

PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH

STELLA has been dating Perry who happens to be African-American. STELLA's mother was unaware of this and saw the two of them one day walking hand in hand. STELLA's mom confronts her about the situation and STELLA explains how she feels about Perry.

STELLA: I wasn't sneaking around, Mom . . . I didn't tell you because I was trying to avoid this very thing . . . a confrontation with you. You have to turn everything into such a big deal. I'm dating Perry. I'm not marrying him [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Not yet, anyway. So he's black . . . so what's the big deal? I thought if anyone would understand it would be you—I never thought my own mother was a bigot.

You saw us together and you immediately jumped to conclusions. You immediately stereotyped him as some "hood." Well, he's great, Mom. He's really wonderful. And he treats me with a lot of respect, which is more than I can say for some of those other creeps I've dated. You've told me my whole life not to judge a book by its cover. So practice what you preach, Mom. Don't judge Perry until you've met him. Don't be a hypocrite. *(Beat.)*

Let me invite him over for dinner. I want you to get to know him. I want you to see what I see. You should be happy for me, Mom. I really like him.

FINDING MOTHER

ANDREA is adopted and has recently located her birth mother. She now plans to meet with the woman, but ANDREA's adoptive mother feels threatened. Here, ANDREA convinces her mother that meeting her birth mother is the right and necessary thing to do.

ANDREA: Don't you get it? It's not about you . . . it's about me and finding out where I come from. I want to know why I look the way I do and act the way I do . . . I think it's important that I find out about those things, don't you? *(Pause.)*

I just want to meet her and talk to her. I'm not trying to replace you. I would *never* want that. *You* are my mother. And as far as I'm concerned you're the only mother I'll ever have. But this woman . . . she can tell me things about my background . . . things that even you don't know . . . and if I don't talk to her now, I'll always have these unanswered questions in my life. *(Beat.)*

Please don't be mad or upset and try to understand how important this is to me. This woman gave me life—but she also gave me up . . . don't you think I have a right to know why? *(Pause.)*

I love you Mom. You have to know that. But you also have to let me do this. You know that it's the right thing to do—and you've always taught me to do the right thing.

CONSPIRACY

EVAN'S father has just received word from the high school principal that EVAN has been caught cheating on his American history exam. EVAN tries to convince his father that he is not guilty.

EVAN: If you would just listen to me, I will explain everything. I did not cheat on that test. *(Beat.)*

Why don't you believe me? I'm your son. You're going to take some stranger's word over mine? *(Beat.)*

Mrs. Landers said what? That she found a cheat sheet? That's impossible. Dad, I swear, I'm not lying. I never made a cheat sheet in my life. I couldn't possibly write that small. And I studied. I know the material. Ask me anything. Go ahead, ask me anything about the Lincoln administration or Reconstruction or anything on American history for that matter—I STUDIED!!! I think I'm being framed. I think the cheat sheet was planted.

(Pause. A new idea comes to him.)

I'd be willing to take the test over, Dad. To prove I didn't cheat. Could you ask Mrs. Landers if I could take the test again? Honestly, Dad . . . I want you to be proud of me . . . you've gotta believe me. I'm not a cheater.

I guess I get teased sometimes from some of the kids. 'Cause I always know the answers and stuff. Maybe they wanted to get back at me for being a know-it-all. I don't know why anyone would do this—but don't you think you know me well enough to know I wouldn't cheat on a test? Have a little faith in your own kid, Dad. Please.

THE HIT LIST

In a random check of lockers at the high school, some disturbing entries were found in TONY's private journal. Now he is on the verge of suspension for allegedly making threats to some of his fellow students.

TONY: Do you believe it man? They went rummaging through my locker. Did they find a gun? No. Did they find drugs? No. [REDACTED] They didn't find nothing except my little notebook where I sometimes write stuff to myself. I write about what jerks some of the teachers are and how phony some of the girls are. Like Kirsten. She's such a tease. She'll flirt and flirt and act like she likes you, and then when you ask her out she laughs in your face and says, "I'm not interested in you that way, Tony." I told her she shouldn't treat people like that or she'd get hurt and now she's saying I threatened her. That was no threat!

So you know what they told my parents? They want to suspend me for making a hit list! A hit list! I was just writin' down my thoughts! They think I'm this warped mind ready to pop and I'm gonna start wasting my classmates.

Now my parents think I'm making pipe bombs in the basement and concocting this elaborate scheme to wipe out the school.

Everybody watches way too much television around here, man. I was just griping about some moron girl, and they think I'm some psycho killer. They're sending me to a shrink and everything. Like I'm some danger to society. Can you believe that? Me.

I didn't do anything and I'm being treated like some criminal. I'm never gonna get into college now. This isn't gonna look too great on my transcripts, ya know?

THE NEW KID

NATHAN has just moved to a new town and has started a new school. However, he is having a lot of trouble fitting in and adjusting to his new environment. Here, he talks to his mother about his troubles and offers some ideas about how he can avoid being “the new kid.”

NATHAN: It's so ridiculous. Back home I was more than just accepted—I was popular. I was well liked. I could understand if this were elementary school. Oooohhhh . . . check out the new kid . . . make fun of the new kid . . . but this is high school for cryin' out loud! Aren't we over all that crap? You'd think people would be a little more accepting. This school is just full of snobs. I'm serious. They're all a bunch of stuck-up creeps. Not one person talked to me today, except the teachers, of course, and they barely did except to acknowledge my presence. I said hi to a couple of kids and they looked at me as if I were some space alien or something. I hate it here, Mom. I want to go home. *(Beat.)*

No, it's not. This isn't home. Not for me. I'm not going back to that torture shack. That's what it is. You have no idea how horrible it is. And it's not like I haven't tried. I've honestly tried. But no one wants anything to do with me.

Can't we figure something out? Home schooling or maybe I'll just drop out and take the GED. *(Beat.)*

It may be a drastic measure, but I'll do anything *not* to go back there. *(Beat.)*

There must be something I can do. What kind of an education am I getting if I'm miserable 100 percent of the time?

A MEMORY LOST

BOBBY is visiting his grandfather who has Alzheimer's disease. Here, BOBBY tries to push his grandfather into remembering the details of his life.

BOBBY: Hi, Grandpa . . . it's Bobby. *(Beat.)*

Bobby, your grandson. *(Beat.)*

Annie's boy. *(Beat.)*

Right, Annie. She's your daughter. *(Beat.)* No, Annie's married now. She's married to Tom and they had a son—that's me. C'mon, Grandpa, you remember, don't you? *(Beat.)*

Yes, I guess I am a young man now . . . just got my driver's license. I have a girlfriend too. Sara. You would like her, Grandpa—she's really pretty and very nice. *(Beat.)*

Really? You want to meet her? Okay. I'll bring her next time I come to visit. *(Beat.)*

Well, when do you want me to come back? *(Beat.)*

Tomorrow? Well . . . okay. I'll come tomorrow and I'll bring Sara. Now promise me something, Grandpa. Promise me that you'll remember me tomorrow when I come back. You've got to try harder . . . try to remember as much as you can. You've had a great life, Grandpa . . . you want to remember it, don't you?

I think you can beat this lousy disease but only if you *try*. *(Beat.)*

Okay, sorry. I won't say lousy anymore . . . but you've got to make a promise to me too. I promise to use better language if you promise to work on your memory. Okay, Gramps? Do we have a deal? *(Beat.)*

It's Bobby, Grandpa. I'm Bobby.

MISSED OPPORTUNITY

After finding out all his friends are going away to college, TIM laments that he never worked hard enough in school and is now stuck working at a menial job and has no hope for the future.

TIM: Everyone is getting into their first-choice school. Everyone! You did . . . Alex did. Eddie and Jake *both* did. Kyle got in with a full athletic scholarship. I got nothin'! NOTHING! What am I suppose to do? I'm a total loser. I have no skills . . . terrible at sports . . . not smart . . . not talented. What am I suppose to do when school is over? My mom's already on my case to get a job and move out. She can't wait to be rid of me.

So I guess I'll work at 7-Eleven for the rest of my life. How exciting! I couldn't even cut it at Starbucks. Kept burning myself on that [REDACTED] cappuccino machine. I hated working there anyway. The people treat you like crap. At least at 7-Eleven the customers are mostly losers too. At 2 A.M. anyway. It would be great to be able to go away to college. You're gonna have it made, man. I wish I woulda tried harder when I had the chance. You're not suppose to have regrets at eighteen, but I sure do. I totally screwed up. And I got nobody to blame but myself.

FATHER'S DAY

RAY and his sister Kim are visiting their father in the hospital. Their father walked out on them years before but recently made an attempt to reunite. Now he is very ill, and RAY explains his feelings to his sister.

RAY: The tube down his throat is what's helping him breathe. He opened his eyes slightly a couple of times, but he's never been fully awake. It's probably better that he doesn't wake up; he wouldn't be able to talk anyway. *(Pause.)*

I can't believe this is happening.

Just when he decides that he wants his kids back in his life, he goes and gets sick. We didn't get any time together. To talk and get to know each other. That's all I ever wanted, ya know? I wanted to have a relationship with my father. And I forgave him for walking out when we were kids. I was willing to let that go if we could be in each other's lives now. I feel like I'm losing him all over again. *(Beat.)*

Don't say that, Kim. Don't say it serves him right. You only heard one side of the story. Mom's side. And she was hurt and angry so she said some pretty rotten things about him. But she also told me some good stuff too. He must have had his reasons for leaving. And I just wish we could hear what they were. But the truth is, Kimmy, he's dying. And we're never gonna have another chance to get to know our father. And that really stinks, Kim. It really stinks.

IT'S A FAMILY AFFAIR

ELLIOTT knows his father is having an affair and confronts him.

ELLIOTT: Don't lie to my face, Dad. I *saw* you with her. And don't try to tell me she was your "colleague." You don't go around kissing your colleagues on the mouth, do you? *(Beat.)*

What do I want from you? I want you to admit it . . . say the words . . . tell me you're having an affair. And then I want you to tell me why. I don't get it . . . I don't understand how you can do this to Mom—to all of us. I hope it's worth it, Dad, because you're about to ruin our entire family. Or don't you care? Now that you've got some young beautiful girl on your arm, nothing else matters. It made me sick, Dad. I wanted to throw up when I saw you with her. How old is she, by the way? She didn't look much older than me. *(Beat.)*

No, I haven't said anything to Mom. But I'm sure she knows. Haven't you noticed how unhappy she's been lately? *(Pause.)*

You make me sick. You don't care about anyone or anything except yourself and your own happiness. How can I ever trust you again? You've not only betrayed Mom; you've betrayed all of us. It's not up to me to tell Mom, you've got to tell her. And then I hope she throws you out and sues you for every last dime you have. I never thought my own father could be such a low-life scumbag. But you definitely are, Dad. You definitely are. Thanks for teaching me a valuable lesson, Dad. You can't trust anybody. Not even your own parents.

SAVING A LIFE

JOEY finds his younger brother, Victor, in the garage with a gun in his mouth. Here, he tries to persuade Victor that he has a lot of things worth living for.

JOEY: Victor . . . hey, man . . . you've got a lot of things goin' for you. Mom loves you and I love you and Emily loves you . . . *(Beat.)*

She does too love you; she's just confused right now—and you have that beautiful little daughter who not only loves you, but *needs* you. You went through life without a father, don't let her go through life without one. Don't do this, Victor . . . please. Think what you will do to all of us. You'll break our hearts. *(Beat.)*

You are not a loser! You are *not* a waste of space! Hey, man, I turned it around, remember? Man, if I could do it, anyone could. I screwed up plenty . . . but now I'm goin' to school, and I'm learning that people give you a chance if you show that you're serious and want to learn. And you're NOT a screw-up, Vic. I swear, I'll help you get back on your feet. I'll help you get a job, and I'll talk to Emily if you want me to, and convince her to move back in with us. But if you do this, man, if you pull that trigger—I can't help you ever again. Ain't no second chances, man, if you use that thing. So take it out of your mouth, Victor . . . C'mon—I'm your brother, man, I'm your family—I won't let nothin' bad happen to you, if I can help it. C'mon, Vic . . . c'mon, little bro—give me the gun.

POINTLESS

AMBER's parents have sent her to a psychologist because they're afraid AMBER may be suffering from depression. Here, AMBER explains to the psychologist that there is nothing wrong with her and the entire session is pointless.

AMBER: My parents sent me here to talk to you because they think I'm depressed. But I'm not—

And I really have nothing to say and they're just wasting their money because I don't need help from some stranger. *(Beat.)*

I don't know why they think I'm depressed. Why don't you ask them? So what if I stay in my room all the time—they should be glad I'm not wandering the streets like some people I know. *(Beat.)*

Yeah, my grades have slipped a little, but so what? School's a joke and everyone knows it. What do grades really mean anyway? They don't prove how smart you are. I know some really smart people who flunk all their classes—school means nothing! It's all so stupid and pointless when you think about it—it seems to me *everything* is pointless. We run around trying to get rich and be happy and we're just going to die one day anyway, so what's the point?

And what's the point of talking to you? You can't change the world—you can't make this world a better place to live. Like I said, my parents are just wasting their money and you are wasting your time sitting here with me.

I'm not depressed. I just hate everyone and everything, but I'm not depressed. Tell my parents to save their money and leave me alone.

NOTHING WITH A FACE

EDMOND is a vegetarian and is disgusted by the meat his friend is enjoying. Here, he explains why he became a vegetarian in the first place.

EDMOND: That's a dead cow you're eating with a couple of strips of dead pig on the side. Did you ever stop to think that that's what you're eating? Flesh. Dead flesh. It's making me sick. The smell is making me sick, and watching you thoroughly enjoy yourself is making me sick. *(Beat.)*

Yeah, I know I used to like it, and then one day something snapped. My brother Bobby was making burgers on the grill, and he didn't season them or anything—they were just plain old burgers and they just looked like lumps of flesh lying there. I took a bite and it tasted awful—that's when it hit me that I was eating a dead cow, and now there's no way I can ever eat anything that once had a face. *(Beat.)*

I *am* not trying to turn you vegetarian, man, and don't make it sound like I'm in some weird cult or something. You should at least think about it, though. If you keep eating those burgers three times a day you're gonna have a heart attack by the time you're twenty-five. If you can't think about the dead animals you're eating, think about yourself, and what it's doing to you!

ON-LINE

EVIE tells her friend about her upcoming date with someone she met on the Internet. As her friend warns her about the dangers of on-line dating, EVIE assures that there's nothing to be worried about.

EVIE: Don't you think I would know the difference between some *creeper* and a legitimate guy? Give me some credit, I'm not *that* naïve, ya know. This guy's the real deal. *(Beat.)*

I don't know how I can tell, I just can. It's the way he writes. He's honest and sensitive; he's totally a kid our age. Nobody can fake that. I wouldn't just date anyone I met off the Internet. We've been writing to each other for like six weeks. We finally decided it's time to meet. He sent me his picture and everything . . . *so cute. (Beat.)*

Yeah, it could be a fake photo, but it's *not!* God, you're being so negative—you should be happy for me. Happy that I finally found someone. I sent him my picture too and he told me I was beautiful. I love that! *(Beat.)*

Yes, I promise I'll be careful, but there's really nothing to worry about. We're meeting in a public place in the middle of the day—I'll be fine. *(Beat.)*

Don't you dare follow me—I'm nervous enough as it is. And don't you dare tell my mother. If she knew I was dating someone I met on-line she'd flip out. Everything will be fine. You worry way too much. *(Pause.)*

You know you should go into the chat room where I met Dennis. Maybe you'd meet a nice guy too. It wouldn't kill you to start dating too, ya know.

THE GUILTY PARTY

SADIE has to reluctantly explain to her friend Casey why she is unable to participate in any social activities.

SADIE: I'm not gonna be able to go on that ski trip with you, Casey, and I'm not going shopping with everyone this afternoon. If I tell you this I hope you won't repeat it to anyone. I'm so embarrassed I could die. But, the thing is . . . my dad lost his job. He got fired. And the reason he got fired was because he was stealing from the company. Stealing money. They call it embezzling. It's very, very serious, and there's a possibility he may go to prison. This is like a total nightmare. My father . . . a criminal in prison.

And now there's no money. I think we're gonna lose everything. The nice house, the nice cars . . . everything. My dad says he was doing it all for us—me and Mom and Jimmy. He wanted us to have nice things and feel like we fit in. I don't know whether to be angry at him or to feel sorry for him. I feel so ashamed. People are going to find out about this and it's going to be unbearable. Mom is totally freaked, and I don't know what we'll do if they cart him off to jail. It's like this is happening to someone else . . . not me. I'm wishing this was all a dream, and I'll wake up and everything will be normal again. Please, Casey . . . don't tell anyone yet. Not just yet. Let's just see what happens first. I've got to figure out a way to deal with this.

A LITTLE RESPECT

CANDACE is fed up with being taken for granted by her friend Chelsea. She decides to let her know how she feels by calling off their so-called friendship.

CANDACE: Whenever you were bored, whenever you didn't have something better to do, you would call me. And we would go hang out at the mall or to the movies or shopping or just rent videos and we always had fun.

Now that you're dating Patrick, you never have any time for me. Suddenly I do not exist. But wonder of wonders, when Patrick has something to do with his friends and he's not around, you're all of a sudden calling me again.

You act as though nothing has changed between us. And then he calls and I become invisible again.

Well, I'm not playing second string to your boyfriend anymore, Chelsea. I'm sick of it. You only talk to me when Patrick isn't around. I never thought you were the type of girl who would treat her friends like this. How can you possibly think that boyfriends are more important than girlfriends? You're gonna get hurt. You're gonna break up with him or he's gonna break up with you, and then you'll come running to me for support and a shoulder to cry on. And I'm not gonna be there. Because when were you there for me? You have to treat your girlfriends with a little more respect. Otherwise, you're not gonna have any friends left at all. Including me.

SINS OF THE FATHER

MARCI'S father walked out on MARCI and her mother two years ago. During that time, he remarried and started a new family. Now, he shows up to persuade MARCI that he wants her back in his life, and he wants her to meet her new half-sister and his wife. When MARCI refuses, her father accuses her of abandoning him.

MARCI: Now wait just a minute . . . may I remind you that you walked out on us, Dad. YOU walked out on US. Not the other way around. How can I be abandoning you when you left first? And now you show up and just because some time has passed, you think everything is fine and dandy? You think you can just waltz back into my life like nothing happened? And you expect me to meet your new wife and kid on top of that? I always thought you were insane, but now I'm sure of it. I don't know what kind of fantasy takes place in your mind, but this is the real world, Dad. I have no desire to meet your new wife; I have no desire to be big sister to your new kid; I have no desire to see you or *know* you anymore. You don't even realize how much hurt you've caused Mom and me. That's what really gets me . . . you have no idea the damage you do to people. Maybe someday I'll change my mind . . . but I doubt it. For now, I don't care if I ever see you again. As far as I'm concerned, I have no father.

THE EVIL STEPMOTHER

KENDRA complains to her friend that her stepmother is sending her away for the entire summer. When her friend comes up with an alternate plan, KENDRA explains that she feels her stepmother deliberately wants to make her life miserable.

KENDRA: You're never gonna believe this but my stepmother is forcing me to go to camp this summer. *(Beat.)* I mean she's forcing me. She's not taking no for an answer, and she's got my dad wrapped around her finger so he'll agree to anything she says.

Next thing you know, she'll figure out a way to ship me off to boarding school. *(Beat.)*

I know, it's straight out of some fairy tale—the evil stepmother, the poor misunderstood stepchild. But what can I do? Since they got married, Dad doesn't listen to a single word I say. Not that he ever did before, but now I really don't have a chance. I'm totally screwed—there's no way out. *(Beat.)*

What's your idea? *(Beat.)*

Go with you on vacation? That would be *awesome!* Would your parents care? *(Beat.)*

Oh God, it would be a dream come true. Hawaii for three weeks. Cruella will never agree to it though. Even if your parents call her up and beg her to let me go with you, she'll say no. She wants me to be miserable. She'd die if she thought I was having more fun than her. *(Beat.)*

Yeah, it's definitely worth a try. But don't get your hopes up—she'll find a way to make it sound like a bad idea. She's pure evil, I'm telling you. This woman is ruining my life and my father hasn't the faintest idea that we can't stand each other.

MONEY TROUBLE

JOANNA usually takes care of all her own financial obligations. She's a bit short for a trip she wants to take with her friends, so she asks her mother for a small loan. Her mother is not cooperative, and JOANNA wants to find out why.

JOANNA: I'm the only one of all my friends who has a job . . . I pay for all my own stuff. So this one time I'm asking you to help me out and you say no. I don't get it. I really want to go on this ski trip with Jen and everybody and I can get the time off at the restaurant—I just need some extra money to cover all the expenses. It's not like I'm asking for a free ride—I'll pay you back, Mom. You know I will.

I've been working so hard—in school and at work. I think I deserve a break. You even said the other day that I should probably slow down so I wouldn't burn out. So I'm taking your advice. *(Beat.)*

I never get to do anything with my friends anymore, and now I have this opportunity and you won't help me. You don't even know how lucky you are to have me for a child. . . . I know so many kids who give their parents such grief. . . .

One hundred bucks . . . that's all I need . . . and I'll pay you back as soon as possible. *(Beat.)*

How can you be so heartless? *(Beat.)*

Oh God . . . I didn't realize you were having problems. *(Pause.)* Mom . . . why didn't you just tell me that you don't have the money? *(Beat.)*

No . . . it's okay. I don't have to go—there'll be other trips. It's no biggie. *Really. (Beat.)*

Mom? Do you need to borrow some money from me? I have the money I saved from the ski trip. It's not much, but maybe it'll help.

DENIAL

LIZ is trying to convince her mother that she does not have bulimia. The fact is that LIZ does not even recognize her own eating disorder symptoms and truly believes there is nothing wrong, when in fact there definitely is.

LIZ: I don't need any help, Mother—I'm not sick. I don't do this all the time, just every once in a while if I feel like I've overindulged or something. *(Beat.)*

I'm telling you there is nothing wrong with me . . . I can stop at anytime. You were actually the one who suggested I do it in the first place. *(Beat.)*

Yes you were—about six months ago—I thought I had food poisoning, remember? And you said, "Try to make yourself throw up, honey, you'll probably feel a lot better."

I didn't want to, but I did it anyway and you were right—I felt much better. So, every now and then if I feel like I've eaten too much, I do it. Or if I've gained a few pounds, I do it. *(Pause.)*

I'm not bulimic, Mom, if that's what you're thinking.

So you see, I don't need to go to a shrink or take any pills for depression, and if you want me to stop—fine. I'll stop. It's not a problem. It's really not. I'll just start eating better and exercising more. I really do need to lose a few pounds. But I'll do that the old-fashioned way—I'll just fast for a couple of days—that should take care of it. I can go without food for a few days. That's never been a problem for me. I can lose a quick five or seven pounds. *(Pause.)*

Now can't you see I'm fine? Will you please stop bugging me about all this?

THE CHEERLEADER

VICKI is obsessed with cheerleading, and she is a very bossy and difficult person to get along with. Because of this, Melissa, the cheerleading captain, has decided to cut her from the team. VICKI finds this decision unacceptable and confronts Melissa.

VICKI: All I ever wanted in life was to be a cheerleader. I started at four years old; can you believe it? I cheered for my brother's Little League team *and* his soccer team. I learned jumps and splits and everyone told me how good I was. I think they should put cheering into the Olympics, I really do. I mean, it's totally a competitive event. And it takes a lot of skill, hard work, and dedication. You have to give your life over to it. I train as hard as any athlete or any dancer. And I take it *very* seriously.

I understand you have to make cuts, Melissa, but it's absolutely ridiculous that you would cut me!

I'm the best you've got—I'm the *only* one who really cares about how we look out there and you know it!

If you cut me from the squad, I will sue you. I'm not kidding. My father is a lawyer and he knows what to do and I will take you to court and you will be humiliated beyond belief. The fact that you are captain of this squad is such a joke, and we both know how wrong you are for the job. You got in on a fluke. Trust me . . . I will ruin you!

Because I am a cheerleader, Melissa. I always have been, I always will be, and YOU will not be the one to kill my dream. If you do—you will be so sorry.