

AMIE'S STORY



OVERVIEW:

When negative thoughts continue to haunt a teenage suicide survivor, the support of her family and boyfriend become essential to finding a sense of purpose and accepting all parts of herself – the positive and the negative.

“You’re fine. You’re past this, you are stronger now...mindfulness.”

EPISODE ONE - RAY OF HOPE



Homework and extracurriculars fill 16-year-old Amie's hours, and every new task helps her stay positive. When she accidentally damages her new day planner, however, the negative thoughts that she wished were gone come spiraling back. As Amie tells her psychologist Dr. Owens, she still feels like she did before her suicide attempt. The awkwardness with friends, the guilt of feeling like a burden, and her inability to reconnect with her boyfriend, Nick, all compete to bring her down, but she's learning that the relationships she's been avoiding are really the connections she needs to heal.

ISSUES TACKLED In this episode:

- Rebuilding a life after a suicide attempt
- Living with depression and mental illness
- Rebuilding after experiencing trauma
- Fear of disappointing your parents



Thought Question:

What would you want the people around you to know about what you are going through? What would you feel comfortable sharing with them? Make a plan to share at least one of these things with someone you love.



Discussion Question:

Amie feels sad when she is spending time on social media. Have you noticed that social media has brought you down too? Who are you following on social media that might make you feel sad? Look for some positive social media accounts that you can follow.

These stories are worth telling.

Resources:

- Crisis Text Line: 741741
- NAMI.org
- 24/7 National Suicide
- Hotline: 1-800-273-8255
- ParentGuidance.org



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EPISODE ONE -

RAY OF HOPE

Journal Entry:

Have you ever felt like a burden before? Like Dr. Owens asked Amie, would you ever look at the people that you love as burdens? Write down some things that you love about the people around you. Remember that this is how they feel about you too.

Good Things Group Activity:

Focus on good things and acknowledge them. Have teens reflect or pair share about good things that have happened to them recently. Then, have them write down a few on sticky notes. Ask a few people to share out. Then find a wall or door where all the good things go so everyone can see! You will be amazed about all the things you learn about their lives. Students will also get the opportunity to reflect on and savor things for which they can be grateful.

Family Engagement:

Sometimes it can be hard for our teens to open up and we worry about how they are doing mentally. Here are three things to remember when trying to foster a meaningful conversation with your teenager.

- Teens are more likely to talk if they aren't getting a lecture and are not being judged. Sometimes teens need someone to listen. It's important that parents and adult mentors don't always offer advice or push for more information. Just listen.
- Give them a warning. Nobody likes when an uncomfortable conversation comes up without notice. Say to your teen "I would like to have an important conversation about _____ after dinner." This gives them time to prepare.
- Manage your emotions. Keeping your emotions even while listening allows your teen to share difficult topics when needed.

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“I want to feel better, but sometimes I feel broken.”

EPISODE TWO - MISSED CONNECTION



Amie's boyfriend Nick is still reeling from the events surrounding Amie's suicide attempt. To make matters worse, it seems like Amie doesn't even want to see him anymore – she avoids him at school, turns him away at home, and doesn't respond to his texts. With the help of Dr. Owens, Nick is learning that supporting a loved one can mean giving them the space they need to heal, while still being there for them.

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Thought Question:

Sometimes people need space to process their emotions, like Amie did from Nick for a while. Who is someone in your life who might need to understand this? How can you let them know that you still care about them even though you may not want to connect with them right now?



Discussion Question:

What can you do to let people know you are there for them when they are ready, like the therapist told Nick to do? Discuss as a class.

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EPISODE TWO -

MISSED CONNECTION

Journal Entry:

It is clear from this video that Nick cares deeply about Amie, even when she has trouble connecting with him. How do you think you can do effectively connect with those who love you? Write down some ideas.

Paper Tweets Group Activity:

This 45-minute activity builds community. Create a bulletin board modeled after twitter. Create a profile template for each participant. Each student will create a class/group twitter handle, Bio line, and sketch a picture of themselves. Students will need to find at least three class followers—a friend, an acquaintance, and someone they don't interact with much. When the class does this activity, each teen starts with a status then their followers' comment on their status. This builds class connections. Students now know more about each other and make new connections.

Family Engagement:

Help your teen adopt an open minded and inclusive attitude. Go people watching together. Explain that you are going to smile at each person you pass no matter who they are. This activity expands your teen's awareness of other people. Discuss the reactions you receive and why they might differ from person to person.

Encourage empathy by talking about what others might be feeling by encouraging them to look at things from a different point of view. You might say: "What do you think she was feeling and why?" or "What do you think was going on in his life to make him seem sad?" or "How would you feel if somebody smiled at you when you were having a bad day?"

This activity both builds connection between you and your teen. It might even provide an opportunity for you to share with your teen a time when you were struggling.

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“So, how did you deal with those thoughts?”

EPISODE THREE - BEING THERE



After reconnecting with Nick, Amie is feeling more comfortable leaning on her support system, but her day is still a rush of activities, and her negative thoughts are never far behind. Helping out at her mom's veterinary clinic one morning, Amie notices that an abandoned dog brings back painful memories for her mom, Linda. Together they take the dog to the park, and Amie helps her mom open up about her feelings the way Nick helped her. Mother and daughter reconnect, and Amie finds that helping others take on their negative thoughts helps her cope with her own.

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Thought Question:

Why do you think Amie decided to help her mom instead of doing what was on her to do list? Why do you think she wanted to help her mom?



Discussion Question:

Sometimes people use one situation to represent another like Amie's mom did. What happened when Amie and her mom were able to have a conversation about their feelings? Why do you think it was important that they had that discussion? Discuss as a class.

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EPISODE THREE - BEING THERE

Journal Entry:

What does Amie do to combat the voice inside of her head? What can you do to combat the negative voice in your head? Write down a few ideas in your journal.

Self-Talk Poster Group Activity:

Self-talk is our inner voice. In this activity you will break up your class into small groups. Each group will create a Self-Talk poster. Students are great at saying nice things to a friend that is doubting themselves but often struggle to build themselves up. The poster should have two columns. One with negative Self-Talk they hear from their inner voice and one with the positive Self-Talk that would be effective in saying to themselves instead.

For example: In the negative column students might say "I'm scared I won't score in my tennis match today." The positive column might say "I have been practicing a ton and am ready to give it my best in today's game." Once student teams have created the posters have students decide somewhere around the school to display the posters and inspire positive self-talk in all students.

Family Engagement:

Positive affirmations are important in building healthy emotional development of your child or teens inner voice. There are so many "voices" in the world telling our children that they don't fit in or measure up. It is our job to make sure they know they do! Start sending your child positive affirmations every Monday. You can send a note in their lunch box or via text to your child.

Here are some examples:

- You are amazing! Your hard work is paying off!
- You are full of amazing ideas!
- You have a great sense of humor!
- We are proud of you!



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“Listening to people’s stories helps me be less afraid of my own thoughts.”

EPISODE FOUR - THE NEGATIVE VOICE



With the support of her loved ones, Amie has grown more confident in herself and is inspired to help others who struggle with negative thoughts. When she comes home from school to an empty house, however, she finds that she’s not immune to setbacks. But this time, Amie uses her coping skills, confront the darkness, and finds a balance. Later in the park with Nick, Amie shares her plans to work in an upcoming mental health fair.

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Thought Question:

Why do you think it was important for Amie to accept the negative voice inside of her head instead of trying to push it out? What did she do to accept it?



Discussion Question:

Do you ever feel pressure to be perfect all the time? What does Scott say about imperfections? Why do you think it might be okay to not be perfect at everything? Discuss as a class.

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EPISODE FOUR - THE NEGATIVE VOICE

Journal Entry:

What do you notice from Amie's experiences comparing herself to people on social media and listening to people share their stories on YouTube? What can you do to use social media in a way that will help you instead of hurting you? Write down some ideas.

Social Media Group Activity:

Students start by working with a partner to talk about how social media might affect their mental and emotional health. Then ask them to discuss how social media has positive and negative influences?

Next, have students work in small groups to discuss how they create positivity on their social media spaces. Find a place in your class that students can add handles of social media influencers or accounts that build them up and give them a positive outlook on life.

Lastly, encourage students to think about unfollowing accounts that are not promoting positivity and positive self-talk.

Family Engagement:

Anxiety is high in teens. Some teens struggle with perfectionism. Here are five calming strategies to help a child who is seeking perfection.

- Let your teen know it's okay to make mistakes.
- Set an example. Share your own small mistakes.
- Praise effort rather than the grade achieved on schoolwork.
- Provide downtime free from expectations.
- Empathize with your teen to promote trust and create a safe space to express emotions.

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