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PREFACE

Gifted Kids Have Feelings Too was developed with a concern for the social and emotional needs of teenagers. The stories can be read for general interest and thinking or they can be used for group discussion and activities. They are targeted at teenagers' experiences. This parent and teacher discussion book, *Exploring Feelings*, provides suggested questions and curriculum activities for individual students, groups or classes. The students' ages, interests or specific concerns should serve to guide teachers and parents in their selection of particular activities or discussion questions.

The main themes of the stories include anti-intellectual peer pressure, coping with competition, relationships with parents, siblings and friends, competition, underachievement, independence, loneliness, goal setting, peer social life issues, and grade acceleration. *Exploring Feelings* includes suggestions for many interpretations of stories. You and/or your adolescents may also want to select or create other discussion topics or activities.

GIFTED KIDS HAVE FEELINGS TOO

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do the kids call students who have excellent grades in your school? Are these references to excellent students negative, positive, neutral or do they differ depending on the student?
2. Is peer pressure different if the "brainy" student is male or female? Are there any other characteristics of the student that seem to cause the "brainy" label to be negative or positive?
3. Have you ever been labeled a "brain" by other students? If so, how did you feel?
4. If kids are known as "brains," do you think it motivates them to study harder or do you think it puts pressure on them not to study as much?
5. Did you ever do poorly on a test because you didn't want a reputation for being brainy? Do you know anyone who ever did? How do you feel about deliberately doing less well on a test?

6. Do you think that there is peer pressure to not appear too smart? How does that peer pressure take place and how does it differ in different grades of school?
7. Do you feel any peer pressure to get higher grades or to study harder?
8. Do you know students in other schools who have experienced other peer pressures for avoiding studying or for studying too hard?
9. Are "brainy" kids ever also popular students? Is popularity important? Read *Popularity Ends at Grade 12* (Rimm, 1988) and *Is Popularity Worth Pursuing?* (Rimm, 1987c) and discuss again.
10. Are "brainy" students respected by most other students? What are the characteristics which gain student respect?
11. What part does jealousy play in the peer pressure that "brainy" kids may feel?
12. Do you think Maria could have been more helpful to Sally? What would you have said or done if you had been Maria?
13. Read "*Why Do Bright Children Underachieve? The Pressures They Feel*" (Rimm, 1987b). Do you think pressure referred to in this article contributes to students' responses to peer pressure?

PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

Interviewing

Interview your parents or grandparents about peer pressure they felt when they were in middle or high school. Ask them what "brainy" kids were called in their generation and about what happened to those "brainy" kids after they left high school. Tape-record their responses and bring them in to share with your class. Then compile a list of labels that have been used for "brainy" kids in middle or high school in the past. Are there cultural or time differences that affect peer pressures on highly intelligent adolescents? Discuss these differences.

Creative Writing

1. Rewrite Sally's story as if she had given in to peer pressure and decided that school wasn't worth her effort. Imagine how her parents, siblings and peers would have responded to Sally as a poor student who stopped doing homework. Imagine how Sally would have felt about herself. Share your story with the class.
2. Pretend you are Sally's parents or brothers or Sally's friend, Maria. Rewrite the story from their point of view changing it to reflect your impression of Sally and of what you would say or do for Sally. Feel free to add or change characters.