

HOW TO USE THIS PROGRAM

This program was produced for use in classrooms, libraries, community centers, social service agencies, youth organizations, camps, teen groups, and parent education centers, or for viewing by parents and teens together at home. Although its target audience is teenagers, anyone who has regular contact with and a commitment to young people can benefit from this video as well. It is meant to be used as a part of a learning experience that begins before viewing the program and extends beyond the classroom walls. The discussion questions and follow-up activities are intended to enhance this learning experience. Educators and counselors planning to show *P.S. I Miss You* to teens may want to view the video in advance so that they can adapt their program follow-up to best suit the needs of their group. It is suggested that teens view the video under adult supervision.

OBJECTIVES

- * To explore the aftermath of suicide and the potentially tragic impact it has on those left behind.
- * To spotlight & better recognize warning signs for suicidal ideation and substance abuse.
- * To examine what peers and educators can do to reach out to someone they feel is exhibiting self-destructive behaviors after losing someone to suicide.

SYNOPSIS

This award-winning MAPLE AVE installment focuses on series regular, Tanya and the toll her family situation has taken on her in the year and a half following her older brother's suicide. During this time, Tanya has been coping by helping others, but gradually this proves not to be enough, and she turns to drinking to ease her pain (in between haunting dreams about her dead brother). Ultimately, things get out of control and her best friend, Jenny intervenes to get her friend some much-needed help.

FILM'S INSPIRATION

According to the National Mental Health Association, 5,000 young people, ages 15 to 24, commit suicide each year. As if that chilling statistic weren't enough, the rate of suicide for this same age group has nearly tripled since 1960. As it stands now, suicide is the third leading cause of death among adolescents, and the second leading cause among college age youth. Armed with this knowledge, OutreachArts began a campaign in 2005 to raise awareness about teen suicide, resulting in the award-winning MAPLE AVE episode, *P.S. I Miss You*. In the film, OutreachArts' writer-director, Richard Wilson's aim was to dig deeper, choosing to highlight the roots of clinical depression as well its resulting symptoms. However, probably the most unique feature of this film is its special focus on 'the helper'; the friend who senses something's wrong and provides critical intervention (*in this case, Tanya's best friend Jenny*). Wilson feels it's crucial to 'bring friends and family on board', providing them with the tools necessary to help recognize and aid a loved one in crisis. As with past MAPLE AVE efforts, *P.S. I Miss You* was greatly informed by the audience it's designed to reach. "Prior to writing the script, I interviewed quite a cross-section of teenagers about suicide, and, sadly, was regularly heartbroken at the sheer number of kids who were truly at sea in their suffering, Wilson said, "Hopefully, this film will make a dent in alleviating such unnecessary suffering ..."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR TEENS & PARENTS

1. Do you know or know of anyone who has ever considered suicide?
2. How would you react if, like Jenny, you were faced with a friend exhibiting self-destructive behaviors?
3. Do you think more teens consider suicide as an option today than in previous generations? If so, why?
4. What do you think would have happened to Tanya if Jenny

hadn't intervened on her behalf?

5. How do you think your community would respond to a neighborhood family that had just experienced a suicide?

6. What do you think happens after the film ends? Does Tanya's Mom get her daughter any outside help or do they just work through it as a family? How does the rest of the story play out...?

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Invite a local mental health professional to talk to your group about post-traumatic stress disorder in the aftermath of a suicide and how it manifests itself.

2. Role play a scene where a student suspects his or her friend of having a secretive substance abuse problem.

3. Imagine you're Tanya and write a letter to your brother, Dwight, telling him about the full impact of his suicide on you and your family.