

## **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 Middle School students & their parents, 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 *Promise Me* 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 impact that troubled parents, particularly those suffering with addictions, have on their children's well-being and overall mental health.
- \* To spotlight & better recognize the signs of teen depression and suicidal ideation.
- \* To examine the behaviors of parents struggling with problem gambling and alcoholism addictions in order to more effectively connect with them in a Guidance / Counseling setting.
- \* To examine what peers and educators can do to reach out to a teen they feel may be privately struggling with a compromised support system (due to troubled/addicted parents).

## **SYNOPSIS**

In the seventh MAPLE AVE episode, Ann is forced to face the grim reality that her parents' addictions (alcoholism and problem gambling) are slowly destroying her family. While her older brother Mike's quiet stoicism is sorely tested by their alcoholic mother's denial of reality, Ann's own initial reluctance is also an issue. However, after Ann's father gambles away her college fund, she can no longer avoid the

truth ~ and soon grows deeply depressed. Though her brother and best friend, Tami sense something's wrong, will they be in time to avert a potential tragedy...?

## **RECOMMENDED RESOURCE**

### **WHEN PARENTS HAVE PROBLEMS**

*A Book For Teens And Older Children With An Abusive, Alcoholic, Or Mentally Ill Parent*

By \*Susan B. Miller

*\* Author, Susan B. Miller is a clinical psychologist in private practice in Ann Arbor, Michigan. She works with young people and adults in psychotherapy.*

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR TEENS & PARENTS**

1. Do you know or know of anyone who has struggled with addicted parents? If so, what are the parallels between their story and 'Promise Me'...?
2. Why does Ann react so differently than her brother, Mike, to their parents' problems? What drives their respective points of view...?
3. How would you react if, like Tami, you suspected your already troubled friend was now considering suicide? To what lengths would you go to help her?
4. If you were Tami's parents would you have done anything differently when alerted to Ann's escalating problems with her parents?
5. What do you think happens after the film ends? How might the rest of the story play out...?

## **FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES**

1. Invite a local mental health professional to talk to your group more in-depth about the issues addressed in the film.

2. Write and perform a short prequel or prequels to 'Promise Me', imagining key moments in Ann and Mike's life, exploring in more detail how the two siblings lives were shaped by their parents, particularly their growing addictions.

3. Write and perform an alternate story told from the parents' point of view; an inner monologue that covers the same key moments as the above exercise.

NOTE: After the above performances, an informed follow-up discussion is strongly recommended.