

# A Parent's Guide

## *Nightmare on Puberty St.*

Educational Theatre, a Community Health program of Kaiser Permanente



Your child will receive Kaiser Permanente's *Nightmare on Puberty St.*, a web series with a livestreamed workshop.



### The Virtual Program

*Nightmare on Puberty St.* is an age-appropriate web series about four middle school students 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. After the web series and a follow-up livestreamed workshop, students will 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 providing the program receive extensive initial training from doctors and licensed counselors. They also receive continuing training that incorporates 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. Despite changes in his body and the outside world, Jerry does not change his style or behavior in a way his peers view as "cool," and he is labeled a nerd. Although teased, Jerry chooses to be an upstander when he sees others being teased and forms a surprising relationship in the process. He also 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 struggling with the greater academic challenges of middle school. In addition, her life feels difficult because of fighting between her parents, financial and housing difficulties, questions about her sexuality, and arguments with her best friend. With the help of a counselor and her peers, Malika's self-esteem increases and she is better able to handle the pressures she faces. Her new self-confidence leads her to make positive decisions about her health, including quitting vaping and expressing her boundaries with a friend by refusing to text explicit pictures to them.

**Natalie** is a 12-year-old who is developing faster than many of her friends. She is proud of the way she looks and has a good self-image and an outgoing personality. Some of her classmates call her names and bully her because of her confidence and adult appearance. Her relationships with close friends begin to shift. Fortunately, Natalie can 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 and seems to have lots of friends and a great life. On the inside, though, he is upset about the racial discrimination he faces. He is also being pressured by his older brother to begin having sex and engage in "sexting." Over the course of the webisodes, Nick learns to cope with the challenges he faces and find 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-training/for-families](https://hhs.gov/ash/oah/resources-and-training/for-families)
- Body and Mind (BAM!), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [cdc.gov/bam](https://cdc.gov/bam)
- Bullying Resources and Information [stopbullying.gov](https://stopbullying.gov)
- Cyberbullying Resources and Information [ncpc.org/resources/cyberbullying](https://ncpc.org/resources/cyberbullying)
- Media and Technology Information for Families [commonsensemedia.org](https://commonsensemedia.org)
- California Youth Crisis Line (24hr): 1-800-843-5200

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