she was glad her parents had been so firm with him.

She felt safe.

As our sexual hormones activate during our teenage years, we can find ourselves drawn to certain people or driven by desires that we never had to deal with before. When we enter adolescence, we are entering a whole new world. While male/female attractions are natural, they can easily become misused, corrupted, and dangerous if we do not learn to watch them closely. Many people's lives have been destroyed by the failure to control their desires—or the failure of other people to control theirs.

Our sexual energy generates tremendous power. As with any power, it may be used for either constructive or destructive purposes. Nuclear power, for example, when harnessed properly, can be used to generate electricity for millions of homes. When used improperly, the power generated can destroy millions of homes. When properly directed, our sexual energy becomes a means for creating loving marriages and families. When misused, it leads to the destruction of marriages, families, and relationships in general.



We will experience many attractions in our lives. It is what we do with these feelings that matters. In our dealings with our fellow human beings, will we honor and respect their value or see them as objects of conquest or as props for our self-esteem and answers to our emotional needs? How do you think Peter felt about Marilyn in the story? Did he really care about her at all?

Because we cannot completely trust our sexual feelings, we need to be wise and maintain an appropriate distance to minimize temptation. Marilyn got herself into a very dangerous situation in the story. She was alone with an older teenage boy in an empty house. Such scenes all too often turn into rape scenes or what is commonly called "date rape". In "date rape" the girl has some relationship with the boy—as Marilyn has with Peter. The couple even may have gone on a date together. However, once the couple is alone, the boy demands sex and may even force it on the girl. Many girls come out of such situations wondering whether they were really raped or whether, because they went on a date with the boy, they "owed" him sex. Legally, such situations are considered rape, and they leave the psychological and emotional bruises of rape, too.

Many traditional societies have customs and rules to protect adolescent boys and girls from sexual feelings that can arise when they are alone together. In the past, young men and women were not allowed to be alone together. Someone had to be with them. This person, called a "chaperone", was there to make sure that everything stayed pure and innocent between any boy and girl who were in one another's company.

It is not always the boys whose feelings become overwhelming, either. In many cases, the feelings of attraction and desire are completely mutual, yet both the boy and the girl regret this too-early sexual experience, without commitment and without real love.

Unfortunately, many modern societies have discarded protective customs and rules and left teenagers vulnerable to their powerful sexual urges and those of others. Because of this, today's teens must find the internal motivation to control their sexual desires and protect themselves from destructive influences, even as they avoid being alone with someone of the opposite sex.

Studies have revealed three main factors that protect us from unwanted sexual experiences:

- 1) *Our own good character.* This involves having a strong conscience, clear moral standards, self-respect, and an understanding of our value.
- 2) *Respect for our parents.* By keeping a good relationship with our parents, we can receive their wisdom and guidance as we face difficulties and challenges, whether in sexual matters or otherwise.
- 3) *Commitment to purity.* By making a clear commitment to sexual abstinence until marriage, we can avoid many tempting situations. If we are not clear about this, we can be drawn into situations in which we find ourselves under strong pressure to do things we did not originally intend to do.

The basic rule is this: Do not spend excessive amounts of time and emotional energy with someone of the opposite sex, especially in isolated situations. Do activities in groups. Do not make exclusive, intense, one-on-one relationships with someone of the opposite sex. Maintain a clear commitment to purity.

For our sexuality to grow in a healthy way, we must protect its development. Just as a person would not pluck a fruit, vegetable, or flower before it had reached maturity, people should not eat the fruits of their sexuality before they are mature. Puberty is just the beginning of sexual development. To engage in sexual activity prematurely will stunt not only our sexual development but also the overall development of our character. Later on, it will affect our ability to love and be loved by the special someone we will want to marry.

Marriage is the place where our sexuality can find its full expression and fulfillment. Marriage provides the stable context for the expression of love with our spouse. It creates the proper environment for the products of that love: our eventual children. As the saying goes: “Good things come to those who wait.” Scientists have found that those who wait to have sex until marriage have happier marriages, better sexual lives together, and more overall satisfaction in love, for they have protected their sexuality until it can grow into full and ripe maturity.

Questions for Reflection

1. What are some of the dangerous sexual attractions that we may face in our lives?

2. Why are they dangerous?

3. Does having sexual feelings toward someone mean that the person is "the one" for you for the rest of your life?

4. Do you think Peter and Marilyn were well matched?

5. What do you think would have happened if Marilyn's parents had not come home when they did?

6. Would Marilyn have been happy with what happened?

7. In your culture, what are some of the social customs and rules that protect young people from sexual temptation?

8. Have some of these customs been discarded in recent times? If so, why?

9. What are three main factors that protect young people from sexual temptation?

10. Do you agree that “good things come to those who wait”?

Exercise: “Good Things Come to Those Who Wait”

The above essay ended with the statement: “Good things come to those who wait.” Can you think of some examples of this in the world around you or in your own life? Think of how this saying applies in the following areas: eating, sleeping, sex, education, marriage, professional career, learning a skill, friendship. Does it mean we should *only* wait, or should we be doing something while we are waiting?

Reflection Exercise: “Dangerous Attractions”

Are there any dangerous attractions that you currently are facing in your own life, sexual or otherwise? What are they? Have you had any success in dealing with them so far? Why or why not? How would you apply the things we have talked about in this chapter to your own situation?

Chapter 5: Saying "No"

"Back off, Louie! Can't you see she doesn't want to?"

"Well, look who's here. What are you—her chaperone? Or maybe you think you're Joanna's mom?"

"I said, back off!"

"Well, I think Joanna's big enough to decide for herself what she wants. Isn't that right, Joanna?"

Louie looked into Joanna's confused eyes. He and Joanna were on a class trip with other students to the local art museum. After a while, they separated themselves from the group and started looking at paintings together. Joanna liked Louie, and he was very interested in her. They were standing in front of a painting from the Romantic Period of European art of a man and woman sitting on a bench embracing each other. Louie got the sudden urge to embrace and kiss Joanna, and he gave in to the urge. That's when Susan, a classmate, appeared on the scene.

"I-I don't know, Louie," Joanna stammered. "I don't think it's right."

Susan stood with her hands on her hips. "Well, I KNOW it's not right, and I can see Joanna really doesn't want to."



Looking at Joanna, Louie persisted, "Joanna, is that true? You really don't want to?"

Joanna now was totally flustered. It took her some time to get the words out.

"Louie, we shouldn't be doing this here."

"Here," Louie repeated the last word. "So, then, you're saying another time and place?"

"I don't know what I'm saying," Joanna replied with exasperation. "I just want to get out of here."

"The answer is no, jerk," Susan interjected. "NO. Now get lost before I get the teacher over here."

Louie glared at Susan, turned around, and walked away briskly.

"Thanks, Susan," Joanna said meekly.

"What's wrong with you, Jo?" Susan said, turning toward her. "I thought you said you didn't want to get too close to him."

"I know what I said, but he's just so nice to me. I don't want to hurt him."

"Hurt him?" Susan replied with some surprise. "You better be careful he doesn't hurt *you*."

"I know," Joanna agreed, "but I just can't seem to say no to him. Or to anybody. I just usually do whatever anyone else wants me to."

Susan put her hands on Joanna's shoulders and looked straight into her eyes. "Joanna, you're going to have to learn to be more firm. Louie's not going to be the last one, you know. If you don't learn to say no now, and say it like you mean it, I'm afraid you're going to find yourself in a lot of trouble one day. Not just with boys, either—with all kinds of things."

Joanna said, "I don't know, Susan. I'm not like you. You're so clear and direct with people."

"The important thing is to be clear and direct inside yourself before anything starts happening—what you want and don't want, what's right and what's wrong. Then work on expressing that when necessary."

She put her arm around Joanna's shoulders.

"Look," Susan said sympathetically. "I'll help you with this. We'll work on it together."

Joanna smiled. "Thanks, Susan. You're really a good friend."

"What are friends for?" Susan returned the smile and gave Joanna a squeeze.

In this book we have talked a great deal about the changes we face as we enter adolescence. This is a time of a growing desire for freedom and independence and a time in which many physical and emotional changes take place. Up until now, boys and girls haven't had much interest in each other, preferring to spend most of their time with friends of the same sex. In adolescence, however, a growing attraction emerges between opposite sexes.

Hopefully, most young people have parents who will guide them and set clear boundaries for them to follow. Nevertheless, teenagers may still find themselves in circumstances in which they need to know how to say no.

As we grow to be older teenagers, such situations will increase. For this reason, it is helpful early on to have a set of "refusal skills" to fall back on should we find ourselves being pressured to do something we know we should not—whether it involves lying, stealing, cheating, drinking alcohol, smoking, drugs, or sex.



The purpose of learning refusal skills is to give ourselves the ability to say NO to risky situations. There are four main components to an effective refusal or NO statement, as follows:

- 1) **Use the word NO.** There is no substitute. Everyone understands the meaning of the word NO.
- 2) **Give a strong nonverbal NO message.** There are many body movements that can support a verbal NO message. For example:
 - Hands-off gesture:* Use hand or arm movements for emphasis.
 - Stiff body:* Sit or stand stiffly. Stomp away from the other person if you have to.
 - Serious expression:* Use an "I mean it" face.
 - Other body movements:* Cross arms and legs for emphasis.
 - Fight back:* If all else fails, push the person away and protect yourself.

- 3) **Use a firm tone of voice to support the NO message.** The way you say something often gives a stronger message than the words you use.
- 4) **Repeat the NO message as much as needed.** Eventually, the person will get the message and give up.

Refusal skills can also involve other aspects, such as giving a reason. This reason could be simply "I'm not allowed to do that", or "That's bad for you". It could state the consequences, such as, "I don't want to do that; it will make me sick", or "You can die from doing that", or "I don't want to get pregnant or get a disease". It could involve changing the subject or suggesting doing something else. The important thing is to state the reason for saying no with confidence. There is no need to get into an argument. The goal simply is to refuse what is being offered. Standing up for ourselves is an important life skill. Being able to state our position assertively is a trait that we should value. If we learn it now, we will be better off in the future.

However, all the refusal skills in the world can't replace your own conviction that premarital sexual activity, drugs, cigarettes, alcohol, and other things that are dangerous to your physical and psychological health are not for you. As Susan pointed out, you have to decide inside.

Don't be "wishy-washy" like Joanna was. Make up your mind to stay away from things that could impact your life negatively, and let your conviction speak loudly when others try to tempt you away from your decision.

Questions for Reflection

1. Why do you think it is important to set boundaries to what we should or should not do?

2. What are some of the boundaries your parents have set for you?

3. What are some of the boundaries your society has set?

4. Have you been in situations in which it was difficult to resist negative peer pressure?

5. If so, why was it difficult? Were you able to overcome it or not?

6. What are refusal skills?

7. What are the four components of effective refusal skills?

8. What is even more important than strong refusal skills?

Exercise: "Saying NO"

Role-play the following situations:

1. Cramer wants Joey to jump off the cliff with him into the deep water beyond the rocks. A couple of weeks ago, a kid doing that broke his legs on the rocks, and there are signs all over: "No jumping or diving". All the parents have warned their kids about jumping off this cliff. The rocks go out too far in the water to safely jump past. Cramer has already called Joey a "chicken" for saying he thinks it's too dangerous.

2. Trevor really likes Teresa, and she likes him. He's very glad they met up with each other at the movies while they were with friends. Their friends laughed and moved so that Trevor and Teresa could sit next to each other. Just brushing against Teresa's shoulder and hearing her comments about the movie in his ear is very exciting to Trevor. In the darkness, Teresa suddenly reaches over and puts her hand on Trevor's thigh. Trevor feels that's getting a little too personal.

3. Billy, Sam, and Perry were going to the local store to buy a soda, and they found a half-full bottle of whiskey lying near the curb. Sam shrugs his shoulders, but after taking a swallow himself, Billy dares Perry to drink some. Perry doesn't want to.

4. Linda's mother said she was just going out for a short while to pick up some things for dinner. Linda's friends Mary and Elizabeth are visiting. As soon as her mother leaves, Linda suggests the girls look at her father's girlie magazines in the back of his closet. Elizabeth is willing, but Mary feels funny about it.

Make sure you use the four components of refusal skills in your role-play.

Reflection Exercise: “Important Life Skill”

Keep a record for several days of when you say no to different situations in your life. Note which of the four components mentioned above you used and whether the "no" was effective or not. If it didn't work, think about why and how you can improve your ability to say "no". Remember, learning a new skill takes a lot of practice.

Chapter 6 : Opposites Attract

“We’re just friends, that’s all!” shouted Jennifer.

“Come on, Jen. You know there’s more to it than that. Everybody sees the way you guys look at each other.”

Christine was Jennifer’s best friend, but sometimes she could be very annoying. Why do people always want to match up boys and girls romantically? Jennifer wondered.

"Get lost, Christine," she said, mostly because she felt confused.

Jennifer and Brian had been neighbors and friends for several years. Their parents were friends, and their families often had done things together, from cookouts in the back yard to camping trips in the summers. Because of the close relationship of their families, Jennifer and Brian came to be friends very naturally. Growing up, they hardly even noticed, nor did it matter, that they were girl and boy.

Now that they were teenagers, they were finding that people were starting to think they were something like boyfriend and girlfriend. Some of their classmates were dating and pairing up like this.



Well, Jennifer had to admit that sometimes she did feel something different toward Brian than she had before. Not only Brian, but toward other boys as well. She found herself suddenly paying attention to their looks—how they combed their hair, the way they talked or smiled. She was finding herself attracted to certain kinds of boys—boys to whom she had never paid any attention before.

It seemed to her that Brian, too, looked at her in a way he had not before. Occasionally she would catch him staring at her.

Most things were still the same between them—they were just good friends—but there was this added element in the picture now. Sometimes she felt shyer about things than she had in the past—more self-conscious—and she could tell he did, too.



Still, that didn't mean they were boyfriend and girlfriend. There wasn't anything exclusive about their relationship. When they were together, they were always welcoming other friends and kids. In fact, both were always relieved to be in a big group, like they had always been. And certainly neither had ever spoken of any special feelings toward the other.

One day Jennifer decided to bring the issue out into the open.

"Brian, do you know what some people are saying about us?" she asked him one day after school as they were walking home.

Right off, Brian knew what she was talking about.

"Yeah, I know, but I try not to let it bother me." Brian looked bothered, though.

He burst out, "Everyone thinks that when you get to be a teenager, you can't be friends with somebody from the opposite sex without it getting to be romantic."

They continued their stroll down the sidewalk, each lost in their thoughts for a few moments. Brian broke the silence.

"I mean—don't get me wrong—I do like girls. Some, anyway." He looked sideways at Jennifer, then immediately looked away. "But that doesn't mean I'm ready to start pairing up with anybody."

Jennifer nodded understandingly.

"I like you a lot," Brian went on. "But not in the way some people think. With you, I can just be me. I don't need to pretend anything. I don't need to try to impress you. You're like a sister to me. Only better than my dumb sisters!"

Jennifer laughed. "Thanks, Brian." She was smiling to herself. This was the Brian she knew so well—a strange mixture of maturity and immaturity. Her good friend. She wondered if she would like Brian as much when he had grown up to be a man. She thought she probably would. Well, there was plenty of time to see if that was going to be true!

They had come to her house.

"Well, see you tomorrow," Jennifer said.

"See you," Brian said with a wave of his hand. As he went into his house, he shook his head. Jennifer was getting more grown up every day, he thought. All that smiling to herself, like she knew more about life than he did. She probably did, too! He wondered if he would like her as much when she had grown up to be a woman. He thought he probably would. Maybe even more.

In studying science, one of the things we notice is that the entire universe is full of opposites that attract, from positively and negatively charged atomic particles in the world of matter, through the plant world, where there are the male stamen and the female pistil, to the animal world where there are male and female, to the human world where there are men and women. Propelled by their attraction to one another, these opposites join together to form a new creation.



For human beings, feelings of attraction to the opposite sex become strong during adolescence. Nature creates this interest so that we will have the motivation to procreate and ensure our survival as a species and to balance out the masculine and feminine natures, which need one another's special gifts and talents.

In the atomic world, the attraction of opposites, protons and electrons, results in the creation of an atom. The bonding that results is nearly unbreakable. In fact, the breakup of an atom releases an incredible amount of destructive energy, as in a nuclear bomb.

With men and women, sexual union also is meant to create an unbreakable bond as the basis of the family unit. The breakup of these unions releases a tremendous amount of negative energy into human society. Without exaggeration, sexual unions that break up are the ultimate cause of many of the social problems afflicting our world today. This is why, when a man and a woman have this kind of intimate relationship with each other, it is meant to take place in the context of a marriage that lasts a lifetime.

There is a beautiful ideal behind the attraction of opposites—the creation of something greater than the individual elements. To realize that ideal, however, requires that we wait until our hearts and minds catch up with our bodies so that we will be able to take responsibility for the results of our attraction and the new creations made possible by it.

Brian and Jennifer are experiencing an awakening of attraction toward the opposite sex, including some attraction toward one another. However, they are very wise. They realize that being attracted to someone doesn't necessarily mean they should be "pairing up". In the confusion of the new feelings of adolescence and the old feelings of childhood, they decide to keep things on a friendship level and not give a lot of thought to the attraction between them but to remain good friends.

Will they have a romantic relationship in the future? Perhaps. They are certainly laying a good foundation for a happy one. They know each other, respect each other, and like each other a lot as friends. Marriage is, at heart, a lifelong friendship between a man and a woman. Yet by choosing not to indulge themselves in too-early romantic feelings and gestures, they are giving their friendship a chance to develop naturally into what it will and won't be in their lives. The kind of friendship they have agreed upon—not pairing up, spending lots of times in groups of friends, acknowledging some attraction but not dwelling on it—is a most suitable relationship for Jennifer and Brian's levels of maturity at this time.

Questions for Reflection

1. What does “attraction of opposites” mean?

2. Have you experienced a change in your feelings toward the opposite sex in the past year?

3. Why do you think people start experiencing such a change when they become teenagers?

4. Why is self-control important in this area?

5. Some people say we should just follow our feelings. What do you think?

6. Do you think it’s possible for teenage boys and girls to be friends?

7. Do you think that one day Brian and Jennifer in the story will be romantic toward one another?

8. What is the ultimate purpose of the male/female attraction?

9. Since it is strong, how is such attraction to be contained?

Exercise: “Teenage Attractions”

Look at the world around you—at the songs you hear, the movies you see, the TV shows you watch, and the conversations you hear. How is the issue of teenage boy/girl attraction dealt with? In the media, are people shown as just responding to their immediate feelings? Amid the attraction, is there real friendship? Is there any discussion of a grander purpose to this attraction? Are these messages helpful or harmful to teenagers as they try to understand their own urges? Keep a log in a notebook of all the messages you get from the media this week about teenage attraction.

Reflective Exercise: “Friendships and Attractions”

Reflect for a moment on your own changing feelings and attitudes toward the opposite sex. How are they different from a year ago? Are there certain boys or girls to whom you feel attracted? What is behind this attraction? Do you have any friendships with the opposite sex? Would you say that you feel like a brother or sister to any of them? Write down your feelings and thoughts on these questions in a private journal, notebook, or diary.

Chapter 7: The Drive

Mr. Foster and his 13-year-old son, Sean, were driving through the city one day.

Suddenly Sean said, “Hey, Dad. Let me drive for a while!”

His father was surprised by this request. “I don’t think so, son.”

“Come on, Dad. I can do it. I’m big enough so my feet can reach the pedals. I’ve been watching you for a long time now. I know pretty well what to do.”

Over the past year, Sean had suddenly developed a strong desire to try driving a car. It looked easy enough—not to mention very exciting. However, his father was adamant.

“There’s no way I’m going to let you drive this car, Sean. It may look easy, but there’s a lot more to it than meets the eye. I know that you’re not ready.”

Sean slumped back in his seat, sulking.

“Why don’t you trust me, Dad? I know I can do it.”

Mr. Foster pulled over to the side of the road. Sean became excited.

"You're going to let me drive?"

His father shook his head and looked into his son's eyes.

"Son, I love you very much. Because I love you, I cannot allow you to do something that could get both of us seriously hurt—even killed—not to mention other people on the road. It would not be responsible of me. Besides that, it's against the law, and for very good reasons."

Sean looked down and frowned.

"Driving is a big responsibility," his father continued. "That's why they don't allow people to drive until they reach a certain age. Not only that—they must also possess a driver's license, which they can only get after passing both a road test and a written test.

"I understand your desire to drive. I wanted to also when I was your age. But it is important to wait until the proper time—a time when you will be capable of taking on the responsibilities of driving a car—a time when your judgment and self-control are as grown-up as those long legs of yours."

Sean shifted in his seat and looked back at his father as he continued to speak.

"In a year or so, I'll be happy to start teaching you the basics of driving. You have to know how to take care of a car, too. Eventually I'll even start taking you out on the road—a back road somewhere—and let you drive in preparation for taking the driver's test."

But that wasn't enough for Sean. One night, he sneaked out of the house with his father's car keys when his parents were asleep. He was just going to drive the car around the yard a little bit. He knew he could do it.



Whoa. The car was harder to control than he thought. He couldn't use the brakes without throwing himself almost into the steering wheel. He thought he could steer well and control the accelerator, but the car leaped forward—right into a tree

Lights went on all over the house, and his parents came running out. His mother was mostly concerned about his safety—she kept hugging him and asking him if he had snapped his neck. But his dad was deeply disappointed in him.

"I told you, you weren't ready, didn't I? Why couldn't you listen to my warning?"

"I didn't think anything would happen!" said Sean.

"Well, you were wrong. And something else is going to happen too. You're going to pay for that damage through working odd jobs after school. And remember when I said I'd start taking you out driving in a year or so? Well, it'll be three good long years now. Maybe then you'll learn to wait for things you're not ready for!"

Sean hung his head. His father was right. He should have waited.

The urge to have sex is often referred to as "sexual drive". Sean's strong desire to get behind the wheel and drive is a good analogy to the sudden development of our sexual desire when we reach the teenage years.

In childhood, sex was probably not a very big issue for us. Even if we saw images of sex in pictures, magazines, movies, etc., it is likely it did not mean very much to us. We were aware it was out there, and it seemed to hold a lot of interest for grownups, but it was not part of our life.

With adolescence, all that changes. Adolescents' bodies are changing. They are not only continuing to grow bigger but changing in shape and function as well. Feelings are changing. Interest in the opposite sex awakens. Whereas before we may have barely thought about sex at all, we now may be finding ourselves thinking about it quite a lot. We may feel strong sexual urges and want to act on them—just like Sean wants so badly to drive his father's car.

If we pay too much attention to modern-day culture, especially the media (movies, TV, much of the Internet, teen books, and magazines), we can get the impression that we should simply follow our impulses—like Sean did. The media tell us that if a person has certain feelings of attraction for someone, there is nothing wrong with acting on them.

This way of thinking was born of the sexual revolution that occurred among Western youth in the 1960s. It has led to all sorts of problems. Since then, unwanted pregnancies, sexual diseases (including HIV/AIDS), rape, adultery, and divorce—not to mention all the associated emotional scars—have skyrocketed.

Like driving a car, sexual activity should not be engaged in until the person is ready to take on the responsibilities involved. Like driving a car, sex requires maturity, good judgment, understanding, and a "license"—marriage.

While much of modern culture highlights the pleasurable aspects of sex and promotes sexual freedom, it de-emphasizes sexual responsibility. As with many other aspects of our lives, we are responsible for controlling our appetites. If we fail to do so, we may end up being controlled by them. This can happen with food, alcohol, cigarettes, money, gambling, power—and sex. We can become addicted to sex just as we can become addicted to other things in life.



The fact is that sex is intricately connected to reproduction; indeed, it is the means through which we become mothers and fathers. Because one of the major purposes of our sexuality is to enable us to reproduce, we should not engage in sexual relationships until we are ready to take on the responsibilities of parenthood. As the foundation for parenthood is marriage, we should not engage in such activity until we have made a commitment to our partner through the marriage vows.

Obviously, having the physiological capability to engage in sex is a long way from being truly qualified to do so. Just as Sean's legs had grown long enough for him to reach the pedals of the car, our bodies grow into sexual capability before our good judgment, maturity, and ability to handle such a powerful force have grown fully. Like Sean, if we try to handle something we are not ready for, we may end up facing destruction.

Questions for Reflection

1. Do you agree with the comparison between Sean's desire to drive and our sexual desire? Why or why not?

2. Are there some things in life we want but are not mature enough to handle yet?

3. Do we sometimes think we are ready for things when we really are not?

4. Should we listen to our parents and elders when they tell us we should wait for some things?

5. What do the media—TV, movies, songs, books and magazines—tell us about sexual feelings? In general, are we urged to wait or are we urged to act on them whenever we want to? Do you agree with these media messages?

6. What is sexuality intimately connected with that requires maturity and responsibility?

Exercise: “Matching”

Match the joyful event with the qualifications needed for it by drawing lines:

Having a baby good grades, good school record

Winning a scholarship money, shelter, food, childcare help
from relatives and friends

Becoming a doctor written test, road test, license

Going out on your first date marriage

Driving a car practice, a good coach, skills

Having sex parental permission and
approval, curfew,
values firmly in place

Winning a trophy in sports degree from medical school

Reflection Exercise: “Strong Desire”

Have you ever had a strong desire to do something for which you were not prepared or about which you did not really think enough to foresee the consequences? What were the consequences of your actions? What did you learn from the experience? How would you compare this with a teenager acting upon his/her sexual impulses?

Chapter 8: A Life Changes

Ginny felt as if her life was falling apart. Her parents had just told her that they were getting a divorce. Although her parents hadn't gotten along for years, Ginny had always hoped they would find a way to stay together. Now this hope was turning out to be an empty dream. She found herself becoming more and more depressed.

Ginny had always been a good student, and she continued to complete her assignments on time. But she had noticed that it was becoming increasingly difficult to concentrate on her schoolwork. She was up in her room one night trying to do some homework when she got a phone call from her friend, Meredith.



"Hi, Ginny. Are you busy?"

"Just trying to make headway with this math and getting nowhere," Ginny responded in a dull voice. "I just can't seem to concentrate."

"Well, that's understandable," Meredith sympathized. "You've been through a lot lately."

"Yeah, sometimes I wish that it would all just go away."

"Listen, maybe I can help," said Meredith. "There's a party taking place on Friday. My big brother, Jim, is going. Mostly it's for older kids, but he invited me to come along and said I could bring a friend. So I thought of you. It might be a nice escape from your troubles."

"That's sweet of you, Meredith," said Ginny gratefully. "But won't we kind of stand out, being younger than everyone?"

"My brother said if we just stay near him, everything will be fine."

"Well, I guess if your brother says it's okay ... yes."

"Good!" said Meredith cheerfully. "We'll pick you up about eight."

Ginny hung up the phone. She wasn't much of a party girl, but maybe Meredith was right. It might be a way to forget about her problems for a little while. It might even be fun. Normally her parents would have prevented her from going, but now they were so caught up in their own problems, they hardly noticed what Ginny was doing.

Meredith and her brother picked Ginny up at eight, and they all went to the party, which was being held at a seaside cottage. It was very crowded and noisy. It wasn't long before Ginny found herself separated from Meredith and her brother. Worse, she ended up in a room where a hand-rolled cigarette with a funny smell was being passed around. Some of the people in the room were acting kind of strange—laughing for no apparent reason, or just sitting and staring.

"Hey," said the boy sitting next to her. "Try this. It's real good."

He had just taken a long drag from the hand-rolled cigarette and was holding it out in front of her.

Without thinking, Ginny took the cigarette from him. All eyes were on her.

Well, they look like they're having a good time, she thought. If this will make me happy, at least for a little while, maybe it will help me get through this divorce thing. Then I'll stop when I don't need it anymore.

Slowly, she brought the marijuana cigarette to her lips and inhaled. Soon she was "high". Even though she did not feel at all like herself, and even though she couldn't tell what she was laughing at and her lungs hurt, she had to admit: it was a good feeling.

After that night, Ginny found herself going to such parties more and more. Soon she was falling way behind in her schoolwork, and eventually she dropped out of school altogether.

Within a few months, even before her parents' divorce was finalized, she had disappeared. Some said she had gone to live with some of her drug friends in another state. Some said she had gotten into the "hard" stuff and was now an addict. Some hinted that she was stealing and doing prostitution to pay for an addiction to the expensive drug cocaine.

Ginny forgot about her parents' divorce problem, all right. She now had too many problems of her own to think about anything but how to get her next "high" on drugs.



An addiction, according to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, is "compulsive need for and use of a habit-forming substance (as heroin, nicotine, or alcohol) characterized by tolerance and by well-defined physiological symptoms of withdrawal." We associate full-blown addiction—like Ginny's—with the "hard" drugs (cocaine and heroin, for example). However, alcohol has addictive qualities, and milder drugs such as cigarettes and even caffeine are addictive.

Looking at the dictionary definition more closely, we can get a better idea of what addiction is. The word "compulsive" means something we are pulled to do, almost uncontrollably. A person loses control of his or her ability to resist a certain substance. He or she develops an intense need for it.

Addiction can be physical—the body comes to expect and need a certain amount of a certain substance each day. If the body is deprived of this substance, it goes into "withdrawal"—physical pain, headaches, cramps, and an overwhelming sense of hunger for the drug. Addicts experiencing withdrawal are willing to do almost anything to get the drug into their systems again.

Addiction is not always entirely physical, however. Marijuana, such as Ginny smoked, is considered a psychologically addicting drug. People use it to have fun and escape from pain, but they soon find that they cannot have fun (or they think they can't) or get out of emotional and psychological pain without the drug. Marijuana is also a "gateway" drug that leads to the use of

harder drugs, as it did in Ginny's case. These harder drugs are not only psychologically addictive, like marijuana. They are physically addictive as well.

Addictions cause great harm not only to the addict, but to their families and friends as well. Addicts usually experience personality changes and lose the ability to interact with other people socially. They may have trouble staying in school or holding a job because of their constant pursuit of the addictive substance they crave. Because many addictions are very expensive, addicts may turn to crime in order to get the money they need quickly enough to support their "habit".

Addictions grow stronger over time. First, a person's body becomes biologically dependent on the substance in certain amounts. That is, the body may begin to need and expect that it will receive a certain substance on a regular basis. If it does not receive that substance, it responds by becoming ill. When this happens, the person is said to be *physiologically dependent* on the substance or activity.

However, the body also builds up a tolerance to the substance so that more and more is needed to produce the same feeling of well-being than was needed at first. The body both wants and needs more and more of the same thing in order to feel the same "high" to which it first became addicted. Therefore, addicts need more and more money all the time to buy increasing doses of their drug. It is not at all unusual for addicts to sell themselves sexually or to rob, break in, and steal (sometimes becoming involved in murder) to get the money they need to answer their increasing needs and craving for the expensive drugs they love.

Make no mistake. Drugs feel good. That is why people get "hooked" or addicted to them. They can make a person feel like all his or her troubles no longer matter at all—that life is sweet and good. They can make people laugh and have fun. That's why people like them. That's why someone like Ginny—who is in a lot of emotional pain—may be drawn to taking drugs again and again.



The problem is, the good time is artificially induced, and so the good feelings fade when the chemicals fade in the body. The "high" lasts only a short time—only as long as the chemicals last in the bloodstream. Many addicts say that they failed to develop the social skills they needed to get along with people and have fun with them because the drug did their socializing for them. Without the drug, they didn't know how to laugh, enjoy the company of other people, or have good, clean fun. One day they woke up to find they were decades behind in personal development and real friendships.

Once a person is addicted to a substance or activity, it is very difficult to wean oneself from the dependency. Most heroin and cocaine addicts wind up going back to the drug. It is extremely difficult to give up these kinds of drugs. Most people need the help of a hospital and a great deal of help and support. The sad fact is that, even with clinical help, most drug addicts go back to being addicts.

Ginny went through a common cycle of drug addiction. Most people experience some pain, depression, and sadness in their lives and would like to escape from the pain. Most people experience Step 1 of the Cycle of Addiction below. However, there are healthy ways to deal with pain, depression, and problems. Talking to a counselor—a teacher, a member of the clergy, an older relative, a kindly neighbor, a good friend—is a great way to cut pain in half. Writing out feelings in a journal may also be helpful. Taking up a new interest—a sport, an after-school club—can help. Sometimes a good movie can take one's mind off one's problems for a time, to give the heart rest. Getting extra sleep can also dull pain. A long walk is therapeutic. Nature—growing a garden, nurturing flowers, walking along forest paths—is deeply soothing and healing. There is no need to go beyond Step 1 of the Cycle of Addiction.

Once a person goes on to Step 2, he or she is only going to add to the pain and suffering of his or her personal life. Drugs are never a way out of suffering. Rather, they lead to increased suffering. No matter what your difficulties in life, drugs, unless prescribed and monitored by a doctor, are never the way to end suffering. In fact, they are the beginning of even more suffering.

Cycle of Addiction—Drugs

1. A young person is feeling pain or depression because of family or school problems.
2. He/she is looking for ways to feel better, so he/she starts to take drugs.
3. At first, the drugs seem to work, because they dull the pain from which the person is trying to escape. So, the person keeps taking the drug.
4. From this point, it often doesn't take long for the person to become addicted, because he/she develops a physical dependence on the substance. Now the person can think only about getting more of this drug just to function.
5. At this stage, a serious downward spiral begins. The person will sacrifice anything—family, friends, school, or work—for drugs. Changed by drugs both physically and mentally, the person is now an addict.

Questions for Reflection

1. What is an addiction?

2. What are some of the things to which we can become addicted?

3. Why is addiction harmful?

4. What is withdrawal?

5. How does tolerance affect the amount of drugs a person takes?

6. Why do addicts often turn to crime?

7. Why is marijuana called a "gateway" drug?

8. What role do friends play in a person's life? What if Meredith had been a different type of friend? What if you were Ginny's friend? What would you have done to help her?

9. What role does a family play in a person's life? What if Ginny's parents had been paying more attention to her situation? What if they had been able to resolve their conflict and had stayed together?

10. What are some other, more constructive ways Ginny could have chosen to relieve her feelings of loneliness and isolation?

Exercise: "Must Have It!"

We mentioned that physical addiction to a substance means that the body feels it has to have a certain amount of the substance. Over time, the body feels it needs even more of the substance in order to feel good.

Imagine it as a growing hunger. Remember the last time you felt hungry. (You may feel hungry right now!) Your body wants something. It feels it needs something. Your stomach aches, and it begins to rumble. Your body is making you very uncomfortable in order to make you get what it wants and needs.

People have done desperate things, even stealing, to get food when they are hungry. People very quickly lose their pride over what they will and will not eat. Very hungry people will eat out of garbage cans, or they will eat things that are spoiled or dirty.

Addiction becomes a physical need that feels as intense as the need for food. Addicts become desperately hungry for the drug.

Addiction becomes a physical need that feels as intense as the need for air. Following your parent's instructions, take a deep breath and hold it for as long as you can without getting dizzy.

Notice how your body feels as the seconds go by. Your body wants breath. It is starving for breath. It is sending you signals that it needs to breathe. It is rebelling against not being given the oxygen it needs and wants. Your body hurts. You have a strong desire to breathe, and soon it will become an unbearable desire. Finally, your body will cause you to do what you need to do to get air. Your body will control you by releasing the held-in air and gasping in breaths of fresh air.

If you were trapped underwater and couldn't breathe, what would you do to get air? Wouldn't you do just about anything? This is how addiction feels. An addict will do just about anything to get the drug his or her body is saying it needs. Addiction feels just like you feel when you desperately need air.

Now let out your breath and breathe deeply. For a few minutes, you may breathe harder than usual, to make up for the lack of oxygen. This is also like addiction. An addict feels the need for more and more of the drug to feel good.

Addiction is when your body has grown so dependent upon a chemical substance, it feels it needs the chemical substance to survive—the same as it needs food or air. You can imagine how intense the desire for that chemical substance can be by comparing it to hunger or the need to breathe.

Reflection Exercise: “My Addictions”

Do you have any addictions, even minor ones? If so, what are they? Are they detrimental in any way to your life? To others? Do you think you could ever be vulnerable to some of the more dangerous addictions, such as alcoholism, drug abuse, or promiscuous sexual activity? What should you do to protect yourself?

Chapter 9: The Loser

“Hey, what a loser! That guy couldn’t play if his life depended on it.”

The words stung Jack Carmody’s ears as he hung his head. Central defender for his school’s soccer team, he was having a rough day. Twice he had allowed players from the opposing team to get by him and score, and now he had just failed to block another strike that ended up in the goal, putting the other team up by one.

Tim Gordon, one of Jack’s teammates, ran up to him and patted him on the back.

“Don’t let it get to you, Jack. Everybody has down days.”

“Yeah, sure,” he responded, unconvinced. He looked up in the stands to see if he could pick out the guy who kept heckling him. It definitely wasn’t helping his game!

This is not just a down day, Jack thought. This is the pits. What am I doing here? The only reason I’m on this team is because my dad pushed me to do it. This wasn’t my idea.

That was not entirely true. His dad did push him to go out for the soccer team, but secretly Jack was grateful for it. On his own, he didn’t have the confidence to think he could make the team, but his dad did, and he was right. Jack surprised himself by making the starting team.

Nevertheless, he still had trouble believing in himself. When things got rough, like today, and people started criticizing him, Jack could easily get discouraged and lose all energy and hope.



He felt like that now, and it was all he could do to keep from walking off the field and quitting the team.

His coach called for a timeout and gathered the team on the sidelines.

Seeing what was going on in Jack’s mind, he addressed him point-blank: “What is it going to be, Jack? Are you going to quit or finish this game?”

Suddenly, Jack felt a lump in his throat. He felt as if he was going to burst out crying. Then he caught a glimpse of his father up in the stands. He knew how disappointed his dad would be if he quit now.

Then he heard the coach’s voice again: “Well, Jack, bad day or not, you’re the best darn defender I have out there. It’s up to you, but I do hope you’re going to stay in there and help us win this thing.”

With that, the rest of the team all voiced their support.

How could he let these guys down?

With new energy and determination, Jack said, “You can count on me, Coach.”

His team soon retied the score. Then both sides vied to go ahead, moving the ball up and down the field. Both teams had their chances but couldn’t get the ball in the goal. A revived Jack was all over, blocking shots and preventing anyone from the opposing team from getting too close.

Then suddenly, with just a minute left in the game, Jack stole the ball away from the opposing side's best player and passed it way downfield to Tim, who was wide open. Going one-on-one with the goalkeeper, Tim shot the ball past him to score the winning goal with only seconds left on the clock.

In jubilation, practically the entire team piled on top of Jack and Tim.

As they untangled themselves and headed off the field, Jack heard a familiar voice coming from the stands: "Hey, that loser really came back, didn't he?"

"You're darn right, I did," thought Jack, gritting his teeth. "And that's what separates winners from losers."



Failure. Just to hear the word makes many people very uncomfortable. However, we all face the possibility of failure every day. Coping with failure and growing from the lessons it teaches are important skills to learn for our lives.

It is only natural that we want to succeed. It feels wonderful when we achieve our goals and win. Yet, so often we experience failure in life. No doubt you already have failed in one way or another: last month's history quiz, the hundred-meter dash on Field Day you were sure you were going to win, last year's poetry contest, failing to control your temper, or cheating on an exam and disappointing your parents when they found out. We all fail—and in many different ways. Yet without failure, we would never learn.

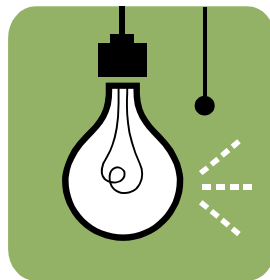
This doesn't mean we should try to fail! We should always try our best to succeed, while reminding ourselves that sometimes failure can be a good thing—if we take it the right way. When we fail, even in a big way, let's remember that it's an opportunity to learn how to do things differently and better.

Failure is a normal part of life. It happens to everybody. Nobody escapes it, even the greatest among us.

Today, the whole world has heard of Abraham Lincoln. He is considered one of the greatest U.S. presidents—and many people consider him to be the greatest president. But few people know that for much of his life, Lincoln faced one failure and disappointment after another. In 1832, he lost the election for the Illinois General Assembly. In 1833, the store he opened with a

partner failed, and he went deeply into debt. His sweetheart died in 1835, as did his former business partner, leaving him further in debt. He went through a severe depression in 1836. In 1837, the girl he had been courting turned down his proposal of marriage. In 1841, he went through another bout of severe depression. In 1843, he lost the nomination for Congress. In 1849, he lost a case he was arguing before the Supreme Court. In 1850, his son Edward died. In 1855, he was passed over for a senatorial seat. In 1858, he lost a senatorial election before winning the presidential election of 1860. There were more sorrows, failures, and setbacks in Lincoln's presidency, too. Yet no one considers Lincoln a failure at all. In fact, he is considered one of the greatest leaders in human history by international as well as American historians.

Another big failure was Thomas Alva Edison, the man who invented the electric light bulb, the phonograph, the motion-picture camera, the microphone, and a thousand other devices that have improved life for humanity the world over. It took Edison more than two thousand tries before he came up with the right filament for the light bulb and more than fifty thousand tries to perfect a battery! In fact, Edison was a firm believer in the importance of failure. He knew that what he learned through his failures was what led him to success. Edison was so successful that when he died, people all over the world dimmed their electric lights in honor of the man who had "lit up the world".



There is a whole category of people who are constant failures: babies! Imagine how many times babies fall down before they are finally able to walk. They don't give up, but they get up and try again and again. Perhaps Albert Einstein was thinking of them when he said, "Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new."

From these examples, we see that the secret to dealing with failure is not to be discouraged but to understand what we can learn from the experience. Making mistakes and having failures is a part of life. We can accept them and learn from them, or be bitter and give up our dream, labeling ourselves "losers" and being overwhelmed by disappointment.

Failures are actually our training ground. We can learn valuable lessons from them. If we do, we can make them the stepping stones to our success.

In the end, failure is a state of mind. It is how we react to an outcome that matters. What is important is what we learn from the experience. We should think of failures as opportunities to do better.

Successful people do not think about defeat. They concentrate on success. We become what we think about. If we wallow in our failures, it drags us down, but if we believe in ourselves and what we can do, no matter how many times we fail, we will get up and try again until we succeed.

Questions for Reflection

1. Jack is failing in his game at the beginning of the story. What does a boy in the stands call him? How does that make Jack feel?

2. What changes Jack from a "loser" to a "winner"?

3. Think about a time when something didn't go well, even though you tried very hard. How did you deal with your feelings of failure?

4. When things seem to be going wrong, what can you do to make yourself feel better?

5. If something important doesn't turn out the way you had hoped, what are some helpful ways to deal with your disappointment? What are some harmful ways?

6. How can you keep from getting angry and upset when things go wrong?

7. Are there times when quitting something difficult is the right thing to do?

One way human beings learn is through making mistakes, or through failure. Learn to aim an object at a target. Observe yourself. First you may aim too far to the right. Then, to correct your failure, you may aim too far to the left. On about the third try, you will probably aim just about right.

Write a short story about someone who tried to do something difficult and stuck with it until he or she succeeded. Include some ideas about why the person's attitude toward the problem was important in overcoming it.

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a template for handwriting practice or general writing. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

Chapter 10: Who's the Loser Now?

That Judy Wooldridge! She always had to be at the center of attention—especially with the boys, thought Miriam as she watched Judy stroll down the hallway to her next class, basking in the attention of several boys walking beside her.

Miriam had known Judy since they were little. Judy had always had a lively personality and had been popular with others, which was now being enhanced by a developing physical attractiveness. Judy put this to good use in her relations with boys. She also surrounded herself with girls of like minds—that is, girls who were extremely concerned about their physical appearance. They seemed to be always trying new makeup, experimenting with various hairstyles, and trying on new clothes.

Judy and Miriam were once good friends, until a couple of years ago when things began to change. Judy started distancing herself from Miriam, on occasion even being quite mean to her. She would call Miriam a “loser” and say things like, “Get a life!” when Miriam wanted to spend some time with her. Eventually, Miriam became afraid of Judy's barbed answers to her, and she stopped trying to be a friend.

Miriam was plain and shy—some people called her an “introvert”. She liked to keep to herself, read books, and stay true to just a couple of close friends. She envied Judy. Why couldn't she be popular like that? Why couldn't she be freer in her relations with others? Instead, she easily felt timid, didn't know what to say, and found herself wanting to escape from people. She felt herself somehow not worthy, because she had little interest in many of the things other kids her age seemed to like. She was different.

With these thoughts in mind, Miriam walked home from school. She liked to walk. It gave her time to think about things—about the books she was reading, things her teachers or classmates had said, about her parents. They had been fighting a lot lately, which worried her.



Most of all, walking home gave Miriam a chance to sit in her favorite spot under a willow tree on the banks of the river that ran through town. There she would write in her journal. That journal was her treasure. She would lose herself in the things she wrote. She loved to create all kinds of characters—some drawn from the world around her, others simply from her imagination—and she would give them all sorts of situations and adventures to deal with. Some situations were funny, others were sad, even tragic, but always true to life.

In her journal Miriam experienced a degree of freedom and release she felt nowhere else. In a way she couldn't explain, or even understand, she could get in touch with her real feelings there. It was the one place where she could feel comfortable with herself and escape from all the nagging doubts and insecurities that seemed to plague her everywhere else. The people and events in her journal seemed more “real” to Miriam than all the daily encounters and events she lived through each day.

In the eyes of their classmates, Miriam was definitely a "loser" and Judy was a "winner". Yet let's take a look at Judy and Miriam a few years later.

Fifteen years later, Miriam published her first book—a series of short stories about life in a small town. The book sold a good number of copies, and Miriam's publisher wanted her to write more. She did. Her books sold well enough for Miriam to have a comfortable life, and, what was more, her books had good effects on the lives of countless people who read them. She knew this, because they wrote to her. Every day she received letters and e-mails and sometimes even phone calls from people who admired her work. She had lots of pen pals and friends. In fact, she married one of her fans and had three children who made her very happy.

Although she basked in all the attention, Miriam was not too attached to her popularity. Besides her family, her greatest love remained her writing, which was still her secret place to go and be completely herself.



Judy? Well, Judy's life turned out a little differently. She married young and had several children. Everyone in town continued to admire her as the pretty wife and lovely young mother. Unfortunately, her husband had financial troubles, and Judy could not help him. She had never studied much in school, spending most of her time looking at fashion magazines. Their financial troubles put a big strain on their marriage, and eventually they divorced. Judy raised her two children alone, but she had a hard time supporting them financially. After working hard at a low-paying job, Judy didn't look so pretty anymore. She looked tired, and her clothes were out of date and worn. She could not afford new ones. Her children rarely spent time with her, because she was working so much, so they sometimes got in trouble. This deepened the lines in Judy's forehead.

Sometimes Judy put her head down on her arms and cried. Where were all her friends now, when she really needed them? Now that she was no longer pretty, fashionable, and fun, they had all deserted her. She was alone. Sometimes she thought of calling her old friend Miriam—who had always been so quiet and gentle—to pour out her troubles to the wise author. But she didn't. Now it was Judy who was afraid of how Miriam might respond to her.

Where does our value come from? The story above revolves around this very issue. It is very easy to associate our sense of value and self-esteem with how popular we are. When people like us and want to be around us, we automatically feel good about ourselves. To get so much attention from others gives us an emotional charge that is very satisfying.

On the other hand, when people ignore us or pay us little attention, we can easily start doubting our value and feel we are not worth very much. We feel unwanted and unloved. We may start wondering whether there is something seriously wrong with us. We may find ourselves falling into a state of depression.

Let's stop for a moment and reflect on the connection between popularity and self-esteem. What makes someone popular in the first place? Very often, it may simply be due to external

factors, such as beauty or handsomeness, a vibrant personality, or the amount of wealth one possesses. Such reasons for being attractive can change over time. As we grow older, our physical attractiveness fades, wealth is easily spent or lost, and even our personality can change as we face the challenges of life. If we attach our value to such external factors, we eventually can find ourselves in a situation in which we have lost all sources of our value. This happened to Judy in the story.

Of course, our popularity may stem from truly valuable things we have done for others, like Miriam's popularity at the end of the story. Someone who has served others will have earned a well-deserved good reputation and be highly esteemed by many people. Another example of this, besides Miriam, might be someone who unselfishly serves the community. A teacher who really loves her students and invests in them with all her heart will be a popular teacher in that school. Even years later, grown-up students may come to visit her. The mailman who takes time to chat with people along his route will become a trusted and established fixture in that neighborhood, someone people like a lot and would miss if he were gone.



This kind of popularity is based upon an internal quality that a person possesses and projects to others. Everyone around such a person feels this special quality and is attracted as a result. This person's sense of value, however, springs from within and not from being popular. His or her popularity is a byproduct of an inner sense of value and self-esteem rather than the cause of it.

In fact, when we study history, we come across many people who possessed a deep sense of their value, despite their unpopularity. Jesus Christ, Joan of Arc, Socrates, Galileo, and Muhammad were all for various reasons deeply unpopular among their own people at one time or another in their lives. Some of them lost their lives at the hands of people who did not like them. They are remembered today precisely because they did not seek their own popularity at the expense of deeply held beliefs and principles. They would not compromise themselves, even in the face of extreme pressure to do so. Instead, they stood firm for what was important to them.

In essence, they were people of integrity who knew their value came from within and not from what others thought of them. They knew that some kinds of popularity are fleeting, and they attached little importance to being liked. Instead, they stood by what they believed, and their examples have stood the test of time. Their inner greatness has emerged over time for the entire world to see. Now they are among the most popular people in the world.

Which would you rather be: someone who is popular here and now for your good looks, your fashionable clothes, your well-developed body, or your possessions? Or someone who is popular for a long time because you contributed something wonderful to the world from your deep inner value?

Questions for Reflection

1. What is an “introvert”? Is it good or bad to be one?

2. What do you think this quote from the story about Miriam means? "Besides her family, her greatest love remained her writing, which was still her secret place to go and be completely herself." What does this say about Miriam's need to be popular?

3. Why do you think people want to be popular?

4. Where does our value come from? Does it come from inside ourselves or outside?

5. What makes someone popular?

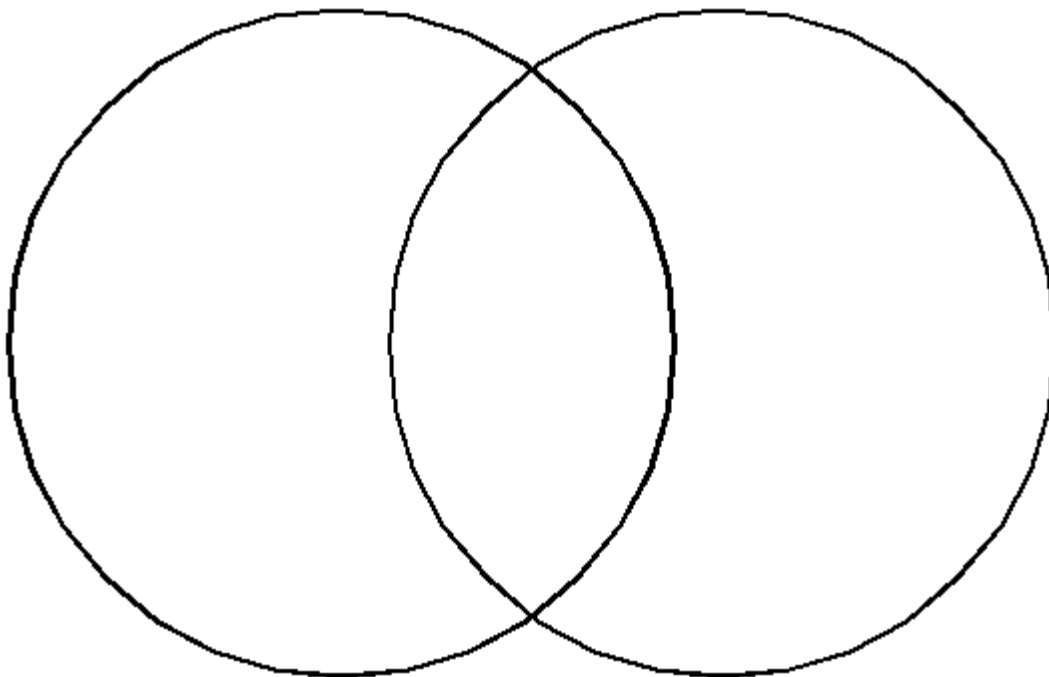
6. What is the most valuable part of a person?

7. Why are some people popular and others not?

8. Would you rather be popular like Judy or popular like Miriam?

Exercise: “Popular People”

Think of two people you know who seem to be popular. Compare the two people using a Venn diagram. You do not need to write their names. In the left bubble, write one of the person's unique popular characteristics. In the right bubble, write the other person's unique popular characteristics. Where the two bubbles intersect, write about the qualities they have that are the same.



Reflection Exercise: “My Popularity and Self-Esteem”

Now think of your own life:

1. Are you or have you ever been popular with a certain group of people? How does or did it make you feel? Is or was it deserved?
2. Were you ever unpopular or ignored? How did that make you feel?
3. What is your inner greatness? Is it recognized by others? Is that important to you? Why or why not?

Chapter 11: The Gift

George reluctantly went up to the physical education teacher and handed him the doctor's note. He had broken his collarbone and couldn't participate in physical education for six weeks. The coach nodded and motioned George toward the bench—a place where George was used to sitting.

George supposed it didn't really matter. He wasn't any good at sports anyway.

Not like his twin brother, Mark. Mark was always the athletic star—the fastest runner, the best hitter in baseball, the great goalie in soccer—everyone's hero. In fact, by foolishly tackling Mark and bringing Mark's full weight down on his neck and back, George had snapped his collarbone. Why do I even try to compete with him? George wondered. It's hopeless.



Still, he liked sports and, like most boys, wanted to be good at them. Life was so unfair. He complained to his mother: "How come Mark's so good at everything?"

"He doesn't have a broken collarbone," his mother said.

"Even when I don't have a broken collarbone, I'm not as good at sports as he is."

"He has his gift, and you have yours, that's all."

His parents always said that every child had a special gift—one thing that he or she was especially good at. The problem was, George didn't seem to be especially good at anything. George was beginning to think he didn't have any gift at all—or if he did, he would never find it.

One day, sitting down on the bench as usual during gym class, George saw his coach approach him.

"George," said the coach. "The home for handicapped children across the street asked us if some students could volunteer there as part of a service project. They don't have enough staff, so they just want kids to come over and play a little with the handicapped kids and keep an eye on them. Our principal agreed to try to find some students to do that. If you'd be interested, the principal said you could do that instead of coming to gym class for the next six weeks."

There was a burst of joyful shouting on the basketball court. Mark had just made a fantastic three-pointer.

Sick with jealousy, George said, "Sure. I'd like to do that." Anything to get away from watching Mark.

At first, he was a little nervous in the home for handicapped children. He didn't know what to expect. One little girl in a fluffy dress that made her look like a little piece of cake came up to him. She was using a walker. She couldn't stand up by herself.

She said to him, "My name is Nanette."

George's heart went out to her. Then he met Miguel, who couldn't speak, and who crawled around on bent knees so much that his pants legs were worn out. George had to admire the spirit in a boy who, if he couldn't walk, would crawl. Then there was Lucy, whose mouth was twisted by a birth defect. She was always covering her lip with her hand to hide it.

Lucy asked George if he had broken his arm.

"No," he told her. "I have to wear this sling to hold my collarbone in place so the bones fuse together again. I broke my collarbone." He indicated his neck.

"Oh," she said, and she seemed to feel so sorry for him, George's heart melted. After all, his collarbone would heal. Her mouth wasn't ever going to be normal.

After a while, Lucy got so used to George's kindness, she never covered her mouth when she was around him. Nanette always swung her walker over to play near him, and Miguel would crawl all the way across the home to greet George when he came. They climbed all over him, sometimes jiggling his collarbone—that hurt!—but he didn't really mind.

It didn't take long before George found himself thinking about them during class and looking at the clock to see when gym hour was coming, so he could be with them. He just wanted to help them and make them happy. Even after his collarbone healed, he kept going to see them, after school now instead of during gym.

At the end-of-the-year assembly, when all the awards and certificates and honors were handed out, George was astonished to hear his name called. He walked up on to the stage and stood with Mr. Loggin, the principal, wondering why on earth he was up there.

"We want to recognize George on behalf of the Home for Handicapped Children. They have given him their Volunteer of the Year award. George's compassion for the children in the home has made him everyone's friend there. The staff said they don't know how they got along there without him, and all the children love him very much. George has made us all very proud!"



He was handed a framed certificate and told to face the audience to be applauded and photographed. The applause and cheering were thunderous.

Making his way back to his seat where his parents were clapping and beaming, George felt like he was floating. Sitting down next to Mark, George felt a big smile slide across his face. He had found his gift.

Compassion is becoming aware of the needs of others and trying to do something to help them. It means understanding what another person is feeling. It is almost like being able to climb inside

the person's head and heart. It involves connecting and relating to what the person needs and being able to supply it with a kind heart.

It is easy to be completely involved in one's own situation and the challenges that arise each day. Growing up means moving from thinking only about oneself to thinking more about others and having compassion for them.

Compassion for others is something that helps us in relating to friends and family. Sometimes it is easier to notice what someone else has (something we want) than to notice what he or she needs (something we could give). Compassion helps us focus on supplying the needs and wants of others, so it helps us build better relationships. Rather than being envious of what other people have, when we are compassionate, we are in a position of giving, which enriches us all.

Compassion is also an antidote to anger. When we are angry at a friend or family member, if we can find a way to think of them compassionately, our anger melts away.

At times, we think of others as mirrors for our own reflection, and we want to be flattered by them. A good mental image to replace the mirror is to think of looking at others through a window, one that lets us see inside people for who they are and what they feel. The shift from looking at a mirror (at ourselves) to looking through the window (at someone else) involves a big shift in perspective. But it is one that brings the rewards of joy and happiness, and it is a mark of maturity.

There is a saying that to really understand someone, we have to "walk a mile in his moccasins." This means that we have to understand the person's situation, stand in his or her shoes, and see things through his or her eyes. Without trying to do this, we cannot connect to people's hearts and feel compassion.



Having compassion for someone is not the same as pitying or feeling sorry for him or her. When you pity another person, you look down on him or her. You think, "How awful" or "What a terrible situation that person is in" or even "Thank goodness, I'm not in that situation". Pity separates you from someone else, while compassion brings you together. Compassion thinks, "How would I feel in that situation, and how would I want to be treated?"

Compassion is often born out of a person's own suffering. The compassionate person—like George—understands the other person's suffering because of his or her own suffering. Compassion sees that we are all in this life together, all human, and all in need of one another's concern and care.

Questions for Reflection

1. What is George's gift?

2. What does it mean to have compassion for someone?

3. Do you think George had compassion for the children for whom he cared in the story?

4. What is the difference between being compassionate and pitying someone?

5. What does it mean "to walk a mile in someone's moccasins"?

6. Does every person need the compassion of others at times?

7. Do you believe that every person has at least one special gift?

8. What is your special gift?

Exercise: "Developing Compassion"

Role-play about showing compassion in the following situations:

- There is a new student in your school who looks and speaks differently from everyone else. He looks awkward and lonely.
- A friend's father has just passed away.
- Your younger brother/sister has confessed to borrowing something that belonged to you, and it is now broken. He/she is crying and very sorry.
- You are invited to a party, and one of your best friends wasn't invited.
- Your elderly neighbor's husband passed away. She has been like a grandmother to you. Each day, you see her sitting alone on her porch.
- You see a young child crying in a store/market. He is lost.

Using posters, photos, or pictures (from magazines and newspapers), look at the faces of people and discuss or write about what each person might be feeling. Begin with descriptive words (i.e., worried, excited, confused) and then expand on the possible reason for this feeling.

Reflection Exercise: "When I Showed Compassion"

Think of a time in your life when you showed compassion toward someone. Who was it, why did you feel compassion for him or her, what did you do to help him or her, and how did you feel afterward?

Chapter 12: I Belong to a Community

"So what is the big deal about this person's funeral?" Oscar asked. "I don't mean to be disrespectful, but he *was* just the mailman."

The local mailman had died. Everyone in the neighborhood was shocked, upset, and arranging to go to the funeral. Oscar couldn't understand it. Most of the time, the mailman delivered the mail when no one was home. And it wasn't like the mailman was related to anyone in the neighborhood by blood. Everyone was acting as though their own relative had died!

"Well, think about it," his father instructed him. "What did Mr. Farley mean to you?"

As he dressed for the funeral, Oscar thought. Well, it was true that Mr. Farley always smiled at him—a nice, big smile, showing all his teeth in a very friendly way. He flashed that smile all the way up and down the street as he delivered the mail.

Oscar remembered that one time when he was a very little boy, he was sitting outside on the steps with a broken toy airplane, crying. Mr. Farley had stooped down and looked at it.

"I think I can fix this for you," he said. "But it will take a special glue. Can I bring it home with me and deliver it to you tomorrow—fixed—when I bring the mail?"

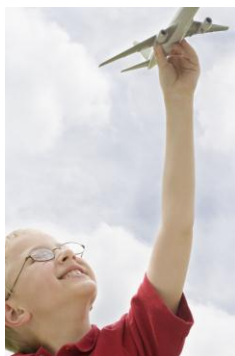
Mr. Farley had been very careful the way he wrapped up the airplane and put it into his mail sack. Oscar didn't want him to take it—it was hard to trust that he would get it back—but his mom said it was all right, so he let it go.

The next day, Mr. Farley came up to their house and searched through his sack as if he were looking for the mail, like always.

"Let's see now," he said. "What do I have here for you? One water bill. One electric bill. A letter from your aunt. A newspaper advertisement. That's it... Oh, what's this?" He reached deeper into his sack and brought out the airplane, carefully boxed. "Open it," he suggested to Oscar.

Oscar opened the box—he felt as though he was getting a present—and there was his airplane, perfectly repaired and polished!

"Wow!" he said, making it fly through the air. "Thanks, Mr. Farley!"



That was years ago. Oscar never played with the airplane anymore, but it had been his favorite toy back then. He still had it.

That same day, Mr. Farley gave seeds from his wife's beautiful flower garden to Oscar's mother. She had thanked him warmly.

Mr. Farley's mail sack was kind of like a Santa Claus sack—he brought all kinds of little gifts in it for everyone in the neighborhood.

He remembered things, too. When Oscar's mother was worried about his grandmother's illness, Mr. Farley didn't just put the letter in the mailbox outside—he rang the doorbell.

"Letter from your mother," he said. "I hope the news is good. Anyway, I thought you might want to read it right away."

Remembering all this, Oscar told his dad, "You're right. When I think about it, Mr. Farley did a lot of nice things for us."

"Yes, he did. And he was like that to every family in this area. He did a lot of extra things for everyone—and yet he always got the mail here on time, and he almost never made any mistakes with the addresses. So you can imagine how much this neighborhood will miss him."

Oscar now stopped protesting about having to stand around at a funeral. In fact, during the service he almost started crying. Many memories of Mr. Farley's kindness came flooding over him. He realized he would miss him.

Everyone else in the neighborhood felt the same way.

"We are here to honor a man who was not all that unusual," said the preacher. "He was a mailman. He was an average person. And yet, he touched each one of our lives because of the simplest thing in the world: human kindness."



When the service was ended and the casket was lowered into the ground, each person took a flower and tossed it into the ground to go with Mr. Farley. When it was Oscar's turn, he went up to Mrs. Farley.

Oscar said, "Mrs. Farley—could I—could I put this in instead?"

Oscar brought forward the airplane he had played with as a very little boy. Mrs. Farley looked puzzled.

Oscar said, "He fixed it for me once when I was a little kid."

Mrs. Farley's eyes filled with tears. "Yes, he was always doing things like that for children. Yes, Oscar. Please put it in. I think he'd be very pleased that you remembered."

The people standing nearby smiled through their tears as Oscar put the airplane into the grave.

When Oscar took his place again next to his parents, his father whispered to him, "Thank you, Oscar. I see you understand very well what Mr. Farley was to all of us. Even if he was 'just a mailman.'"

We all dream of living in a better world—a world where there is peace, no crime, and where people are friends with and take care of one another. It can only be that way, though, if everyone in an area or community is kind to one another.

The story is about a man we might call a community-builder. By his kind and caring actions, he made a whole neighborhood a better place to live in.

Being a community-builder involves thinking about more than just our own needs. It means being aware of and thinking about others, as the mailman did.

We don't start life thinking of those around us. A baby is not able to think of others. Babies cry when they are hungry, uncomfortable, or need to have their diaper changed. They sleep a large percentage of the time and are not aware of much around them.



As a baby grows, he becomes aware of his family. He smiles and laughs at familiar faces and may cry when a stranger picks him up. The family is the baby's first community! Eventually, a young child can help with simple chores, such as picking up toys or taking a plate away from the table. These things help the child be a good member of the small community of the family.

When a child is old enough to go to school, his or her community expands. Everyone has classmates and a teacher to be connected to. There are rules to follow, assignments to do, friends to play with in the yard, and relationships to work out. There may be opportunities to help others, such as cleaning up trash around the school or practicing a play or song for a school program.

As we grow, so does the size of our community. It is important that our awareness of others continues to grow as well. Parents, teachers, and others help us to expand our awareness by showing us kindness, setting a good example of helping others, asking us to help out around the home or school, asking us to apologize when we have been unkind, pointing out ways to help others, taking us to participate in a neighborhood service project, telling us stories of when they were young, and much more.

It takes a whole community to help with things like keeping the parks looking nice, making neighborhoods safe to walk in at night, keeping pollutants out of a local stream or lake, and making the town fundraiser for the local school a success. If everyone in a community helps out, a community becomes a wonderful place to live.

As you grow toward adulthood, you will realize that we live in a world community too. It has been said that if we reduced the whole world down to a community of one hundred people, only one of them would have gone to college, two of them would have most of the wealth, and most of them would be underfed and badly in need of medical attention. This is our human community. We need to help our community members.

Developing a sense of belonging to a community has already begun in you. You can help your community and feel more a part of it by practicing acts of kindness toward those around you—in your family, school, and neighborhood. Communities are as strong and good as the individuals within those communities. Help make your community one in which anyone would want to live!

Questions for Reflection

1. Why did everyone like Mr. Farley so much?

2. Do you have someone like Mr. Farley in your neighborhood or community?

3. Would you like to be a person like Mr. Farley?

4. What do you do at home or at school to make the community better?

5. Have you ever cleaned up your neighborhood or park or gone door-to-door collecting money for a good cause? Did this make you feel more a part of your community?

6. What can you do to make your community better?

Exercise: "Community Power!"

Let your parent lead a small group in the exercise "Community Power!" Everyone will line up facing one another's backs, forming a circle. Each person will place his or her hands on the shoulders of the person in front of him or her. Slowly and carefully, everyone will lower themselves by bending their knees. With enough trust and care, you will soon find yourselves all safely seated on the knees of the person behind you! This is the power of people helping each other. Everyone is taken care of!

Reflection Exercise: "My Community"

Remember that a community can be as small as a family and as large as the whole world. Everywhere in the world, communities celebrate or commemorate the following events. How does your community—whether it is family and friends or a whole village—mark the following big events:

- The birth of a child

- A wedding

- When someone dies

- Rites of passage (bar mitzvah, confirmation, puberty, etc.)

- Special holidays

Chapter 13: Civic Duty

"Why do I have to go?" asked Hana. "I don't want to walk around in the heat! Why can't I stay home and watch TV?"

Her mother had asked her to go around the neighborhood with her to encourage people to vote in the next presidential election.

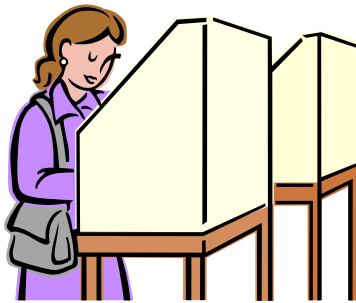
"I need someone to help me carry the sign-up sheets and flyers," said her mother. "Besides, it's good practice for your civic duty."

"What is my civic duty?" asked Hana.

"Your civic duty is your duty as a citizen of this nation. They say that, in a democracy, people get the kind of government they deserve. If people won't get out and vote, they've got no right to complain about the way the country is run. It's our civic duty to vote, so that we get the best possible leaders for our country."

"What about the ones who are going to vote for the other candidate?" Hana asked. "Aren't you required to sign them up to vote too?"

"I want them to vote too. I don't want someone to win—even if it's my candidate—just because nobody bothered to vote. I want him or her to win because he or she best expresses the will of the people."



There was no arguing with her mother on these kinds of points. And Hana definitely wasn't in the mood for any more lectures. She decided she'd better just go along with her mother. Very often in Hana's life, that was the best policy!

At the first doorbell they rang, old Mrs. Timball came to the door.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Timball," said Hana's mother. "We're encouraging people to vote, and to register to vote if they are not registered."

"Oh, wonderful," said Mrs. Timball. "I'm registered, and I'm going to vote in the seniors' community center, where I have my lunch every day. Won't you come in?"

Mrs. Timball's home was very cool inside with the shades drawn to keep out the sun. She brought them two tall glasses of iced tea and praised what they were doing.

"Thank you, Mrs. Timball," said Hana's mother.

Back on the street, Hana's mother said, "That wasn't so bad, was it?"

"No," said Hana. She looked at her mother's list of registered voters. "Mom! Mrs. Timball votes for the opposition party!"

"I know that," said her mother, smiling. "And she knows where I stand too. But that doesn't mean we don't respect each other. That's democracy too. Every side has an important voice for our country to listen to and learn from."

At the next house, Mr. Farrell, the school basketball coach, let them in. Hana was always curious about how teachers lived. They seemed so different from regular people! But his home

was very similar to hers. His wife and children were doing various things—washing dishes, practicing piano, studying, watching TV. It seemed like home. The big, muscular coach was just reading the newspaper, like a normal man! He told them that he and his wife were registered to vote, but he appreciated that Hana's mother had some new information on where people in this district were supposed to vote this time. Mrs. Farrell gave them some freshly baked cookies to take with them.

"This is fun!" said Hana when they were out in the street again.

It wasn't as fun all afternoon. Some people said no. Some people were unfriendly. Some people started arguing politics with Hana's mother, who simply shook her head and refused to argue.

"I am only here to encourage you to vote for the candidate of your choice," she said. "If you feel that strongly, please go out and make your voice heard at the ballot box."

Most people were nice, and a few more gave them drinks or snacks or let them use the bathroom. Still, it was a long, hot afternoon.

"You've been very patient and good, Hana," said her mother. "Just one more house, and we'll go home."



"Oh, no, this is Ruthie's house!" said Hana.

Ruthie was in Hana's grade at school. Hana thought Ruthie was nice—but certainly Hana was not in Ruthie's circle of friends. She *wanted* to be. Now Hana was dying inside at the idea of showing up at Ruthie's door uninvited.

"This is the last house on this street," her mother said. "We'll just do this one and then we'll go home."

To Hana's acute embarrassment, there were three girls from her class over at Ruthie's house. They were experimenting with nail polish at the dining room table, playing music, and having a wonderful time. Hana flushed deep red.

Ruthie looked really surprised to see her, but she was nice, as always.

"I'll get my mom," she told them, and went calling into the back of the house. The other girls looked curiously at Hana and waved. She waved back.

"My mom's changing the baby," Ruthie reported upon returning. "So she asked me to ask you if you could come back later, because she does need information on registering to vote."

"All right," said Hana's mother. "Let me just write down your name and address so I know to come back here."

Ruthie was looking at Hana as her mother took her notes.

"Can Hana stay?" Ruthie asked.

Hana's mother looked at Hana. Hana's eyes went wide with pleading.

"Well, this was the last house we were going to do today," said her mother. "It's okay with me. But just till dinner, Hana."

"Do you want to, Hana?" asked Ruthie.

"Yes!" said Hana.

Hana delightedly went inside and spent the rest of the afternoon with the very classmates with whom she had been wanting to become friends.

Ruthie told her, "It's great that you're doing this."

"It was kind of fun," said Hana.

She described all the different kinds of people they had met, the kind ones and the mean ones, and her new friends were very interested in everything she said.

"You saw the inside of Coach Farrell's house?" they marveled. "Wow! What's he like outside of school?"

"He's nice," said Hana.

"Next time, I want to go with you," said Ruthie. "Do you think your mother would mind?"

"No, she wouldn't mind. The more, the merrier," said Hana.

When she got home that evening, full of plans she had made with her new friends, her mother said, "I'm glad it worked out so nicely for you. You never know what good things will come when you do your civic duty!"



What does it mean to be a good citizen? Citizenship usually refers to your membership in, responsibility toward, and contribution to your community and nation.

Of course, citizenship means obeying the rules or laws of the group or community and nation in which you live. Good citizenship begins in the home. This means that as a family member, you follow and respect the rules of your family. It means that you help out around the house and try to make family life go smoother and better.

Good citizenship extends to the school. It means that you follow the rules at school and respect other people's feelings. It means you try to help out by not littering and by joining clubs and the student council and doing things to strengthen the school.

Besides obeying the rules and laws and making contributions, being a good citizen means participating. It means that you vote when you're old enough to vote. It means that you speak out for or work for what you believe. You might even campaign for someone running for office. It also can mean volunteering to stuff and seal envelopes, make phone calls or door-to-door visits to inform people of civic matters.

We live in a world where we can fly to almost anywhere on earth in one day. With the touch of a computer key, we can "talk" to someone halfway around the world. People work on projects together while living in different countries. Many people speak more than one language. Products that we use every day are made in other countries. All this means that we need to think beyond our community and nation toward being citizens of our world.

Sometimes people from one group keep themselves separate from other groups. This separation is based on many things, but it is mostly due to fear of anyone who is different. Sometimes people of different nations, races, economic classes, religions, ages, levels of education, or cultural backgrounds shy away from one another. Moving beyond such attitudes and behaviors is part of our work as world citizens. There is no need for such separation. People everywhere are more alike than they are different. They all live in families. They all want peace and prosperity.

They all love their friends. They all enjoy food and presents and celebrations. They all hope for a better life. To become aware of these kinds of things means to become a citizen of the world.

Citizenship is a word of action. It means that we do something to help out. Helping out or doing our part in our world starts small. As we act to help our families, schools, communities, and nations become better, happier places, let us hope that our actions will also make our world a little better too.

Questions for Reflection

1. What is a good citizen?

2. How were Hana and her mother being good citizens?

3. What are ways to be a good citizen in your family?

4. What are ways to be a good citizen in your school and community?

5. What are ways to be a good citizen in your nation?

Exercise: "Citizenship"

Your parent will draw two outlines of a person. Suggest qualities for each outlined person that would make him or her a good president of your nation. Your parent will write the qualities and ideas inside the outline of the person. Now vote for the candidate of your choice!

Reflection Exercise: "World Citizen"

The Nobel Prize is an international prize given to persons from any nation who have made great contributions to humanity through their work. There are Nobel Prizes in science, math, literature, peace activities, and other categories. Look up the Nobel Prize to find out basic information about it. Here is one website with information on Nobel Prize winners:

http://www.invent.org/hall_of_fame/1_4_9_nobel.asp Then imagine that, thirty years from now, you have won the Nobel Prize. In what field would it be? What contribution did you make as a world citizen?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Chapter 14: Resolving Conflicts

“Wow! This is going to be great!” thought Alice as she listened to Mr. Drake, her social studies teacher, explain their class project—creating a school newspaper. As he went on explaining about the paper, Alice imagined herself as its editor—choosing, cutting and pasting the articles, putting it all together. It was only natural, she thought. She was a good organizer and had a good eye for writing.

“Okay, now,” Mr. Drake was saying. “Let’s choose positions for the paper, starting with editor. Who wants to be editor?”

Immediately Alice’s hand went up, but so did Alex’s. Alex was the top student in the class, grade-wise.

“Well, now,” said Mr. Drake. “Looks like we need to have a vote. How many people vote for Alice to be editor?”

Nearly half the class voted for her.

“And Alex?”

The rest of the students raised their hands.

“Well, Alex, it looks like you’re it. It was close, but the majority goes to you. Congratulations!”

Alex! steamed Alice. How could they vote for him? I’m more qualified than he is.

The other positions on the paper were filled smoothly. Alice was given the position of assistant editor, but she wasn’t satisfied. It bothered her that the class chose Alex over herself as editor. As the period ended, Mr. Drake said they would start putting the first issue together the next day.

As they began work the next day, nothing seemed to work. Alice disagreed with Alex on many of his ideas for the paper, and she found supporters among the students who had voted for her. He wanted a dignified, serious, traditional-type paper, while she dreamed of a loud, splashy attention-getter. He wanted informative, objective articles on current events, but Alice wanted to focus on opinion pieces, with lots of crossword puzzles and games. By the end of the period, the class was in a shouting match between Alex’s supporters and Alice’s.



Everyone left the room bitter and exhausted. Alex remained behind to talk to the teacher.

“I’m sorry, Mr. Drake,” he said. “I don’t think I can handle this. Let Alice be the editor. I’m quitting.”

“I know how you feel, Alex,” said his teacher sympathetically. “Why don’t you give it another day? Tomorrow, maybe things will be different.”

That evening Alice was almost crying. A confusion of thoughts and feelings sped through her mind as she mulled over the day. She was not happy the way things had gone concerning the

school newspaper. She even felt a little sorry for the way she had treated Alex. He's not that bad a kid, she thought.

Just then, she heard the phone ring and her mother calling her.

It was Mr. Drake. He got right to the point.

"You know, after our class today, Alex stayed behind and told me he wants to quit as editor of the newspaper." Her teacher paused for a few seconds, then said, "He said he can't handle the constant arguing with everything he tries to do."

Alice listened in shock.

"Just wanted to let you know that. You think about it and decide what you're going to do about the situation."

"Okay, Mr. Drake, I will. Thanks."

The next day, Alice was early for social studies. She wanted to catch Alex before the class began. Luckily, he arrived early too.

"Alex," she said, with a sense of urgency in her voice. "I'm so sorry for the way I acted yesterday. I was more concerned with myself than with the newspaper. You're really the best person to be the editor. You're much more fair, and you can work better with people. I'm ready to support you all the way."

Alex looked at her with a grateful smile.

"Thanks, Alice. Let's make this school newspaper the best in the state—together!"

Conflict is a natural part of life because, as individuals, we are different in how we look at things. Conflicts happen because of these differences. It occurs wherever a group of people work, play, or live together.

It seems that conflict and violence are everywhere around us. We hear siblings fighting with each other, friends arguing, classmates disagreeing, and parents saying ugly words to each other. In the news, we hear about wars, revolutions, ethnic conflicts and violent crimes every day. Some of us live in violent cities, neighborhoods, and even homes. Conflicts can arise over belongings, friendship, competition, power, resources, and values or beliefs.



But the problem isn't conflict itself. It is how we deal with it. We have a choice how to respond. Denial or avoidance of a conflict doesn't work in the long run. It undermines relationships, the environment of the group, and its ability to get along. A passive response does not help anyone to feel respected and included.

On the other hand, responding aggressively usually escalates the conflict. Responding with a tough remark, name-calling, or a punch makes tempers flare, and the conflict gets bigger.

Avoiding and denying conflict is sometimes called a "passive" response. We don't do anything about the sources of conflict. We just hope they'll go away. But they rarely do. And we may still be burning angry or very hurt inside.

Attacking someone else, verbally or physically, is called an "aggressive" response. It almost always makes a conflict worse instead of solving it.

There is a third choice called an "assertive" response. This involves making the decision to be a person who respects others, stands up for himself or herself without attacking, being a person who listens, communicates, and works toward cooperation and peaceful solutions. There are different names for ways to learn these skills: conflict resolution, peacekeeping, assertive communication, and more. But basically, they mean learning to express feelings without using insults, mean words, physical violence, or doing other things that escalate a conflict.

We cannot control what other people do or say. Only they can do that. However, we can control how we react to different situations. For example, if you are walking into class when another student bumps into you, causing you to drop your books, there are different ways that you could respond. You could shove the person back, starting a fight. Or you could yell, "Watch where you are going!" She might bump you again just to prove that you cannot tell her what to do. You could say nothing but have a storm brewing inside, which might cause an upset stomach. Or you could smile and say, "Oh, I guess you didn't see me coming! Could you help me pick up these books?" Maybe it was an accident after all, and even if it wasn't, at least your conflict would probably end there. Maybe the person will even help pick up your books!

Resolving conflict is more than avoiding disagreements or violence. And it doesn't mean that people never lose their tempers or act impulsively. It does mean that people know how to talk to and listen to each other and work out their differences. Being willing to cooperate and compromise is important.

Conflict is a natural part of life, just as weeds and insects are part of growing a garden. Conflict can help us grow. It can strengthen us. It also helps us learn about ourselves and how to relate to each other. Believe it or not, sometimes conflict actually brings people closer!

Questions for Reflection

1. Why do people have conflicts?

2. What kind of skills do people need in order to work through conflicts?

3. How did the conflict occur among the students in the story?

4. How did Mr. Drake help Alice to resolve her conflict with Alex?

5. What kinds of conflicts do you have and with whom?

6. What are ways that you could avoid such conflicts in the future?

Exercise: “Resolving Conflicts”

Using the three different kinds of responses discussed in this chapter (passive response, aggressive response, assertive response), write down possible responses to the following scenarios:

- Someone insults you and calls you names.

Passive

Aggressive

Assertive

- You’re playing soccer when you get fouled (another player kicks you in the shins), but the referee calls the foul on you.

Passive

Aggressive_____

Assertive_____

- Your mother punishes you for breaking a lamp that your brother broke.

Passive_____

Aggressive_____

Assertive_____

- Your teacher wrongly accuses you of cheating on a test.

Passive_____

Aggressive_____

Assertive_____

Reflection Exercise: “Being a Peacemaker”

Reread the story at the beginning of the chapter. Imagine the next day at school after Alice spoke with Alex. How is their communication different from that of the previous day? How is the rest of the class different? Alex and Alice still have differences of opinion. How do you think they will resolve them?

Chapter 15: Cooperation

This is stupid, thought Lenny, as his eighth-grade social studies teacher explained the assignment. From his spot in the back corner of the classroom, he half-listened with his ears while his eyes were fixed on a pickup basketball game on the court at the high school across the street. Lucky guys, he thought. High school was already out, but here he was, still stuck in school.

“And Lenny ... Lenny?”

It was his teacher, Mr. Phillips. Lenny turned his head.

“You work with Dick and Monica.”

Lenny gave a short nod of the head and looked up at the ceiling. Great, he thought, I’m stuck with the class nerd and Miss Prissy. Well, they weren’t going to get any cooperation out of him. No way. Let them work it all out. He’d just “observe”.

The assignment was to write a letter to the mayor of the city suggesting some improvement in the environment. The students switched seats to be with their work partners.

“Well,” began Dick. “What issue should we write the mayor about?”



Lenny just looked out the window. The basketball court across the street was busy with players. By the time Lenny would get out of there, he would not be able to get on the court.

“Let’s tell the mayor that we need more dress shops. I can never find the right kind of dress,” Monica said.

“The mayor doesn’t have anything to do with that,” Dick responded. “It’s all business—supply and demand stuff. What do you think, Lenny?”

“Whatever,” said Lenny distantly. “You’re the experts.”

Not knowing how to respond, Dick and Monica sat in silence for several seconds. Then suddenly, Lenny became animated and turned around toward them.

“But, you know, if you really want to be serious about this, what I would do is write a letter complaining about the lack of basketball courts in town. There are only two, and they’re always being used.”

“That’s a great idea!” said Dick. “I can never get on the court near my house.”

“You play basketball?” asked Lenny, surprised that Dick did anything physical.

“I love basketball.”

It turned out that they both were Lakers fans as well. They got into a discussion about the team’s chances for the playoffs.

So they decided to write a letter on the need for more basketball courts.

“Let’s not forget the little kids,” interjected Monica. “My little sister has nowhere to go to play outside. There’s no playground anywhere near our area.”

“Hey, that’s right,” said Lenny. “I noticed my little brother just hangs around the house. We have no backyard, and he just drives my mom nuts—even more than I do.”

So they decided to write about the lack of outdoor play areas in general throughout the city. By the time they finished, they had a well-crafted letter ready to send off to City Hall.

More importantly, they had a newfound respect for and interest in each other. By working together, they discovered things about each other they had never known before. Lenny realized that Dick and Monica weren't so bad after all. But the greatest miracle was that Lenny was actually looking forward to presenting the letter they had written to the class—and to the mayor!



The dictionary defines cooperation as the action of working together for a common purpose or benefit. Learning to cooperate is a very important skill for our lives, both for now and in the future. When people give each other support and respect, they can achieve great visions and goals together—more than they could ever accomplish alone.

Cooperation makes the whole stronger, whether we are talking about a family, a classroom, a community, or a nation. Cooperation is what is behind the saying that a whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

One important factor in working well together is learning to really listen to others. It is important to remember that we have one mouth but two ears. This might mean that we need to listen twice as much as we talk! When we do, we learn things and discover things about people that we never knew before, as Lenny did.

He discovered that he had more in common with his classmates than he had realized. He and Dick both shared an interest in basketball. Plus, he discovered that Monica also had a younger sibling. Her expressing concern about her little sister’s lack of playground areas helped Lenny realize that his own little brother shared a similar situation. By working centered upon their common interests and considering the situation of other children, they were able to put together a well-written and powerful letter to the mayor concerning a very real problem in their city.

Cooperation helps teach us the value of others because of the contributions they make to the project or group. Working with people means you have to get to know them a little more than you did before. At times, you have to trust them—you have to trust in their ideas and abilities—not worrying that they may be better than you at something. They may end up amazing you with their talent—and you may learn something you didn’t know about your own talent! Learning to value the opinions, contributions, skills, and efforts of others helps us expand our own knowledge and see family members, friends, and classmates in a new light.

Cooperation contributes to a healthy family, classroom, community, society, and world. With cooperation, people don’t feel left out. They feel included and part of things. We all know that's a wonderful feeling!

Questions for Reflection

1. What does it mean to cooperate?

2. What does the saying “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts” mean?

3. In the story, what did Lenny learn about cooperation through his experience with his group?

4. How did his opinions about Dick and Monica change while the three children worked on their assignment?

5. What do you think made Lenny excited about presenting the letter to the class at the end of the story?

6. Why is listening an important part of cooperation?

Exercise: "Cooperative Ways"

These are some words, actions and behaviors that either help or hurt cooperation. Write the number under the most appropriate heading.

1. "You dummy! Let me do it!"
2. "Could you say that again? I want to make sure I understood your idea."
3. "I think you'd be great at doing that!"
4. "Shut up."
5. "Thank you."
6. "Oh, no. Here comes the Big Mouth again."
7. "Give it to me—now—or I'll punch you!"
8. "Sally hasn't said anything yet. Let's listen to what she has to say."

Helps Cooperation

Hurts Cooperation

Reflection Exercise: "Creating Cooperation"

Think of a time in your life when you were part of a group or activity that worked well together. Write about how cooperation was achieved. Who helped to make it happen? What did you do?

Chapter 16: Giving

Tyler was known as the "rich kid" at our school. His father owned the most property and several businesses. Tyler lived in a big house on a hill, and it seemed he had everything.

Everything but friends, that is. First of all, people were jealous of all that he had—his nice clothes, his dad's car, all the latest electronics equipment, and all kinds of exciting holiday trips. So it would have helped if Tyler had been a really nice guy who shared what he had with others. Instead, all he did was brag about it all.

If he invited you over to his house, he was always trying to get you to be impressed with everything. I know, because I went there once or twice. I didn't feel like he wanted to share what he had with me. He just wanted to show it all off.

"Hey, look at the new watch I got, Patrick," he would say, flashing a watch that looked like it cost more than my family's whole living room.



"Oh, wow," I would say, but it made me uncomfortable.

He even tried to give me money. I took it because I could use it, but my mom made me give it back.

"You can't buy friendship," she said. "And that's what he's trying to do. Besides, even though we're poor, we're not beggars. We have our standards."

That was all my mom ever talked about—"standards." You had to be fair, you had to be honest, you had to be kind, you had to be polite. Those were our family's "standards", and we all had to live up to them.

I couldn't take Tyler's money because of our "standards".

I wasn't sure why Tyler had picked me as his special person to try to hang around with. I guess it was because I had a lot of friends. One thing about me, which my mom taught me, was that if I had anything, I shared it with my friends. That was one of her standards, too. I guess my friends liked my generosity.

Whenever I had a few dollars, I went to the local store and got sodas for my friends. I always got them birthday and Christmas presents, even if they didn't give me any. I always invited them over to my house for dinner and to play—even Marty, who, three years in a row, had not invited me to his birthday party, even though I had, three years in a row, invited him to mine. So what? I liked Marty, and I wanted him to come to my parties.

Maybe that's why Tyler clung to me. Other kids said I was generous, and they liked me. But I wasn't generous to get them to like me. I just liked making people happy.

When I gave Tyler back his money at my mom's insistence, he said, "Well, at least I know you don't like me for my money, Patrick."

I didn't say what the other kids would have said: "I don't like you at all." It wasn't completely true. I did kind of like Tyler. I felt like he was trying to be a decent kid in spite of being rich and spoiled.

Then one day things changed for Tyler. Something happened to his dad and his money. Something about his business and his property and taxes that weren't paid—I'm not sure. His dad didn't go to jail, but he sure was in court a lot. And Tyler's clothes were getting old, and they weren't getting replaced. He even had last year's model video game player. The fancy holiday trips got canceled. For Tyler, that was really being poor.

Tyler was afraid now that he didn't have money, he wouldn't even have a chance of being part of our group. When he found out we were going to the movies, he said he couldn't go: He was broke.

"Ah, heck," I said. "I'll pay your way this time. You can pay me back—sometime."

Tyler looked like a big light had burst over his face. His features looked like a little baby's that's just been given some wonderful new toy. For a minute, I thought he was going to cry.

On the way to the movie, he came up to my side and said, "Why did you pay for me?"

"You offered to pay for me lots of times."

"That was different. I was rich—and I wanted to buy your friendship. Besides, you never took it."

"Yeah, my friendship's not for sale, Tyler," I said, clapping him on the back. "But if you want to come along with us, fine."

"You're more generous than I ever was, even when I was rich," he told me. "I never gave to anyone without wanting something from them." He looked at my friends. "I guess that's why so many people like you."

"Maybe," I said. "I like my friends. I like to give to them. I hope they like me back, but I don't do it to make them like me. I do it because *I* like *them*. I guess it's just my—my—"

"Your motto?" Tyler asked.

"My standard," I said, with great satisfaction, thinking of my mom. "That's it. Giving to others is my standard. My *family's* standard," I added. Then I just started laughing. My friends laughed with me, and we all started having a good time. Tyler just kept shaking his head at me, but to me, it was simple: Give to others, and good things flow back to you.



Patrick, the boy who tells the story, is a generous person. Generosity means giving without thinking about what you will get in return. It is giving with an open hand and heart. It is true that the more you give, the more you receive. Yet a generous person does not give in order to receive. He or she gives for the sheer pleasure of making other people happy.

Truly caring for others means that there are no strings attached to your giving. It is giving without expecting to receive in return. You don't give or serve grudgingly, and you do it without keeping track of how much you give. Sometimes this kind of giving takes courage, since you don't know how the other person will respond. Yet you cannot let the fear of rejection hold you back from being generous.

Looking around, you can notice many opportunities to give to and serve others. Think about your friends, relatives, family, people in your neighborhood, pets and animals, the environment, and the community. How can you use your abilities and talents to do something for someone else?

At times, it is hard to be generous. It is a challenge to think about others. Our own problems overwhelm us. Or we just want to focus on what we want or need. The opposite of generosity can be described as being self-centered.

Shifting the attention away from yourself and focusing on helping others makes your own problems seem smaller. By focusing on using your unique talents and abilities for the sake of others, you will find more satisfaction, joy, inspiration, and happiness.

Many people try to gain fame and fortune with their ideas and talents. A truly generous person is concerned with helping others as well as being accomplished.

Benjamin Franklin, an American inventor and statesman, developed the stove now called the Franklin stove, which is still made today. When he invented the stove, he was offered a patent which would have helped him to make a lot of money. However, he refused the patent; instead, he made up a flyer that told how anyone could build the stove. He was generous with his ideas.

Being generous can be expressed in many ways. It can mean helping your mother at home or saying kind words to other people. It can mean thinking positive thoughts about others or not spreading rumors. It can mean using money that you earned or that was given to you to treat your friends, like the boy in the story does. You can give to charity.

It is through caring about others that we feel connected to them. We no longer feel alone. We feel part of the human family when we give. Have you ever felt wonderful after doing something nice for another person? Generosity helps attract happiness and joy, just as it does for Patrick in the story.

Questions for Reflection

1. Even though Tyler is rich, he is not really generous. What in the story tells you that?

2. Why does Tyler try to give money to people?

3. Why does Patrick give things to people?

4. With whom would you rather be friends—Tyler or Patrick?

5. What is Patrick's reward for his generosity?

6. Do you think a person can buy friendship?

Exercise: “Ways to be Generous”

Discuss as a class ways to be generous with the following:

- Actions
- Words
- Thoughts
- Time
- Possessions or money

Reflection Exercise: “Experiencing Generosity”

Think of someone who has shown you generosity with his or her words, time, actions, or possessions. Write about the experience(s). How did you feel to be on the receiving end? What did you learn from this person?

Chapter 17: The World Around Us

It was eighth-grade earth science class, and Mrs. Miller was handing out topics for a research project on ecology. The students were divided into pairs. The topic of oil spills came to Jody and her partner, Amy. This was very interesting, because an oil spill had just occurred off the coast.

That evening Jody's dad agreed to take the two girls down to the coast on Sunday to get a firsthand look at the oil spill.

"But first, I want you girls to do a little research," he said.

That Saturday, Jody's father brought them to the local library, where they spent several hours digging up whatever information they could find on oil spills. They discovered that most types of oil, spilling from tankers or off-shore rigs, float on the water surface. The oil tends to spread out and form "slicks", which are moved across the water surface by wind, waves, and currents. Oil spilled into the water often reaches the shore. Jody heard that this had already happened with the spill near them. Oil can end up coating rocks, beaches, vegetation, fish, and even many animals, like birds. Worse, despite attempts at cleanups, it can remain for a very long time, permanently affecting the area.



The next day, Jody, Amy, and Jody's dad got an early start on their drive to the coast. At first, the drive was absolutely beautiful. It was a picture-perfect sunny day with a cool sea breeze coming off the ocean. They drove by rocky crags, boat-filled marinas, and gleaming, sandy beaches. Swimmers, surfers, and sailboats dotted the shoreline in the more populated areas.

Soon, all this changed dramatically. The first thing they detected was the smell of oil coming in with the sea breeze. After several more minutes, they began to see spots of oil on the rocks, grasses, and sand near the shore. Then suddenly, as they came around a bend, they saw stretched out before them, as far as the eye could see, a massive oil slick—black and foreboding. It was as if they had been dropped onto a lifeless planet.

The varied signs of life they had seen just a few miles back had all but disappeared, replaced by the slick crude oil that covered everything within twenty feet of the shoreline. Jody's father slowed down and pulled off the road at a spot overlooking what had been a vast, sandy beach.

They got out of the car and began walking toward the beach. Then they encountered the most horrible sight of all. The beach was littered with the carcasses of dead dolphins, sea otters, seals, and birds. But not all of them were dead.

“Jody,” Amy gasped. “Look over there!”

About thirty feet in front of them to the left, they could see a baby sea otter, covered from head to tail with black oil, struggling to pull itself across the oil-covered sand. No matter how much it tried, however, it remained in the same spot.



“Daddy,” cried Jody, looking up at her father. “What can we do?” Tears were beginning to stream down her cheeks.

Her father looked down at her with big, sad eyes. “I’m afraid there’s not much we can do to save him, Jo. But maybe there is something we can do to help that one.”

Jody turned around to see what her father was looking at and spotted a small, oil-covered bird struggling in a clump of grass below a rock to their right. Small peeps emanated from its beak.

Jody’s father went back to his car and pulled a cardboard box from the back, along with a small blanket. Then he went over to the struggling bird, carefully lifted it up, and placed it in the box while covering it with the blanket.

“Let’s take him over to the bird sanctuary near our home and see what they can do for him,” Jody’s father said. Jody could see that even her father, usually so tough, was feeling a lot of emotion.

They had planned to stay longer, but even without speaking about it, they all knew they had seen enough. The ride back was a silent one—the silence punctuated only by the occasional peep from the box.

Although the air was once again freshened by the sea breeze, and gorgeous views presented themselves on all sides, the three travelers took no notice of it all. Their minds were dominated by the darkened images they had left behind.

Taking care of the environment is something that involves everyone. Whether we are talking about the rain forests, recycling, oil spills, or the ozone layer, environmental issues do not affect just a group of people in one area. These issues and how we deal with them affect all of us.

Different words are used to discuss environmental awareness. *Conservation* means deliberately working to preserve or save things like the air, plants, endangered animals, water, and more. *Ecology* is the study of the relationship of plants, animals, and people to the environment. *Recycling* is one way that we can conserve and reuse resources. *Stewardship* is taking care of the gifts that we have been given; in this case, it refers to the environment, the earth, and its resources.

There are many groups that work to raise awareness of environmental issues. They do research, give speeches, print flyers, and make media presentations to educate people. They are taking

their role as stewards of the earth seriously. Some of them work to change laws to better protect the environment.

A number of changes have been made. Laws have been passed to protect our earth. Cars are now made that produce less harmful exhaust. People cannot dump whatever they want down their drains or into rivers and streams. Large areas of land are protected from development in order for people to have parks to relax in and for wildlife to live in. Farmers are finding less harmful ways to fertilize and protect their crops from pests.

There are many things that you can do, too. Walk or ride your bike instead of asking someone to give you a ride. Recycle and reuse as much as you can. Encourage your family and friends to do the same. Use rechargeable batteries. Don't waste water when you are washing your hands or the dishes. Pick up trash around your home or school. Plant flowers to attract insects, and make a nice garden. Don't litter. Participate when your community has a cleanup project. Better yet, volunteer to organize one.



One of the best ways that we can increase our knowledge of environmental issues is through education. Reading helps us expand our awareness. Research can help us understand how our choices affect our local community and the larger world.

Did you know that within the last fifteen years, elephants were at risk of becoming endangered because they were slaughtered for their ivory tusks? By refusing to buy items made of ivory, consumers can help to protect the elephant population.

Did you know that trees can, over time, remove excess carbon dioxide from the atmosphere? Ten thousand years ago, before agriculture, it is estimated that more than fifteen billion acres worldwide were covered by forest. Now that amount has shrunk to barely ten billion acres. Trees, humans, and animal life are interdependent. If a significant amount of trees are lost due to development, our environment is directly affected.

The choices that we make every day affect the present and the future. When it comes to choices that are made about the environment, we may be affecting the quality of life for future generations. In order to be good stewards of our earth, we need to make choices that are responsible and informed. Even small choices make a difference—how much water, paper, packaging, and chemicals each of us uses. It would benefit our earth if every individual began to make more responsible environmental choices.

Questions for Reflection

1. What is environmental awareness?

2. What are the various types of environmental problems afflicting the earth today?

3. Is there a difference between researching something in a library and seeing it firsthand?

4. What lessons did Jody and Amy learn through their visit to the oil slick?

5. What does it mean to be a good steward of the earth?

6. How can we take better care of our environment?

7. Are there any things you do that affect the environment in a negative way?

8. What can you do to change them?

Exercise: “Being a Good Steward”

Think of an environmental project that you could do in your neighborhood. Write down a list of steps that you would need to take in order to make this project happen. Be as specific as possible.

Reflection Exercise: Environmental Awareness

Make a list of ways that you (or your family) help or harm the environment. Include anything that you can think of, no matter how large or small. Put a mark next to the ones in the “Harm the environment” list that you think you can change—and then start putting the change into practice.

Harm the environment

Help the environment