

THE POWER OF GIRLS: INSIDE AND OUT®

Discussion Guide

FAMILY HEALTH
PRODUCTIONS



Mellon has long been committed to the communities it serves. We recognize the importance of supporting organizations and activities that improve quality of life and we believe that strong, ongoing relationships with our communities foster positive partnerships that benefit everyone.

To this end, Mellon is delighted to partner with Family Health Productions in their effort to reach out to young people and their families through *The Power of Girls: Inside and Out*[®] and *Boys on Bullying*. These powerful programs capture the stories of 10 young people who speak candidly and courageously about the many challenges they confront growing up.

We believe you will find *The Power of Girls: Inside and Out* and *Boys on Bullying* to be inspirational resources.

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The Power of Girls: Inside and Out

As girls grow up, they experience many physical and emotional changes. Adolescence is often a time when girls begin to feel awkward and self-conscious.

One of the most powerful ways to help girls stay strong and healthy is to help them build supportive and trusting relationships with family, friends, and their community.

The girls profiled in *The Power of Girls: Inside and Out* talk about the challenges they faced growing up. They say that relationships with friends, parents, or another trusted adult helped them to cope. Girls who watch this program will be reminded that they can ask for help when they feel alone or unhappy. And parents, and other caregivers, will understand the power of reaching out and being available to girls.



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeanne Blake". The signature is fluid and elegant, written in black ink.

Jeanne Blake
President, Family Health Productions

Showing The Power of Girls: Inside and Out

The Power of Girls: Inside and Out is appropriate for groups of young people, for parents in the workplace, or at a community event. It can also be viewed, with this guide, by families at home.

Note: The Power of Girls: Inside and Out includes copyrighted materials. Broadcast, cablecast, Internet, duplication or commercial use in trainings or presentations is prohibited.

Profiles

Rachel

As a young girl, Rachel sometimes treated others badly just to build herself up. She says the people closest to her helped her understand the importance of respecting herself and others.

Katti

Katti was rejected by a group of girls she considered to be her friends. Katti stayed true to herself. She learned a lot about what it means to be a real friend, and why girls are sometimes mean to each other.

Bopha

Bopha grew up wanting to be perfect. She thought dieting and losing weight would make her happy. Bopha developed an eating disorder and says that she contemplated suicide. Eventually, she learned to live a healthier lifestyle.

Wendy

Wendy was 14 when she had sexual intercourse for the first time, an encounter she says she now regrets. Wendy tells how a friend helped her regain her self-respect. Now, she makes better choices.

Kemba

Young people may experience loss in many ways. A close friend moves away, parents separate or divorce, or someone they love dies. As a teen Kemba was able to endure the loss of her mother because other adults supported her.

Using This Guide

This guide is designed to help lead discussions with young people, parents, and other caregivers. Parents can use this guide to discuss the program with their children. Sets of questions are marked for:



young people



parents/caregivers

➤ Follow these arrows to proceed easily through the discussion.

The questions for young people can be asked of both girls and boys. In focus groups, girls told us they hoped boys would see this program. “If they see the program about us,” they said, “maybe they’ll understand us better.”

Please review the program and questions to determine their appropriateness for your group.

Impact On Participants

Participants may feel strong emotions as they hear the stories in the program. Within the audience, there may be someone who has experienced:

- Rejection by friends
- An eating disorder
- Thoughts of suicide
- Death of a friend or another loved one
- A sexual encounter that left her uncomfortable

You may want a counselor, advisor, or other adult support available for anyone seeking counsel.

Before Viewing the Program

Prepare participants for viewing the program by asking the following questions:

➤ Ask participants

- What do you like most about being a girl?
- What do you consider the most difficult part of growing up?
- How does society tell girls they should look?
- Why is it important to share your concerns or worries with someone you trust?

Katti

➤ Introduction

In *The Power of Girls: Inside and Out*, five girls talk about the challenges they faced growing up. Let's watch Katti's story. She describes being rejected and teased by friends.

View Katti's Story (Approximately 5 Minutes)

Stop for discussion when screen momentarily goes black.



➤ Begin discussion for young people by saying

We all want to feel like we belong. When we are rejected by someone, it hurts. Let's talk about how Katti responded to rejection and the reasons people sometimes treat others badly.

➤ Ask young people

- Why do some young people reject others?
- Katti says she stayed true to herself. What does it mean to be true to yourself?
- Katti says her family was there for her. What are ways you can be there for someone?
- The day Katti encountered a member of the group, she knew that all the pain she'd experienced wasn't worth it. How did she come to that realization?
- Katti now has real friends. What are the qualities of *real* friends?

➤ Remind young people

As people grow up they're always changing. But you can stay true to yourself in the midst of change. One way to do that is to try to make decisions that are best for you in the long run.



➤ **Begin discussion for parents or caregivers by saying**

As children grow up, it's natural that conflicts develop within their peer groups. Some girls will do just about anything to feel as though they belong. Let's talk about how Katti managed to resist the pressure to change, even though it meant losing friends.

➤ **Ask parents or caregivers**

- Katti was too embarrassed to tell her parents she was being rejected. What do you think she was afraid of?
- Katti managed to stay true to herself. How do you encourage your daughter to stay true to herself?
- How can you build your daughter's confidence so that she can resist the pressure to go along with the crowd?
- Katti says it made a difference to know that her family was there for her. How do you let your daughter know you're available to her?
- How do you make sure that your family has time just to hang out together?

➤ **Remind parents or caregivers**

One of the best ways to show children that you care is to spend time together, with no particular goal other than simply being together. Spending time with your children shows them that they're valued and loved.

Bopha

➤ Introduction

Most girls worry, at some point, about their appearance. Let's look at Bopha's story and learn how her obsession with losing weight affected her.

View Bopha's Story (Approximately 4 Minutes)

Stop for discussion when screen momentarily goes black.

➤ Begin discussion for young people by saying

TV, magazines, peers, and parents sometimes send messages that it's important to be thin. Bopha learned that it can be difficult to accept yourself with so much pressure to look a certain way. Let's discuss why Bopha wanted to lose weight, and how she now stays healthy.

➤ Ask young people

- Bopha starved herself and threw up to try to lose weight. What was the result?
- Why do some girls go to extreme measures to lose weight?
- What characteristics does Bopha now consider more important than physical appearance?
- Bopha calls suicide a "permanent solution to a temporary problem." What do you think about suicide as a solution?
- Name positive ways to handle stress.
- Rachel says that when she feels good on the inside, she's more accepting of how she looks on the outside. When are you most critical of your appearance?
- What would you do if you thought a friend had an eating disorder?

➤ Remind young people

Bopha says that what she knows, who she is, and what she gives to others matters *more* than her looks. Bopha no longer feels isolated, because she feels close to people who care about her.





➤ **Begin discussion for parents or caregivers by saying**

Comments and expectations from parents can erode a girl's self-esteem and contribute to unhealthy eating habits. Let's talk about how Bopha reacted to pressure to look a certain way.

➤ **Ask parents or caregivers**

- How do you help your daughter understand that no one's perfect?
- How do you praise your child so she knows that who she is, is more important than how she looks?
- Recall a time when, in front of your child, you complained about your physical appearance. What message do you think doing that gave your child?
- How do you encourage healthy eating and exercise habits in your family?
- How can you help your daughter deal with media messages that pressure girls to look a certain way?
- If your daughter asked you whether she looked fat, what would you say?

➤ **Remind parents or caregivers**

Well meaning but critical comments about weight, shape, or appearance can be hurtful. Young people who feel judged or criticized have a difficult time accepting who they are and how they look.

It's important to remind your daughter that you love her, believe in her abilities, and respect her character.

Wendy

➤ Introduction

One of the biggest responsibilities in becoming a woman is learning to handle sexual feelings. Let's find out what happened to Wendy and what she learned about taking care of herself.

View Wendy's Story (Approximately 5 Minutes)

Stop for discussion when screen momentarily goes black.



➤ Begin discussion for young people by saying

Let's talk about the choices Wendy made and what she learned.

➤ Ask young people

- Wendy says, "If a girl really has self-respect, she won't let someone take advantage of her." What does it mean to have self-respect?
- When you respect yourself, why are you more inclined to make good choices?
- How could Wendy have handled the situation with the guy differently?
- Why is it sometimes difficult to say no to sex?
- What are some ways to be close without having sexual intercourse?

➤ Remind young people

Healthy relationships are built on mutual trust and respect. As Wendy suggests, when people respect themselves and others, they tend to make better decisions.



➤ **Begin discussion for parents or caregivers by saying**

It's often difficult for parents to talk with their children about sexuality. Finding opportunities to talk about sexual health with your children can help them make smart choices. Let's watch Wendy's story.

➤ **Ask parents or caregivers**

- Wendy says that if she'd respected herself, she'd have made different choices. How can you help nurture feelings of self-respect in your daughter?
- A girl who respects herself is more likely to take care of herself. How can you show your daughter that she is worthy of respect?
- How do you create opportunities to talk about sexual health with your daughter?
- How can you help your daughter consider how she would respond to pressure to be sexually intimate?

➤ **Remind parents**

Some parents worry that talking about sex encourages early sexual experiences. This isn't so. Research from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that when mothers talk with young people about sexuality, and their conversations include topics such as birth control, condoms and reproduction, those young people are more likely to delay sexual intercourse and use protection when they do have sex.

Kemba

➤ Introduction

We will all experience loss at some time in our lives. Let's listen to Kemba's story to find out how she coped with loss.

View Kemba's Story (Approximately 4 Minutes)

Stop for discussion when screen momentarily goes black.

➤ Begin discussion for young people by saying

Loss is experienced many ways—when someone we love dies, a close friend moves, or our parents divorce. Let's discuss how Kemba stayed strong when she experienced loss.



➤ Ask young people

- Kemba's mom was sick, so she turned to Aunt Gloria for guidance. Why is it important that she could talk to Aunt Gloria?
- Initially, Kemba didn't talk openly with her dad. If you can't talk with a parent, what steps can you take to try to talk more openly with him or her?
- If you couldn't talk to your mother or father about important things, who would you turn to for guidance?
- Kemba says her mother got sick just as she was becoming a young woman. Why is it important to have someone to talk to during these years?

➤ Remind young people

Sometimes a parent isn't available to you, or able to talk openly. If you try but still can't talk openly with your mother or father, you *can* find another trusted adult to listen, to care, and to offer guidance.



➤ **Begin discussion for parents or caregivers by saying**

All children, at some point, will experience loss—a close friend might move; parents may divorce; or someone they love may die. When a child experiences loss, she needs a lot of support. Let’s talk about how the adults in Kemba’s life helped her thrive.

➤ **Ask parents or caregivers**

- What qualities about Aunt Gloria help Kemba trust her?
- When you have experienced loss, who did you turn to for support?
- Why did you choose that person?
- How can you show young people in your life you’re available to them?

➤ **Remind parents or caregivers**

Friends and family provide children with a supportive network during times of loss. When a child feels connected, she feels valued. That increases her confidence and self-esteem.

Role-Playing

Role-Playing is an effective way to help young people and adults talk about important topics.



➤ **Set up a role-play situation for young people. It may include one of the following scenarios:**

- You see someone in your class being teased.
- Someone says they are fat and they aren't eating.
- Someone you know is withdrawn and seems depressed.
- A friend wants you to drink alcohol at a party, but you don't want to.
- How to be close to someone, without having sex.
- How to talk with a potential sex partner about whether you are ready to have sex.
- How to talk with a potential sex partner about using condoms.



➤ **Set up a role-play situation for parents or other caregivers to help them practice talking with young people.**

- Your daughter's friends have rejected her because she won't do what *they* are doing—having sex and drinking alcohol at parties. You can tell she's struggling, though she isn't talking about it much. You reach out to her and demonstrate your support.
- Your daughter's friends and your daughter are fixated on being extremely thin. Your daughter has lost weight and isn't eating much. How do you respond?
- Your daughter is spending a lot of time with her boyfriend. You feel concerned that she might be considering having sexual intercourse, yet you are not sure. Discuss your concerns with her.
- A few of your daughter's friends have started to drink, and she's asking you about it. What do you tell her about alcohol? When she asks you about your first experience with alcohol, what do you tell her?
- You want your daughter to have other trusting adults to talk to about important issues. How do you encourage her to identify someone you both trust with whom she can talk?

Activities

Writing and talking about personal experiences similar to those heard in the program is another way to reinforce positive messages.



➤ **Ask young people to write about a challenge they've faced growing up. Topics may include:**

- What I consider most difficult about growing up and ways I got support.
- How I showed courage when pressured by my peers.
- How I accepted something about myself I would liked to have changed.
- How I reached out for help when I felt I needed it.
- How my parents have supported me.
- How involvement in a community organization helps my life.



➤ **Ask parents or caregivers to share how they've successfully reached out to their young people. Topics may include:**

- How I helped my daughter accept herself.
- What I told my daughter when she told me she felt fat.
- How our family finds quality time together.
- How I encourage my daughter to be true to herself.
- How our family volunteers together to help our community.
- How our family manages to talk about difficult subjects such as sexuality, drugs (including alcohol), violence, and suicide.

Family Health Productions

Family Health Productions produces programs, guides, training materials, and abouthealth.com to help families talk about the challenges young people face growing up.

Jeanne Blake is the producer of *The Power of Girls: Inside and Out* and the president of Family Health Productions. She is a television medical reporter and an affiliated faculty member of the Division on Addictions at Harvard Medical School. Blake speaks to parents at corporations, at health care organizations, and at schools, and consults nationally on family communication. She is also the president of Blake Works, Inc. and the author of the *Words Can Work*[™] series of books for parents.

Also from Family Health Productions

***Alcohol: True Stories* hosted by Matt Damon**

Four young people tell how alcohol affected their lives. Includes guide for leading discussions with young people or parents. 20 minutes.

Recommended for grades 5 & up, parents and other caregivers 

In Our Own Words®: Teens and AIDS

Five young people tell about being infected with HIV as teens through unprotected sexual intercourse. Includes guide for leading discussions with young people. 20 minutes.

Available in Spanish.

Recommended for grades 6 & up 

Boys on Bullying

Five boys tell how bullying affected their lives and how support from family, peers and the community made the difference. Includes guide for leading discussions with young people or parents. 20-minutes.

Recommended for grades 5 & up, parents and caregivers 

Raising Healthy Kids®: Families Talk About Sexual Health

Gives parents information and skills for talking with kids about sexual health. Includes discussion guides.

Program #1 *For parents of young children* Addresses setting limits, labeling body parts, how babies are made, self-touch, appropriate/inappropriate touch and more. 20 minutes.

Program #2 *For parents of preadolescents and adolescents* Addresses sharing values, keeping communication open, postponing sexual intercourse, avoiding absolutes, building strong relationships, and more. 20 minutes.

Recommended for parents and other caregivers 

To place an order or to ask about other resources contact:

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