

# Reviving Ophelia

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### **I. Resource List**

#### **Print Resources**

##### **Advice for Parent**

Don't Stop Loving Me: A Reassuring Guide for Mothers of Adolescent Daughters.  
Ann F. Carson.

Father's Daughters: Transforming the Father-Daughter Relationship.  
Maureen Murdock & Fawcett Columbin.

The Little Girl Book: Everything You Need to Know to Raise a Daughter Today.  
David Laskin & Kathleen O'Neill.

Parent/Teen Breakthrough: The Relationship Approach An End to Battles with Teens.  
Mira Kirshenbaum and Charles Foster.

##### **Body Image and Eating Disorders\***

The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women.  
Naomi Wolf.

The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls.  
Joan Jacobs Brumberg.

Hunger Pains: The Woman's Tragic Quest for Thinness.  
Mary Pipher.

Surviving an Eating Disorder: Strategies for Family and Friends.  
Siegal, Brisman, & Weinsher.

Unbearable Weight.  
Susan Bordo.

\*For more information regarding eating disorders see the [Recovering Bodies](#) study guide.

### **Books for Girls**

Girls Know Best: Advice for Girls From Girls On Just About Everything.  
By Girls Just Like You. Beyond Words Publishing.

Great Books for Girls: More Than 600 Books to Inspire Today's Girls and Tomorrow's Women.  
Kathleen Odean.

Tatterhood and Other Tales.  
Ethel Johnston Phelps (folk tales with strong central female characters).

What Are My Rights: 95 Questions and Answers about Teens and the Law.  
Thomas Jacobs. Free Spirit.

### **Communicating with Youth**

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and How to Listen So Kids Will Talk.  
Ade Faber, Elaine Mazlish & Kimberly Ann Coe.

What Children Can Tell Us: Eliciting and Interpreting and Evaluating Critical Information From Children.  
Garbano, James, Stott, Frances & Faculty of the Erikson Institute.

### **Community**

The Shelter of Each Other.  
Mary Pipher.

Bridges of Respect: Creating Support for Lesbian and Gay Youth.  
Kathleen Whitlock.

### **Gender\***

Are We Winning Yet: How Women Are Changing Sports and Sports Are Changing Women.  
Mariah Burton Nelson.

This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color.  
Eds Cherrie Moraga & Gloria Anzaldua.

The Difference Growing Up Female in America.  
Judy Marvin.

Girl's and Women's Lives.  
Carol Gilligan and Lyn Mikel Brown.

You Just Don't Understand.  
Deborah Tannen.

\*For additional books about women and beauty, sexuality and social pressures see Jean Kilbourne's [Resources for Change List](#).

### **Masculinity**

"Advertising and the Construction of Violent White Masculinity."  
Jackson Katz. In Gender, Race and Class in Media. Eds. Gail Dines & Jean M. Humez.  
1995.

Reaching Up for Manhood: Transforming the Lives of Boys in America  
Geoffrey Canada

### **Media Criticism**

Media Literacy.  
Gloria De Gaetano.

Minorities and Media: Diversity and the End of Mass Communication.  
Clint C. Wilson II & Felix Gutierrez.

Screen Smarts: A Family Guide to Gender, Race and Class in Media: A Text-Reader.  
Eds. Gail Dines & Jean M. Humez (a comprehensive anthology).

Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female With the Mass Media.  
Susan Douglas. Random House.

### **Self-Esteem**

Girls Talk: Staying Strong, Feeling Good, Sticking Together.  
Judith Harlan.

100 Ways to Build Self-esteem in Children and Adults.  
Full Esteem Ahead.

Schoolgirls: Young Women, Self-Esteem, and the Confidence Gap.  
Penny Orenstein.

The Shared Heart: Portraits and Stories Celebrating Lesbian, Gay and Bixsexual Young People.  
Adam Mastoon.

Sisters of the Yams.  
bell hooks.

Things Will Be Different for My Daughter: A Practical Guide to Building SelfEsteem and Self-Reliance from Infancy through the Teen Years.  
Mindy Bingham and Sandy Stryler.

### **Sexual Harassment and Abuse**

Dating Violence: Young Women in Danger.  
Barrie Ley, Ed.

Hostile Hallways: AAUW Survey on Sexual Harassment in America's Schools.  
AAUW Eductional Foundation.

Safe at Last: A Handbook for Recovery from Abuse.  
David Schopick and Suzanne Burr.

Secrets in Public: Sexual Harassment in Our Schools.  
Nan Stein, Nancy Marshall & Linda Tropp. The NOW Legal Defense Fund and the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, Wellesley, MA. 1993.

### **Sexuality and Health**

The Journey Out: A Guide About Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Teens.  
Rachel Pollack.

The New Our Bodies Ourselves.  
Boston Women's Health Book Collective. (practical information about women's health, sexuality, birth control, sexually transmitted disease).

Promiscuities: The Secret Struggle for Womanhood.  
Naomi Wolf.

### **Social Action and Volunteerism**

Bridges of Power: Women's Multicultural Alliances.  
Eds. Lisa Albrecht & Rose M. Brewer.

Kids with Courage: True Stories About Young People Making a Difference.  
Barbara A. Lewis.

The Kids Guide to Service Projects: Over 500 Service Ideas For Young People Who  
Want to Make a Difference.  
Barbara A. Lewis.

The Kid's Guide to Social Action: How to Solve the Social Problems You Choose and  
Turn Creative Thinking into Positive Action.  
Barbara A. Lewis.

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## **ORGANIZATIONS**

American Academy of Pediatrics  
[www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org) 847-228-5005 (many media literacy resources)

Blacklist  
[www.blackstripe.com/blacklist](http://www.blackstripe.com/blacklist) (for the African-American gay, lesbian, bisexual  
community)

Center for Media Literacy  
[www.medialit.org](http://www.medialit.org) 213-931-4177

CityKids Foundation  
[www.citykids.com](http://www.citykids.com) 212-925-3320

Full Esteem Ahead  
[www.europa.com/~kmasarie](http://www.europa.com/~kmasarie) 503-297-8742

Girls Inc.  
[www.girlsinc.org](http://www.girlsinc.org) 212-689-3700

GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network)  
[www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org) 212-727-0135

G.I.R.L.S Conference Homepage  
[www.gis.net/~adena/girls.htm](http://www.gis.net/~adena/girls.htm)

Girl Power  
[www.girlpower.com/](http://www.girlpower.com/)

Go Girls!

[www.goldinc.com/gogirls](http://www.goldinc.com/gogirls) 206-382-3587 (national eating disorders-related project designed to empower teens to voice their influential opinions to advertisers)

Girl Scouts

[www.gsusa.org](http://www.gsusa.org) 847-640-0500 ("Making Choices" program)

NGTLF (National Gay and Lesbian Taskforce)

[www.ngltf.org](http://www.ngltf.org) 202-332-6483

Media Education Foundation

[www.mediaed.org](http://www.mediaed.org) 800-897-0089 (provides educational videos on media, culture, gender, race and sexuality)

Planned Parenthood

[www.plannedparenthood.org](http://www.plannedparenthood.org)

Teen Voices

[www.teenvoices.com](http://www.teenvoices.com) 888-882-TEEN

## **PUBLICATIONS**

New Moon Magazine

[www.newmoon.org](http://www.newmoon.org)

Teen Voices

[www.teenvoices.com](http://www.teenvoices.com) 888-882-TEEN

Vibe Magazine Online

[www.vibe.com](http://www.vibe.com) (celebrates urban music and the American youth culture)

Wings

[www.europa.com/~kmasarie/bugrep.htm](http://www.europa.com/~kmasarie/bugrep.htm) 503-297-8742

## **MEDIA COMPANIES: Where to send your comments**

ABC Entertainment

2020 Avenue of the Stars

Los Angeles, CA 90067

CBS Entertainment

51 West 52nd Street

New York, NY 10019

(212) 975-4321

NBC Enterprises  
3500 West Olive Avenue  
15th Floor  
Burbank, CA 91505

Fox Broadcasting  
PO Box 900  
Beverly Hills, CA 90213

PBS Corporation  
1320 Braddock Pl.  
Alexandria, VA 22314

MTV  
1515 Broadway, 23 Floor  
New York, NY 10036

Nickelodeon  
1515 Broadway, 20 Floor  
New York, NY 10036

ESPN  
935 Middle St.  
Bristol, CT 06010-7454

For more information about media ownership see MEF's MediaSpace: Project on Global Media and Public Space [www.mediaspace.org](http://www.mediaspace.org)

## II. Exercises

Below are a series of questions and exercises designed for educators by *Reviving Ophelia* video producer and media educator Susan Ericsson. The topic headings are the same as those used in the video. Click on the images to jump to particular topic.

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### TEEN PRESSURES

1. Have girls list the activities they enjoy or would like to try (sports, politics, reading, art, music, science, writing, games). Inquire about how

regularly they participate in them. If students do not participate with regularity, a common trend that Mary Pipher notes, suggest they pick a couple to try. Provide them with resources that will help them in their pursuits. Create an awareness of the rewards of volunteer work (helping with environmental clean up, health services, human rights, soup kitchens, animal care).

2. Discuss reasons why girls may want to join a self-defense class. Link self-defense to (1) the need for girls to learn to protect themselves and (2) the social expectations placed upon girls' behavior and bodies (i.e. not to be aggressive or strong, but to be thin, passive, beautiful).
  
3. Have students write down the qualities and values that they believe are important for friends to possess and then compare this list to the qualities of the friends with whom they actually spend time. Are they similar? If not, discuss the possibility of shifting patterns to spend time with people with whom they share interests and values. [This exercise is geared for one-on-one discussions or for groups of people who are not well acquainted.]
  
4. Have students list the qualities they like and dislike about themselves. Have them discuss the ways friends, family, media and society influence their judgments. If dislikes include criticisms of looks, body, and eating habits, help participants construct challenges to their assumptions. Attempt to locate the specific sources of negative messages and counter them. For example, "rather than feeling bad about my body, I'm going to criticize the media and people who tell me I'm supposed to look a certain way." Or "I'm going to be offended by weight loss ads, instead of thinking I should use their products I'd rather be strong than skinny." Or "I feel bad about my looks after watching this sitcom; I'm not going to watch it anymore."
  
5. Create a student theater group which could act out various scenarios about issues students have experienced. Role play situations that have ended poorly and then perform them again with a more satisfactory outcome.

## **MEDIA PRESSURES**

1. Record an hour of prime-time television.
  - a) Count the number of thin women and the number of women who aren't thin. Then go to a public space and count the number of thin and non-thin women there. How do the numbers compare? What message is the media giving women about

body weight? Do the same thing for men. How do media messages about women and men differ?

b) Further break down women and men by racial categories. How does the racial representation on television compare to the population distribution? What message is the media giving about people of different races?

c) Identify what activities women and men are doing. Compare the similarities and differences. Are they equally as active? If not, who is less active and what specifically are they doing? What jobs do the women and men portrayed have? What jobs are Asian women and men doing? Latino? Black? White?

d) Write an article for the school newspaper presenting the results and implications of the media analysis.

2. In a group of girls and boys, have everyone anonymously write down on a sheet of paper how they feel about their looks and identify their gender. Swap sheets and read them aloud. Discuss the differences between what girls and boys say. Explore the many ways society gives the message that beauty and thinness are the most important characteristics of girls/women. Discuss WHY girls are given these messages about beauty. Discuss ways both girls and boys can counter these damaging messages.

3. The media regularly give girls and women the mixed message that they should consume many different kinds of "fattening" foods and that they should be thin to be considered beautiful. Mary Pipher notes that these conflicting messages are one reason for the high prevalence of eating disorders. Create a cut-out collage with images and words from fashion magazines that pass along messages about food and beauty. Then write down and add to the collage messages more important for girls.

4. Have students identify an offensive advertisement and compose a letter to the company, explaining the criticism. Discuss the reasons why consumer boycotts can affect company actions and have students consider taking such action. Have students collect signatures for their letters. If the ad appears on television, consider sending the letter to the station. (See the [Resources List](#) for major television network addresses.)

5. Representations of violence in film have victim/perpetrator trends that fall along race and gender lines. Watch several films which contain violence and note who play the role of victims and who play the role of perpetrators. Also observe

how characters express or don't express feelings. What messages do these trends in film create about violence and emotional expression in relation to race and gender? Who generally express what kinds of emotions? Who tend to be perpetrators? Who victims?

## **SEXUAL PRESSURES**

1. In order to be persuasive, advertisements frequently couple a product with an abstract quality or feeling. The goal is to create the message that if you use this product you will find romance, become sexually attractive, achieve happiness, etc. These messages frequently are about sexuality, love, and relationships. Analyze a group of ads and identify what quality or feeling is being sold with the actual product. Deconstructing media messages is an important tool for resisting consumer manipulation.

2. Develop a discussion about romance and sex. Have students anonymously write on paper responses to a question you pose, swap sheets, and read answers aloud. This can be a good way to begin a discussion such that no one feels criticized for their opinion. Encourage students to determine their own desires and limits and discuss ways to communicate these. Have students imagine or role play difficult situations and what they can do and say to maintain their chosen boundaries. Have them think about who are safe people with whom they could discuss concerns and seek advice (parents, peers, counselors, teachers). Let them know that if their boundaries have been or ever are violated, they should tell an ally who can help them be safe and take appropriate action. Provide them with some specific local resources (school counselors, rape crisis centers, confidential teen health advisors at clinics and HMOs).

3. Frequently in the media women are depicted as sexually attractive and men are depicted as desiring those sexually attractive women. One result is that it is virtually always men, and not women, who are seen as having sexual desires. Women are represented as the objects of sexual attention and men are represented as the sexual actors. When women are depicted as having desires, they are usually shown as wanting to be a sexual *object*.

a) Analyze a movie, sitcom, commercial, or music video, paying attention to how women and men are sexually depicted. Count (separately for women and men) the number of whole bodies and fragmented body parts. What are the many visual ways that women are gazed upon and men are the gazers?

b) How do media representations of sexuality vary by race?

- c) Identify ways that sex becomes confused with sexual violence.
- d) Compare media forms to address the different ways they sexualize women -- sitcoms, music videos, movies, sports magazines, fashion magazines, commercials. Do some objectify women more than others?
- e) How do media representations of sexuality normalize heterosexuality?

4. Humor is an important way that values are conveyed. Have students recall jokes they've heard in school or seen on television about gender, race and sex. Analyze how the humor in them functions and what values are being conveyed. For example, jokes frequently criticize fatness, equate blonde women with ignorance, and devalue gay people.

### **III. Mary's Tips**

Below is advice Mary Pipher gives to parents, therapists and educators in her workshops regarding adolescent development, professional practice and social change.

#### **COGNITIVE ERRORS OF ADOLESCENCE**

1. Black-white thinking. Parents are considered either awesome or awful.
2. The need to categorize people into geeks, preps and cool.
3. Over-generalized thinking. "No one else's parents make them walk to school." "Everybody else is getting a car for their sixteenth birthday."
4. Imaginary audience syndrome. This is the adolescent's feeling that everyone is watching and preoccupied with the smallest detail of her life. Example - being upset over a bad hair day.
5. Egocentric thought. It's difficult to focus on anyone else's experience. Example - "I do all the work around here."
6. Emotional reasoning. If I feel something, it must be true. Example- "If I feel unpopular I am unpopular."
7. Historical shift toward feeling vulnerable. Example- historically, girls would feel that they could have sex without birth control and get pregnant. This is no longer true. What has changed is that teenagers experience directly so much more tragedy that they don't feel invulnerable. Instead, they feel scared.
8. Preoccupation with right and wrong, fairness. Teens have long lists of shoulds, high expectations for others, especially parents.

9. Present-oriented. Focus is on short-term not long-term gratification.
10. Serious miscalculations about adult wisdom, or stated differently, they believe that adults know both more and less than they do.

### **GOALS FOR THERAPY**

1. We need to protect.
2. We need to connect.
3. We can be purveyors of hope.
4. We can be purveyors of respect.
5. We can clarify thinking.
6. We can help families develop strategies for making good decisions.
7. We can teach empathy.
8. We can promote authenticity and creativity.
9. We can fight secrets, promote openness and encourage family members to face pain directly.
10. We can help families diffuse anxiety and cope with stress.
11. We can help families control consumption, violence and addictions.
12. We can help family members find the balance between individuation and connection.
13. We can promote moderation and balance.
14. We can foster humor.
15. We can help people build good character.

### **THERAPY'S MISTAKES: Ten Mistakes That Therapists Make**

1. Therapists have often labeled family as the cause of all problems.
2. Therapy has been hard on women.
3. Therapy has pathologized ordinary experience and taught that suffering needs to be analyzed.
4. We have focused on weakness rather than resilience.
5. Some of our treatments have created new problems.
6. We have encouraged narcissism and checked basic morality at the doors of our offices.
7. We have focused on individual salvation rather than collective wellbeing.

8. We have confused ethical and mental health issues, empathy and accountability.
9. Some therapists abuse their power.
10. We've suggested that therapy is more important than real life.

### **DOING AMBULANCE WORK: Therapy with adolescent girls**

My two main goals are:

1. to attend to the deep (rather than surface) structure of messages in order to assess needs.
2. to further cognitive and emotional development.

Many kids don't need a person with a Ph.D. as much as they need someone who knows them, is a good listener and is a good problem solver.

#### **A. Intra-personal Skills Exercises**

1. Centering: North Star Therapy

Questions: Who are you? How do you know what you truly think? Who do you most respect? How are you different from your mother and father? How are you alike? What are your deepest values?

Assignments: Diaries, autobiographies, and poetry.

2. Thinking vs. Feeling. Stabilizing feelings. Relaxation training and rating system, modulating thinking. If A is 1 and B is 10 what is C?

Questions that foster cognitive growth: Last week you liked X and this week you think he's a jerk, how do you reconcile those two positions? How do you think Y felt when you called him Z? What rights do you think parents should have? Do you think if two people disagree one of them has to be wrong?

3. Managing pain and anger—at one of my speeches I overheard a mother say "Every summer my daughter is Okay and her nails grow out, then with the school year, her hands become bloody and mangled."

4. Self-validation skills.
5. Wellness program.

### **B. Inter-personal Skills Exercises**

1. Conscious choices—For example, neighbor whose sixth grade daughter shoplifted or girl who loved to play the clarinet but the band kids at her school were isolated and labeled geeks, teased a lot by peers. Should she join?

a) Boundaries:

b) Position statements:

c) Defining relationships:

d) Sexual decision making: As one teen said, "I'm so sick of sex I wish I lived on a desert Island." Another said "I know that having sex can mean having your funeral."

e) Perspective Skills:

f) Time Travel:

g) Altruism:

h) Anthropology field work: Many issues, such as lookism, consumerism, sex, role of women, violent media with women as victims.

i) Resistance training:

### **TIPS FOR A CHANGING WORLD**

1. Establish parent support and community groups.
2. Create city wide activities for youth that have adult supervision and guidance.
3. Begin letter writing campaigns to companies that exploit children or have offensive ads.
4. Refuse to buy products from companies whose ads offend.
5. Develop mentoring programs.

6. Seek self-defense training.
7. Devise training for preteens on proper ways to relate to each other.
8. Organize supervised activities for teens to gather, such as coffee houses and also settings where teens and older people could gather, talk, play games and work.
9. Establish community programs to turn off televisions.
10. Regulate the amount of television and other media in the home.
11. Cancel subscriptions to child hurting magazines and explain why.
12. Encourage reading, especially stories about people who have made a difference and made good choices.
13. Learn about the childhood's of Famous Americans.
14. Pledge to do good work.

### **TIPS FOR PARENTS**

1. Adolescents are influenced by relationships and rules. Rules are important, but in the absence of relationships, rules are hard to enforce.
2. Validate your daughter's adult behavior whenever possible.
3. Encourage honesty and authenticity rather than niceness and popularity.
4. Encourage your daughter to do something she loves.
5. Encourage your daughter's educational pursuits, especially in math and science. Praise her intellect.
6. Examine your own sexism and gender-based assumptions. Try to model androgyny.
7. Talk to your daughter about your sexual values and about how to handle real sexual situations.
8. Help your daughter make wise choices about media, tools and consumption.
9. Help your daughter develop a wellness program. Wellness includes nutrition, exercise and stress management.
10. Help your daughter form a plan for dealing with drugs and alcohol.
11. Sign your daughter up for a self-defense course.
12. Form a support group of parents in the community.
13. Take your daughter to the mountains.

### **ASSIGNMENTS: Some Ideas for Family Homework**

1. I ask families to record their victories.
2. I encourage families to orchestrate "corrective emotional experiences." With adolescents, corrective emotional experiences work better than punishments. Relationship-oriented reparations are often the most effective.
3. After families have experienced trauma, I help them design healing ceremonies.
4. I recommend ceremonies of acknowledgment and forgiveness after an extramarital affair. Many marriages can be saved, but the couple must deal with what happened, express their painful feelings and resolve to move on. After betrayals, violence and losses, ceremonies can help with healing.
5. I encourage families to make conscious choices about media.
6. I encourage clients to read some self-help literature. I recommend works about overcoming adversity.
7. I encourage the gifts of attention, lessons, encouragement and experiences.
8. I encourage families to develop rituals. These can be for seasons, significant family events and rites of passage.
9. I encourage families to increase their expressions of affection.
10. I design experiments to help people sanctify time.

#### **IV. Excerpts from Mary Pipher's Interview with MEF**

A clinical psychologist in private practice in Lincoln, Nebraska, Mary Pipher has been seeing adolescent girls and families for some 25 years. She and her husband, Jim, also a clinical psychologist, have raised two children, a boy and a girl. Dr. Pipher received her BA in cultural anthropology from the University of California at Berkeley in 1969 and her Ph.D. in clinical psychology from the University of Nebraska in 1977. **Reviving Ophelia** was published in 1994 to help parents understand the pressures teenage girls face in this culture. It struck a responsive chord, and largely by word of mouth from one parent to another, it hit the number one spot on the bestseller list by the following year. She is also author of **The Shelter of Each Other** and **Hunger Pains: The Modern Woman's Tragic Quest for Thinness**. In 1998, Mary Pipher was awarded the distinguished Presidential Award from the American Psychological Association.

The three books cited above can be obtained in paperback from Ballantine Publishing Group, Random House. For Direct Orders call: 1-800-733-3000.

Her newest book, to be published in March 1999 by Riverhead Books is titled, **Another Country: The Emotional Terrain of Our Elders** \$24.95. For Direct Orders call (Credit Card accepted): 1-800-631-8571.

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## **What has changed since you were a teenager?**

I was a teenager in Beaver City, Nebraska, little town of about 400 people. My mom was a doctor in that town. I knew everybody, and I knew the name of every dog in that town. And so when I walked around that world, I was moving among people who I knew well, and who knew me well. Increasingly, that's not the experience of children. They aren't growing up in communities of adults who care about them. They're constantly meeting strangers, and they've been socialized to be frightened of strangers. So they're moving among people they have some reason to fear. They don't get nurtured the way children were nurtured thirty years ago. And they don't get corrected and informed about their behavior the way I did. Now, some of the rules I learned were silly. Some of the rules I learned, I could hardly wait to cast off when I left home. But the fact of the matter is, there were a lot of adults deeply invested in my becoming a wellbehaved civic citizen. And that's something children don't experience as much. So loss of community is one thing.

Another thing that's changed, of course, is children have a new community. They're being raised in an electronic village. They grow up-- all the children of the world know Sting, know Madonna, know Princess Diana. There's an international community now, of personas that children know very well. They all listen to the same music all over the world. There's an international language that children know. But it doesn't connect them to real people. And furthermore, many of the stories children hear from the people in this electronic community are stories not about raising healthy children.

What I like to see is stories told to children by people who love them. When you think about it, we've been in human families for about four million years. Telling stories is an old, primal business. For four million years, at the end of a day, parents, adults have sat with the children they knew, maybe had their arm around them, around a fire. They told them stories that reflected the needs of the tribe, the events of the day, the developmental needs of the child. If the kid looked scared, they'd maybe, like, tone the story down. If the child was going to sleep, they'd maybe zip it up a little bit. The stories were about helping people relax, entertaining the children, instructing people on the things they needed to know to grow up. Those are the kinds of stories that we still need now -- stories told by people who are deeply invested in the rearing of particular children, in particular places. So I think it's very important that children hear stories told to them by real people, who know them and love them.

The other thing is, if you think about our big national stories, they're so depressing. I mean, there's -- the Oklahoma bombing, the O.J. Simpson story, the Susan Smith drowning her two children story. They're stories that make us feel bad about our country, bad about ourselves. The good stories, the stories of hope, those stories don't get published in the newspapers. They aren't on the nightly news as much. And it's unfortunate, because those are the stories that motivate people to act.

My favorite, by the way, is *The Adventures of Shelby Woo*. Have you seen that show? It's [about] an Asian girl, about eleven or twelve years old, who's a detective. Shelby Woo is her name. And it's kind of a remake in the 90's of the old *Dana Sisters*, or *Hardy Boys*, or *Nancy Drew*. She's a very assertive, engaging detective, has very funny adventures, so that's a good one.

One of the things I get asked, is if I believe in censorship. Because I am a pretty harsh critic of the media. And I don't really believe in censorship, although I do believe that along with our right to free speech, we have a responsibility-- to teach children the right things. I think one of the problems we have as a culture right now is we're letting down a whole generation of children, in terms of giving them good guidelines as to how to be decent adults. And they will suffer and we will suffer because of our failure to give children good advice on growing up. But I really don't believe in censorship. What I think is not that we have too many stories, but that we have too few stories. Too few corporations are telling all the children in the world too few stories with too few plots. And those plots, those stories for the most part, are about making money and raising corporate profits, not raising children.

### **How do you compare the social pressures girls face with those boys face?**

When you talk about girls' rights, or women's rights, or something like that, there's a certain number of people that immediately get upset, and think that you're arguing that somehow women suffer more than men. When I wrote *Reviving Ophelia*, I was very careful never to compare, do boys suffer less, do girls suffer more, et cetera. I don't think suffering contests do anybody any good. I think it's theoretically and empirically impossible to demonstrate who suffers more. It's a subjective state! It's impossible to prove, and furthermore, it's very polarizing. So I never use that kind of argument. What I do say, is to me, it is absolutely unrefutable that teenage girls have a very hard time coping with this culture. And that's something we need to pay attention to.

### **What advice do you have for parents?**

One of the things I talk about in *The Shelter of Each Other*, is how it's become harder to become a good enough parent. A man put it very well to me. He said, I grew up in a dysfunctional family, my dad drank too much, my parents fought, but I was in a functional community, and I turned out okay. My children have very functional parents, my wife and I get along well, we think a lot about our kids, we're a very child-oriented couple. But the children are in a dysfunctional community, and they're having a much harder time.

Well, there's so many things to tell parents. The main thing I tell parents in the nineties is, to survive in this nineties culture, you need to protect your kids from what's ugly, obnoxious, and connect with what's good and beautiful. And I deliberately don't tell parents what those things are, because that's your job as a family, to sort through your own values, and come up with your own ideas about what's good and beautiful, and what's noxious. I mean, for example, in our family, we love the natural world, we love music, I love books, so those are things I wanted my children to have a lot of exposure to. Other families could choose sports, or they could choose politics. It doesn't matter so much, as that you make good, conscious decisions.

One of the things I think is really important for families, is not to just let the culture happen to you. Because the culture's pretty noxious right now for families, and what you want to do is make good, conscious decisions about how you interact with the broader culture.... You have to do all sorts of things to protect your time, to protect your money, to protect your private space, and to build some walls around your family. And by walls, I don't mean literal walls, of course. I mean walls that come from having a family identity, from having family rituals, from having family meals, from having things that your family loves to do together. These things, by the way, end up holding teenagers' lives in place. Having a sense that they can count on Dad to take them out for an ice cream cone on Sunday afternoon, or the first ball game of the season's coming up, and the family will be going together.

Three things that adults remember with the greatest pleasure from childhood: time outdoors, family meals, and family vacations. So my simplest advice to parents is, if you want your children to have happy memories, spend time outdoors with them, eat family meals together, and take them on vacation. And they'll have good memories of your family.

**Some of Mary Pipher's stories included in the interview, but not the video.**

One of the reasons we're starting to be a sick culture, is our stories are sick. And one of the ways anybody can be an instrument of culture change, is to have something good happen in their life, notice something good that's going on somewhere, and go out and tell that as a story of hope. Here's an example, just a tiny little story of what I mean.

Because the stories of hope so often aren't in the newspapers or on the t.v., we have to do this community by community, person by person. It's a sort of an underground press, an underground way of conveying stories.

I went and spoke in this town, and a teacher in this town had heard the saying-- you know that saying of practice random acts of kindness and senseless beauty. Well, she'd heard that saying, so she was teaching a third grade class, and she told them that saying, and she said, from now on, whenever you do anything kind or beautiful, come tell me. She started giving them awards at the end of the week. Well, the other classes heard about it, they started doing it, all the kids at the school got caught up in it. So the school paper started publishing things, the city paper picked it up, a town of about 10,000 people. Then, the city paper started offering an award in the community, to whoever did the best random act of kindness or senseless beauty that week. Well, this town must have had a lot of competitive people, because everybody starts trying to out-do themselves. And people started being so nice to each other, they'd do stuff like bake up a bunch of brownies and walk around their neighborhood handing them out, or-- when I was in this town, it was a funny town to be in, because you could hardly open your own car door. You'd pull up someplace, somebody's come run open the car, carry your groceries for you, ask if you needed umbrella over your head. People had just gotten socialized because of this little tiny thing, into knocking themselves out to see who could be the nicest. And it had stayed long beyond the original teacher in the story. That kind of story -- very good story for people to hear.

Here's another one I heard. This is environmental story [that] happened in Minnesota. There's a young farmer, he's farming on his grandfather's land, he's putting the kind of chemicals that kill the soil on the land, because that's what all the other farmers are doing. But he has a baby daughter, and they get in the shower, he's giving his little daughter a shower, and while this water is pouring across his beautiful little daughter's flesh, he realizes it's full of chemicals, and it could eventually hurt his daughter. And he gets out of the shower and he dries off his daughter, and he decided, I'm not using those chemicals anymore. I want my daughter to grow up healthy, and I want her friends yet unborn to grow up healthy. And he stood up at a grange meeting, in a little community in Minnesota, and told that story, and a bunch of guys quit using chemicals on the basis of that little story. So I'm a believer that a small story like that about the kind of ordinary things

everybody in this room experiences every week, can be a big force for changing the culture.

### **Is there hope?**

One of the things I notice, is that when I bring up the phrase, cultural change, people's eyes glaze over. They think, "what can I do to change the culture?" They don't feel powerful enough to change the culture. But what I really believe, is cultural change is a million individual acts of kindness and courage.

Let me leave you with the last few lines of the book, *Reviving Ophelia*. "Let's work toward a culture in which there is a place for every human gift. In which children are safe and protected, women are respected, and men and women can love each other as whole human beings. Let's work for a culture in which the incisive intellect, the willing hands, and the happy heart are beloved. Then our daughters will have a place where all their talents will be appreciated, and they can flourish like green trees, under the sun and the stars."

### **Girl Scouts Illinois Crossroads Council Video Workshop**

The following guide is a workshop designed by Elizabeth Ablah, Program Consultant for the Girl Scouts Illinois Crossroads Council. Feel free to use this for developing a workshop or guided classroom discussion of your own.

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The Media Education Foundation's *Reviving Ophelia* video inspired the Girl Scouts Illinois Crossroads Council to develop a *Reviving Ophelia* workshop with the targeted audience of young women (ages 11-18) and their parents, guardians, and/or troop leaders.

The workshops have been tremendously successful. Facilitators enable participants to effectively communicate their ideas and feelings in a safe environment - identifying cultural themes and developing action steps to better our communities. Workshop participants have such positive experiences, they encourage their families and friends to watch the video and get involved in similar discussions.

### **MATERIALS**

Colored markers  
2 easels

The *Reviving Ophelia* video  
TV/VCR  
Sign-in sheets  
Pens  
Paper  
Evaluations

## PRE-WORKSHOP PREPARATION

Prepare the easels with subject titles (headings):

- < Easel A, page one = STRESSORS
- < Easel A, page two = DESCRIBE A 9 YEAR OLD
- < Easel A, page three = SUPPORT
- < Easel B, page one = INFLUENCES
- < Easel B, page two = DESCRIBE A 13-15 YEAR OLD
- < Easel B, page three = ACTION STEPS

Review curriculum

Cue the video to the beginning of the tape; adjust volume; turn off the monitor

Display the sign-in sheets, pens

Encourage participants to sign-in upon arrival.

## INTRODUCTION

Facilitator introduces herself: name, affiliation with Girl Scouts & "excited to be with you today because this is such an important program."

Encourage participants to take notes, especially when we talk about "action steps." (Distribute paper if they wish to do so.) Let them know that they are going to participate in activities that could feel overwhelming if they did not have the time to process/talk about it. Developing the "action steps" will feel good and will balance out some of the negatives they will discuss. (1 minute)

Get to know everyone around the room - their names, ages and what they like about being their ages. Facilitator leads with a positive example. Often young women identify "nothing" good about being their age. This nicely leads us to the next section. (Depends on the size of the group: about 10 minutes)

#### EASEL A: STRESSORS

What are stressors for these young women? If this is a group of young women and adults, use one marker color for the young women's comments, and use another marker color for the adults' comments. Ask the young women to begin their list - have them informally, verbally list the things that stress them out. The facilitator writes their comments on the easel. After they run dry, ask the adults to participate, while still encouraging the young women to participate. (This will take about 15 minutes, but try to facilitate by following their lead. If they are contributing a lot of stressors, keep going!) When they finish, keep the list visible. As they move on, encourage them to think of other stressors.

#### EASEL B: INFLUENCES

What/who influences young women? (See above for more information). (15 minutes)

When they have completed these lists, encourage them to review what they have accomplished. Also, make them aware of how many stressors they are able to identify - that they live with this amount of stress everyday! Let them know that the question becomes - what can we do about it, and we get to this soon.

Ask them to watch for the stressors and influences they have listed (in the video).

#### EASEL A: DESCRIBE A 9 YEAR OLD GIRL

Describe a 9 year old girl (5 minutes)

#### EASEL B: DESCRIBE A 13-15 YEAR OLD GIRL

Okay, now describe a 13-15 year old girl (5 minutes)

Ask them what they notice. Differences, similarities.

#### THE VIDEO

Introduce the *Reviving Ophelia* video. Mary Pipher is a psychologist and professor in Nebraska. She wrote *Reviving Ophelia* (the book), in response to a large number of young women she was seeing: their issues were much more complex than what psychology was addressing at that point. (Basically, this is a concise, intensive classroom video version of the book.)

Watch *Reviving Ophelia*. (35 minutes)

Ask them, "Did anything stick out? Do you have immediate comments or ideas?" Process their thoughts with them. Make sure they are aware that regardless of whether they are aware of it, they just processed a great deal of information.

After immediate reactions, ask the young women if they thought it was an accurate portrayal of their age group and of the culture. Why or why not?

Also, discuss Ophelia's story if it has not already been discussed.

#### EASEL A: SUPPORT

Methods of support. (in adult color): What can adults do to support young women: (in young women's color) what can young women do to support each other?

#### EASEL B: ACTION STEPS

Invite everyone to participate in developing action steps, even if they are recounting Mary Pipher's action steps. Remind them of the Margaret Mead quote.

Any comments or questions? Thank the participants for an excellent job.

#### CLOSING

Facilitator distributes evaluations and pens and wishes them a good day/night.