

A Parent's Guide

Nightmare on Puberty St.

Educational Theatre, a Community Benefit of Kaiser Permanente

NIGHTMARE
ON PUBERTY ST.

Your child has been invited to see Kaiser Permanente's live theatre production, *Nightmare on Puberty St.*



Show Summary

Nightmare on Puberty St. is an age-appropriate, live theatrical performance about four young people on their journey through adolescence. As the characters wrestle with the question, "Am I normal?" they learn to cope with the changes affecting their bodies and minds. The frank and sometimes funny program shows students how to cope with many of the issues of puberty, including how to handle pressure to be sexually active, how to build self-esteem, and where to find help if faced with feelings of depression or thoughts of suicide. By the end of the performance, students understand everyone goes through changes during puberty, and there are resources to help them adjust to those changes.

Nightmare on Puberty St. was created in conjunction with physicians, teachers, licensed counselors, and parents. The performer/educators in the play receive extensive training from doctors and licensed counselors at the beginning of each school year. Their training continues throughout the year, incorporating updated information as it becomes available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institutes of Health, the Kaiser Family Foundation, and health care providers.

Character Descriptions

Jerry lives with his grandmother and is a well-adjusted, mature, and confident pre-teen. In the changing social environment from elementary school to middle school Jerry does not change his style or behavior in a way his peers view as "cool" and he is labeled a nerd. Despite the teasing, Jerry decides he is not going to give in to peer pressure, as he discovers it is all right to just be himself.

Malika has low self-esteem and is an over-achiever who did well in elementary school, but is not as successful in facing the higher academic challenges of middle school. In addition, her body is just beginning to develop and this embarrasses her. Her despair and her difficulties dealing with her feelings lead her to thoughts of suicide. With the help of her friends and family, Malika is able to improve her self-esteem and is better able to handle the pressures she faces. Her new self-confidence leads her to make positive decisions about her health, such as choosing abstinence when faced with pressure to have sex.

Natalie is a 12-year-old girl who is developing faster than many of her friends. She is proud of the way she looks, has a good self-image, and outgoing personality. Some of her classmates call her names and tease her about her body because of her adult appearance. Fortunately, Natalie is able to deal with the teasing because of her high self-esteem and the emotional support of her mother and close friend Jerry.

Nick is becoming a popular student at school and will do anything to be considered "cool" and to hang out with the "in" crowd. Physically abused by his father, Nick is struggling with how to control his own anger, and begins taking his anger out on fellow students. He also tries to pressure Malika to have sex with him because he thinks his peers are all having sex. During the course of the play, Nick learns to cope with the consequences of his actions and finds resources to help him deal with his feelings. He also learns that just because he is thinking about sex, does not mean he is ready to have sex.



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Tips for Talking with Your Child about Sensitive Topics

Starting Out

- **Show your child it is okay to talk about sensitive issues.** Have appropriate discussions with your spouse, partner, or friends about sensitive issues with your child present.
- **Ask your child what he or she thought about *Nightmare on Puberty St.*** Has your child or his or her friends experienced pressure to fit in, problems with cliques or gangs, feelings of sexual attraction, depression, or thoughts of suicide?
- **Talk about yourself.** Share how you felt at that age and how you now feel about these issues.
- **Remember, you don't have to have all the answers.** Don't worry about having to know everything. You and your child can look up answers together and talk about what you learn.



When You Talk

- **Encourage questions.** Statements such as, "I'm glad you asked that question" or "That's a good question," will help keep the lines of communication open with your child.
- **Use active listening.** Nod or say "uh-huh" when listening to your child. Make eye contact. Really listen to what your child tells you. Good listeners help children figure out how they feel instead of telling them how they should feel.
- **Keep discipline separate from talking.** Your child may not listen to important information if it is given in anger. Choose a time to talk when you can listen to each other.
- **Don't make assumptions.** Tell your child, "I trust you" through your words and actions. Just because your child is asking questions about drugs and alcohol, for example, doesn't mean your child is using those substances. Curiosity is natural.
- **Keep the conversation open-ended.** After answering a question, ask your child what else he or she would like to know. This lets your child know you expect more questions and it is okay to ask.

Parent and Family Resources

- **Talking to your Teen, Office of Adolescent Health:**
hhs.gov/ash/oah/resources-and-publications/info/parents
- **Body and Mind (BAM!), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:**
cdc.gov/bam
- **Bullying Resources and Information:**
stopbullying.gov
- **Cyberbullying Resources and Information:**
ncpc.org/topics/cyberbullying
- **Media and Technology Information for Families:**
commonsensemedia.org
- **California Youth Crisis Line (24hr):** 1-800-843-5200

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