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# *PREFACE*

Not-so-fictitious stories are about real teenagers who are experiencing problems that are part of their adolescence. Although the stories are not entirely true and sometimes one story may combine life situations of two or three young people, they are based on the real lives of adolescents whom I have known.

The purpose of these not-so-fictitious stories is to help you to know that you are not alone in struggling with teenage issues like achievement, popularity, parent pressures, peer pressures, loneliness, friendship and giftedness. While some of these stories may represent problems that are more extreme than yours, other stories may remind you of some of your very own personal experiences.

Other stories and poetry by teenagers are also included in my book. These were selected because these authors wrote about feelings and worries that

they experienced or observed which may provide helpful insights to you.

You may read these stories just for fun or for more serious thinking or discussion with others. Your parents or teachers may send for a discussion and activity guide, entitled *Exploring Feelings*, to stimulate your perceptions and thoughts about the teenagers' lives described in this book as they relate to your own or others' experiences. Please encourage your parents or teachers to read the stories that are especially meaningful to you.

I hope you enjoy my book and that it provides you with some insights about your own feelings and the feelings of other teenagers.

There are many people whose contributions I would like to acknowledge, including first, the young people who shared their experiences with me to whom the book is dedicated. Next I want to thank the teenagers who reviewed my stories and gave me the confidence that I was touching their life experiences. The following is a list of my teenage review panel: Bradley Jones, Chris Kramer, Alyssa Hartz, Brett Stoner, Ryan Stoner, Lisa Lovance, Sara Franing, Ben Ruder, Jeremy Knackert, Colin Maas, and Andrea Ruder.

I want also to thank the staff at Apple Publishing for their careful review, their personal feedback and their constant encouragement while I was writing this book. Of course, most of all I want to thank my husband and children who have provided the continuous support and inspiration for all my work.

# *GIFTED KIDS HAVE FEELINGS TOO*

"Hold your book up further on your chest," Ms. Trost suggested, "so that everyone can see your illustrations."

There were snickers from the back of the classroom. Sally blushed. She couldn't hear what was being said, but she was sure it wasn't good. She continued with her presentation on the stories of some historically famous and very valuable postage stamps. The giggling from the back of the room finally stopped and her classmates tuned into her fascinating stories. She felt better, at least temporarily.

Ms. Trost complimented her on her report and her organization and explained to the class that Sally's

work was a model for the rest of them. As Ms. Trost announced her A+ grade, there was a groan from that same back area of the class and Sally thought she heard someone saying, "That's the brain again." Sally again felt a flush of embarrassment. She knew her face was red, but she determinedly held back the tears that were so very close.

At lunch, Sally cornered her friend Maria, who sat near the boys in the part of the room where the snickers and giggles had come from.

"Maria," Sally persuaded, "you just have to tell me what the guys were saying about me. I know it was bad, but I better know what I'm up against."

Maria averted her eyes and casually answered, "Forget it, Sally. They're just mean anyway. They're just rotten; they're really jerks."

"But Maria, you're just avoiding telling me. You know, and you're my friend. I know it'll hurt, but I have to know."

"OK, OK, I'll tell you, but I wish I didn't have to. Josh said, when Ms. Trost told you to put your book up on your chest, 'What chest?' and all the kids laughed and then Scott said, 'All her energy goes to her brains so there's nothing left for a chest' and then they laughed again and when Ms. Trost said you got an A+, Josh muttered, 'Brain, brain, she's a pain, go to Spain, don't come back again.'"

Maria whispered the last and Sally could hardly stand it anymore. She murmured a "Thank you" and retreated toward the girls' room. Maria knew Sally