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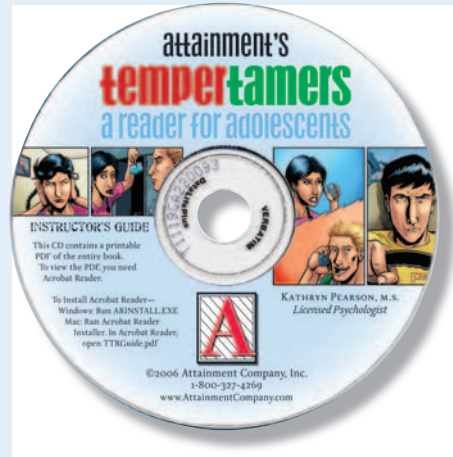
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ILLUSTRATED BY GABE ELTAEB

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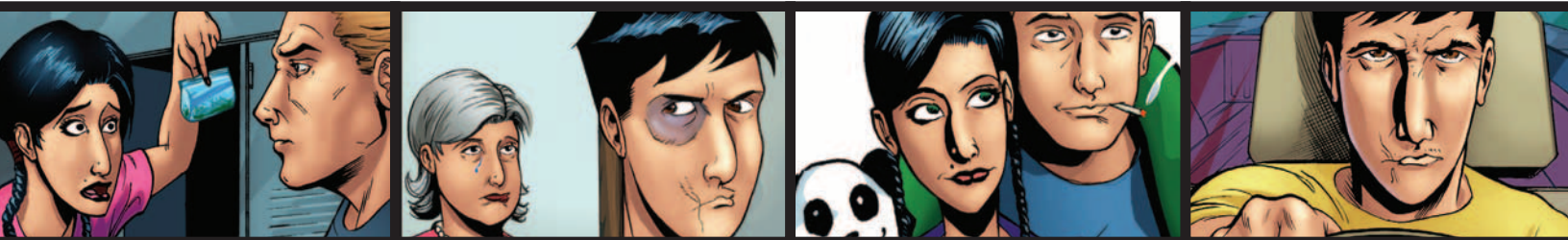
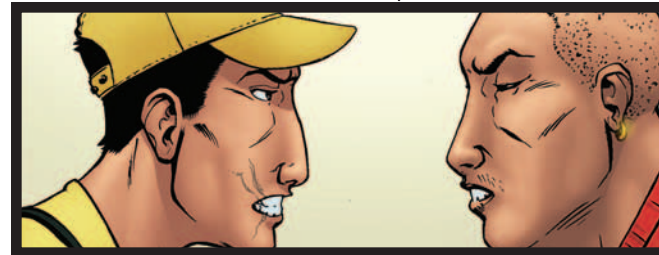
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instructions for adults



The purpose of this book is to help adolescents with their emotions. It can be used in a small group format with an adult leader, or teens can read it on their own.

Brain development research confirms for us the normal biological and physiological reasons why teenagers struggle with constantly shifting emotions. Highs and lows, uncertainty and the general moodiness that describes normal adolescent development are not the main problems. Difficulties develop when teens choose unhealthy behaviors to cope with their confusing feelings. By working through this book with an adult or by reading through it on their own, adolescents can begin to understand what they feel, and learn positive coping behaviors to help them throughout their lives.

The first step is to help teens identify their feelings. Adolescents who exhibit problematic behaviors haven't been well trained in the language of emotions or in strategies for how to manage them, particularly the uncomfortable feelings that cause pain. Unfortunately these uncomfortable feelings can lead adolescents toward destructive behaviors— either by acting out against others or by focussing inward and harming themselves.

The first section of the book describes twenty-eight feelings in comic book style and is a mini-dictionary of emotions which can be used as a reference throughout the book. Then the book becomes a story, divided into six chapters. The main characters are adolescent siblings, a boy and a girl, who take turns being the protagonist so youthful readers can relate to their own gender. It is less threatening for teens to read about and identify with someone else their age rather than immediately being asked to think about their own issues. In the discussion section following each chapter there is a brief explanation that describes in every day language, the emotion—reaction sequelae so that teens can learn some of what goes on in their brains as a result of their emotions. It is not enough however to just name feelings and understand reactions.

Adolescents need to learn techniques to prevent themselves from spiraling negatively into destructive patterns. The first step is to learn how to cue themselves when they recognize the strong emotions that release adrenaline and other hormones. After learning and practicing a stopping technique, they will learn how to re-think the situation so they can plan and carry out behaviors that will have positive results for them rather than negative ones. Because the management of emotions is best learned sequentially each lesson builds from the previous one, and this step by step approach makes it easier to remember the sequence.

REALITY CHECK

Stuff happens in life every day to make you feel different emotions. You can't help what you feel. Not only can you not help what you feel, you also can't help how your body reacts. Kyleen's face felt hot, she held her breath, her chest got tight, and she couldn't concentrate very well.

Very intense emotions like fear or anger cause our bodies to react instantly. Our brain sends out commands, causing us to attack, or run or sometimes freeze. Attacking can be helpful if you are in danger, but it can also cause problems. Because your emotions and your brain work together at incredibly fast speeds, it's hard to stop once an action gets set into motion.

POINTS TO PONDER

What were some of Kyleen's feelings?



◀ REJECTED — Dominic didn't want to be with her anymore.



◀ CONFUSED — She didn't know why he didn't want to be with her.



◀ NERVOUS — She wanted to ask him why, but didn't know what he would say.



◀ JEALOUS — She thought he was hanging out with someone else.

What were some other feelings she might have had?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ▶ How did Kyleen's body react to her feelings?
- ▶ Could she help the way her body felt in reaction to her feelings?
- ▶ What did she do as a result of what she felt?
- ▶ Do you think she could have stopped herself from doing those things that might get her into trouble?
- ▶ Can you think of a time when you reacted to something in a way that got you into trouble?
- ▶ What are some feelings that you have that might make you behave in a way that gets you into trouble?

THINK ABOUT IT

Think about how your body reacts when you have an intensely unpleasant feeling.

- ▶ Does your face get hot?
- ▶ Does your chest get tight?
- ▶ Is there pressure in your head?
- ▶ Do you get a stomach ache?
- ▶ Do your legs feel like running, or kicking?
- ▶ Do your arms feel like slamming, slapping, hitting, punching?
- ▶ Think of some times this week when you had intensely unpleasant feelings and figure out where you felt tension in your body.