

**ADOLESCENT BEREAVEMENT**

**RYSZARD KOZLOWSKI**

B.Ed., University of Alberta, 1977

A Project  
Submitted to the Faculty of Education  
of the University of Lethbridge  
in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree

**MASTER OF EDUCATION**

LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA

April 2002

## Abstract

Bereavement is a state or feeling of loss. At some point in everyone's life, tragedy occurs, triggering feelings of bereavement. The adolescent's experience with bereavement is unique from other age groups for a number of reasons. This document examines the research describing adolescent bereavement and exposes some of the myths maintained by our North American culture regarding the adolescent grieving process. Adolescence is an extremely exciting period of change and development for an individual. With these developments, there are issues the adolescent must face. These issues, when combined with bereavement complicate the lifestyle of the adolescent and become compounded when influenced by society's myths. These circumstances may lead to reducing the care shown to a bereaved adolescent and without this needed attention, an adolescent's unchecked grief can lead to a decline in their emotional and physical well being.

One of the primary purposes of this document is to communicate bereavement issues to the adolescent. The two literary forms chosen to convey this information is a comic book in combination with a storybook. Using these two formats, it is the aim of this writer to motivate the adolescent to reflect on their loss and foster within the adolescent an understanding and an acceptance of their bereavement. When an adolescent acquires an understanding of bereavement, they are more inclined to explore the resources available to them. The concluding section of this document offers the bereaved adolescent a variety of readily accessible resources. Through such resources the adolescent is extended an offer of hope and the healing process is initiated.

## Acknowledgements

Projects immerse writers into research and writing with the intent of increasing their understanding of a subject. But all such endeavors need the direction of expert guides who lead the way and encourage the traveler on his journey. I have been fortunate in that I have had many individuals share with me their expertise and support, contributing to me successfully reaching my destination.

I have received excellent support from my advisors, Dr. Kris Magnusson and Dr. Rick Mrazek. They have offered the professional direction and guidance needed to ensure this document meets the high standards expected by the University of Lethbridge. Their contributions have significantly impacted this work and their time and efforts have been greatly appreciated.

I am thankful also to the many young people who offered valuable input. The beauty of the adolescent (if you are able to appreciate it) is their ability to, “tell it like it is”. While such criticisms, can at times be somewhat unnerving, their honesty and immediate feedback, was always greatly appreciated.

I also wish to extend thanks and appreciation to the Counsellors and Coordinators who have provided assistance by reviewing and offering their professional input of this document. Their contributions have helped to ensure this document was appropriate for the intended age group and was factually accurate.

But most of all, I am sincerely grateful to my family for their continued support and confidence in me. All of my children (Amanda, Michael, David and Angela) have assisted me in completing this project and have generously given of their time as

volunteers in various interviews and activities. Their encouragement and assistance has meant a lot.

To my wife Virginia, I offer my gratitude for the constant reassurance and love she extended to me throughout the development of this project. She instilled in me the confidence needed to initiate this project. She offered unlimited hours of assistance with assignments. She renewed my motivation when I was weary. She expressed faith in me when I couldn't find it in myself. Without her support and love I would not have been able to maintain the desire to achieved my goals.

The "Bereaver" will hopefully assist adolescents to deal with loss. The support they desire will not come as a result of the words found on the pages of this document. These pages will merely emphasize the message that each of us experiences loss. By placing trust in others, our hope is restored and we begin the healing process. If we are to withstand life's many tribulations, people of all ages must learn to empty themselves of grief, enter into the healing process and allow themselves to be restored by the celebratory joys of life.

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements .....	iv
Table of Contents .....	vi
Chapter 1: An Introduction To Adolescent Bereavement.....	1
Purpose of Document.....	1
Issues and Concerns Surrounding Bereavement .....	4
Adolescence Lacks Rites of Passage.....	6
Familiarity with Bereavement Issue.....	7
Age, Gender, and Race Related Issues .....	9
Predictability/violent Versus Non-violent Issues .....	10
Cognitive Development of Adolescent .....	11
Spirituality of the Adolescent .....	13
Summary of Bereavement Issues .....	15
Chapter 2: The Comic Book .....	18
Tyler’s Introduction to the Comic Book .....	18
Purpose of the Comic Book .....	19
Chapter 3: The Storybook .....	21
Mike’s Introduction to the Storybook .....	21
Purpose of Storybook .....	22
Fall .....	23
Fall Reflections .....	29

Winter .....	30
Winter Reflections .....	35
Spring.....	36
Spring Reflections .....	42
Summer.....	43
Summer Reflections .....	50
Chapter 4: Summary of Comic Book and Storybook Formats .....	53
Chapter 5: Bereavement Guides and Resources .....	54
Purpose of Guide and Resource Section .....	54
Teachers' Guide .....	55
Bereavement Fact Sheet by Terry .....	59
Introduction to Survey by School Counsellor .....	63
Bereavement Survey .....	64
Assessment Guide to Bereavement Survey .....	68
Self Help Pages .....	70
Books .....	75
Magazines and Journals .....	77
Others .....	79
Summary of Resources by Beth .....	79
Chapter 6: Conclusion .....	81
References .....	84
Appendix.....	88

## Chapter 1: An Introduction to Adolescent Bereavement

### Purpose of Document

The document entitled, *Adolescent Bereavement*, has been developed and submitted as a final project toward the attainment of a Master's Degree. It has been developed with the intent of someday being commercial produced and used as a bereavement resource for adolescents..

Throughout my 25-year involvement in the field of education, I have witnessed first hand the sorrow and complications that can develop for adolescents when they experience loss. Their ability to express bereavement can often be hampered by age-related developments.

Initially, I struggled with the development of this document. I was very conscious about producing a product that would be practical and user friendly, but which also addressed the needs and interests of the targeted group. The document has been developed as a resource for the bereaved adolescent and caregivers of this group. I believe I have achieved this goal through this document, albeit a commercial version of this project is not yet developed. It is my hope that in the future, I might secure the necessary funding to carry out this venture.

The primary goal of this project was to communicate bereavement issues to the adolescent through a document(s) they would find readable (comic book/storybook). The document's chief aim was to motivate adolescents to reflect on and to communicate their feelings of bereavement and promote healing. Although formal testing results have not been recorded as a component of this document, all aspects of this document have been presented to adolescents. They freely registered both their approval and disapproval of

it's contents; laughing at it, denying it's suggestions, crying over story parts, scowling at it's inquiry, ridiculing it's speech and offering acceptance with grunts and other descriptions that at times required translation. These critical reflections and responses have helped to shape this document to ensure its acceptance, credibility and appropriateness for the adolescent.

The bereavement survey, appearing as a component of this document, was only administered to family members or personal acquaintances interested in being a part of this project. This limited administration was deliberate. This survey was only ever intended to be a reflective tool, and not a scientific assessment of bereavement. Participation in the survey and the resulting responses were meant to motivate adolescents in their examination and reflection of loss. As the administrator of this bereavement survey, I was conscious of it's potential to trigger emotional stress for some subjects. In the event this was to occur, I would hold myself accountable for the participant's welfare and consider it my duty to attend to the individual's concerns. As direct counseling was not a focus of this project, I was careful to administer this survey to a select group of participants, to minimize emotional distress that may have occurred during it's administration.

The original focus of this study posed the question, "Would bereavement activities effectively assist adolescents to cope with their sense of loss?" The literature does recommend intervention for adolescents coping with bereavement issues and stresses an urgent need for further study in this area. The literature review has prompted additional questions and concerns;

- Do adolescents who experience “a rites of passage” or initiation into adulthood, feel more accepted by adults, resulting in a more “open” response by adults to adolescents’ bereavement?
- Are tests available that assess the degree of distress experienced by an adolescent following a loss?
- Do school environments play a role in effectively reducing the harm that occurs as a result of bereavement issues?
- Does spirituality promote healing of bereavement issues? If so, is it acceptable to incorporate spirituality when counseling bereaved adolescents who do not identify with any religious denomination.
- How does intervention occur for an adolescent who is struggling with a loss, but refuses to admit to their grief or accept assistance?
- What role can peer support groups play in offering support for the bereaved adolescent?
- What strategies are useful in promoting hope in the bereaved adolescents?

The development of this document has been based on research and review of related literature. However, if adolescents are to recognize and understand the damaging affects of bereavement, the information must be delivered in a manner they find interesting and regard as acceptable. For these reasons, this document has adopted a creative format, incorporating pertinent research information specific to bereavement concerns and issues.

Our young adults need to be alerted to the serious harm that can result from loss and must also be aware of the various support systems they can rely on to help them overcome their bereavement. By obtaining such assistance, the adolescent will become

equipped with the two essential tools needed to overcome grief; a belief that there are others who care enough to help and the confidence and hope that their situation can and will improve.

The following section introduces the reader to some specific needs and issues relating to adolescent bereavement. Many perceptions exist among caregivers concerning how the adolescent deals with loss. Some of perceptions held by caregivers are a result of not being aware of adolescents' experiences and development. Other perceptions owe their existence to stereotypes used to describe the adolescent. In some cases, these stereotypes, perpetuated by the adolescent, result in minimizing the support offered to the adolescent.

#### Issues and Concerns Surrounding Bereavement

The year prior to the millennium heralded great excitement with the promise of renewed fortunes, rapid progress and dynamic technological advances. Unfortunately, the millennium was also bearer of many stark realities concerning our youth.

For some time it was thought that adolescents were relatively untouched by issues concerning death. It was also believed they were extremely resilient in dealing with emotional loss and were able to overcome bereavement without intervention. Part of this belief developed from the fact that adolescents didn't generally request assistance for their bereavement. This led people to assume that adolescents were able to deal adequately with their losses or did not experience the same degree of emotional loss that children or adults did.

However, with recent tragedies such as the school shootings in Columbine, Colorado and in Taber, Alberta during 1998/1999, it has become shockingly clear that

adolescents of today are in no way insulated from the experience of death. Accounts of violence are prevalent in today's media and make up a substantial part of the adolescent's reading and viewing activities. These facts, combined with the developmental changes affecting adolescence, punctuate the need to address an adolescent's emotional welfare, following a death or loss. Closer examination of bereavement techniques is also needed to ensure the approaches are being effectively implemented and have successfully addressed the adolescent's emotional distress. Leighton (1959) recognized bereavement as a typical experience. He identified bereavement as being responsible for obstructing the fulfillment of one's sentiments, and noted that a disturbed physical condition exacerbates crisis resolution for an individual. Intervening with bereaved adolescents facilitates discussion, promotes healing and assists adolescents to recognize that others also feel sorrowful during times of loss.

In addition, the review of the literature further demonstrates that adults hold a number of incorrect assumptions concerning adolescent bereavement. These assumptions have the potential to detrimentally affect a youth's psychological development. The literature clearly demonstrates that many adolescents are not being provided the necessary care needed to recover from their emotional losses. It is of paramount importance that further studies be carried out to ensure adolescents receive adequate care, if they are to mature and develop into healthy adults.

It is the goal of this document to offer information on the topic of bereavement to adolescents and to those who work with the adolescent. The document is also designed to offer intervention in assisting adolescents cope with bereavement issues and in particular the death of a similar aged youth. The next section outlines and describes six issues

surrounding adolescent bereavement. These issues help the reader to understand why bereaved adolescents are reluctant to seek assistance from adults, but also why adults are reluctant to offer assistance to the bereaved adolescent.

These issues are re-addressed in the format of a comic book and a story. It is hoped that these mediums will appeal to youth and encourage them to investigate this topic to gain a greater understanding of themselves, adults and the issues surrounding bereavement. By becoming informed and knowledgeable on this topic, adolescents will hopefully be encouraged to seek assistance for themselves or for others when confronted with loss.

Adolescence lacks rites of passage. The term *adolescence* is derived from the Latin root (*adolescencia*) that refers to the process or condition of growing up and that designates a “youth” or person in the growing up stage (Simpson and Weiner 1989). Adolescence is often thought of as that “in between stage.” Typically, an adolescent growing up in North America is not considered a child, yet conversely is not recognized, through any societal rituals, as an adult. “Coming of age” rituals are found in various cultures that mark a direct and relatively abrupt division between the era of the child and the reality of adult responsibilities. (Aries 1962) The North American Adolescent by contrast, undergoes a complex evolution of experiences that do not clearly define his/her entrance into adulthood. As a result, there exists ambiguity, not only for the adolescent, but also for the adult in their approach to the bereaved adolescent.

Adolescence presents unique concerns that can complicate and interfere with bereavement interventions. This period of development is marked by a variety of psychological and physiological changes. It is not clearly understood by adults to what

degree adolescents understand or interpret death. Furthermore, there is confusion among adults concerning whether or not adolescents are emotionally capable of dealing with issues surrounding death. This confusion may arise from the behavior exhibited by some adolescents who grieve silently or who show little or no emotion following a loss. Adults sometimes interpret this as an adolescent successfully dealing with a death or loss. This is a false assumption, as denial is often the predominant expression demonstrated by teenagers. The lack of emotional display may reflect a fear of appearing different or abnormal (LaGrand, 1981).

This issue concerning the lack of a “rite of passage” for adolescents may play an important factor in the bereavement process. The presence or absence of such a confirmation phase is traditionally determined by cultural and societal customs. It is interesting to note that Canada, as a multicultural nation is home to a plethora of nationalities. Bearing this in mind, it would be prudent on behalf of a care-worker dealing with a bereaved adolescent from another culture to carefully probe the individual’s customs. A bereaved adolescent experiencing a “rite of passage” may be more receptive to sharing their feelings of grief, thus accelerating a return to a feeling of wellness.

Familiarity with bereavement issue. Some adults hold the belief that adolescents do not experience bereavement and therefore, do not require the care and attention generally shown children or adults. This myth may be fostered by the sometimes-calloused behavior exhibited by adolescents and the rebellious, independent stereotype that portrays them as strong and unfeeling.

Contradicting this belief, Ewalt and Perkins (1979), in a survey of 148 Kansas high school students, found that “ adolescents have more experience with death and

mourning than has been assumed” (p. 547). Other recent studies further demonstrate that the adolescent does indeed experience loss and suffer with bereavement. Kandt (1994) states that although bereavement during adolescence is not considered a normative life transition, up to 90 percent of adolescents experience a loss associated with death. In another article, Danieli, (1995) states that, “a common but mistaken belief asserts that adolescents are innocent when it comes to encounters with death and bereavement. In many countries, war has led millions of youth to know murder firsthand, either as perpetrators, victims, or witnesses”.

In 1994 adolescents between the ages of 10 and 24 made up 21 percent of the total population of the United States. During this year adolescents experienced approximately 39 000 deaths, representing fewer than 2 percent of the nearly 2.3 million deaths in the country that year (Corr,1997). These devastating statistics further illustrate the fact that adolescents do in fact encounter death on a first hand basis and such statistics punctuate the need for further studies to examine the bereavement process available to the adolescent.

In addition, one cannot overlook that this is an age when individuals are developing emotionally and tend to feel strongly toward individuals or objects. Adolescents experience bereavement through multiple losses arising from the death of a single significant person or attachment figure in their lives. This loss may be experienced through the death of a rock idol, failure to make a sports team, abortion or miscarriage, family divorce, romantic break up or loss of friendship, change of residence and/or school, or through a variety of situations that can disrupt the adolescent’s lifestyle.

Age, gender, and race related issues. Age, gender, and race of the adolescent population play a significant role in the study of Adolescent Bereavement. Adolescence (Balk, 1995) is commonly thought of comprising three age periods: early adolescence (10-14 years old), middle adolescence (15-17 years old), and late adolescence (18-22 years old). Data taken from the United States census indicate that the death rate rises rapidly from early through middle and into late adolescence. In 1991 more than 40 000 adolescents died in the United States. While this number of deaths is lower than the number for infants or adults, it is significant to note that the majority of these deaths are classified within one of three categories: accidents, homicides, and suicides. These alarming statistics conclude with the analysis that only in the adolescent years is disease not one of the three leading causes of death; rather the three leading causes of death in adolescents are human-induced. This statistic is unique to adolescents, as in all other age groups there are usually two or more disease related causes of death (National Center for Health Statistics, 1993).

Gender disparities are significant when examining death statistics concerning adolescents. More than three times as many males die as compared to their female counterparts. Statistics further reveal that Caucasian American males compared to Caucasian American females die at a rate of 3:1. The statistics report the ratio of male versus female and the deaths as a result of accidents 4:1, homicide 6:1, suicide 3:1 and deaths associated with HIV infection as 3:1 (Kochanek& Hudson, 1994).

Other statistics concerning adolescent deaths reveal race disparities comparing Caucasian Americans versus African Americans. Although there are many more adolescent deaths of Caucasian Americans than African Americans, the African

American figures show a higher death rate. African Americans are more likely to die as a result of homicide, diseases of the heart, and HIV infection. Caucasian Americans by contrast are more likely to die as a result of accidents or suicide. Comparing African American males to African American females we observe a similar correlation in death rates comparing male and female who are Caucasian-Americans. African-American males die at a rate of slightly less than 4:1 compared to their female counterparts. Differences in male versus female African-American deaths are recorded as 2:1 for diseases of the heart, 2:1 for HIV infection, 4:1 for accidents, 8:1 for homicide and 8:1 for suicide (Corr, 1997).

Statistics such as these reflect critical issues, not only for the adolescent's peers who are left to mourn, but also for the many other individuals who had associated with the adolescent. The death of approximately 39 000 youth between the ages of 10 - 24 years is substantial and confirms that not only do adolescents experience bereavement and the subsequent emotional stresses, but they also deal with their grief in aggressive ways often leading to harmful or deadly outcomes.

Predictability/violent versus non-violent issues. As discussed, the three leading causes of adolescent deaths are a result of human-induced behaviors (accidents, homicide and suicide). This, in and of itself, creates serious problems for the bereaved adolescent. In circumstances where a death may be anticipated resulting from an illness, those associated with the victim are often given time to prepare for the death. If an adolescent's death is caused through an accident, homicide or suicide, there is generally little or no preparation time. The result of such deaths generally causes great shock and distress. In the case of a suicide, feelings of guilt may develop among peers, for not having

recognized the signs that may have been given by the victim. This concern is supported by Gilliland and Fleming (1998) who stress the need for on-going review of grief outcomes in the context of sudden versus expected death.

As discussed earlier in this paper, there is often confusion and ambiguity on the part of adults' reactions to the bereaved adolescent. This may cause the adult to assume that the adolescent is capable of dealing with their loss in their own way. There is also ambiguity felt by the adolescent in the event of a death. They recognize themselves to be matured past the stage of a child, yet still may not have the experience of an adult in the area of death. The adolescent may become confused about how to respond, may feel awkward and reluctant about asking for assistance, and possibly could respond in ways that are harmful to themselves or to others. Rando states that after a significant loss, adolescents may feel helpless and frightened. They may want to retreat to childhood, where there was a sense of protection from death and its consequences, but be compelled to act more adult by social expectations. This conflict is painful when the adolescent is expected to comfort family members while feeling childlike and frightened himself (Rando, 1984). These feelings of helplessness sometimes become expressed as anger in the rebellious adolescent, through which they may regain a sense of power. Such a reaction however, may also lead to depression and/or actions of self-injury.

There are a variety of reasons why adolescents do not express their grief during bereavement. When mourning does not occur, the adolescent may adopt the behaviors exhibited by adults whom they see bereaved. Such pseudo-adult behaviors may include; identification with the dead person, withdrawal and depression, sexual acting out, and

care eliciting behaviors designed not only to secure care, but to release tension, self punish, and sometimes to replace the deceased (Raphael, 1983).

Cognitive development of adolescent. The adolescent understands death in different ways as they mature and experience new situations. For example, Cook and Oltjenbruns (1982) found qualitative differences in questions asked about death at junior high schools, high schools and at college levels. The cognitive development or changes of the individual influence the nature of these questions. The changes that would normally occur during adolescence are reflected in the following: hypothetico-deductive reasoning, abstract thought (Brainerd, 1978); egocentric thinking (Elkind, 1984); and religious development (Fowler, 1996).

Recognizing that the adolescent is unique from the child, yet also different from the adult, dictates one must adopt a bereavement approach that is both age and developmentally appropriate for the adolescent. Fleming and Adolph (1986) stressed that individual's grief must be examined in the context of normative developmental challenges and tasks. Success in working with the bereaved adolescent is dependent upon integrating knowledge of the adolescent's unique developmental characteristics and capabilities as part of the search for understanding bereavement outcomes.

The adolescent that is able to engage in hypothetico-deductive reasoning is able to go beyond the confines of everyday thinking to such things that have not been experienced (Brainerd, 1978). This skill allows the adolescent to consider possible solutions, evaluate possible consequences, and then test contrived solutions regarding what death means (Hill & Foster, 1996). Whereas a child would think of death in terms of funerals and hospitals, an adolescent with hypothetico-deductive reasoning would be able

to contemplate what happens to someone after death or what the death experience is like. Adolescents at this stage of development also begin to think abstractly about death, recognizing that concrete interpretations of death offer incomplete understandings. Noppe (1996) expressed that the adolescent accepts a more fuzzy concept of death that includes relativistic thinking.

Often, adolescents experience a time in their development, when they believe that everyone is watching them. This egocentric thinking at this stage influences the way in which individuals think about themselves and others. Elkind referred to the assumption that everyone is watching, by which the adolescent is so greatly influenced, as the “imaginary audience” (Elkind, 1984). This stage lends itself to convincing the adolescent that they are unique and that death is something that happens to others, fostering within them a sense of immortality (Noppe & Noppe, 1996). However, as time goes on, this feeling of mortality is challenged by the fact that one’s peers do succumb to death. Thus, a key variable in adolescent’s attitudes toward death may be the level of maturity that the adolescent has achieved (Maurer, 1964), with greater maturity being associated both with “greater sophistication and acknowledgement of the inevitability of death as well as with enjoyment of life and altruistic concerns” (Raphael, 1983).

The emerging cognitive development of the adolescent plays a significant role in the bereavement approach utilized by a care worker. The adolescent struggles to give meaning to life, at a time when other adolescents around him succumb to human induced deaths. A clear background and understanding of development is essential for anyone endeavoring to assist an adolescent in their bereavement.

Spirituality of the adolescent. Bereaved adolescents use various methods to cope with their grief. Studies have been carried out to determine if an adolescent's spirituality offers them solace to overcoming their feelings of loss. Spirituality may take the form of an organized religion, which Mahrer (1996) refers to as the way an individual expresses his or her relationship to a higher force, being, power, or God. One's religion may be expressed through either belief systems or communal rituals such as prayer and worship, and is not limited to organized religions. Due the cognitive changes that occur in adolescents they are capable of thinking about God in an abstract fashion and of developing a new image of God. Balk (1983) supports this with his statement that, "it is during adolescence that religious values and beliefs begin to be clarified".

It is evident how religions, through the use of various rituals and practices, could assist in the bereavement process of the adolescent. Religions are often structured such that support and encouragement is provided to those suffering as a result of a loss. Funerals in many religions have been renamed "celebrations of life", and the services themselves regard the death as a time to give thanks for the many contributions of the deceased, as opposed to merely focusing on losing a loved one. Religious celebrations typically encourage and support the ones left behind to continue their lives and to search for meaning by reaching out to others. Often support groups are available to lend their assistance to those who are left behind. Evidence of this is documented by Hood (1996) who states, "religion gives meaning to many different situations and, depending on the context, can signify a sense of control, growth, hope, comfort, intimacy, belonging, emotional release, as well as provide guidance and support".

Nabe (1997) also suggests that religion provides release and redemption. Through religion, death can be viewed as a release from burden, pain, and the relationship to suffering. Religion also allows death to be seen as a release into the afterlife. As adolescents are developing the cognitive capabilities to think abstractly, it is suggested that they can benefit from spiritual counseling methods to assist them in their bereavement. LaGrand (1986) determined that religion helped bereaved college students accept their loss. (Balk, 1991) concluded that adolescents with religious beliefs had different reactions to sibling death than adolescents without religious beliefs. Balk concluded that adolescents with religious beliefs reported feeling more confused after the death, whereas adolescents without religious beliefs reported more depression and fear. “It is imprudent, I believe, to infer that adolescent bereavement resolution favors the religious believer(s)” by somehow making the grief less acute or distressing (Balk, 1991).

The question that emerges is whether spirituality should be utilized during bereavement intervention, particularly in the situation where a bereaved adolescent doesn't purport to have religious affiliation. Adolescents, as previously discussed, are in the midst of cognitive changes. While they may be developmentally receptive to spiritual direction and guidance, is it ethically correct to offer this form of guidance to someone who does believe in a “higher power”? In an effort to console, religion could be accused of taking advantage of the grief stricken adolescent, who at a vulnerable and fragile time is also malleable to religious indoctrination.

Summary of bereavement issues. The literature expresses an urgent need for additional investigations into the psychological and physiological affects experienced by

bereaved adolescents and repeatedly demonstrate a definite lack of information on this topic.

Raphael (1983) reported that there were few systematic studies of adolescent responses to bereavement and only a few case descriptions or peripheral references found in general works. Even when studies on bereavement were carried out, they did not isolate their research to accurately identify the responses of specific age groups such as the adolescents. This fact is confirmed by results reported by Bowlby's (1980) and Gapes' (1982) studies. Both researchers carried out investigations related to loss, but did not make any distinction between the responses made by children and those by adolescents. Werner and Jones (1979) also conducted a study to report the affects of parental loss on college students, but likewise made no age distinction with their reported findings.

The urgency for additional studies into adolescent bereavement has been recognized for some time. Ewalt and Perkins (1979) carried out a study related to the affects of loss, which involved more than 1 000 students. Alarming, in this study, 90 percent of the student participants disclosed that they had experienced the death of someone they loved. Surprisingly, 40 percent of this sample expressed that the individual that died was a friend, roughly their age. From this evidence, the authors concluded that adolescents experience death far more than is generally assumed. Results such as these corroborate the need for additional research, yet unfortunately there has been very few recent studies initiated in this area. Based on this lack of research and present day statistics related to adolescents' loss, it is apparent there is a great need for further research. It is the goal of this document to initiate and promote open discussion between

adults and adolescents on the topic of bereavement. In doing so, it is hoped that adolescents will recognize adults and their peers as concerned individuals, who can become a source of support for them in their time of need.

## Chapter 2: The Comic Book

### Tyler's Introduction to the Comic Book

Hey there! I'm Tyler. I'm one of the main characters in this comic book. I'm 17 years old and I'm in my last year of High School. I'm a jock, but my marks are generally decent; not as good as my friend Mike's, but hey who's keeping score? I hang with a great group of friends. Sure, we have our ups and downs like anybody else, but for the most part, we get along pretty well.

This story is all about growing up and the lessons life teaches you. It's about the difficult times you can experience at High School. It's about friends that care and others who act as if they care. It's about following everyone's advice to become independent, but at the same time knowing we still need to depend on each other. It's about feeling lonely and isolated while attending school with over a thousand other students. It's about losing your confidence, losing a love, losing one's hope, and losing the life of a close friend. Looking back, being a kid seemed so much safer, but we all lose that too... our childhood.

This story is about my friends and me in our graduating year. You may find parts of it resemble your own story or the story of someone you know. I learned a lot this year and I hope by reading this comic you'll get some ideas about how to deal with things that can rock your life.

A lot of stuff can happen in one year to cause a person to change; I know cause it happened to me. And yes, at one time I thought just the way you do right now; tragic stuff doesn't come my way, it happens to the other guy. Well, suddenly, I'm that other

guy and believe me, you could be the next one in line. So what can it hurt... have a read and talk it over with a friend. Tyler

### Purpose of the Comic Book

The comic book version of, “The Bereaver- Restorer of Hope” was developed primarily to capture the interest of the adolescent reader and introduce the topic of bereavement. The topic of personal loss can be a difficult and awkward subject to broach with most age groups. Utilizing a comic book to present the topic to adolescents was useful for a variety of reasons.

Many young adults fondly remember reading comic books during their childhood. A typical setting might have an individual relaxing on their bed with a comic book, junk food close at hand, as they escaped to a world of make-believe. These quiet reads are often remembered as relaxing and private. By incorporating a comic book into this project, the writer hopes to reconnect the adolescent with these secure and peaceful memories so that the adolescent feels receptive to learning about bereavement.

Associating with these types of memories, the comic book becomes an enticing vehicle to encourage the adolescent to address this serious topic. The comic navigates the adolescent through the traffic jams caused by personal loss. It becomes a roadmap for their lives, easily accepted and understood by the adolescent. Comic books, while full of adventure and dilemmas, generally conclude happily, not unlike the fairy tale that is fondly remembered by the adolescent.

Comic books also match the fast paced life of the adolescent. The adolescent has grown up around disposable items, fast foods, 30-second commercials, and instant communication through technology. The comic book is a “good fit” in their world as they

recognize its catchy illustrations as a quick story with a message. The illustrations also help to level the playing field for those individuals who have limited reading abilities. Pictures, in combination with the written word help to communicate the message at a glance.

In the comic book (Appendix), the reader is introduced to several characters completing their final year of high school. The story begins with news of a tragedy. For this reason, it is strongly recommended, the instructor review the Teacher's Guide accompanying this document, prior to introducing the topic to students. The comic book is divided into the four seasons to assist in creating a timeline for the story. This format can also be used easily to emphasize that bereavement, if not properly addressed, may reappear at a later time, creating serious personal difficulties.

## Chapter 3: The Storybook

### Mike's Introduction to the Storybook

Hey Reader,

So that's how it happened in the comic book. But some people don't get the full picture (pardon the pun) without the story and some people like to read between the lines (oops, did it again!)... so the storybook has been included.

After reading each part of the story, have a look at the Reflection Pages. A lot of times this year, I should have taken more time to think about things instead of doing or saying the first think that came to my head.

There were certainly some things I felt badly about, particularly to do with Tyler. For instance, by the time Beth and I went in to see Mrs. Almak about Tyler, she said other people had already been in to talk to her about him. Here I thought I was his best friend. If that was the case, how come it took me so long to find someone to help him out? Why wasn't I the first to see her about Tyler?

I also have to admit I felt like a bit of a fool for taking so long to recognize how special Beth was to me. I am really surprised that Beth and I never got together earlier. Was the timing not right or was I just so lacking confidence that I couldn't tell her how I felt?

I hope the story and the reflections give you something to think about. For myself I've found slowing down, getting a handle on life and dealing with the stuff that is bothering me, really helps. I guess that's a little something I picked up from Beth.

Mike

### Purpose of the Storybook

The storybook gave birth to the development of the comic book. Initially, it was not planned for the story to be anything more than the framework for the illustrations appearing in the comic book. The decision to retain both components came at the urgings of some of the readers who previewed the storybook's draft version.

It became evident that adolescents appreciated the storybook version as much as the comic book. While the comic book helped to create an initial interest, it did not offer all readers the same qualities that the storybook provided.

Adolescents generally are social beings and the storybook seems to create added description and detail they appreciated. For some, the storybook helped to fill in the blanks and bring closure to their thoughts and ideas concerning events in the story. The storybook version also seemed to help readers identify to a greater extent with the actions of the characters.

Details are everything to the adolescent. They spend a great deal of time communicating information on such topics as dating, conversations, clothing and music. While this information may seem trivial to the adult, it becomes an important basis to adolescents in their decision making. The storybook seems to provide this additional information, not always found in the comic book.

Another important purpose the storybook plays involves its effectiveness in successfully targeting the maturation levels of the adolescent. This project targeted the adolescent ranging in age from 14 years to 17 years old. While this is only a span of three years, the experiences and maturity of individuals in this range may differ greatly. During reviews, it was discovered that some older adolescent responded better to the storybook

than the comic book. It may have been that the comic book, while still having appeal, did not appear as sophisticated as the storybook. At a time when image means everything, a 17 year old may feel reluctant about relating to a comic book that may suggest he is immature. In this way, the storybook offers an alternative to the comic book that may be regarded as a more adult or acceptable version of the material.

The storybook also provides another very important role. Integral supplements to the storybook are the Reflection Pages. The activities involved in these pages would prove to be difficult to complete if the reader needed to rely entirely on the comic book. The reflection pages promote a review of the story and the situations that affect the characters. The comic book by itself does not always supply sufficient information for the reader to carry out an informed reflection. By reviewing the storybook in combination with the comic book, the reader is able to gain a greater understanding and insight into the circumstances surrounding the characters in the story. The additional information provided in the storybook also helps personalize the story's events for the reader.

### Fall

The rituals had been rehearsed for an eternity. Getting ready for school each day, around the schedules of my family, involved a series of routines and precise timing that any German watchmaker would be glad to apply to his trade. I had it down to a science; doze six minutes after the alarm waiting for my mom to holler up the stairs, shower until my brother started banging on the washroom door for his turn, sneak into his room while he showered, steal a clean sweat shirt from his drawer, grab some toast and juice, then hightail it out the door before Mom ragged on me to eat the runny eggs she offered for breakfast.

The clockwork continued as I drove away in my truck, on my way to the beginning of a new school year. I cranked up my stereo that I bought with money earned from my summer job, hoping the bass would pound my senses to life. First day back to school always seemed so unbalanced and distorted like the morning after a party. In some ways I was looking forward to school, this being my final year, but there was also a strangeness going back. Must be first day jitters I convinced myself. By home time, those jitters would be replaced by whining about schoolwork, rumors about new students and staff, renewal of old acquaintances and naughty little lies about our summer happenings. Yeah, for sure; give it a day and teachers would make certain that summer holidays were a past event. That always proved to be history lesson number one, on our return each year.

Pulling into the parking lot at Adnama High instantly brought back all the richness I remembered from last year and the familiar sights and sounds calmed me. Students were scattered everywhere, surrounded by tunes, blasting from car stereos. The commotion from the lot probably sounded to teachers like the distant warning of a trumpet, signaling an enemy attack. The summer silence around the school yard had been unceremoniously evicted by spinning tires, shouts of rude but welcomed salutations, and the lies and laughter from the stories being told about the two month reprieve from the classroom. There was no doubt about it. The stark reality of first day back, had single handedly overcome any disbelief I first felt when my groggy mind and reluctant eyeballs battled the morning light. The dreams and luxuries of summer had definitely been laid to rest. We were back, feeling a bit like foreigners in our own land, but we were definitely back, alive and well.

I spotted my buddy's 96 Cavalier surrounded by some familiar faces, so I veered in that direction, revving my engine to make a suitable entrance. My excitement and anticipation came to a screeching stop at the exact time that my truck did. I was met with a somber reception of sullen faces and distraught looks. I should have picked up on all the flags, but instead ended up making an idiot of myself by opening my mouth first. Have you ever been in one of those situations where you wished you could have followed your instincts and taken a moment, before spewing out the first thing that comes to your mind?

“Hey people... Who died?”

A second after those words smeared the air, I knew it was the wrong thing to say. Four pairs of disbelieving eyes stared at me for what seemed forever. Finally Beth ended the silence as she broke into tears and dashed off across the parking lot for the school, immediately followed by two girl friends who shot contemptuous glances back at me.

“What'd I say?” directed at no one in particular and hoping like hell that someone would turn the key to let me out of my self made purgatory. Finally, after what seemed an eternity, Tyler, my best friend since grade five, explained how I had just earned the “jerk for the day award.”

“Well it... hasn't hit the news yet, but... Terry Barracks was found last night in his garage... dead in his car. Talk is that he died from carbon monoxide poisoning. He did it while his mother was shopping in Edmonton over the weekend”

“Dammit! Man, I had no idea.”

“Yeah, well we just found out ourselves. Beth said the press was asked not to go public until the cops got hold of Terry’s dad and he’s working out on a rig somewhere in the Middle East.”

“Hell of a way to start off the year. I can’t believe this crap.”

“I knew that the guy wasn’t doing well,” said Tyler “but I guess we all did. I was hoping he’d have the summer to pull out of it and return cool without all the baggage. I had no idea he’d take it this far. If I thought for a second...”

Tyler never finished what he was going to say but we all knew what he meant. It was a rotten feeling, knowing how Terry was, watching the guy day after day get a little worse, and hoping he’d snap out of it. We kept thinking the old Terry would suddenly return and he’d rejoin the group and hang out just like he use to. But instead, things for Terry must have gotten steadily worse over the summer, and with most of us having jobs, we sort of lost contact with him completely. Now this...

The rest of the day was like a bad dream. It didn’t take long for the whole school to know about Terry, but because it wasn’t in the news, everyone acted as if it wasn’t true. The school administration made no announcements that day about Terry so they must have been contacted and requested not to address it until further notice. But it was ridiculous because there were all sorts of people by the counsellor’s office and girls asking to be excused in the middle of classes, dashing out only to be followed by about two other girlfriends. The fact that teachers permitted this constant parade out of their classrooms, told us that they knew but weren’t talking.

Students avoided talking about the situation, except in hushed tones. I knew I wasn’t going to say anything, and risk cracking someone up again like I did with Beth. I

don't think I actually saw her for the rest of the day. Someone said that she had gone for bereavement counseling. I wasn't sure exactly what that meant, but I hoped I wasn't the reason for it, whatever it was. An eerie mood hung over the school for the remainder of the day; no one was comfortable talking about it, but it was on everyone's mind.

Driving home after school I was fixed on the day. The entire school seemed to have been held captive by the mood and the event of Terry's death. It was harder to believe without an official announcement, which made us all cling to the hope that maybe this was just some rumor or mistake that got out control. A lot of people wanted to believe that Terry was just not back from holidays yet. I had this gut feeling though that the story was true.

Lying in bed that night I couldn't help think how the day seemed to be orchestrated by some terrible villain, like the comic book characters I use to read about when I was a kid. My thoughts were totally occupied by the happenings of the day and all night I seemed to dream about Terry.

That night, in my dreams I saw him for the first time. He was dressed in a cloak you'd expect someone to wear on Halloween. A hood was pulled over his head that made it hard to clearly make out his face. I could see him walking about in the hallways amongst all of the students, but no one else seem to notice him. If I risked pointing him out to anyone I would look as if I had lost it. I wasn't willing to have all my friends look at me like I was crazy, so I said nothing. It felt like I had this dream all night long. Every hallway I walked, every classroom I went into, he was there. He must be the one responsible for making us feel the way we did about Terry's death.

My dream ended abruptly when I went around a hallway corner and ran smack into this weird dude. I wanted to turn and run, but he gripped my arms with both of his hands and I was powerless, but fought with all my might to escape. I yelled out hoping someone would come to help me.

The next thing I knew, my brother was standing over my bed, in his boxers, shaking me awake. When I finally came to my senses I heard him saying,

“One of those dreams, hey! With all the moaning she sounds like she’s pretty special. But isn’t *Bea* kind of an old fashion name?”

“What do you mean?” I asked, still in a sweat and shaking from my nightmare. “Well you tell me... you kept moaning her name... *Bea! Bea!* You really gotta have the hots for this one? Sounded like the last name was *Reaver*. Must be a new girl...I don’t recognize the name.”

He left the room laughing and said, “Better make your shower a cold one this morning, looks like you need to cool off.” Five minutes later, still lying in bed, I was remembering my dream, the fear I felt and the guy in the cloak...

That’s it...Suddenly it came to me... What I was saying as my brother walked in was *Bereaver*... He was the one responsible for all of this... the fear, the empty feeling, the loneliness we all felt. It was him! He was the one responsible for the gloom and doom that seem to hang over the school.

The shower seemed to help. It washed away my fear like sweat from my body and washed it away down the drain. I laughed to myself thinking about my brother’s comment about a girl name *Bea*. I was glad he thought it was one of those dreams and didn’t know that I was scared senseless. A guy’s gotta keep his rep ya’ know.

Fall Reflections. Use the following questions and thoughts to reflect or to initiate discussion to help you gain a greater understanding of the story... and perhaps yourself.

How does the title of the first chapter (Fall) have special significance to the events in the story?

Does Fall pose any personal problems for you? Do you experience a change in your mood during this time of the year?

Is the way that Beth and her girl friends deal with the news of Terry's death a stereotype?

Do girls express their emotions more freely than boys? How would you react if you saw a boy like Mike crying after hearing news that a friend had died?

Do you think that boys deal well with their emotions? Are they inhibited or afraid to express how they really feel?

Are there any examples in the story of peer pressure influencing how either the males or females reacted to Terry's death?

If you had a friend whom you suspected was upset by Terry's death, how would you find out if they were upset what would you do to help.

How is your school prepared to deal with tragedies such as a student death? Are there staff members that can offer assistance? Are there students that can offer peer support to others who are experiencing grief?

Do you agree with the action of the school in not officially announcing Terry's death?

How did it affect the grief process?

Do you believe that students often know about other student's troubles before school staff? If you believe this to be true, does it influence you in your obligation to these students?

Mike's morning started out just like clockwork. Does clockwork or routines in your day make you oblivious to things that are important in your life?

Mike's first day jitters eased when he met up with friends. Imagine yourself being a new student to the school? Is there anything you or the school could do to make being a new student a more comfortable situation?

If you were the principal at Adnama High, would you have done anything different after getting the news about Terry's death?

Mike went to bed that night thinking about his friend and ended up having a nightmare involving the Bereaver. Who is the Bereaver and what is his purpose in the story?

The first part of the story ends with Mike expressing gratitude that his brother didn't discover he was having a nightmare. He states, "A guy's gotta keep his rep you know!" How much does a person's reputation influence who they are in a high school. How can a person's rep be both a positive and a negative influence for them?

### Winter

I can still remember sitting in math class, looking out the window and watching the first snowfall early in November. The flakes started out like bits of tiny dust and within a few minutes they became fluffy and fat like the ones you see in those romantic movies. I fantasized that this fresh blanket of snow would magically cover over and blot out the reoccurring thoughts of Terry's death. My dreams of the Bereaver had subsided, but it was as if he still lingered in the hallways of the school, every so often returning to have us re-live our friend's tragedy. Everyone seemed drained by the death and the quickest way to clear a friendly gathering was to bring up Terry's name.

Tyler and Beth had started seeing each other ever since Terry's funeral back in September. I remember watching Tyler comfort Beth on that day; pretty thoughtful for a guy who didn't score high in the compassion department. In the weeks following the funeral, it became obvious around school that the two of them were an item. I often thought back to that day, confused; was Tyler's show of affection at the funeral compassion, or was he hitting on Beth at a time when she was devastated by a friend's death?

Tyler and I have been buddies for as long as I can remember. Growing up in the same neighborhood, we were always doing things together. We were alike in many ways, but where I was probably a little more academic, he was more into sports. I remember Sunday afternoons when we'd play football in the park. He was always the quarterback, because he had an arm on him like a cannon. My job was always to protect Tyler from the rushing team.

“One, one thousand, two, one thousand, three, one thousand...”

There I stood, listening as Tyler yelled out orders behind me to the other players, as I watched them scatter across the field in all directions to his commands. Anxiously I waited, ready to absorb the rush of players, the moment they finished chanting a five thousand count.

At the end of each play, we huddled around Tyler to listen again to his commands. As long as I could remember it was always this way. Everyone always gathered around Tyler, as if protecting him from some outside enemy or force. Whether it was on the football field, at a dance, or in the parking lot, people always surrounded Tyler.

Something else about Tyler that never seemed to change was the fact that he was always right. Rarely did anyone ever stand up to him or disagree with what he thought. When we played football, unsuccessful plays were always the fault of someone on the team who had not carried out the play as he had instructed. I never recall Tyler taking the blame for a missed play. That was just Tyler, but everyone still seemed to like him. His athletic ability automatically made him captain of every team he tried out for and his confidence and outgoing nature caused him to stand out from the crowd.

Tyler and Beth's relationship continued through the volleyball season. Beth would sit in the bleachers every game watching Tyler captain his team to victory. I had to admit he was great to watch. He understood the game so well and always seemed to pull off the play that was needed to secure the win. On rare occasions, things didn't go as planned and the team would suffer a loss. In those situations you would see the worst side of Tyler. He would become sullen and moody and wouldn't talk to the other players. The rest of the team felt guilty for losing, but knew better than to hang with Tyler until he cooled off. He was certainly not big on losing. After those sorts of games, Beth would usually catch a ride home with me. Trapped in a car, listening to Tyler's post game review was nobody's idea of fun. It was just better to give him some distance for a day or two, or until he got his next fix from winning a game.

Beth was a great person. She joined our school in Junior High after moving from the East. Her father had something to do with the construction industry and her mother was one of those stay at home moms we all wished we had. Beth and her mother were real close. I'd often see them out walking together in the neighborhood or shopping at the grocery store where I had a part time job. Beth was just an all round great person.

One day just before Christmas break, I saw Beth with some other girls huddled by the entryway to the gym. Beth was in the middle of about six girls. From their expressions and the way they were talking, I could see that something serious was going on.

The early morning practice for senior boy's volleyball had just ended and I spotted Tyler leaving the dressing room area with some of his team. He passed right by the girls huddled around Beth, saw what was going on, but didn't stop to talk. From the sneers and darting glances of the girls, I gathered that this was a break up scene. In a school our size, this was almost a weekly event, but this one really hit me hard because Beth and Tyler were both my friends.

Tyler and some of his team took a table in the commons area, in view of the girls, and I walked over to check things out. As I approached the guys at the table I could see everyone hunched over the table, hanging on every word Tyler spoke. As I got closer it was just as I thought. He was sharing his version of how his athletic success was not only reserved for the football field or volleyball court. He was bragging it up how he had scored another win, this time with Beth and now it was time for him to take on a new challenge.

I stood there, just long enough to know what Tyler was saying. I glanced over to Beth and the group of girls. They were still next to her trying to comfort her from all the nasty rumors. For a moment, Beth's gaze met mine pleading the question, "Do you believe a single word he's saying?"

The next thing I did was the toughest thing I remember doing in a real long time... I turned and walked away; away from the story that may have been accurate in

every detail or was the fantasy of a guy who always had to be a hero to his buddies. I turned away from the faces of the boys as they greedily devoured Tyler's every word. I'd taken only a few steps when I heard Tyler call out my name.

"Hey Mike, where ya' goin'? I'm just getting to the good part! You might learn something!"

Before I could say anything one of the guys at the table yelled, "Oh let him go Tyler, it looks like he's verging on tears."

"Yeah well that's funny guys", Tyler said, "cause that's what Beth looks like, a virgin on tears! But you know what? She ain't anymore!"

That remark caused a cruel laughter to erupt from the table. I knew I had to get away before I did something stupid, like beat the living crap out of Tyler. As I walked away from the table, I hoped that Beth hadn't heard the conversation. But even if she hadn't heard she probably had a pretty good idea what was being said. I couldn't stay at school any longer. I went out to my truck to pull myself together and decided that this was one day I couldn't stomach being at school. I pulled my keys from my coat pocket and shoved them into the ignition. The engine roar that was supposed to follow the turn of the key was replaced by a feeble little ticking noise meaning my truck battery was dead. This day had gone from bad to worse.

I grabbed my backpack from the seat, slammed my truck door and headed across the field in the direction of home. This I decided was going to be a sick day. I would call the school when I got home and tell them that I had the flu or something.

I was fuming as I trudged across the field, with my head down staring mindlessly at the snow. The longer I stared at it the more I became mesmerized by it; trackless and

fresh, an unbroken expanse of white. I was the first to cross the field and it was my steps that broke the unblemished beauty of the field. As I continued my walk home, I relived the guys sneers and laughter contrasted by Beth's troubled glances. I couldn't understand why this was so hard for me to deal with. Break ups happened all the time. Why was this one any different?

My thoughts returned to the snow. For some reason the longer I walked staring at the snow, the calmer I became. I just couldn't bear to look back at the school or the unsightly prints I left as I trekked across the field. It just felt better to keep looking forward at the fresh powder that lay untouched before me; pure and still untrampled.

Winter Reflections. More questions... more thoughts... new answers?

Why would Mike wish that the snow could cover over and blot out Terry's death? Do you ever use any strategy to control a fear? Is it effective?

Why would students still be preoccupied and upset by Terry's death months later?

Why would they still be somewhat reluctant to discuss it?

Do you feel that Tyler genuinely cared for Beth when he comforted her at the funeral or did he take advantage of Beth's moment of weakness? How do you tell the difference between someone that is empathetic and someone who is taking advantage of you in a situation?

During the Sunday football games, Mike's job was to protect Tyler from the incoming rush of players. Do you play that role on behalf of a friend? Does it do that person more harm than good? Does anyone do "blocking" for you?

What drew people to Tyler? Why didn't anyone ever confront Tyler about the various issues they had with him?

Why would Tyler have trouble accepting that sometimes he is wrong? How would Tyler have developed this attitude and how is it perpetuated?

Could Tyler's break up with Beth have anything to do with his attitude toward losing in sports? Who do you think ended the relationship, Tyler or Beth? What do you think caused them to separate?

How might Beth and Tyler's mothers' be different in their parenting skills? Is there something one mother might value over the other?

Why would Tyler spread rumors and be so hurtful toward Beth after their break up?

How was walking away from Tyler's discussion in the commons area, an important step in Mike's personal development?

If Mike always supported Tyler, why did he become so upset over this particular incident?

In the story, Mike goes to leave school only to find out his truck won't start because of a dead battery. What could the battery represent in Mike's life?

Why might the fresh snow seem to have a calming effect on Mike? Why couldn't Mike bear to look back at the snow in the field that he had walked through?

### Spring

“Hey Beth, do you want go over and grab a burger during our spare?”

“Sounds like a plan, Mikey. Let's meet in the commons area after math class.” We headed off down different hallways to our classes. I couldn't help thinking how good it felt to be going out with Beth. What seemed strange was that we had known each other for so long and yet we never really thought of ourselves as anything more than friends. I could still vividly recall the day Beth and Tyler broke up and I skipped out and

went home. I didn't realize it then, but looking back, that was the first time I ever gave serious thought to what Beth meant to me. It was about two weeks later that Beth and I starting dating.

I really liked being around Beth. We had so much in common. It was funny how it took us so long to actually see for ourselves what a good match we were. Or maybe we knew it, but were too afraid to act on it. The thing that I liked the best was we could talk about anything with one another. I enjoyed being with her and we spent a lot of time doing that; talking.

After class I met up again with Beth as we had planned. She was in the commons area sitting at a table with some friends. We chatted together with everyone for a bit and then headed out alone. It was mid morning, but already the heat of the sun could be felt warming up the air. The frigid snow on the ground was a sharp contrast to the bright sun that hung in the sky. It was like Mother Nature was having a moment of confusion or maybe winter and spring were negotiating, trying to decide who was running the show. Whatever the case, it was a sensational day! The moment we broke through the front doors of the school, Beth closed her eyes, raised her face toward the sun and let out a sigh. She insisted we walk to the store to enjoy the warmth of the sun. There was no way I could argue with her. The sun gave off such a relaxing glow and not having felt its strength over the dreary winter months made it feel all the more inviting. The rays had a gentle strength to them that made you think that they had spent all winter recovering to make their return in splendid glory, like a rock star or professional athlete coming out of retirement.

The warmth of the sun was just enough that the chill in the air was gone. Looking across the field where we'd normally cross, you could tell the snow was starting to melt. While it appeared frozen on top, underneath it was probably melted and would be like walking through a puddle. We decided to take the long way around, staying on the sidewalks to avoid getting soaked. Strolling through the neighborhood with Beth, past yards scattered with children's toys, felt weird in one way, but in another way sort of felt good.

About halfway to the store, Beth brought up Tyler. I thought the mention of his name would have made me jealous, but it didn't. I knew Tyler sometimes phoned Beth in the evenings to talk with her, but since their break up last November, they didn't have much to do with one another at school.

"Tyler called me last night around 10 and he didn't sound so good," Beth said.

Even though Tyler was a royal pain at times, he was still a friend and I could tell from Beth's voice she was worried about him.

"Well what'd he say?" I asked.

"He kinda rambled, talking about his mom and dad's recent separation, his marks at school and about some friends he's having trouble with; just a bunch of things that he had on his mind. But it wasn't what he said as much as how he sounded that bothered me"

"What do you mean?" I questioned.

"Well he sounded almost like he had been drinking or was on something. I worry about him ... but hey, Mike, I don't want you to start thinking I've got something for

him. I mean yeah, we went out back in the fall, but it just didn't work out. He's a great guy, but we aren't right for each other.

"Yeah, I know what you're saying Beth. Tyler and I've been friends since elementary and I've thought about him too. I didn't know his mom and dad had separated, but I have noticed a real change in him these last few months. He didn't even try out for the badminton team this year which was quite a shock."

Beth continued, "Well you probably heard the story going around school, that he was at a house party last weekend and was pretty bent out of shape. He decided to take somebody's car for a joy ride and was almost in an accident. He apparently drove downtown, ran a red light and was nearly sideswiped by a pick up truck. The strange thing about all this, exclaimed Beth, was without saying a word to anyone, just right out of the blue, he gets up from the party and tears off in someone else's car. They say he's lucky to be alive."

"He seemed fine in the beginning of the year. What do you think is wrong with him, I asked?"

"I'm not sure, Beth responded. I think it's a lot of things. His girl friend Kimberly for instance, hasn't been at school for a few days. She left last Thursday before the weekend, telling some of her friends she was going to Calgary to visit an aunt who was sick, but she's still not back yet. That makes six days she's been away. Who do you know can afford to miss that much school to visit an aunt who isn't well? Rumor has it that she's off school for different reasons."

"If you're saying what I think you're saying, I can see why Tyler would not be himself"

“I really worry about him. He doesn’t seem very well at all. Something has to be done, but I’m just not sure what. I suggested he see a counsellor or somebody, but he said it wouldn’t do any good. I just don’t know how to help or even what to suggest.”

“Yeah, I know what you mean, Tyler can be pretty thick at times, but I’d hate for anything to happen to him either.”

Finally, we got to the fast food pit. We walked in and stared at the oversized menu plastered over the counter while the waitress glared and waited impatiently us to order. Beth ordered a chicken burger and substituted a salad for the fries that came with the meal.

When I was asked for my order I said, “I’ll have the same.”

Beth looked at me funny and said, “I thought you loved your fries.”

“I do. I just thought I’d have something different today. What, can’t a guy change his mind about things?”

She just looked at me with a glow, gave me a gentle poke in the ribs and said, “Ya sure, you’re the boss!”

On our way home we got to talking about dreams and plans once we were finished High School. We chatted about that for awhile, then I casually changed the subject and asked if she ever had nightmares or dreams that disturbed her sleep. She said that in Junior High she had problems sleeping and would often have nightmares. I wanted to tell her about my dreams involving the Bereaver, but I was afraid she might laugh at me. Instead, I asked her if she still had the nightmares. She said ever since her mom helped her work through them, she rarely had them.

“Yeah, my mom said that a lot of the fear I was experiencing was a result of me avoiding a problem. By not doing anything about the problem I was spending a lot of energy just worrying about things instead of dealing with them. I’d go to bed worrying and sure enough, wake up in a terrible nightmare screaming my head off. After awhile I took my mom’s advice and tried dealing with the things that were bothering me and it seemed to help. At least I don’t have such a problem sleeping like I use to. I guess I also started to accept that there are some things that I can’t change. She gave me some advice that really seemed to help. She told me to always remember that worrying was like a rocking chair, it gave you something to do, but it didn’t get you anywhere. I’ve always remembered that little saying and it’s surprising how it seemed to help me.”

“Yeah, your mom is alright”

“She really is pretty great for a mom!”

It was about then, we reached the place where we would normally cut across the field to get to school.

“I’ll race you across the field to school” I said.

“Are you nuts, we’ll get soaked !”

“And does that worry you Beth?”

With that challenge issued, Beth pushed me backwards and started wildly running toward the school, screaming as the icy melted snow began to fill her runners. As I chased after her yelling, I couldn’t help notice her footprints, as they broke through the snow. With every step, a sparkling spray of water shot up from around her ankles like tiny crystals. I chased her until finally catching up to her at the parking lot. I grabbed her shoulder from behind, pulled her to a stop and hugged her as she laughed hysterically at

the silliness of what we had done. As we stood there, soaking wet from our shoes up to the knees of our jeans, I looked back at the tracks we had made through the field and smiled. Together we had made impressions from one end of the soggy field to the other. Standing there drenched, together in the sun, I felt the best I had in a very long time.

Spring Reflections. With spring melting occurs. Things that have been covered over for months by frozen ice and snow finally become exposed.

The reader finds out in the beginning of this chapter that Beth and Mike are dating. How do you think this relationship came about? Do you think Beth or Mike initiated the relationship?

Considering the circumstances prior to their dating, what type of problems might these two experience? How might they deal with the problems that could occur?

When Beth and Mike leave the school on their way for a burger, they are greeted by the sun. They describe the sun as having a gentle strength. Who in your life shines on you and offers you gentle strength?

Beth and Mike decided not to cross the field. It appears frozen on top, but is probably soft and mushy underneath. What things in your life appear different than they really are?

Why didn't Mike get upset when Beth brought up Tyler's name on their way to the store?

What does that tell you about Tyler's character?

Think of a good friend. What would be some of the telltale signs they were experiencing problems? Would you confront them about these changes, or ask an adult for help?

Do you have someone in your life who you can share your personal thoughts and feelings with?

Do you think Tyler's running off with a car from the party was an act of recklessness, an action to gain attention, or a suicide attempt?

What is it about Tyler's personality that might make it hard for him to seek help with a problem?

How do relationships provide opportunities for growth?

Why does the Bereaver continue to return to haunt Mike's memory with the death of Terry? Think if you have ever had any reoccurring thoughts that were upsetting to you?

Why do you think you continued to have these thoughts?

Mike asks Beth if she has nightmares. She says she use to, but doesn't anymore. What strategy did she use to get rid of her nightmares?

Why would Beth and Mike return to school through the field when they knew how wet it was?

Running through the wet field was like a cleansing for both Mike and Beth. What was washed away that caused them to feel so good?

Mike enjoyed the footprints he and Beth made together in the snow, but couldn't bear to look at the footprints he had made the day he left school early. Why?

What are some of the strengths of Beth and Mike's relationship?

### Summer

Adnama High was an alright place to be as far as schools go, but come early June, whenever the temperature got over 25 degrees Celsius, the school became unbearable to be in. The old bricks on the outside of the school heated up and it became like an oven on the inside! On days when it was a real scorcher, some classes would go outside and have their lesson in the shade; this was one of those days!

To escape the heat during breaks, you'd often see students competing for shady areas around the school. They'd lay claim as if God Himself had granted them these spots. They got real territorial about their areas and it wasn't a smart idea to trespass on them. The worst to cross were usually groups of girls. Violating their rights to a spot, meant you would be unmercifully tormented and called down.

"Take a hike, you little #0\$\$%0%\*\*\*! This is our spot!" they'd demand, as they tried to bully us out of there. (If only their mothers could hear their little princesses now)

When they started lipping us off, we'd all act as if we didn't hear and stay right where we were. This ticked them off to the point they'd threaten us with "An Attack" meaning they were prepared to defend their holy spot with water.

We'd laugh and say, "Go ahead girls. Like we're afraid of a little bit of water?"

The girls would storm off, returning minutes later, armed with filled water bottles. This in turn would start for us, our own little game... who would be the last guy to run from the advancing girls? This game of "chicken" earned the winner a slush from the convenience store after school. The winner of this challenge could potentially end up soaked to the bone, because these girls were ruthless when it came to winning back their territory. We could see them from a distance as they returned from inside the school, and approaching us like a thunderhead in the sky. This was the calm before the storm and it marked our final few moments of delight.

"What took ya girls? We thought you were never coming back!" we taunted as they approached"

"I sure hope you warmed that water up a bit cause my mommy says I have very sensitive skin."

It was a hoot! We'd go on like this until they'd get into striking distance, then grab all our stuff and run like hell. I was never the last guy out. Somehow a slush didn't quite seem worth the discomfort of walking around in wet boxers the rest of the day. But one by one the guys all started to make their move, leaving me behind, motionless in the grass. Everyone now had fled except me, so victory was mine. I had won for the very first time! If I got up in the next split second, I would be spared the full extent of the soaking, but I remained in my spot. I was thinking about the frigid water in the bottles, but for some reason my mind backtracked to that spring day when I chased Beth across the field; I remembered the coolness of the spring slush splashing up my jeans against my bare legs, followed by her warm embrace. The girls were almost next to me. By this time the guys were screaming wildly for me to run, but at the same time laughing their heads off, because they knew I was about to be drenched.

The first water hit me as a squirt, but when the girls saw I wasn't making an effort to move, they began taking the tops off their bottles to pour the water directly over my head. I sat still, refusing to give up, as all six girls emptied their bottles on me. My buddies, staying a safe distance away, howled hysterically. When the girls' water ran out, and I was still there, they began beating me on the head with their empty water bottles. It was at this that point I made my soggy retreat toward the laughter of my friends and away from the vulgar insults of my abusers.

When I reached my buddies, they jokingly congratulated me, but were puzzled why I didn't escape sooner.

"I'm not worried. Its just water... I'll dry off. And by the way, you guys owe me a slush."

They never stopped laughing until we reached the parking lot where we decided to hang out and listen to tunes off Phil's stereo. Needing to get dry and being tired of fighting the heat, I tore my t-shirt off, hung it on the car's antenna and draped myself over the hood to bask in the sun like a lizard on a rock.

Lying peacefully on my back across the hood of the car, arms stretched out wide, facing the sun, and listening to my buddies in the background, I got to thinking. Some of these guys were not the same people I started the year out with. Tyler for instance, still wasn't back to school yet. Things got really bad for him around March. Beth and I watched him go downhill as time passed. He wasn't showing any interest in sports, his marks were in the toilet, and he started missing a lot of school. There were always bizarre stories buzzing around every Monday morning about him. At the end of these stories, people would usually comment that they thought Tyler was a real loser. That was hard for me to take, cause I could remember in the beginning of the year, how everyone thought he was such a hero. They loved Friday nights when Tyler led the school teams to yet another win by smoking the opposition. After the game, we'd all crowd into our favorite pizza place and brag it up, reviewing every detail of the game. Tyler was never called a loser back then.

But everything had changed and it seemed to happen almost overnight. The only people who hung around Tyler before he left were guys who were just killing time or suspected drug dealers. Beth and I hadn't had much to do with Tyler for a while. He'd stopped calling Beth sometime ago. We cared about him, but we didn't want to get mixed up with his crowd.

I guess Tyler sort of made us relive the memories of Terry and his situation. One day after school we dropped into the counsellor's office to see Mrs. Almak. We talked to her about Tyler and how we were worried about him. She took down details of what we said, thanked us for coming in, and told us that other students had already done the same. She assured us that arrangements were being made to get Tyler the help he needed.

Not long after that, Tyler wasn't in school anymore. Word had it, he was being treated for drug dependency and depression. Some others said that Tyler was actually with Terry the night before he died. Both of them had a lot of things happening in their lives. It was being said that Tyler got something from a dealer that he thought might help Terry feel better. Looking back, it was shortly after Terry's death that we started noticing changes in Tyler. Nothing you could actually put your finger on, but he just wasn't the same anymore. We missed the old Tyler, arrogant as he was. It sure would be great if Tyler made it back for grad, but that seemed too much like a dream.

The weeks flew by and before we knew it, grad day arrived. I met Beth in the hallway and she was really excited, but not stressed like some of the other girls. She wasn't worried about all the details; she just wanted all the excitement and celebration to happen. Finally, twelve years of schooling was coming to a close.

Afternoon classes for grads that day were cancelled. We were released at noon so we could get ready for the evening's activities. The ceremonies, meal and dance were fine, but it was a bit like having to visit your Aunt Margaret on a Sunday afternoon that was perfect for swimming, biking or a hundred other things. Everybody was dressed in their best and looking great, but by 11 pm it was getting old and all anyone could think about was the all night grad party. One by one, small groups of students began quietly

leaving to go home for one more change. This time we were changing into serious partying outfits; jeans and sweatshirts.

Everyone met at the old fair grounds downtown. Buses had been reserved to take us out to the site of the party. It was held about 60 km away at an old community hall, in a deserted farmer's field. The atmosphere was like a circus you remembered going to as a kid. Everyone was happy and there was free food and booze everywhere you looked. It didn't take long before you could tell some people already had too much to drink and I was one of them. I guess the thing about those circuses I forgot, was that usually I came home feeling sick from everything I had there. Some things never change...some people never learn.

I can pretty well remember everything up until about 3:00 that morning, and then I either got very sleepy or I passed out. I hadn't seen Beth for most of the evening, but I knew she was somewhere at the party. At one point, I remember a parent supervisor coming over to me and offering to help me into the hall to get some rest. The organizers had laid mats out on the floor to give us a place to crash. I laid my dizzy brain down and my eyelids closed immediately. They probably couldn't bear to watch me make a fool of myself anymore.

Suddenly, I found myself walking in a field, and off in the distance I saw Tyler talking to Terry. Those two crazy guys were still dressed in their black tuxes. It was dark and they were in the shadows, but I'd know those two anywhere.

So it wasn't true after all? Terry was okay. He wasn't dead! And Tyler was with him. I was so happy and excited! I started running toward them, shouting out their names.

“ Terry! Terry! I can't believe it's you. Why didn't you tell me Tyler?”

As I got closer, the two figures of my friends began to slowly merge. I ran harder. I wanted them both to be there; my two friends, not just one of them. The harder I ran, the more they seem to form into one shape. Just as I reached them, the two became one distinct figure. It wasn't Terry and it wasn't Tyler, but oddly enough I still recognized the outline. Who was it? I stood there alone inches from the figure with it's back to me.

Confused I whispered, "Tyler is that you?" But there was no response.

"Terry?" But my question was met with dead silence.

A cold chill ran through my entire body. It was the same icy feeling I had that day I found out that Terry was dead. Then it came to me! I knew who this was. But this time I wasn't running away. Not this time. I was staying put, right here in this spot, not sure if I was too afraid to run or brave enough to finally stand my ground. Was I frozen in fear, too afraid to flee or had I overcome my fear? The black tuxes worn by Terry and Tyler had now become the familiar black cloak I knew from previous dreams. I wanted him to turn around so that I could see him, but I couldn't get his name to cross my lips. I tried over and over again, but all that would come was "bea...bea..."

Suddenly, he turned and we were face to face. Strange, I didn't feel the fear I had in my other dreams. I tried again to speak his name but was only able to get "bea" out. Then I did what I never thought I would be able to do... I reached out my arms to the Bereaver. I felt his arms for an instant wrap around me and his cloak brush against my face. Our embrace lasted only a moment, and then without a Word, he turned and began to walk away. Intently, my eyes followed the Bereaver as he crossed through the wheat field. I could see the impressions his footsteps made as he walked. I continued to watch until his shape gently faded and finally disappeared into the blackness of the night.

Somewhere far off, I could hear what sounded like the voice of an angel whispering my name.

Slowly, opened my eyes to find myself in Beth's arms. She was holding me close to her and her hair rested softly against my cheek.

"Mike are you alright? she said. I was starting to worry about you."

It took a moment for me to focus and to understand what she was saying.

"You," I said. "I thought you didn't worry about things?"

"Oh I worry alright, but just about things that are really important to me."

"But how did you know to find me here?" I asked.

"I've been right next to you ever since you laid down. I thought you knew I was here, because just a minute ago you called my name."

"I called for you? I asked surprised."

"Ya, don't you remember? You were saying, "B"... "B." No one but my mom ever calls me "B", but I think it sounds sweet coming from you too. Now come on sleepy head, let me help you up, cause it's time to make tracks home."

Summer Reflections. The sun's warm rays can prompt growth and cause blooms to burst forth... it also provide intense heat that suffocates and causes life to shrivel and die.

Bullies are anyone who intentionally causes physical or psychological harm to someone else. Would the girls who wanted their shady area back, be considered bullies? Would the boys who refused to move, be considered bullies? How have you dealt with bullies and were your strategies successful?

Why is Mike willing to be soaked by the girls? Was he really distracted by fond memories of him and Beth? Had he undergone some type of character change?

Do you think Mike's relationship with Beth had anything to do with him refusing to move from the shade?

In this chapter, Tyler experiences many problems. In the beginning of the story it states he hated to lose and now other students refer to him as a loser. Is there any correlation between these two situations?

Although Tyler and Mike don't hang out anymore, there is still evidence that Mike cares about Tyler. How does he show this?

Why do you think Tyler stopped calling Beth in the evenings?

If Tyler did provide actually drugs to Terry the night before he died, would you consider him responsible for Terry's death? Why didn't Tyler let on that he saw Terry the night before he died? Why didn't Tyler demonstrate any signs of remorse over Terry's death?

It didn't take long before Mike was drunk at the grad. Part of this was probably the joy of graduating, but part of it may have been a stress release? How do you gain release from the stresses of your day?

At the grad party, after Mike passes out, he dreams he sees Terry talking with Tyler in a field. What would cause him to have this dream when he knows that Terry is dead?

As Mike runs toward Terry and Tyler, they begin to merge and become one. The harder he runs towards them, the more they blend to become one. What does this scene represent to you?

What is the significance of Terry and Tyler 's forms becoming the Bereaver's?

Why doesn't Mike fear the Bereaver when he meets him in his dreams?

Who is the Bereaver to you and how do you explain his presence in the story?

What is the meaning of the footprints that reoccur throughout the story?

How has this story helped you understand the concept of bereavement?

#### Chapter 4: Summary of Comic Book and Story Book Components

The comic book and storybook are both considered equally important as components to the story line. Both forms are effective in introducing bereavement issues and concerns to the adolescent reader. Although the comic book may in some cases be more accepted by younger adolescents, there will be older readers whose interest will be peaked by this component. Similarly, there will be some older students who will prefer the format of the storybook.

At present both these components, the comic book and the storybook exist separately. Future development of this project would permit these components to be designed as two separate entities, a comic book for the 14 and 15 year old students and a storybook for the 16 and 17 year old students. If this became the direction of the project, two components could be developed allowing students two separate occasions when they could participate in the topic of bereavement

A second option could involve merging the comic book and the storybook to incorporate features of both into one document. This type of development would result in a final product that would offer a high level of visual interest through illustrations, combined with the sophistication of a short story. The decision to create two individual components or a combination of the comic book and storybook will be reserved for future consideration.

## Chapter 5: Bereavement Guides and Resources

### Purpose of Guide and Resource Section

Most people have felt the awkwardness that occurs when interacting with someone shortly after they have experienced a loss. For both parties it can prove to be very uncomfortable as each party is unsure about what to say or do.

In many cases, individuals who wish to help those grieving are often uncertain how to offer assistance and are usually unfamiliar with agencies that can offer support. Due to most people's general lack of comfort and familiarity with this topic, it is easy to understand how adolescents experiencing a loss, sometimes end up dealing privately with their grief. In some instances, individuals not receiving support will resort to hiding their grief, never realizing the options available to them. The Guide and Resource Section has been developed to help the user become more familiar with the topic and offer suggestions on how to effectively present and use the materials contained in this document.

This section consists of five components; a Teacher's Guide, a Bereavement Fact Sheet, a Bereavement Survey, an Assessment Guide to the Bereavement Survey and Resource Pages. The Teacher's Guide is designed to offer information to an instructor and provide a general overview of the document. Due to the sensitive nature of this topic the guide recommends that instruction occur only after a thorough review of the entire document. The Teacher's Guide also offers an explanation of the various components contained in this document and offers suggestions for the presentation of material.

The Bereavement Fact Sheet takes the format of a friendly letter written by one of the main characters of the story. The letter, written by Terry, is designed to provide the

reader with some statistics. This letter approach avoids making use of charts and graphs that may be interpreted by the adolescent as lecturing. Instead it is written in a conversational manner encouraging the reader to reflect on some of the personal ideas presented.

After all this discussion about personal loss, one of the thoughts that must surely run through a reader's mind is, "Am I bereaved?" To answer this question, a Bereavement Survey has been included in this document. The Bereavement Survey also contains an Assessment Scoring Guide and an accompanying interpretation of the scores. The survey, while not a scientific instrument, provides the subject with some valuable food for thought and encourages further individual reflection.

The final component is a Resources Section. This section encourages bereaved adolescents to seek the assistance of trained caregivers to help with their grief, but also offers self help alternatives. These alternatives include; chat lines, books, magazines, journals and distress lines. Adolescents using these resources are encouraged to seek help using a variety of options.

### Teacher's Guide

This document has been developed to address bereavement issues of the "middle adolescent" and to offer interventions to assist with that bereavement. It is designed as a class module for administrators, counsellors, teachers, parents and high school students. Specific bereavement issues are presented in the introduction of this document. It is highly recommended, prior to presenting this material, instructors familiarize themselves with these issues and review all student materials. Instructors may wish to present some

of these issues to students to initiate class discussion and to explore students' feelings, prior to the commencement of classes.

Student materials consist primarily of a comic book and a storybook. Using these two formats, the reader follows students in their final year of high school as they experience various bereavement issues. The story line is divided into the four seasons of the school year. These divisions help to illustrate that bereavement can occur at anytime in one's life. Furthermore, when these issues are not properly addressed, they may re-appear at a later time to cause serious personal conflict.

Reflection Pages written by some of the main characters appear throughout the story. These Reflections introduce upcoming sections of the document and also allow the reader to understand some of the private thoughts that motivate the actions of story characters. It is not the intent that students respond to all the Reflections. An instructor may wish to begin asking students to select individual reflections they wish to respond to privately in a journal. As students become more comfortable with the topic, arrangements may be made to allow small groups of students to discuss various reflections and respond back to the larger class. As discussion and comfort levels develop, Reflections may also be introduced to the entire class by way of a general discussion. Students could also be encouraged to develop their own reflections for the particular chapters of the story. Reflections may also be implemented as "openers" at any point, either preceding or following the reading of the comic book or storybook. Individual reflections may also be revisited as the two versions of the story may offer different perspectives to the reader.

In addition, this document offers adolescents an opportunity to explore their state of well being, through an individual bereavement survey. Bereavement, like any other

emotion, is complex and difficult to understand. The survey cannot and does not accurately assess one's degree of bereavement. It is not a scientifically developed instrument. Rather, it should only be considered a tool, used to encourage discussion and guide personal reflections. Responses to the survey questions will assist by helping students in their examination of how bereavement may be affecting their feelings and behaviors. If the survey results indicate bereavement issues exist, the student should be directed to the Resource Section that offers suggestions for intervention. Through these various components, it is this document's goal, to promote a positive communication between the "middle adolescent" and an adult caregiver.

Before using this document, a teacher should make every effort to discover if any of the students enrolled in the class have recently suffered a serious loss. This can be accomplished by reviewing students' individual Cumulative File, or by contacting the School Guidance Counsellor to ensure the topic is suitable for all students. This will help to ensure that instructors do not cause any undue distress for students who are presently dealing with bereavement issues.

Due to the sensitive nature of this topic, student emotions may run high. Prior to the commencement classes it is recommended all students participate in developing and agreeing upon a class set of rules or guidelines. These rules should reflect the need to respect one another's feelings and maintain confidentiality. In the event a student becomes upset during a lesson, it is advised to have a plan in place which could offer comfort and support to a distraught student. A number of options may be planned.

One option might be to have each student paired with another student who they feel supported by. In the event a student becomes distraught, their partner may escort

them to a quiet place in the room or school. If a student experiences a high level of distress, the partner may escort them to the counsellor's office or to another staff member who can offer assistance. Whenever possible, classroom students and the teacher in charge should extend comfort to the bereaved student and offer emotional support. This can become not only a valuable teaching moment, but also a very worthwhile learning experience for the bereaved student, learning that peers and adults can be relied upon for support.

It is the goal of this document to help students recognize bereavement as universal; everyone at some point in their life experiences bereavement and must deal with its affects. It is crucial for adolescents to recognize they are not alone. This document attempts to introduce the bereaved adolescent to a variety of people and agencies that can offer assistance.

If adolescents understand their bereavement and share it with others, their healing can be accelerated. By communicating how they feel, adolescents are more likely to receive the attention they require and deserve. Hopefully, all adolescents will recognize the signs of bereavement within themselves and others. Such understanding assists to develop empathy for bereaved peers and encourages involvement by others. This is indeed an educational process, not only for the adolescent, but also for the caregiver that works on a daily basis with the adolescent. Only by continued efforts in this area will students come to accept bereavement. Through this understanding they will also willingly accept the key being offered them; the key that frees them from the deadly silence imprisoning their souls, plundering their hope and drifting them aimlessly away from those who care.

Bereavement Fact Sheet by Terry

Greetings,

I really didn't mean to do it you know. Sure, things weren't going so well, but it wasn't the end of the world. When I look back, I'm sure if I would have gotten some help, things could have worked out.

I don't blame Tyler for any of this. I'm sure he must think this is his fault, but it isn't. I was the one that couldn't face up to my problems.

I don't blame my mom or my dad either. Mom missed dad as much as I did. If he wasn't overseas working, we couldn't make ends meet, she'd say. But I would gladly have lived in a shack if it meant having him home. I missed him a lot!

Working overseas was very risky last year when there was a war going on, near where dad worked. I couldn't concentrate at school and my marks dropped the lowest they'd ever been. The last few months of school, I couldn't drag myself out of bed. I would wait until Mom left for work then go back to bed. I missed a lot of school in the last few months of grade eleven.

Over the summer everyone got jobs and I hardly ever saw any of the old gang. I slept through the better part of the summer, in the basement, hidden away. It was the only way I could find peace.

The day I took the drugs I knew I took too much. Tyler warned me not to overdo it, but I needed to numb my senses to forget all the pain. I don't recall turning the car on in the garage, but I don't remember a lot of things.

I 'm just a memory now... reduced to a fact or number. I thought I could end all my grief. But what I really did, was cause a great deal more by passing it on to my family, friends, teachers and anyone else that knew me. If only I could do it over again.

Here are some things I want to share with you. It's facts about dying, but don't get the wrong idea. This is not meant to be some type of scare page. Like think about it...ya fear is a deterrent, but only to a point. When someone gets as unhealthy as I was, you just start to feel numb and fear doesn't stop you the way it use to. When a person gets to that point, you know you're in need of help.

So, then what 's the point you ask? Well, like I said before, I don't blame anyone for what happened to me. But, if more people took the time to try to get involved and recognize the problems adolescents have, maybe things would improve. This next bit of space simply offers some facts and opinions for you to think over.

Growing up isn't easy, especially when you're somewhere between 15-18 years old. We grieve about things just like adults do. Our grief though is compounded by a number of other issues; physical and psychological changes, our struggle for independence, career choices, being misunderstood, not knowing who to listen to for advice, romantic relationships, and needing to prove to everyone that we're tough, to name just a few. . Dealing with bereavement, in addition to all of this, can be quite difficult.

So here are some facts to help remind you how serious things really are. Like I said before, I know this stuff doesn't scare you. What I'm hoping is that it'll get you to take better care of yourself or a friend when you're weighed down with grief issues.

For starters, we're the only age group (15-24 years old) whose top three causes of death are not related to disease. When you look over the stats, it shows that 10 354 of us died from car accidents. Another 3 179 of us died from other accidents and adverse effects. Homicide and legal intervention accounted for another 6 827 adolescents and suicide ended the lives of 4 789 of us. That's a grand total of 25 149 adolescents dead in 1995 in the United States alone.

When you combine all the other causes of death in this age category, you get a total 33 569 adolescents dying. The sad part is, looking at these numbers; approximately 75 percent of us die from reasons other than disease. What this is saying is the biggest cause of our deaths is us.

Now while that's a lot of us, it doesn't even come close to how many are left behind to grieve our loss. Think about your own situation and how many people this would involve; family, friends, teammates, teachers, girlfriends/boyfriends, acquaintance. If each of the 25 149 people had, 10 people upset by their loss, we're talking about over a quarter of a million people who are bereaved. Remember, I 'm not trying to scare anyone and I'm surely not trying to lay any guilt trips... it's just the facts and where I am now I have an eternity to think about these things.

Some of those 10 people grieving, are bound to be friends, meaning they're in that 15-18 age group, and some of them may not be able to deal very well with loss. It's a painful cycle that seems to go on and on. As you picked up from the story, we all are constantly coping with a number of issues surrounding bereavement.

For starters, there's the issue about growing up. When exactly are we considered grown up? I know with some cultures there's certain initiations and customs that

recognize an adolescent as an adult. In our case however, there's no such ceremony. We always seem to be stuck in that in-between stage. You're not a kid anymore, but you're not an adult either. Not only does this make it tough for us, but it complicates things for adults also. They become unsure about how to relate to us.

When it came to bereavement I sort of thought if I put up a strong front I would be thought of as an adult. When I did that, I seemed to convince adults I was mature. It made them believe I wasn't upset by loss, so after that they didn't bother to offer me the help I needed. I guess I was my own worst enemy.

Sometimes adults assume we don't have any experience with death, but we have a lot more experience than they know. Death doesn't always translate to a loss of life. Being an adolescent creates strong feelings about a lot of things. I often felt just as bad about a death as some other things in my life. For instance, breaking up with a girl friend or boyfriend can cause as much grief for some of us, as a death. Or your mom and dad fighting every night and you anticipating any minute one of them is going to call it quits. Or imagine what it would be like if your dad got a transfer to the other side of the country in your last year of High School. These sorts of things can really be hard to deal with, but a lot of times we respond by doing a cover up.

The statistics show most deaths of people our age are unexpected. Ya, you might know someone's going through a rough time, but you don't really expect the person to do something like what I did. But it happens, and when it does, you have no warning. You can go from thinking things couldn't get any better, life is great, to your best friend's funeral is this Friday.

Death and grief aren't something we think a lot about. Hey, we're young and living in the most exciting time of our lives. We tend to operate in an upbeat and positive mode; that's just how we think. And speaking about thinking, I really found it tough sorting through everything... heaven and hell, god and religion. I never gave much thought to those kinds of things. I lived in the here and now, not the "what if."

How much of this you believe, I guess is up to you. I've tried to share with you some facts, mixed with some of my personal opinions. I know you won't necessarily agree with it all, but it's how I see things and I think for the most part, I'm dead on!

Terry

#### Introduction to Survey by School Counsellor

Dear Reader,

Throughout the year I interview many students with all sorts of struggles. The saddest cases though are the ones where a student is experiencing grief. Often, students feel indestructible. A sudden loss can have a serious impact on their lives. But of course, it's not only death they grieve.

Students between 15-18 years old, sometimes form strong romantic relationships with one another. Break ups can affect students tremendously. Divorce, abortion miscarriages, and school moves are some of the other issues presented to me. All of these situations can require bereavement counseling.

On the following pages I have placed a survey I often use with my clients. The responses help me gain an understanding of how a student is feeling. You may wish to respond to these questions or simply read them and answer them to yourself. At the end of the survey is a scoring guide, offering you a general assessment of your bereavement

level. If your responses indicate feelings of bereavement, I would recommend you refer to the Self-help Pages or make an appointment with a Bereavement Counsellor.

You would be surprised how many students share similar feelings and concerns as you. From my experiences with young people, the sooner they address their issues, the better they begin to feel. Avoiding the problem only makes it worse. Take the time to find out if you are well. You have to be able to care for yourself before you can begin to care for others.

Serving All Students,

Mrs. Pearl Almak

School Counsellor

Bereavement Survey

Bereavement is described as, “sensing a loss”. Such a loss may be the result of varying circumstances and may affect each individual differently. An individual may experience bereavement as a result of losing someone very close to them, like a sibling. On the other hand, an individual may experience bereavement upon hearing about a celebrity’s death, someone that they may have personally never met. Bereavement may be experienced for short or extended periods of time. The intensity of bereavement will vary with each person. A situation that may seriously trouble one individual may not affect another to the same degree. For instance, a daughter who has cared for her ill mother may or may not feel the same bereavement following her mother’s death, as the sibling who resides away from her mother and has not seen her for some time. The one thing for sure about bereavement is that it is unpredictable.

### Directions

To examine your level of bereavement, circle the response that most appropriately answers or describes how you feel. This survey offers a reflection of an individual's state of bereavement. It is not a scientific instrument and its results cannot be used for diagnostic purposes.

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Gender \_\_\_\_\_

1. I have a clear understanding of the term "bereavement".      Yes    No
2. I have experienced bereavement within the last year.      Yes    No

If the response to question 2 is "no", the writer should omit questions 3-15 and continue with question 16.

3. Estimate the number of bereavement incidence(s) experienced in the last year.  
           1                    2                    3                    4            more than 4

4. Indicate the cause(s) of your bereavement. Check any that apply.

Death of a loved one or friend \_\_\_\_\_      Romantic Breakup \_\_\_\_\_

Family problems \_\_\_\_\_      Divorce of parents \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_ Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_





### Assessment Guide to Bereavement Survey

Bereavement, like other emotions is complex and difficult to understand. The survey provided cannot and does not accurately assess your degree of bereavement. It is not a scientifically developed instrument. Rather, its only use is as a tool to encourage discussions and guide personal reflection. Your responses to the survey will encourage you to recognize how bereavement may be affecting your personal feelings and behaviors.

Duration of time from loss, acceptance of the loss and circumstances surrounding a loss, significantly affect how we deal with bereavement. Due to these factors, such a survey cannot provide conclusive data relating to one's emotional state. It can only offer you some general guidelines.

#### Score

#### Interpretation

0-10

Everyone experiences bereavement at some point in his or her life. A score within this range could be interpreted as an individual recognizing a loss and coping with their bereavement. More important than the final score are the individual responses. These should be scrutinized carefully by the respondent to ensure those inappropriate strategies or behaviors have not been adopted as a coping mechanism. (I.e. denial would certainly alter any reliability that this survey might contain.) This is where a friend can be invaluable. Talk to a friend who you trust and respect, to find out if they have noticed any significant changes in you since your loss.

Listen carefully to them. If they do recognize a change, it's time for you to do some careful self-reflection.

11-21 Individuals scoring at this level may be experiencing some difficulty, but as stated earlier, this is not a scientific tool. Review your responses and see if there was any one answer that concerns you in any way. This is really the first step in dealing with any problem... confronting it. If you identify one question that in some way concerns you, it is recommended that you take some time to review the resource section of this document. Look for a resource that relates to the concern you might be feeling. Don't dismiss how you are feeling. It is very important to listen to your personal thoughts. If you don't find a resource that you think might help, seek out a counsellor, a friend or someone that you feel you can have an honest discussion with, and explain how you feel. This is the next step after confronting your concern... taking some form of action.

22-32 So, you scored in the highest range, did you? Well before you start thinking how serious your problem must be, I want you to notice that there are no titles attached to any of these ranges such as, "normal", "a bit scary", and "hey this one's got it real bad" That's because all bereavement is normal. It's the side affects that occur when bereavement is not dealt with that makes it frightening. We all experience bereavement sooner or later. It's one of those

feelings most of us aren't very good at dealing with, especially if we have to deal with it alone. If your score was in this range, it might indicate that at this time bereavement may be a concern of yours. If that's the case, take care of yourself. Look over the resources, talk to someone that can offer assistance, and carefully examine your feelings to see if you have experienced any major changes. If there have been significant changes and if they are negatively impacting your lifestyle, you need to attend to things. Remember that although time can sometimes heal, sharing how you feel and obtaining useful information promotes the healing process. Don't hesitate. Get the help you need and deserve. You're worth the effort!

### Self Help Pages

The following pages list resources that could be used by adolescents to learn more about the topic of bereavement. People and Agencies are listed first, as it is considered to be the most important category of resources. It is through our involvement with people and agencies that we receive immediate assistance.

People and Agencies-Our losses and our grief need to be expressed and shared with others. Most people will generally have someone in their life that could offer them assistance; a family member, a friend, a member of the clergy, a teacher, school counsellor, a neighbor, a co-worker, your family doctor or a professional community care-giver are some of the people that can offer assistance. If the first person you approach does not have the skill to assist you, do not be discouraged or feel that they are

not interested. The topic of bereavement can be an uncomfortable topic for some people to deal with. If you do not initially receive the assistance you require, continue seeking out someone who can attend to your needs.

Below are other resources listed in categories that you may wish to explore. By finding out more about the topic of adolescent bereavement, you will find yourself better equipped to deal with your grief.

**Family Doctor-**Sometimes one's grief can trigger physical symptoms that need to be addressed. Make an appointment with your doctor when you suspect that your grief might be affecting your physical health.

**Community Mental Health Clinics-**Most provinces and states offer Mental Health Services that deal with bereavement issues. Check your phone book for a listing of these services in your area. For Red Deer, call (403) 340- 5466.

**The Internet and Chat Lines-**For those who are so inclined, technology offers a host of sites and chat rooms related to bereavement. Anyone utilizing technology should always observe the usual precautions when communicating and sharing information with someone they are unfamiliar with. Do not offer private information such as your address, phone number or make comments that would reveal your location or daily habits. Surreptitious individuals sometimes pose as interested parties, but have ulterior motives in mind concerning the welfare of those they communicate with.

Various sites exist offering help for the adolescent and others who are bereaved. Below are some listings of sites that offer information on the topic of bereavement, with a brief summary of what is presented at each site. These few sites illustrate the wide variety of information that is available off the Internet.

1. T.A.G.-Teen Age Grief <http://www.smartlink.net/~tag/index.html>

This site offers education on the grief process, an understanding of the unique needs of the bereaved teen and concrete methods to assist the teen in the healing process. The mission statement of this group is to make grief support available to all teens from all walks of life in an environment that is accessible, safe and non-judgmental.

2. Amy's Story/Anthony's Story <http://dying.about.com/health/dying/library/blamy.htm>  
<http://dying.about.com/health/dying/library/blant.htm>

These two sites help the adolescent reader recognize their own feelings, expressing through the stories written by Amy and Anthony. Amy describes how her friend Matt was murdered and how she reacted to the tragic news. She also shares with the readers a poem she wrote about her feelings toward Matt.

Anthony describes how he tried to pick Matt up to give him a ride to school, but was informed by Matt's mother he wouldn't be attending school that day. Shortly afterwards, it was discovered both Matt and his mother were murdered. Anthony also talks about how much Matt meant to him and how Matt's death changed his feelings about some of the students he attended school with.

At the end of both of these submissions is an invitation to enter a chat line to discuss and share feelings of bereavement. The chat line operates on Wednesday from 8:00-9:30 p.m. and also publishes a bi-weekly newsletter (Daybreak) on the topic of Teen Grief.

3. Helping Teens Work Through Grief <http://www.wnyafn.com/teengrief/group.htm>

This site offers suggestions on how to set up a support group for grieving teens. Considering teens often are aware of other teens' grief before adults, it is reasonable that

teens should become involved in supporting one another. Information is offered on how to set up such a group (peer support) and what preparations are required in the creation of such a group. It also outlines suggestions for how the meetings could be conducted and describes a general agenda for support meetings.

4. Book Store: Bereavement Store <http://www.arrangements.com/bkstor/bereav.htm>

This site offers a wide variety of books on the subject of bereavement. In most cases the delivery date for book orders is 1-3 days.

Three book titles I found that would be of particular interest to the bereaved teenager were:

- Teenagers Face to Face with Bereavement
- Straight Talk about Death for Teenagers: How to Cope with Losing Someone You Love
- Facing Grief: Bereavement and the Young Adult

These are a sampling of a few sites that contain a wealth of information for the bereaved adolescent. A student using the Internet can search out and connect with many sites that offer assistance to help cope with loss and promote the healing process.

Following the directions below, an individual can carry out their own search to locate other sites, designed to deal with their particular grief.

By going to the site, Ask Jeeves, and entering the term, "Teen Grief" into the search box the following hits are shown;

<a href="http://www.Altavista.com">www.Altavista.com</a>	9 matches
<a href="http://www.About.com">www.About.com</a>	5 matches
<a href="http://www.Webcrawler.com">www.Webcrawler.com</a>	3 matches

www.Infoseek.com            10 matches

www.Excite.com            4 matches

By going onto such sites, teens can access a great deal of information pertaining to grief. One example of this would be the Trackstar site found on [www.Altavista.com](http://www.Altavista.com)

This site offered information in the following areas;

- Psychology of Teen Grief
- Grief Support on the World Wide Web
- Resources for and About Grieving Children and Teenagers
- Grief Resources
- Helping Teens through Grief.

Through these various sites one can obtain books, access articles from Teen Magazines, locate additional websites, purchase videotapes, enter into chat lines as well as question and answer columns, read words of inspiration, and obtain other URL's of organizations that offer support in this area. Some useful titles of resources located on the Trackstar site included;

- Adolescent Bereavement
- Children and Adolescent Grief
- Helping Teenagers Cope with Grief.

Take the time to review some of the other sites listed above to locate information on the subject of adolescent bereavement. If the Internet isn't your thing, the next section, entitled Books, offers another of resources that could provide the distraught teen with information on this topic.

## Books

Adams, D. W. (1995). *Beyond the innocence of childhood: Helping children and adolescents cope with death and bereavement*. (Vol. 3) Amityville, NY: Baywood.

Bowlby, J. (2000). *Attachment and loss*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) Boulder: Basic Books.

Bowlby, J. (2000). *Separation: Anxiety and anger*. Boulder: Basic Books.

Burnell, George M., Burnell, Adrienne L. (1984). *Clinical management of bereavement - A handbook for healthcare professionals*. Chesterfield, MO: Science and Humanities Press.

Corr, Charles A., Nabe, Clyde M., Corr, Donna M. (1993). *Death and dying: Life and living*. Pacific Grove: Brooks/Cole.

Corr, Charles A. (1996). *Handbook of adolescent death and bereavement: Postvention with early and middle adolescents*. New York: Springer.

Cresnschaw, David A. (1995). *Bereavement: Counseling the grieving throughout the life cycle*. New York: Crossroad/Herder and Herder.

Doka, Kenneth J. (2000). *Living with grief: Children, adolescents, and loss*. Philadelphia: Brunner Routledge.

Elkind, David (1997). *All grown up and no place to go: Teenagers in crisis*. Boulder: Perseus Books.

Goldman, Linda (2000). *Life and loss: A guide to helping grieving children*. Hemisphere.

Gootman, Marilyn E., Prothrow-Sith, Deborah (1994). *When a friend dies: A book for teens about grieving and healing*. Minneapolis: Free Spirit.

Gravel, Karen, Haskins, Charles (2000). Teenagers face to face with bereavement. New York: Julian Messner.

Grollman, Earl A. (1996). Bereaved children and teens: A support guide for parents and professionals. Boston: Beacon Press.

Grollman, Earl A. (1993). Straight talk about death for teenagers: How to cope with losing someone you love. Boston: Beacon Press.

Helmlinger, Turdy (1982). After you've said good-bye: Learning how to stand alone. Orlando: William Kaufmann.

Jarratt, Claudia J., Rosenberg, Dan (1994). Helping children cope with separation and Loss. Boston: Harvard Common Press.

Johnson, Joy (1999). Keys to helping children deal with death and grief. Hauppauge, NY: Barrons Educational Publishers.

Kuklin, Susan (1994). After a suicide: young people speak up. New York: Putnam Group Juv.

LaGrand, Louis L. (1986). Coping with separation and loss as a young adult: Theoretical and practical realities. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Morgan, John D. (1998). The dying and the bereaved teenager. Philadelphia: The Charles Press.

Nagy, Julie (1999). Children, bereavement and trauma: Nurturing Resilience. London, UK: Jessica Kinglsey.

Perschy, Mary K. (1997). Helping teens work through grief. London, UK: Taylor and Francis.

Rando, Therese A. (1984). *Grief, dying and death: Clinical interventions for caregivers*. Champaign, IL: Research Press.

Raphael, Beverley (1995). *The anatomy of bereavement*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson.

Silverman, Phyllis R. (1999). *Never too young to know: Death in children's lives*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Simon, Leslie (1998). *A music I no longer hear: The early death of a parent*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Skinner Cook, A., Dworkin, Daniel S. (1992). *Helping the bereaved: Therapeutic interventions for children, adolescents and adults*. Boulder: Basic Books.

Stuart, Wendy J. (1998). *Death and the adolescent: A resource handbook for bereavement support groups in schools*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Trozzi, Maria, Massimini (1999). *Talking with children about loss: Words, strategies and wisdom to help children cope with death, divorce and other difficult times*. New York: Perigee.

Turner, Mary, Thomas, Bob (1998). *Talking with children and young people about death and dying: A workbook*. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley.

### Magazines and Journals

Adolescent Bereavement: Turning a fragile time into acceptance and peace.  
Journal Citation: *School Counsellor*; v41 n3 p203-211, Jan 1994.

An investigation of the grief counseling services available in the middle schools and high schools of the state of mississippi. *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying*; v30 n3 p191-204 1994-1995.

The Application of Poetry Therapy in grief counseling with adolescents and young Adults. *Journal of Poetry Therapy*; v8 n2 p63-73 Winter 1994.

Balk, D. E. How teenagers cope with sibling death: Some implications for school counsellors. *The School Counsellor*, 31.

Balk, D. E. Sibling death, adolescent bereavement, and religion. *Death Studies*, 15.

Cook A. S., & Oltjenbruns, K. A. (1991). A cognitive-developmental approach to death. *Journal Citation: Elementary School Guidance and Counseling*; v26 n2 p139-148.

Disenfranchised grief: Loss of an adolescent romantic relationship. (*Adolescence*; v26 n102 p253-259 Summer 1991).

Ewalt, P. L., & Perkins, L. The real experience of death among adolescents: An empirical study. *Social Casework*, 60

Kandt, V. E. Adolescent bereavement: Turning a fragile time into acceptance and peace. *School Counsellor*, 4.

LaGrand, L. Loss reactions of college students: A descriptive analysis. *Death studies magazine title*.

Maurer, A. Adolescent attitudes toward death. *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 105.

Nabe, C. Meanings of death. Unpublished manuscript, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville.

National Center for Health Statistics. *Vital statistics of the United States*. Hyattsville, MD: United States Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Centers for Disease Control

Noppe, L. D., & Noppe, I. C. Dialectical themes in adolescent conceptions of death. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 6.

### Others

Bible and Prayer Books-For those individuals, who have experienced a spiritual upbringing, faith often provides a great deal of comfort during difficult times. If you have been provided a spiritual upbringing, you may consider utilizing one of the above resources to assist you in dealing with your loss. Libraries and Religious Stores offer a variety of spiritual and uplifting resources.

Crisis Health Line-Most cities offer 24 hour Help Lines that allows individuals to discuss their difficulties over the phone or obtain numbers for other services that can lend assistance. One such number offered for the region of Central Alberta is 1-800-779-5057  
Help Distress Line-larger centers offer Distress Lines that permit individuals to speak to a counsellor. One such number for Central Alberta can be reached at (403-340-1120)

### Summary of Resources by Beth

Hi there,

So that's it. Now you've got some suggestions how you or a friend can be helped to deal with bereavement. As you can see, some of it is self-help and some is professional. It's up to you to decide what type is needed. The self-help pages are just some starting points to investigate if you're having problems. If things are serious, you need more than just a good book, a chat line or a video... you need someone you can talk to and share your feelings with. I mean let's face it, not everybody feels comfortable talking to a parent about these sort of things. But the fact of the matter is you're the one

who knows when things are not going well. You're the one that has to take control before things get out of hand.

I know sometimes it takes a lot of courage to face those fears, but it's got to be done. Besides my mom, I've also found friends a great support and there are even some teachers I feel comfortable enough to talk to about my problems.

When you continue to just accept things the way they are, you tend to get down on yourself. I could tell with Tyler there came a time when he had given up. I heard it in his voice; it was that sound of hopelessness. Nothing I could say seemed to make a difference and after that, he went downhill quickly. I guess it was hard for him because he was always seen as the type of guy who had it together. To go from that reputation, to someone everyone thought was a loser must have been a real blow to his ego.

So look over the resource section and see if there is something you or a friend could use. If that doesn't do it for you, be sure to talk to someone. But remember, don't give up and let things slide. Understand your problem and then deal with it.

Beth

P.S. Sorry if this sounds a bit preachy. I guess that happens after years of sharing with my mother.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

The affects of adolescent bereavement are alarming. Many school populations contain youth that appear content, but who struggle daily with bereavement issues. These issues when left unattended can lead to depression, absenteeism, promiscuity, drug use, bullying, school violence and suicide. Statistics taken from the National Center for Health Statistics show that American Adolescents are the only age group whose top three causes of death are a result of accidents, homicide, or suicide. These facts reflect the tragic and painful reality experienced by our young people.

If Canadian statistics reveal a similar pattern, then an urgent need exists for caregivers to assist adolescents to address bereavement issues. Such statistics contradict the belief that adolescents are not familiar with death or grief. On the contrary, adolescents seem to know bereavement all too well. What they don't know is how to deal with these issues. Often times they are so overwhelmed dealing with psychological and physical issues that they become incapable of dealing with their bereavement.

Perhaps the best way to illustrate these difficulties is through an excerpt taken from a student interview. This young person described her coping methods used during times of bereavement, in the following manner;

“I guess first I should tell you that throughout my adolescence I learned how to handle things differently. I guess as I grew older, I think I learned how to handle the concept of loss in more effective ways ... in the beginning of my adolescence I think my best coping mechanism was to simply do my best to put on a good front – to put on a front that I was happy and that although the loss I had ... I had lost something important to me that I was strong enough to continue and do well. As I got older I started finding

out that, that wasn't a healthy way to deal with things ... all of the hurt that was inside of me that I hadn't let out all started to affect me psychologically and instead of letting go of the hurt I kept it alive and then I started to cry. I started to learn that it was okay to be sad, it was okay to feel loss, that it was something that had to be confronted, that it was something that had to be dealt with, that ... the more I kept inside the harder it would be to deal with in the future, so I started to talk about the losses and how they were affecting me."

Upon further questioning this same individual was asked to describe the effectiveness of her coping methods in helping to deal with bereavement. Her response was;

"The coping mechanism or ... of containing it ... I don't think it was effective at all--maybe the only--the only way it was effective it was easier just--I think to feel ... the same as everyone else. To feel what other people were feeling so if it was happy you would be happy with them, if they were sad you're sad with them--but I don't think that is always necessarily the healthy way to be feeling what everybody else is feeling. I found that gradually I was able to show my emotions when I felt them, was more healthy in that I was more comfortable with myself--I felt that I had the right to be sad or the right to be happy when--when I felt like that."

The interview concluded by asking for a description of what helped this individual to overcome her feelings of bereavement and this was the subject's response;

(pause) "Accepting that I guess through death comes new life, and that doesn't necessarily mean because someone dies they go to heaven. It means that when parts of you or parts of other people are lost there is a space left for something else to fill and if

you let that compartment be filled you'll be able to carry on and you'll find new and refreshing things in life, but if you don't let yourself be filled with new things and if you leave the death and the loss inside you there is no room for anything positive”.

From my research I have come to the conclusion that adolescent bereavement deserves greater investigation. It also demands education be offered to young people and adults alike. At present, there appears to be a great deal of ambiguity for both adults and adolescents surrounding this topic. Unless channels of communication are developed between adolescents and adults, serious problems may continue to exist. In the words of my interviewee, “In the beginning of my adolescence, I think my best coping mechanism was to simply do my best to put on a good front.”

We must accept the responsibility of teaching our youth how to care for their mental health and how to properly deal with bereavement. Concealment and cover-ups must be replaced by appropriate intervention. If this lesson is learned by our adolescents, much suffering can be avoided and bereavement can become an expression of passion rather than one of shame.

We live in a world which dreads the question and which turns away from it. Earlier civilizations looked death straight in the face... Never perhaps has our relationship with death been so poor as in these times of spiritual barrenness, where human beings in their haste to exist, seem to sidestep the mystery. They do not realize in doing so they rob the love of life of an essential source. (F. Mitterand, (1959). Preface, in M. de Hennezel, *La mortintime*. P.9)

## References

- Aries, P. (1962). *Centuries of childhood: A social history of family life*. Trans. New York: Random House.
- Balk, D. E. (1981). *Sibling death during adolescence: Self concept and bereavement reactions*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, IL.
- Balk, D. E. (1983). How teenagers cope with sibling death: Some implications for school counsellors. *The School Counsellor*, 31.
- Balk, D. E. (1991). Sibling death, adolescent bereavement, and religion. *Death Studies*, 15.
- Bowlby, J. (1997). *Attachment and loss*. New York: Basic Books.
- Brainerd, C. J. (1978). *Piaget's theory of intelligence*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Burnell, G. M. & Burnell, A. L. (1989). *Clinical management of bereavement--A handbook for healthcare professionals*. New York, N.Y.: Human Sciences Press.
- Cook A. S., & Oltjenbruns, K. A. (1982). A cognitive-developmental approach to death education for adolescents. *Family Perspective*, 16.
- Corr, C. A., Nabe, C. M., & Corr, D. M. (1997). *Death & dying-- life & living*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing.
- Danieli, Y. (1995). *The war on children*. London, Ontario
- Elkind, D. (1984). *All grown up and no place to go*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Ewalt, P. L., & Perkins, L. (1979). The real experience of death among adolescents: An empirical study. *Social Casework*, 60.

- Fleming, S. T., & Adolf, R. (1986). *Helping bereaved adolescents: Needs and responses. Adolescence and death*. New York: Springer.
- Fowler, J. W. (1996). Pluralism and oneness in religious experience: William James, faith development theory, and clinical practice. In E. P. Shafranske, *Religion and the clinical practice of psychology*. Washington, DC: American Association.
- Gapes, C. (1973). *A study of bereaved adolescents and their church group*. Unpublished Manuscript.
- Gilliland G., & Fleming, S. (1998). A comparison of spousal anticipatory grief and conventional grief. *Death Studies, 22*.
- Grollman, E. A. (1995). *Bereaved children and teens: A support guide for parents and professionals*. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press.
- Hill, D. C., & Foster, Y. M. (1996). *Postvention with early and middle adolescents. Handbook of adolescent death and bereavement*. New York: Springer
- Hood, R. W., Jr., Spilka, B., Humsberger, B., & Gorsuch, R. (1996). *Psychology of religion an empirical approach*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Kandt, V. E. (1994). Adolescent bereavement: Turning a fragile time into acceptance and peace. *School Counsellor, 4*.
- Kochanek, K. D. & Hudson, B. L. (1994). Advance report of final mortality statistics. *Monthly Vital Statistics Report, 43*. Suppl. Hyattsville, MD: National Centre For Health Statistics.
- LaGrand, L. (1981). *Loss reactions of college students: A descriptive analysis. Death studies*. Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas.

- LaGrand, L. (1988). *Coping with separation and loss as a young adult: theoretical and practical realities*. Springfield, Il.: Charles C. Thomas.
- Leighton, A. H. (1959). *My name is Legion: Foundations for a theory of man in relation to culture*. New York: Basic Books.
- Mahrer, A. R. (1996). Existential-humanistic psychotherapy and the religious person. *Religion and the clinical practice of psychology*. Washington, D.C: American Psychological Association.
- Maurer, A. (1984). Adolescent attitudes toward death. *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 105.
- Morgan, J. D. (1990). *The dying and the bereaved teenager*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Charles Press.
- Nabe, C. (1997). *Meanings of death*. Unpublished manuscript, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville.
- National Center for Health Statistics. (1991). *Vital Statistics of the United States*. Hyattsville, MD: United States Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Centers for Disease Control.
- Noppe, L. D., & Noppe, I. C. (1996). Dialectical themes in adolescent conceptions of death. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 6.
- Rando, T. A. (1984). *Grief, dying and death: Clinical interventions for caregivers*. Champaign, Illinois: Research Press Company.
- Raphael, B. (1983). *The anatomy of bereavement*. New York: Basic Books, Inc.

Simpson, J. A., & Weiner, E. S. C. (1989). *The Oxford English dictionary* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; 20 vols.). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Werner, A., & Jones, M.. (1979). Parent loss in college students. *Journal of the American college health association*, 27.

## Appendix

### The Comic Book Version

Author's Note: The drawings included in the Appendix are in a draft stage. It is hoped this project might be commercially produced in the future. If this occurs, panels may have to be redone to properly recognize any financial support or contributions; i.e. a Coke or Pepsi dispenser included into a gathering area of the school.

If this final goal is achieved, further details would be added and the comic book would go to the final stage of inking. The pages that follow would then be replaced with the commercially produced version.

# The Bereaver...

## Restorer of Hope

Author's Note: Completed, this title page will contain a menacing illustration depicting the Bereaver to be an antagonist.

I guess a lot of time I felt hopeless towards the idea that life would ever be good again. I thought that I would always be caught inside the unhappiness and the feelings of loss – um ... feeling alone, ah ... and not ... not seeing other people feel the same unhappiness that you feel and sometimes anger too. Wanting to bring back the things that you can't bring back. (Excerpt from Student Interview – September, 2000)

7:35 AN UGLY CONCEPT. LUCKILY WITH MODERN TECHNOLOGY (THE SHOWER BUTTON) I COULD DEFER THE INEVITABLE



MOM, YOU WASH MY NIKE SWEAT SHIRT - THE BLUE ONE?

UH!

DID YOU PUT IT IN THE LAUNDRY?

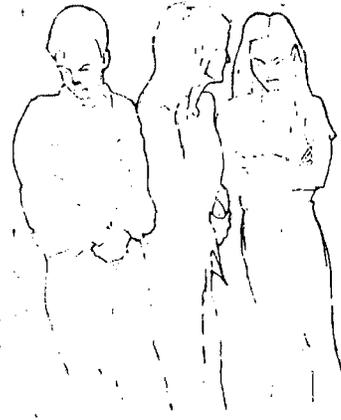
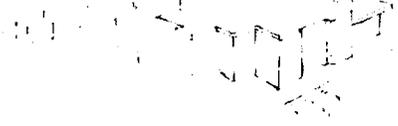
DONT WORRY. I FOUND IT WADDLED UP IN YOUR CLOSET AND CLEANED IT. IT'S ON YOUR DRESSER.

AS USUAL CHAD, MY YOUNGER BROTHER WAS HOGGING ALL THE HOT WATER

HEY SPITWAD, GET OUT OF THE SHOWER OR I'LL FLUSH THE DOWNSTAIRS TOILET



AFTER DOWNING SOME GELATINOUS SCRAMBLED EGGS I HEADED FOR MY ALMA MATER - ADNAMA HIGH. RIGHT AWAY I SPOTTED KELLY'S (MY BEST BUD) 'N CHALLER. I PULLED INTO THE OPEN STALL



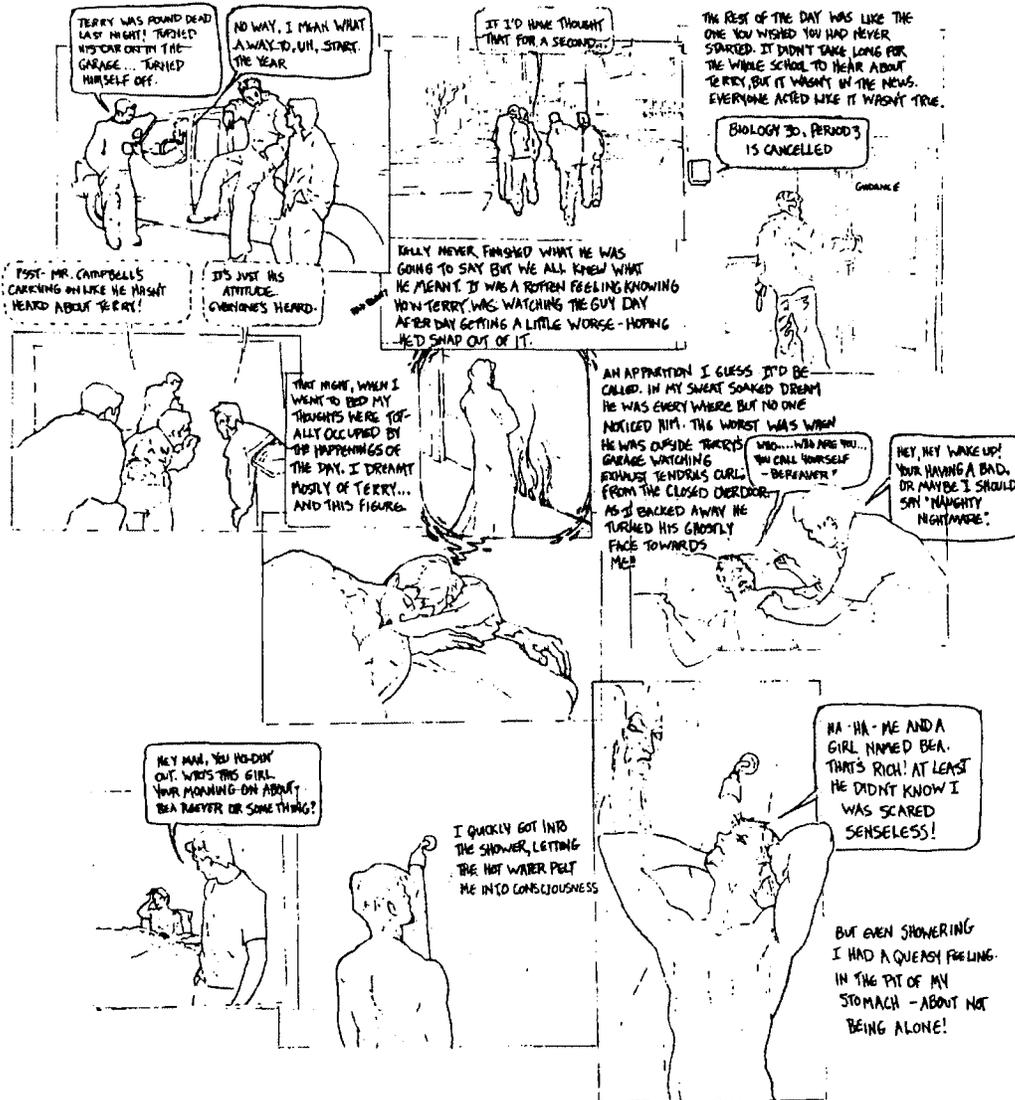
THERE ARE TIMES WHEN INSTINCT OR A SIXTH SENSE SHOULD TELL YOU JUST TO KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT. UNFORTUNATELY MY MOM ALWAYS SAID I NEVER HAD MUCH SENSE.

WHY ARE YOU GUN'S SO HEAVY WITH THE GLOOM? YOUR BEST FRIEND DIE?



NICE GOING, JERKFACE!





...SO THE DERIVATIVE OF 2X^4 IS ...  
HOW IF ONLY THIS SNOW COULD BURY HOW WE KEEP FEELING ABOUT TERRY!



DONT CRIB BEH IT'LL BE OKAY.  
I REMEMBER WATCHING TYLER CONFERTING BETH THAT DAY. NOW THEY'RE BOTH AN ITEM!

TYLER AND I HAVE BEEN BUDDIES FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER. IT'S SORT OF A YING-YANG THING. I ACE ACADEMICS, TYLER RIPS THROUGH ATHLETICS



HOLD 'EM BACK MIGHT I'M GONG LONG.

OUR FRIENDSHIP IS LIKE FOOTBALL. WE ALL INSIDE AROUND TYLER LISTENING TO HIS COMMANDS. HE ALWAYS THROBING FOR CALLING A GREAT PLAY. MISSED PLAYS ARE: SOMETHING ELSE. BUT HE'S A LEADER. I LIKE HIM.



YO TY GREAT JOB AS QB. HOW THAT SEEM'S GONE YA GONNA KICK VOLLEYBALL BUT?



SINCE TERRY'S FINISH. TYLER AND BETH SEEM TO BE "THE" SEEN ROMANCE. BETH AND I CREATED TYLER'S ACADEMICS. IT WAS GREAT AS WE COMBED UP WINS. BUT TO LOSE...



AND THE FINAL SCORE OF FINALS GAME IS 11 FOR BE FRIENDS, IS FOR ADHAMMA HIGH!



EVEN BETH WOULD AVOID TYLER AFTER A LOSS. SHE'D USUALLY CATCH A RIDE HOME WITH ME. TYLER WOULD BE WALKEN FOR A CURE OF PAIN.

JUST BEFORE CHRISTMAS BREAK EVERYTHING CANNED BETWEEN THE TWO OF THEM.



THERE'S THE DISTANCE NOW

SO WHAT WERE YOU UP TO THIS WEEKEND TY?

LONG AS YOU TRYING NOT TO PROOF. I'LL TELL!

SO NOTCH UP ANOTHER WIN FOR THE ALL-STAR



YA BUT DID YOU HAVE TO GO INTO OVERTIME!

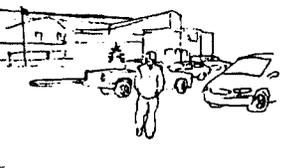
I STOOD THERE LONG ENOUGH TO KNOW WHAT TYLER WAS SAYING. BETH WAS ALSO IN THE COMMON AREA. HE WAS BRAGGING IT UP. JUST ANOTHER WIN.

HE SLOWLY GLANCED AT BETH SMACKERING TO THE GUYS. "SHE MIGHT BE VERBING ON TEARS BUT SHE AINT A VIRGIN ON TERMS."



YO. HERE. WHERE YA GOIN? I'M JUST GETTING TO THE GOOD PART!

I NEVER THOUGHT TYLER CAPABLE OF BEING SUCH A JERK. I HAD TO GET OUT OF THERE. AS I LEFT BETH'S GAZE MET MINE. SHE WAS SILENTLY PLEADING



IT'S NOT TRUE. DONT BELIEVE A WORD.



I WAS SEEING BUT THE LONGER I WALKED IN THE FRESH SNOW THE CALMER I BECAME. IT WAS PECULIAR BUT I DIDNT WANT TO LOOK BACK AND SEE THE MASS MY TRACKS HAD MADE.

HEY BETH, HOW ABOUT WE RUN OUT AND GRAB A BURGER AFTER THE NEXT CLAMS?

SOUNDS LIKE A PLAN. I'M STARVED AND IT'S ONLY TEN O'CLOCK!

BETH AND I HAD HOOKED UP AFTER TYLER'S SPAZZY BEHAVIOR. LIKE THE SPRING AIR WE'RE DISCOVERING THE FREEDOM OF EACH OTHER.

I REALLY LIKED BEING WITH BETH. WE HAD SO MUCH IN COMMON. WE COULD TALK ABOUT ANYTHING. NO SHIT. A LOT OF TIME TALKING TALKING.

THIS IS REALLY NICE. PUT YOUR KEYS AWAY. WE'VE GOTTA WALK.

WALKING THROUGH THE NEIGHBORHOOD WITH BETH MADE ME FEEL LIKE WE WERE SOME NEWLY MARRIED COUPLE OUT FOR A STROLL.

ABOUT HALF WAY TO THE BETH BROUGHT UP TYLER. I WAS SURPRISED BY MY LACK OF JEALOUSY. NONE OF THE HOLLOW-PITTED FORBIDDING I'VE HAD BEFORE. I KNEW TYLER SOMETIMES. PHONED BETH, BUT SINCE THEIR BREAK-UP THEY DIDN'T TALK AT SCHOOL.

YOU DON'T SOUND SO WELL TYLER. WHAT'S GOING ON?

HEY BOBE, EVERYTHING'S COOL. I WAS JUST CHECKING TO SEE IF YA MISSED ME.

TYLER HAD CALLED BETH LAST NIGHT RAMBLING ON ABOUT HIS PARENT'S SEPARATION, MARKS AT SCHOOL, FRIEND TROUBLES. HE WAS IN A DEFINITE DOWNWARD SPIRAL. EVEN THOUGH TYLER COULD BE A ROYAL PAIN HE WAS STILL A FRIEND. WE WERE BOTH WORRIED. ALTHOUGH I COULD SEE BETH WAS CONCERNED ABOUT HER CONTINUING ROLE IN TYLER'S LIFE.

I CARE ABOUT TYLER, MIKE BUT DON'T GET THE WRONG IDEA - IT'S JUST A FRIENDSHIP!

STORIES OF TYLER HAD BEEN CIRCULATING - HIS DRINKING, PARTYING AND ABSENCE AT SCHOOL. LAST WEEKEND HE'D ALMOST DIED ON BEER AND WHO KNOWS WHAT ELSE. HE LIFTED A FRIEND'S CAR, RAN A RED LIGHT AND WAS ALMOST T-BONED BY A PICKUP.

HEY YOU DRUNKEN IDIOT... COME SLEEP WITH MY CAR!

SOMEONE LIFTED MY CAR!

GET A LICENSE WORK!

SCREE

I THOUGHT I WAS FAIRLY CLEVER AND NOT MUCH GETS BY ME. TYLER'S GIRLFRIEND, KIMBERLY HAD BEEN ABSENT FROM SCHOOL FOR SIX DAYS. I DIDN'T THINK ANYTHING OF IT UNTIL THE RUMOUR MILL STARTED GRINDING.

HEY TYLER, WHERE'S KIM BEEN THE LAST FEW DAYS?

ON DID YOU HEAR? SHE'S VISITING HER AUNT WHO'S SICK.

REALLY?

WHAT A MURDER I'D BEEN! IF TYLER AND KIMBERLY ARE FACING THE ISSUE I SUSPECT IT HELPS EXPLAIN TYLER'S BIZARRE BEHAVIOR. THERE HAD BEEN A TIME TYLER WOULD HAVE SOUGHT MY HELP. AT LEAST BETH AND I SHARE OUR FEELINGS.

I THINK I'LL HAVE A BURGER BUT FORGO THE FRIES TODAY

HEY YOU LOVE YOUR FRIES?

YEAH, BUT I JUST FEEL LIKE A CHANGE

DON'T CHANGE TOO MUCH ON ME MIKE. RIGHT NOW I DON'T THINK I COULD HANDLE IT

ENJOYING OUR BURGERS I WANTED TO TELL BETH ABOUT MY NIGHTMARE - THE DEPREMER. INSTEAD I ASKED HER IF SHE HAD ANY NIGHTMARES.

SARAH DEAR, IT'S ONLY A NIGHTMARE. MOM'S HERE

I USED TO BUT MOM HANDED ME TOLD ME NIGHTMARES ARE THE PRODUCTS OF WORRY. I'D WAKE UP SCREAMING MY HEAD OFF BUT NOW I TRY TO RESOLVE ANYTHING NEGATIVE AS IT OCCURS.

WORRY IS LIKE A ROCKING CHAIR, IT GIVES YOU SOMETHING TO DO BUT IT DOESN'T GET YOU ANYWHERE!

THE SUNLIGHT CHASED THE WINTER SHADOWS FROM THE LANDSCAPE AS MY MIND ERICITENED BETH HAD THAT EFFECT ON ME

ARE YOU HES WE'LL BE SOON!

BETH - YOU CAREER! COME BACK HERE!

FACE YOU BACK TO SCHOOL THROUGH THE FIELD!

"SUMMERTIME AND THE LIMBS IS EASY." WELL MIGHT NOT WITH MY SINGING VOICE. BUT BESIDES THE PRESSURE OF GRAD 12 DEPARTMENTALS OUR SCHOOL WAS UNUSUALLY HOT. LIKE OLD DGS THE STUDENTS SOUGHT SHIRT CURTAINS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.

AFTER SEVERAL DAYS OF PUD THIRTY TEMPERATURES STUDENTS WERE GETTING PRETTY TESTY. GROUPS WOULD STAKE THE SHADDEST AREAS AS THEIR TURE. MY FRIENDS HAD A RUNNING FEUD WITH SOME FAIRLY HARD-CORE GIRLS.



OHAY BOYS HAIL YOUR SORRY BUTTS OUT OF OUR SPOT!

YEA WE DONT WANT TO HAVE TO HAIL YOU

OF COURSE WE REFUSED TO MUCK SO THE PERSUADER FOR THE GIRLS WAS TO DOUSE US WITH COLD WATER FROM THEIR WASHROOM... THEY GAINED IT DIDNT COME FROM THE TAP

HEY MAKE THE BATHROOMS BACK-GETS SPLUT!

I CAN SMELL YOU GUYS FROM HERE. YOU NEED SOME REAL CLEAN TOILETS

I DONT KNOW WHO BUT THIS DAY I DECIDED TO CALL THEIR BUNNY - NO BUNNY. I GOT SNAKED BY MY SKIRTIES WHEN THEY STARTED TO BEAT THE ABOUT MINOGGIN WITH WATER BOTTLES I FINALLY RETREATED.



SNAK HIM DOWN

NO RESPONSE! THIS GUNTS BRAIN DEAD.

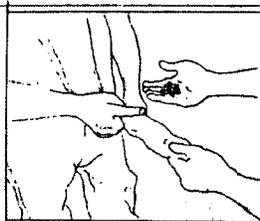
I WAS SNAKED BUT IT FELT GOOD. FOR SOME REASON MY MIND BACK-TRACKED TO THE SPRING WHEN I CHASED BETH ACROSS THE FIELD. THE MELTING SLUSH SPLASHING MY LEGS AND HER WARM EMBRACE. I DROPPED MY SHIRT AND STRETCHED ACROSS THE FROD.



THAT WAS JUST TOO SWEET, NICE. BOY YOU GOT GAME!

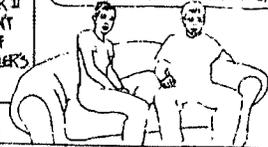
YEA WE OWE YOU A SLUSH FOR SURE. UNFORTUNATELY THAT SNAKED CARCASS AINT GETTING IN MY CAR.

AS I WAS STRETCHED OUT I GOT THINKING 'FUNNY, THESE FRIENDS WERENT THE GANG I STARTED SCHOOL WITH.' THER WAS STILL AUNT, HIS SCHOOL YEAR IN THE TOILET AND HIS HEAVILY INTOXICATED DRUG SCENE.



BETH AND I DECIDED TO TALK TO MRS. ALMMAK. THE SCHOOL'S COUNCELLOR ABOUT OUR CONCERN. AS THE DISCUSSION UNFOLDED AND I RETRACED MY FRIENDSHIP WITH TYLER IT WAS APPARENT I WENT COMPLETELY AWARE OF OTHER ASPECTS IN TYLER'S LIFE.

I COMMENT YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF TYLER I WOULD CARE TO HELP HIM. UNFORTUNATELY TYLER HAS WITHDRAWN FROM OUR SCHOOL. APPARENTLY HE BLAMES HIMSELF FOR TERRY'S DEATH. HE GAVE TERRY SOME PILLS ON THE NIGHT OF THE SUICIDE



WOW - GREAT TO SHED THE FORMALS. NOW I'M GET A BUNNY. LET'S ROLL. THERES A REG WITH MY NAME ON IT.

SHEN'T WITH SOME GIRLS FOR PICS. WE'LL MEET US LATER

WHAT FOLLOWED WAS PRETTY GRIEVSOME. SURE I'D DONE SOME WEEKEND PARTYS IN SCHOOL. I'D BEEN ROCKED A COUPLE OF TIMES BUT I POWERED DOWN LIKE A WOLVERINE ON A DEAD MOOSE. I DONT EVEN RECALL BEING TAKEN FROM THE BONFIRE AND PLACED ON A MAT.

GRAD FINALLY ARRIVES. CELEBRATION OF THE POST AND TENTATIVE STEPS TOWARDS THE FUTURE. AND, OH YEAH..... PARTY!!

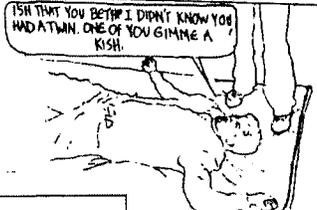


STREETS ARE DENSE. WE'VE FINISHED DINNER. I'M DANCED WITH THEM. NOW LETS BLOW THIS FOPSKILL STAND.

SAFE GRAD WAS AT A COMMUNITY HALL SOMEWHERE. BUSES WERE ARRANGED TO PICK US UP.



HEY, WHERE'S BETH?



ISH THAT YOU BETH I DIDNT KNOW YOU HAD A TWIN. ONE OF YOU GIMME A KISS.

ALTHOUGH I PASSED OUT I DREAMT I WAS WALKING IN A FIELD. OFF IN THE DISTANCE TYLER WAS TALKING TO TERRY. EVEN THOUGH TERRY WAS DEAD THIS SEEMED NATURAL TO ME. TERRY! TERRY I CANT BELIEVE IT'S YOU! TYLER DIDNT TELL ME!



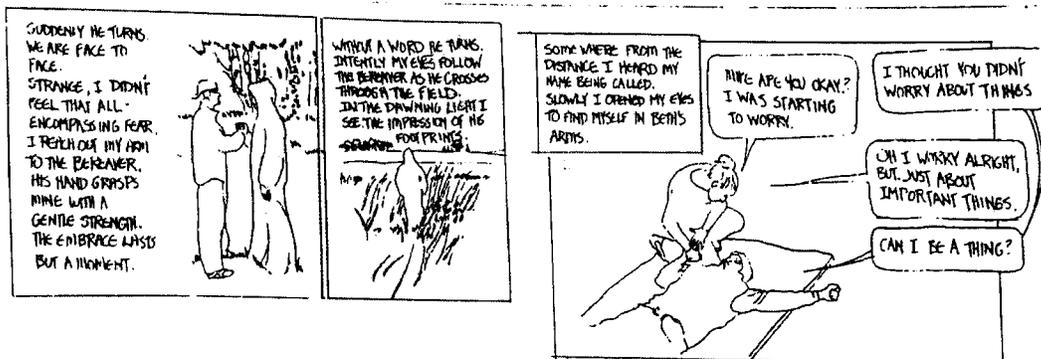
AS I GOT CLOSER THE TWO FIGURES BEGAN TO MERGE. I RAN TO KEEP THEM SEPERATE BUT THE HARDER I RAN THE FASTER THEY MERGED. FINALLY I STOOD INCHES FROM THE FIGURE.



EVEN WITH HIS BACK TO ME IT WAS FAMILIAR. A COLD CHILL. RAN THROUGH MY ENTIRE BODY

BEA... BEA...

I GASEPED HIS NAME BUT COULDN'T GET IT ACROSS MY LIPS. I TRIED AGAIN AND AGHNN.



AS I LOOK BACK ON MY LAST YEAR IN HIGH SCHOOL, IF SOMEONE ASKED ME TO SUMMARIZE MY EXPERIENCES IN ONE WORD IT WOULD BE - FEAR! I DEFINITELY HAD IT AND SAW IT IN MY FRIENDS. FEAR OF MORTALITY, FEAR OF NOT CONFORMING, FEAR OF CHANGE, FEAR OF TALKING ABOUT OUR FEARS.

BETH'S MOM WAS RIGHT. A GOOD DEAL OF FEAR STEMS FROM LETTING IT CONTROL US, FROM NOT WORKING TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING.

I NOW COMPREHEND THAT BEAVERMENT IS A NECESSARY PART OF LIFE. THAT BEAVERMENT IS NOT JUST AN EMOTION FOR DEATH. WE EXPERIENCE IT WITH CHANGES IN RELATIONSHIPS AND THROUGH HAVING OUR LIFE ALTERED.

THE BEAVER IS NO LONGER A SCEPTER OF FEAR IN MY LIFE. RATHER I NOW KNOW HE'S A COMPANION, A COMPANION THAT HELPS ME TO UNDERSTAND LIFE'S EVENTS IN AN IMPERFECT WORLD.