CONTENT WARNING

There are varying themes in this Graphic Medicine which may be difficult or stressful for the audience to view, including substance use, dating violence, teen pregnancy and a teen death. As these topics may be triggering for the reader, care should be taken when reading.

Pages of particular importance:
  Substance use:
  Pages 13, 32, 48, 49, 65, 67, 78, 80, 99, 100, 102
  Teen Pregnancy:
  Pages 30, 31
  Dating violence:
  Pages 46, 47, 48, 49
  Teen Death:
  Page 71
First soccer practice in high school, let’s GO!

Don’t forget I need new cleats for soccer practice tonight.

Tonight?
Didn’t we just buy those?
I can’t ask one more person for directions or I’ll scream.

Crap. now I’m late.

Sorry!

Oh god, sorry!

Are you trying to find Freshman English, too?

Yes! I think it is this way.

Okay, let’s go your way first.
Hi sweetie, how was your first day?

It wasn't too bad. I hope they make something different for lunch tomorrow.

Where do I park my bike?
IN THE CAFETERIA.

Are these seats taken?

Umm, no.

Am I a loser?
AT HOME.

SEAN

Nope.

Yes!
AT SCHOOL.

Meh.

I pick Sean.

If there are 37 pears and half are yellow, how many tops hats does it take to catch a bank robber?
Where do I fit in?
Pssst, Can I copy your paper?

Dad is finally here.

We are going to have a great weekend!

I have plans with friends.

Thanks!

He is the one wanting a divorce from mom.
Let's watch a movie! It's been ages.

Armina!

I can't eat this for breakfast.

Are you okay? You look tired.

I'm fine.
HAPPY FRIENDS
FIXED SMILE
NORMAL

The medication takes time.

We are here for you.

FIXED SMILE
HAPPY FRIENDS
Brenden: You seem more...

Go on.

Calm? Happy? I don’t know... something is different

I’m on medication for anxiety and depression

Cool!

That’s great!

Good for you!

Freshman Year: Changes

Zoe: Changes in body, environment.

Caleb: New kid in school, making friends.

Sean: Finding identity, fitting in.

Armin: Divorce, anger management.

Brenden: Dealing with mental health.

Protective factors to watch for: Positive adult role models, self-awareness, and resilience.
Chapter 2

My Sophomore Year

10th Grade on

A new year!

Soccer Ball

Prize Shorts

Test Shirt

School Cleats

GROWL! RUMBLE!
AFTER THE GAME.

This is Zoe.

Let’s go to dinner. I can drive us.

You must get permission to leave with these girls.

Mom & Dad

Can I go to the dinner with some girls from the soccer team?

Yes. Who will be there? Text us if you go anywhere else. Home by 9 p.m. Call if you need a ride. Love you.

You played a great defense but you can’t stop the WOLVES!

This was fun. I’d like to see you again.

That would be great!

How was dinner?

It was great! We lost the game, but dinner was fun.
Hey Zo, about class, Paul and I have been having sex and I missed my period, I'm worried.

You and Paul have been having sex? You've only been together for a few months.

Nevermind, just forget I said anything.

What should I do if one of my friends thinks she's pregnant?

Are you asking about a friend, or is this 'asking for a friend'?

No, I really mean for a friend.

That can be hard news to hear sometimes. Just be there for them.

I think I need to give her a call.

I'm really sorry about this morning. I want to be there for you. Can we talk?
Assembly day! I hope they don’t show that drunk driving video this year. We get it!

This summer me and my cousin had some of my mom’s wine coolers at our families camp. They were awful.

Why did you keep drinking them?

We thought each other liked them.

I’m not here to give you a lecture, I’m here to talk...

Here comes the video.

... at us.

Sssh!

We all want to talk, and to be clear about the consequences...

SMOKING VAPING and YOU

... of drinking, smoking, and vaping.
Hey man, wanna go to the football game?

It's only $5 and the Snack Shack is open!

C'mon! Miranda will be there!

Thanks man. Maybe next time.

You're late!

I know. I'm sorry.

3:30

5:10

AT SCHOOL.

See me after class.

How are you?

Umm, I'm fine.

You haven't been turning in homework.

I'm sorry, I work a lot after school.

How about this, I'll give you a couple of extra days.

Are you sure?

I know you are trying your best.

83 (was 57)

ONE WEEK LATER

Thanks!
AT WORK.

Hey!

How's it going?

Good! Just this, and a pack of cigarettes.

C'mon, can't you help a friend out? I'll give you $20!

I can't sell them to you, sorry.

$30?

I can't loose my job. I need it.

Yeah, I get it. Don't worry about it. See you later.

dinner

bills
You’re late.

I know. While walking home I met someone!

Her name is Jess and she asked me to play basketball with her and her friends and I’m sorry I didn’t text to say I’d be late honestly I really got distracted because she is so cute and so nice and I had met her out with her friends. I think it’s the same school that she goes to, we aren’t in the same classes so...

... and she has the nicest brown eyes. Amazing for a girl. She’s on the varsity team, she just never would’ve talked to me.

Is it okay, I go out on Friday?

Sure, but we want to meet her.

THANKS!
AFTER THE DATE.

Awesome date! We saw a spy movie and she guessed who did it right away.

Do you think you will see her again?

YES!

AFTER CHURCH.

Does Jess go to church?

I'm not sure. I'm just getting to know her.

You didn't ask? That's the first thing ... I know Jess, I don't think Sean could God knows Jess's heart

AFTER CHURCH.

Jess and I are officially dating.

Hey, congrats!

She doesn't go to church though, right? I didn't think you wanted to date someone who couldn't share your values.
How was your date?

I asked if Jess goes to church, she doesn’t.

Was she rude about you going to church?

No, she was kind about it.

Do you want to stop seeing her because she doesn’t go to church?

Not at all. I don’t want to choose between her and my friends.

We choose to spend time with people because of how they make us feel.

I think all of us value kindness, right? Jess is nice. Whether she comes to church or not, we share the same values.

You guys like me, and now we’re friends, and I never went to church growing up!

Yeah, you’re right!
How were your dates? Are you going to see them again?

Well, probably not.

Why not? You're too picky.

They were fine, but didn't fit. Just not the right ones.

The right one? We're 16, you have time to find the right one.

I know! That's why I can afford to be so picky!
I wouldn’t wait.

Ugh! Lots of weird drivers. Are you ready?

It’s getting late. Let’s meet up another time.

NO, WE’RE HERE NOW. We’re going to have a nice time.

He talked over me all night and doesn’t like my guy friends.

How was your date on Thursday?

Well...

What a jerk! So many red flags. I’m glad you’re not seeing him again.

He insisted. I felt like I couldn’t say no.

WHY?
Hey girl, why weren’t you at lunch?

Ummm, honestly since I started dating Tyler I’ve been a mess.

Tyler vapes and he wanted me to vape too.

So why are you hiding in the bathroom?

Well, you can’t have a vape in school. I don’t like going the whole day without it.

I mean. I guess it’s just vapor so it’s fine. Why can’t you vape in school?

Hey, we have to get to class, ready?

NICOTINE TOXICANTS HEAVY METALS CARCINOGENS
Anxiety
Depression
Anxiety
Depression
Anxiety
Depression
I had such a nice walk today.
I have to show you the new shop I found.

Greeks were so keen for using geometry based on the golden ratio of 1.618.

Okay, so a few of your teammates, including two captains, have something they want to say.

We want to apologize to the team because we can’t play. We’re watching the game from our cars.

We’re going to loose!

We got caught with some stuff we shouldn’t have had on the school’s property.

That’s not fair! What’s going on?
A few days later at school.

Hey, you did a great job on Friday night! If I can’t play, I’m glad you were there.

THANKS! I love lacrosse!

Making variety your sophomore year shows.

If you have any pointers, I’d love to hear them!

Yeah, sure. Come by after school this week. Let’s practice.

That sounds great!

Ahem.

We were vaping in the bathroom. We’re sorry to let the team down.

The first time a player gets caught with a substance, they sit out 3 games. You signed this.

We have to take responsibility for our actions.

And being in shape to play means not putting crap into your body.

Brenden, Timmy, Mark, and Charlie, you’re starting tonight.
Okay guys, we were allowed to start playing our starters again ... BUT we won our last two games.

Tomorrow at practice, we are all going to renew our substance free pledge.

Tonight we are going to mix our starters, Trey, Kyle, Charlie, and Brenden. This is a team sport, let’s show it!

Really coach? They’re one of the best teams in the state!

WE are one of those teams!

What are we?

A TEAM!

Tim scored twice and Mike slung one to Kyle for the winning goal.

And Brenden defended what would have been the winning goal.

Brenden didn’t mention that!

Yeah, this one’s humble.

See you at 6 for the team dinner?

I’ll be there!

Team dinner? The season ended like two weeks ago.

We’re a team, even after the season ends.

SO CUTE
Sophomore Year: Dating & Relationships
Zoe: Empathy & Pregnancy
Amina: Vaping & Dating Pressures
Caleb: Responsibility to family & work
Sear: Choosing between people you care about
Brendan: Consequences & team commitments

Protective factors to watch for: Anti-drug use policies, parental monitoring, strong attachments to positive groups, clear limits, clear expectations of rules & values
What classes are you taking?

TRIG CHEMISTRY PHYSICS

No study halls? No easy classes? THAT'S ALOT!

I had to take everything I could. We're halfway through high school and I still have no idea what I want to do with my life.

AT HOME.

Varsity soccer team Homework completed Socialize friends SHOW EAT! Research Schools Internship SLEEP!

Hey Zo, Did you hear what happened?

Are you going to live through 3 AP classes?

Guess I'll sleep when I'm dead.
Attention students, first period this morning is cancelled. Students should go to their homeroom.

Hey kid, sit this one out okay? See the trainer for that head shot.
A FEW WEEKS LATER.

Zoe, we know you are struggling. Can you talk to us?

Honestly...Justin was a good friend of mine, and Sean was there when he died in the car.

I just keep thinking... how awful Sean must feel. I keep thinking about... dying. I just feel awful.

I spent all summer and fall working on what's next for me, what happens after high school... Justin won't even get to find out.

Sweetheart, of course those thoughts are happening for you. It's way too much all at once.

We know what it feels like to lose someone who means a lot to you. It helps to talk to someone.

Would you be open to talking to a counselor about all this?

I guess I could try that. Can I stop if I don't like it?

Of course.
Hey, it's dead in here.

Sorry, bad choice of words. I'm going for a quick break. Wanna come?

We'll hear the bell if anyone comes in. You need a break.

Have you tried this? It'll take the edge off.

There's going to be an assembly about the crash. Sit with me?

Sure.
Why do you smell minty?

Thanks for joining me today to talk about our huge loss.

We are going to talk about Justin and his legacy.

REST IN PEACE

**AT HOME.**

**KNOCK KNOCK**

Hey, ma. I didn’t expect you home so soon.

I took the night off. We need some food. Lasagna?

Can we afford to loose a shift?

It’s okay sweety. Let me worry about the bills.
It’s so nice to sit down for a meal with my boys.

Hey Justin, ready to get going?
Okay, Cinderella.
I really need to get home. My curfew ends in 10 minutes.

This thing is trying to trick me!

Are you high? Oh, I'm good.

SCREEECH!
Sean is pretty cheerful. He thanks everyone for the support.

You'll need to wear this soft cast for a few more weeks.

Sean has been so strong.

Sean is recovering well.

They were stoned.

It was his fault.
AT SCHOOL.

SOMEONE TELLS A JOKE AT LUNCH.

Are you high?

What did you say?

Nothing, it was a joke.

AT HOME.

SAT PREP TODAY
Hey, why don’t you come over to my place. We’re going to make hot cocoa and hang out.

Thanks, that’s sweet, but I have so much homework to get done. Next time!

I really have to get my homework done! Talk later.

Oh, I almost forgot we had plans, come in!
BACK AT SCHOOL.

A NEW DAY.

What's next for me? What do I want to be?
I'm good.

You don’t vape anymore? Why?

I just don’t.

That’s it? No reason?

I don’t need to have a reason.

Okay, whatever.

Justin, we miss you. You are with us on the field tonight.
AFTER THE GAME.

See you Monday.

See you.

Monday!

Yep!

MONDAY

Hey Zoe!

Awesome game on Friday. Brenden played great! We’re going to crush it on Thursday.

RING

See ya.

Hey, are you and Kyle like a thing?

That’s cool! A power couple. C’mon before we are late for class.
Hey, I ... um, have to ask ... are we, um ... 

Let's talk about it after the game. 

Yeah, after the game. 

I have to go. See you tomorrow. 

See you.
it's a thing. He made a couple change to locker rooms, you know.

Coach said we didn't need anyone to get worked up before a game.
You are on course to finish with school by December by finishing your summer courses.

You have a head start. You passed your college-level courses with great grades.

Do you want to make an appointment to start applying for colleges? Fall is the best time.

I am not sure right now, but I’ll come back and make an appointment when I’m ready.
Hey kid, GREAT game!

Thanks! I practice this summer between classes.

Classes?

I was taking a few classes over the summer to get ahead. I may graduate early. I have all of my credits.

I’m in no rush to leave. I don’t know what’s next, but I’m ready for my next adventure!

Don’t go wishing your life away, promise?
I heard you telling your coach you’re graduating in December.

Oh, I didn’t know anyone heard that. I don’t really know for sure.

Does that mean you’re going to miss all of the good stuff? Senior prom, graduation, senior day, and everything else?

I haven’t really thought about that, honestly.

Congratulations on your hard work, Zoe! Have you decided what to do next? I don’t want you to graduate without a plan in place.

I really don’t know. So many options. I talked to my parents and did some thinking.

I’m going to take some time off, and visit family on the west coast.

You’re welcome to return to walk for graduation.

Early Graduation Form
APPROVED
Are you okay to close up if I need to head out?

Of course. Have a nice night.

I thought you would say that.

I know I don’t pay you enough, but you are a damn good worker. Maybe you’ll stick around after graduation?

I’m giving you a little raise. You’ll be a great manager. You already train every new person and do the ordering.

Thank you so much, but ...

Don’t worry, I know you are helping to take care of your family. It won’t be much more work.

Thanks, boss!
You're home early.

One of my co-workers needed the hours. I had overtime last week.

Where are the boys?

At their friend Stephen's house.

I got a promotion today to store manager.

I'm so proud of you! Dessert tonight to celebrate!

Is that what you are thinking about for next year, the store?

I don't know.

We'll figure it out, we always do.

I'm done in December and I'm going to Cali, so I'm just here for pens and candy.

We're the largest employer in the state.

I can stay at the store and make more money. Maybe full-time hours too.
AT THE STORE.

Goodnight, Mr. Manager.

Hey Boss, can I ask you a question?

Sure.

When you served, did you like it?

REMOVES HAT.

Next to my wife and kids, it was the best thing I ever did.

Thanks!

AT HOME.

You look great out there. What made you get up early to workout?

What do you think about me joining the army?

Your grandfather was in the army. He was proud of that.

I did not know that.
In your applications, you will have to write an essay about overcoming adversity. Any examples?

I didn’t make the basketball team my sophomore year, but I did my junior year.

Sean Lee, please come to the office.

Sean, you know you can’t leave in the middle of class.

You have great grades, but over talks from the last 18 months, I know you’ve been hurting.

I think you need to talk about your future.

What?

IT’S NOT FAIR!
What’s going on? Talk to me.

How did you find me?

I’ve been keeping an eye on you. Since Justin passed, I know you come out here when you are hurting.

I don’t want to think about what’s next. Justin doesn’t get to, so why should I?

What you went through, most people don’t go through in a lifetime. You’re getting through it.

Everything is falling apart all of the time.

I know it feels like that sometimes.
ONE MONTH LATER.

I'm done.

This is great. I'm so proud of you.

Echoes of Loss: Learning to be okay when everything is falling apart. by Sean Lee

I put in an application for colleges. I wrote an essay about Justin, and I realized how much writing means to me.

I have an announcement to make.

Maybe I'll be an author or a teacher, but I know that I want to write.

That's awesome!

Great idea!

Justin would like that.

Wonderful choices!
ARMINA

AT SCHOOL.

I'm ready for this year to be over. I'll miss you guys, but I'm ready.

Love you dad. Have a good day.

You too, Buddy!

I guess I'll give you your's first since you are here first. Good job, Armina.
Hi mom!

Hi sweety! How was your day?

Really good. I've been trying to take care of myself more lately.

That's great! Everything is about balance.

I'm learning that.

Let's go to the new Thai place for balance.

Because we made dinner the last two nights and we need to balance that out!

How is that about balance?

AT DAD'S HOUSE.

Mina, come here! You got a letter!

It feels heavy.

I'm nervous.

Rip that Band-Aid off!

I'm in!

Great job, Buddy! I knew you would get in!
AT LUNCH.

Didn’t you want to go to a real college?

WHAT? I mean didn’t you want to get further away? I figured with your parents.

I didn’t know it was that obvious. I want to go, but it’s about balance.

I totally agree! Congrats, Nina!

You look awesome! Tonight, I’m so happy!

I heard Zoe made it to California.

That’s cool!

So happy for her.

She’s coming home for graduation.
AFTER THE GAME.

What's up? What's with that face? You WON!

I know! Things are good, but I only have a few games left until I graduate, and everything changes.

Can't change be good? You're still going to be playing lacrosse in college.

That's true. I just spent so long getting it right here with you, lacrosse, and my anxiety. Starting over sucks. What if ...

NEXT GAME.

Hey, guess what?

What's up?

Your school has a GSA.

What?

I looked into it. Your school has a Gender and Sexuality Alliance, and mental health week where they have forums and discussions to raise awareness.

OK?
You’ll still have community. You work to maintain control over your anxiety. You’re smart and good at lacrosse. You have a great scholarship.

My point is, yes, it is scary. I felt like that last year too. You made things good here, and you will again.

Zoe!

How is California?

We missed you!

Especially at the prom.

FAMILY GROWTH
ACCOMPLISHMENT
So today, the wide path we all have walked on together splits. Some of us will be going away...

... and some will be staying close to home.

Some will join the military, and some will go to work in our hospitals, police stations, stores, restaurants, and at city hall.

Some will be going to colleges and universities...

... and some will be figuring it out. But, wherever we go, we know we have roots here.

We will always be growing from the same soil, we stand on today. Good luck out there, everyone. We've got a world to change.
VAPING RESOURCES

Vapes and e-cigarettes often include nicotine, THC, or other substances that can be addictive or make stopping use difficult. If you use vaping or e-cigarette products and you’re thinking about quitting, there are resources that can help you take the next step.

**Quit Resources:**
- This Is Quitting (Truth Initiative)
  - The first-of-its-kind program to help young people quit vaping. This is Quitting has helped more than 250,000 youth and young adults on their journey to quit vaping. Learn more about how it works and the additional resources available for parents of teens who vape and for adults who want to quit.
  - Teens and young adults can join for free by texting DITCHVAPE to 88709
  - TheTruth.com

**Lung helpline and Tobacco Quitline:**
- Talk to experts at the American Lung Association Lung HelpLine and Tobacco QuitLine. The service is free and they are there to help you. You can connect by calling 1-800-LUNGUSA (1-800-586-4872 and press 2), submitting a question or live chat when available.

**Education:**
- American Lung Association:
  - What Teens Need to Know (www.lung.org)
  - Alternative to Suspension Program (www.lung.org)
  - talkaboutvaping.org Get Your Head out of the Clouds
- Truth Initiative / truth Campaign
  - The Truth about Vaping (www.thetruth.com)

**CDC:**
- [Electronic Cigarettes](www.cdc.gov/tobacco)
OUR PROCESS

We chose graphic medicine as a medium to talk about vaping prevention because we know presenting ideas in a graphic format is helpful to the engagement, retention, and enjoyment of students. Graphic medicine combines those benefits with information about health and medicine. Substance misuse prevention falls under public and behavioral health, and primary prevention seeks to reach a wide variety of people, so graphic medicine is an effective tool for discussion around vaping prevention. This graphic medicine was created with two driving goals:

1: To be used as a tool for substance misuse prevention, specifically for vaping prevention.

2: To be read and enjoyed as relatable glimpses into the lives of five young people in New England.

To do this, it was vital to have a content expert on the team to guide the prevention messaging overall throughout the story, and to include youth voices from its conception to be sure the story would be something worth a teen's time to read.

The students wanted to see character progression and characters that don't always make the "right" choice. They wanted to see characters that made mistakes sometimes, and figured out ways to fix them or move past them. They wanted to see characters that didn't fall into gender, race, socioeconomic, and sexual stereotypes. They wanted to see characters at different stages in their lives.

Taking their lead, we set out to write the characters blind. Each chapter looks at a different year in high school, and each year bringing new themes. Under these themes, we created story lines for "Character 1," through "Character 5." We didn't assign gender, race, or names to the characters until we had created their story lines with the intention to remove some degree of internal bias of our team.

OUR PROCESS

Continued

The artist created character sketches of about 20 students, which were narrowed down to the five main characters in the story, which we then assigned to story lines. The stories were then presented to the steering committee of young people again for their approval, and then it was time to write.

Vaping Prevention is the focus of this story. The effects of vaping on a person's body, long-term outcomes, and overall health are not fully known. We have some good data, but our knowledge of vaping is growing all the time. To make this story a little more timeless and prevent putting into print a story that will be outdated before the characters within it make it to graduation, we chose to highlight risk and protective factors within the story that we know are associated with vaping and other substance use. Risk, protective, and promotive factors drive prevention work. We know that taking a universal approach to this story, as well as focusing on the social rather than scientific elements around vaping, we would be able to create a tool that can be used to drive conversations for a longer time, and hope to create a more lasting impact in the world of substance misuse prevention.

It's important to keep in mind that a person's risk or protective factors are not definitive in determining whether a person will misuse substances. Many other factors come into play, such as genetics, major life changes and disturbances, and resiliency. Your risk factors do not define you!

To learn more about risk and protective factors, go to the SAMHSA website at the link below:

CONVERSATIONS

As a tool, this graphic medicine can be used in a variety of ways, but perhaps most impactful as a way to have conversations with young people about choices they may face around substances use and vaping. You may also want to have conversations around dating and red flags of intimate partner violence, loneliness, finding identity, loss and grief, self-care, role models, consequences, life changes, empathy, or other topics addressed. These topics are included in the story lines of these characters because teens don't make one choice at a time; they are making choices about substances at the same time all these other subjects are impacting their lives. Talking about resilience and building resiliency when facing many challenging choices at once is a strong substance use prevention method, and teens need to be resilient to make the best choices possible.

Consider the following questions and conversations during your reading:

Chapter 1: Freshman Year

Protective/ Promotive/ Risk:
What risk factors do the students face as they enter high school or start a new school? Are there other tricky situations that students experience as they enter high school that none of these characters experienced? What support did the students have in their lives at this time? What types of family structures represented? What about the environment of the school, or sports, were protective factors for the characters?

Choice and Consequences:
Sean makes choices around vaping. What around him might influence those choices? What things in Armina's world are her choices, and what things is she obligated to do? How do these obligations affect her, and how does she deal with that? Do any of the characters make choices that bring negative or unwanted consequences? What choices about self-care and health care do the characters make? Does the word "fixed" mean something different to Brenden at different times?

Social:
What connections do the characters make to other characters? How might the different characters care about reputation differently? What can you infer about the students based on what they do/say? Do you think any of these characters struggle more than others connecting, and why?

YOUTH DRIVEN

A team of 10 students from the Tobacco Free Rhode Island Youth Ambassadors helped inform the writing of this graphic medicine. The students identified a variety of themes they found readable and interesting, but the themes that carried over between genres and personal preference were:

- Relatability
- Anti-Stereotypes
- Fantasy + Reality
- Character Development
- Likeable characters that don't always make the "right" choice

Some elements of the story are drawn directly from the stories the group spoke to. Trying vaping to impress a boy, bathrooms in schools being a place the hide and vape, thinking vaping products are harmless because they smell good or don't have tobacco in them.

We also tackled issues the group felt needed to be addressed that don't have to do with vaping directly, but do affect a teen's life, including:

- Letting men and boys be vulnerable with their thoughts and feelings
- Getting stuck and getting help
- Being subtle but clear about substance misuse prevention
- How grief changes us and throws off our routines
- Connections between people

We wanted to create a story with prevention messages that teens could read and discuss, so the story had to be driven by teens to reach that goal.

The characters are named after the team of students who lead the creation of the story, with their permission.
CONVERSATIONS

Consider the following questions and conversations during your reading:

**Chapter 2: Sophomore Year**

**Protective/ Promotive/ Risk:**
In what ways do the relationship between the characters and adults in their lives change? Several of the characters start exploring dating in this chapter. What were signs of healthy relationships, and what were signs of unhealthy relationships?

**Choice and Consequences:**
What are some goals of the characters, like Sean and Caleb? What makes accomplishing their goals harder, and what do they do to overcome difficulty? What choices do the characters, like Armina and Brennen's teammates, make around vaping? What influenced those choices? What consequences do you notice for the characters around those choices, and what consequences, good or bad, can you think of in real life?

**Social:**
What different types of communication do you see? Do you see characters navigating the best ways to communicate? What communication didn't work, or was hurtful, and why?

**Chapter 3: Junior Year**

**Protective/ Promotive/ Risk:**
This chapter deals with loss, grief, and tragedy. What supports do the students have? Are there any students with less support than others, and how do you think this affects them? How does the school support the students? How do the adults in the live's of the characters support their physical, mental, and emotional health? What other things are going on in the students lives during this year that they have to balance with their grief?

**Choice and Consequences:**
What choices around substance use do the students make in this chapter? For Caleb, do his choices around substance use make things easier or harder for him?

**Chapter 3: Junior Year Continued**

**Social:**
How does the loss of a student affect the characters differently? How does resiliency show in the different students? Sean is directly impacted by the loss of the student and by the car crash. How does this affect him? In what ways do people talk to him about the car crash? What expectations do people have on the characters, and how hard or easy is it to live up to them? What expectations do the characters have for themselves? What expectations does Brennen have about his team and his friends in this chapter, and how do they live up to reality?

**Chapter 4: Senior Year**

**Protective/ Promotive/ Risk:**
What supports do the adults in this chapter offer the characters? How are the characters encouraged or discouraged about the next chapter in their lives? How do the students support or not support each other's aspirations?

**Choice and Consequences:**
How might the choices of the adults in the lives of these characters impact the choices of the characters, such as Caleb's mom? What worries the students about substance use?

**Social:**
How do the characters use what they have learned in high school? What traditions do you see in this chapter? Do any characters break from tradition?

Consider the following questions for the story overall:

What choices do students make around substance use? What things happen around substance use that aren't really choices the characters are making? What generational factors may affect the students? What surprised you about the students in this story?
PREVENTION IN PICTURES

Research Base

Josh Elder, founder and president of Reading With Pictures, sums up the strengths of comics as educational tools with his “Three E’s of Comics.”

Engagement: Comics impart meaning through the reader’s active engagement with written language and juxtaposed sequential images. Readers must actively make meaning from the interplay of text and images, as well as by filling in the gaps between panels.

Efficiency: The comic format conveys large amounts of information in a short time. This is especially effective for teaching content in the subject areas (math, science, social studies, etc.).

Effectiveness: Processing text and images together leads to better recall and transfer of learning. Neurological experiments have shown that we process text and images in different areas of the brain: known as the Dual-Coding Theory of Cognition. These experiments also indicate that pairing an image with text leads to increased memory retention for both. With comics, students not only learn the material faster, they learn it better.

In addition, visuals support English as a second language: “The students, primarily English-language learners, were able to make use of this medium [comics] in order to learn new reading practices. The teacher used the comics to teach multiple aspects of various reading processes...[this] demonstrates their use as instructional texts, because comics provide interesting and motivating material as well as visual support for literacy learning.”

Incorporating visual rhetoric into your curriculum supports students because the reading of both visuals and text together necessitates inference skills and a synthesis of a number of clues presented both on the page and as a pattern throughout the book. And, studies find that verbatim recognition of information and test scores are higher with graphic novel texts compared to traditional textbooks.

See www.graphicmedicine.org for more on the graphic medicine format.

RESEARCH BASE SOURCES


CREATIVE TEAM

CONTENT EXPERT : DANIEL FITZGERALD, MPH, ICPS

Daniel Fitzgerald, MPH, ICPS is the National Senior Manager of Advocacy for the American Lung Association and serves as the advocacy lead for the State of Rhode Island. Dan’s educational background is in prevention science, social marketing, nonprofit management, and public health. Dan began his journey in substance use prevention and tobacco control at the age of 12 as a youth advocate in his community. Dan has worked at the state, local, and national levels with nonprofits and state and federal agencies working to address tobacco use as a public health and as a social justice issue. Recently, Dan was recognized for his impact in the world of tobacco control and received the 2019 C. Everette Koop Unsung Hero Award in honor of the late United States Surgeon General. In addition to Dan’s role at the Lung Association, he serves as the Executive Director for the Chariho Youth Task Force which is the substance use prevention and mental health promotion coalition working in Charlestown, Hopkinton, and Richmond, RI. Dan played a pivotal role in editing the story creatively as well as for prevention content.

PRODUCTION : NEW ENGLAND PTTC

The New England Prevention Technology Transfer Center (PTTC), administered by AdCare Educational Institute of Maine, Inc., provides training and technical assistance services to the professional and volunteer prevention workforce within the New England states. The New England PTTC is developing a diverse program with multiple modes of training and instilling science into the practice of prevention, including this Graphic Medicine. This also includes collaboration with states to hold live, in-person trainings featuring the latest prevention science, but also multiple opportunities for distance learning to maximize the reach of technical assistance in the region. The New England PTTC also puts a focus on workforce development initiatives, to include a year long Mentorship Program and Fellowship Program. The New England PTTC serves as a hub of specialty expertise in providing training and technical assistance in the area of marijuana risk education and prevention.

Sarah Johnson, New England PTTC Training Project Coordinator, authored the story.

ARTIST : SMILING OTIS STUDIO

Russ Cox was raised by a pack of crazed hillbillies in the back woods of Tennessee. Without much in the way of modern conveniences, like a television set or running water, he spent his time drawing, whittling, and throwing dirt clods at his cousins. With the bulk of his life spent in Pennsylvania, he met his wife; became a graphic designer; played in punk, alternative, and surf bands; had two kids; and started his own illustration studio, Smiling Otis Studio (named after one of their very large cats). Russ creates his art the old school way using paper, pencil, gouache, and watercolor. Using traditional tools gives Russ an opportunity to explore and experiment. He also works digitally if deadlines are tight or the style is better suited for the project. Russ lives in Maine with his wife and four cats.

CREATIVE TEAM

STEERING COMMITTEE : TOBACCO FREE RHODE ISLAND YOUTH AMBASSADORS

The TFRI Youth Ambassadors are students from around Rhode Island who collectively work to reduce the impact of tobacco use and nicotine addiction in Rhode Island. These students bring their lived experiences and passion for impacting positive change to a variety of prevention initiatives including school-based education and policy change. In recent years, this group worked to assist the State of Rhode Island build a strategic plan inclusive of ways to address youth e-cigarette use. As a result they worked to launch an e-cigarette text-based quit resource for all RI youth and young adults. Members of this group have used the experience of being a TFRI Youth Ambassador to go serve in leadership roles with national organizations such as Truth Initiative and SADD as well as being appointed by Governor Gina Raimondo to serve on the RI Vaping Advisory Board and impacted state-wide e-cigarette policy change.
CONTACT US

PRODUCTION: NEW ENGLAND PTTC
Erin Burnett
Senior Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator
New England Prevention Technology Transfer Center (PTTC)
AdCare Educational Institute of Maine, Inc.
207-626-3615
pttcnetwork.org

ARTIST: SMILING OTIS STUDIO
Represented for books by:
Jennie Kendrick Red Fox
Literaryjennie@redfoxliterary.com
www.redfox.com
209-505-8686

For all other projects:
russ@smilingotis.com

CONTENT EXPERT: DANIEL FITZGERALD MPH, ICPS
Daniel Fitzgerald, MPH, ICPS American Lung Association in Rhode Island
Daniel.Fitzgerald@Lung.org
401-533-5176
Lung HelpLine:
1-800-LUNGUSA | Lung.org

STEERING COMMITTEE: TOBACCO FREE RHODE ISLAND YOUTH AMBASSADORS
www.tobaccofree-ri.org
Zoe.Moreau@lung.org
Daniel.Fitzgerald@Lung.org
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In the Air is a graphic medicine built to foster conversations with and among young people around vaping, choices about substance use, and social factors. This graphic novel-styled story of five teens going through high school incorporates behavioral science of substance misuse prevention with the stories, interest, and ideas of members of the Tobacco Free Rhode Island Youth Ambassadors. The novel has questions to help guide discussion, a strong research base, and roots in risk and protective factors.