

The background is a painting. The top half is a deep blue sky. Below it, a light, hazy landscape with soft, vertical brushstrokes in shades of white and light blue. In the foreground, a dark, curved horizon line separates the sky from a dark, almost black ground. Three small, dark, pointed shapes, resembling buds or small figures, stand on the horizon line. A thin, light-colored path or stream flows from the bottom left towards the horizon.

Common Threads Of

Teenage Grief

By Teens Who Know
& Janet N. Tyson,
Licensed Professional Counselor

A H A N D B O O K F O R H E A L I N G

*Common Threads
of
Teenage Grief*

A Handbook for Healing

by

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and

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Licensed Professional Counselor



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INTRODUCTION

A person's life is like a web. All of the parts are interconnected. When there is a break in the structure, the entire web must be reconstructed and healed. Eventually, if the healing has taken a positive course that section of the web will be rewoven into a new, healthy web. This is symbolic of the reinvestment of life. The other parts of the web still have part of the old that was lost, but it has changed, and continues to live. The web concept is also symbolic of the fragility of our lives and the significance of each person that we meet (1).

When I started working with grieving teens in Lake Dallas, Texas, I had no plan to help them write a book. Actually, the idea originated during a grief support group meeting when everyone described how they were coping by writing about their losses. The techniques and methods were different, but writing helped them remember and work through their feelings in order to make it through one more day. These students wanted to help other grieving teens cope by sharing what they had written.

The students in the grief group asked me to write a counselor's perspective on teenage grief for their book. For me, the best method involved writing about the relationship I had with each one of them, the strategies that were used, and recommended guidelines for

1

Stuff for Teenagers

TEENS ARE UNIQUE

The teenage years can be exciting but also somewhat frightening at times. You will experience more physical and sexual changes, mental and emotional upheaval, and make more social choices in your life than at any other time since you were born. During the teenage years, most people try to gain independence by emotionally pulling away from their parents and establishing their own identities (2). Friends take on an important role and a majority of your time is spent with them. However, your home and your emotional ties to the people in it remain strong.

These years also can be confusing and contradictory for you. Although teens want to appear in control and "cool," most of you are sensitive to criticism, possess a strong sense of fairness, ask questions about moral and ethical issues, and reflect about life. You may not always want it, but you often need support and structure. It is common for teens to begin hiding their problems or worry from their parents.

Life Happens

Things happen to the people you know and love that are out of your control. They just happen. Parents, siblings, or