



Our programs are enthusiastic about working with a literacy program that is fun, interesting and will help students become better readers. Real Stories offers students in after-school programs an exposure to reading and writing that they can get excited about. — Stefan Zucker, Manager, Literacy Programs, The After-School Corporation, New York, NY

The Real Stories program is just right for middle school after school programs because the issues raised in the stories and the activities appeal to their age group. That encourages them to read more—in and out of the program. — Steve Kessler, Program Director, Staten Island JCC/IS 49, Staten Island, NY

The kids in my program are having a ball with Real Stories—they want to do it every day. I even caught some kids in the hall talking about the stories! — Quinton Ervin, Program Director, Good Shepherd Services/MS 206, Bronx, NY

The activities [in Real Stories] have helped my students open up to me and express themselves. — Quintasha Wallace, Counselor, Police Athletic League, Queens, NY

It's the best reading material right now for teenagers. Some of my students even take the books home to read. — Brittany Grissett, Counselor, Child Center of NY/MS 72, Queens, NY



About the Real Stories Program

The Real Stories program was developed by Youth Communication and Development Without Limits.

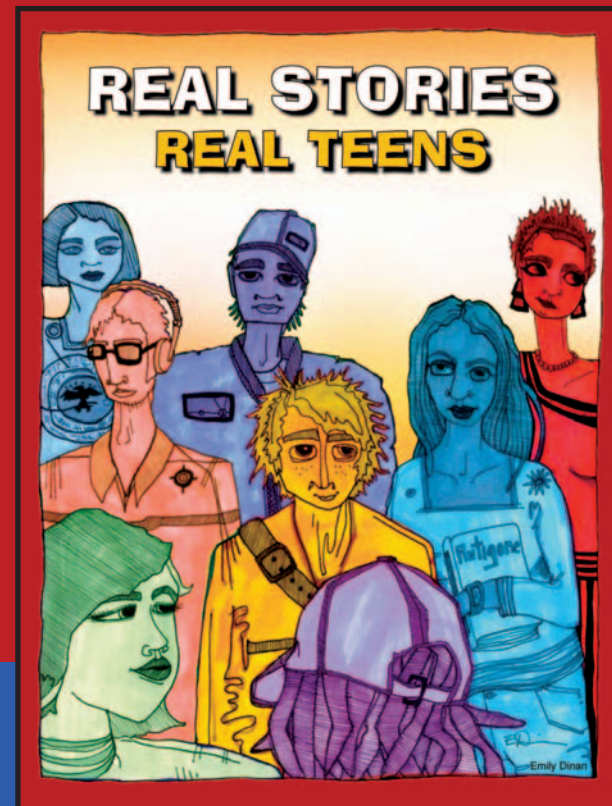
Youth Communication trains teens in writing, journalism, and leadership skills, and helps teens make their voices heard by publishing their stories in books, magazines, and on the web. Executive Director Keith Hefner won a MacArthur Fellowship for his work in youth development.

Development Without Limits works with schools and community-based organizations to develop curriculum and train staff. They have provided professional development to hundreds of after school and summer programs nationally including LA's BEST, The After-School Corporation and more.

Start using *Real Stories* in your program or school!
Contact Development Without Limits at 718.781.5753
or ericgurna@developmentwithoutlimits.org

www.developmentwithoutlimits.org

Motivate Middle and High School Students to Read, Think, and Explore Values Outside the Classroom



Literacy Activities for Advisories, After School and Summer Programs

Engaging Stories
Easy-to-use Activities
Teen-tested



Here is an excerpt from the **Leader's Guide**:

What is the Real Stories program?

Real Stories uses true stories written by teens, young adult literature, and hands-on activities to promote reading, discussion and reflection. It helps teens recognize their strengths, form values, build strong relationships, and make smart decisions.

Each session focuses on a theme and includes:

- 1 An opening activity to introduce the theme;
- 2 Reading a true story by a teen (or an excerpt from a young adult novel) with facilitated discussion;
- 3 An experiential learning activity that helps participants connect the themes in the story to their own lives;
- 4 A closing reflection activity.

What do you get?

Professional development

- *Staff training workshops* cover a range of topics including utilizing the Real Stories materials, facilitating successful group activities, discussing sensitive topics and incorporating youth development activities like service learning, media production and the arts.
- *Coaching and technical assistance* provide programs with ongoing support in effectively implementing Real Stories.



Materials

- The Real Stories anthology (26 stories by teens, plus excerpts from three young adult novels)
- The Real Stories Leader's Guide (full text of every story, detailed lessons, teen-tested discussion questions)
- Young adult novels from the Bluford Series

You can customize the materials to meet your needs. **A typical kit includes:**

- 3 Leader's Guides
- 20 anthologies
- 20 copies of each featured young adult novel
- 2 full sets of the entire Bluford Series of young adult novels

Running From Myself

Opening Activity

Freeze on Bad Things That Happen
Ask students to freeze for 30 seconds on the following prompt:

"Think of a time something bad happened to you, or you were treated unfairly. What happened? Who was to blame? What did you learn from it? How did the experience help you grow or change?"

When they are done, briefly allow a few students to share if they would like.

Note: Avoid being judgmental. This writer feels uncomfortable on her own skin. She's painfully shy, overweight, and lonely. She decides to break out of her shell by taking drugs, smoking, etc.

There is a "caveat" to her actions after risks of drugs, especially, but there is a big " caveat," too: she emerges from her shell and learns how to love life. It is beautiful.

Adults sometimes wonder why teens do " stupid" things like take drugs, or run away. They may always have the powerful need to find oneself can cause some teens to take reckless action. When discussing the story, it's important to acknowledge the history of the writer and to refrain from being too judgmental about her drug taking. Encourage students to focus on her process of finding herself—a theme they can all identify with.

Story & Workshop Summary

Materials: paper, pencil

Core Issues/Emotions: strength; coping with pain

Theme: Emotional pain can lead to risky behavior and to positive change, if the steps are kept under control.

Plot: The writer, a shy and overweight girl, goes through a wild phase of drinking, smoking, and eating. She goes through a period of depression but comes out of it as a more confident and self-aware person.

Youth Development Goals:
• Challenge the fact that growing up can be a painful struggle for young people.
• Allow that young people can cope through painful situations in healthy ways.

The Real Me: Running From Myself

Read the Story and Talk About It

Take turns reading the story. Pause from 1:00 to 1:10 when there is a passage that you think is ripe for discussion. Consider pausing on the designated points.



Explore the Ideas

Advice Column

Ask the group, "Can growing up be hard?" Ask a few people to explain why they think so. Point out that one of the best resources from here is their peers. Young people can provide advice and support for each other when dealing with hard situations or personal problems.

Think the students into four groups. Explain that they have all been asked to write an advice column in the school newspaper. The letter will be addressed to the "Dear Helpies." Assign each group one letter from a "reader" at their school (use mail pages). They will have 10 minutes to work together to write a response. Walk around as the groups are working to make sure everyone is on track and to help if anyone is stuck. When time is up, ask the groups to read their responses aloud.

Closing Activity

Ask the groups if they agree with the advice. Do there anything they would add?

Do Something About It

Write a letter to Jennifer asking her what she'd do for you in her story. If you have students do this, collect the letters. They provide fascinating insight into your students' circumstances. You can send the letters to Youth Communication if you like and we will try to forward them to Jennifer. If you like, have students block out the letter in traditional fashion. (Creative Writer, Youth Communication, 224 W. 29th St., 2nd fl., NYC 10001).

Prompt for starting the letter:
I really liked when you wrote about... I've felt the same way when... I agree with... I don't understand why you... If I was in your situation I would...

