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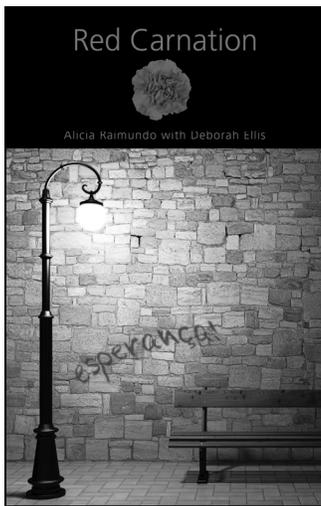
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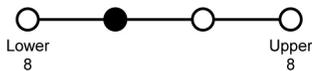
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Level



Text Type

- Memoir

Genre

- Non-fiction

Line Masters

- LM 9: Writing to Understand Your Thoughts and Feelings
- LM 10a: Fact or Fiction?
- LM 10b: Fact or Fiction? Answer Key
- LM 11: Home Connection Letter—*Red Carnation*

TEACHER TIP

Red Carnation deals with the sensitive issue of attempted suicide and the true story of one girl's mental health struggle. Although the circumstances of the event are not mentioned and the emphasis is on the process of recovery, be sensitive to the particular experiences and needs of your students. For more information about discussing suicide with students, please consult your ministry guidelines.

Invitation to Learning

Red Carnation

by Alicia Raimundo with Deborah Ellis

Purpose	Content Focus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To learn about mental illness in an effort to de-stigmatize the issue • To learn about seeking help and building resiliency as effective ways to respond to and cope with mental health issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing Stigma (p. 47) • Building Resiliency and Moving Forward (p. 48) • Writing to Understand Your Thoughts and Feelings (p. 50)

What You Need to Know

Reducing Stigma

As noted throughout the activities in *Well Aware*, stigma remains one of the greatest barriers to individuals' and families' ability to deal positively with mental health issues and seek help. Stigma can isolate those coping with mental illness and damage their self-esteem (which may in turn exacerbate the situation).

Studies by organizations such as The Canadian Mental Health Association and the U.S. National Library of Medicine show that a contributing factor to stigma is the way in which people with mental illnesses have been depicted by the entertainment industry. Given the prominent role of mass media in daily life, these portrayals can significantly influence public opinion. Unfortunately, they frequently rely on stereotyped and sensationalized images. For example, characters with mental illness are often portrayed as dangerous, violent, and unpredictable. Education about mental health is key to countering the potential effects of such stereotypes, as is teaching students to take a critical stance on what they hear and view.

Facts about Canadian youth and mental health are found on pp. 11–21 of this resource and serve well as a starting contextualization for classroom work with this text.

It is also important to emphasize with students that this text offers them a chance to hear from a real person who has experienced a mental illness and thereby gain new insights and/or challenge ideas they may already have.

See: Activity #1: Fact or Fiction? p. 47

Building Resiliency and Moving Forward

Red Carnation is a story of help and hope. Alicia credits much of her recovery to the opportunity to talk about her experiences and help others. The afterword included by Alicia offers a view into how much her life and outlook have changed since the incidents depicted in this book as well as how significant her recovery has been (as a “superhero” of mental health).

There are many elements to explore when talking about resiliency. Once again, self-talk is critical. In this invitation, students explore self-talk and how to turn their negative thoughts around to reflect a more positive view of the world and their own situation.

The effects of stress on the mind and body have been studied for some time. Recently the effects of positive thinking and optimism on physical health have become a subject of interest. Benefits of positive thinking may include an increased life span, lower rates of depression, a reduced risk of death from cardiovascular disease, and an improved ability to cope with stress.

This text also illustrates the importance of listening and empathy. Students have the opportunity to consider what does and does not help a person dealing with a challenging illness.

See: Activity #2: Things that Help, p. 48; Activity #3: Listening and Showing Empathy, p. 48; Activity #4: Recovering, p. 49; Activity #5: Hope, p. 50

Writing to Understand Your Thoughts and Feelings

Writing and talking are powerful life tools that have a positive impact on well-being. You may wish to share the ideas in **Line Master 9: Writing to Understand Your Thoughts and Feelings** and ask students to reflect on a value of writing (or drawing) that they had not previously considered.

In this invitation, students are encouraged to keep a journal and to explore how this reflective writing (or drawing) can help them learn more about their thoughts, feelings, and actions.

See: Activity #6: Keeping Track, p. 50; Activity #7: Journal Writing, p. 51

Curriculum Connections

The activities in this Invitation to Learning have connections to Language, the Arts, Health and Physical Education, and Character Education.



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Line Master 9

TEACHER TIP

These notes provide a “menu” of ideas and strategies. Timelines and the choice of options to pursue under each step are left to your discretion, as you know your students best.

TEACHER TIP

You may wish to research progressive relaxation scripts to support breathing and relaxation strategies being implemented. You may also wish to research “Square Breathing” or another formula to show students how to “breathe with purpose.” Some students have trouble with an abstract instruction such as “We are going to breathe to calm down.”

TEACHER TIP

Explain that an epigraph is used at the beginning of a literary work to suggest the theme of what follows.



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Teaching Notes

A. Before You Begin

Centering: *How do I prepare for this learning experience?*

Ask students to think about how their day is going so far. Allow time for personal reflection about what has been good, bad, or indifferent, and then ask them to give their day a rating of 1–10. Have students share with a partner and identify what events influenced their choice. Invite volunteers to share with the whole group.

Explain that sometimes even one discussion, event, or thought—positive or negative—can affect how we feel for the entire day. Ask students to close their eyes and think about a special person, place, or event that makes them feel happy, appreciated, and safe. Then ask them to picture themselves in this good situation and try to focus on the sensations that accompany these thoughts.

B. Introducing the Text

Contemplating: *What is this text about, and why is it important to me?*

Share with students that some people feel the adolescent and preteen years are among the most challenging times of our lives. Ask students whether they agree with this opinion and why or why not. Point out that this is a time when they are experiencing a great deal of change. They are changing

- Physically with the onset of puberty and the significant development of the prefrontal cortex (responsible for abstract thought)
- Emotionally with hormone growth and development
- Socially with more complex relationships
- Intellectually with new interests, passions, questions, and global concerns

Turn to the page preceding Chapter 1 in *Red Carnation* and read together the epigraph about Alicia being a mental health superhero. Discuss what students are expecting from the text. What are some of the myths that are prevalent about mental illness? Students could talk in small groups and create their own lists. Ask:

- *What do you think Alicia means when she calls herself a “mental health superhero”? What do you think this text might be about?*

Challenge students to keep these questions in mind as they explore *Red Carnation*.

To acquaint students with the creators of *Red Carnation*, you may opt at this point to read pages 28–29 where Alicia tells about her “superhero” achievements. Students may be familiar with the work of author Deborah Ellis, either from reading *Todd on the Edge* (in the *Well Aware* series) or any of her many other titles.

C. Reading the Text

Connecting: *What do I already know, and what do I need to know?*

Since *Red Carnation* deals with the sensitive issue of attempted suicide, you will want to proceed thoughtfully with students' reading of the text. Monitor students' responses and tailor approaches and activities according to your students' needs.

Consider reading this text in chunks, as outlined below. As indicated, students may do some preliminary reflection on the Discussion Starters prior to working with them in the activities that follow.

1) **Chapters 1 and 2:** Students may be asked to record privately any questions, connections, or reactions they have at this point. They could choose to talk or write about their responses to **Discussion Starters #1** and **#2**.

2) **Chapters 3 and 4:** You may choose to read these chapters aloud, pausing at points to add to students' thoughts about **Discussion Starter #2** and the first sentence of **Discussion Starter #3**. Alternatively, students may read this section independently and participate in a small-group discussion afterwards.

3) **Chapter 5:** Consider reading this chapter aloud and then having students participate in small-group discussion by finishing **Discussion Starter #3** and then progressing to **Discussion Starters #4** and **#6**.

During and after reading the book, students might make notes privately about **Discussion Starter #5**. Encourage students to be completely honest and not hold back feelings that they might be embarrassed or uncomfortable sharing openly. Offer a sentence starter such as “*Before, I used to think But now I know*”

D. After Reading: Reflecting About the Text

Confirming: *How do I practise what I have learned?*

Activities Related to ... Reducing Stigma

Activity #1: Fact or Fiction?

Connect to **Discussion Starter #1**: *In what ways is Alicia a typical teenager? How is she different from most teens you know?* Discuss students' responses and draw out thoughts they have about the difference between ordinary ups and downs in feelings and how they perceive Alicia's illness.

Distribute **Line Master 10a: Fact or Fiction?** Have students work in pairs to discuss whether each statement is fact or fiction. Follow up by sharing **Line Master 10b: Fact or Fiction? Answer Key**. Discuss answers and correct misconceptions.

TEACHER TIP

Record the text as it is read aloud so students who are ELL or who need support can listen to the story again in school or at home in order to be part of the discussion that follows. This is called *assisted reading*.

Discussion Starters #1–6

TEACHER TIP

The topic of suicide and the myths surrounding mental illness are also explored in the text *Upside Down*. You may find it effective to draw out connections in students' work with these two books.

Discussion Starter #1



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Line Master 10a
Line Master 10b

Activities Related to ... Building Resiliency and Moving Forward

Activity #2: Things that Help

Discussion Starter #2

Connect to **Discussion Starter #2**: *How would you describe Nurse Carolyn's personality? Why? Is she a good nurse for Alicia? Why or why not?*

Prompt students to use evidence from the text to support their descriptions of Nurse Carolyn's personality. Ask them also to look at how Alicia reacts to Nurse Carolyn's words and tone. Continue by asking what aspects of Nurse Carolyn's approach would be good for any of us to use when supporting a friend or family member with a mental health challenge. These could include

- Maintaining calm and not reacting to comments or emotional behaviours in a judgmental fashion
- Being warm and caring
- Listening and following up on things Alicia said
- Giving Alicia time and room to think about her own actions
- Pointing out to Alicia what her impact is on others (without judgment)

TEACHER TIP

Students might consider the way in which some Aboriginal cultures regard tone of voice. It is viewed as a weakness to use a harsh tone whereas a calm tone and voice show great strength. It is also felt that using a calm tone of voice is the way to achieve positive progress in dealing with others.

Discussion Starter #4

Connect to **Discussion Starter #4**: *Alicia feels that just thinking happy thoughts isn't enough to help her get over her deep feelings of sadness and hopelessness. What does help Alicia? Consider the information provided about her life during and after her stay in the hospital. Work in pairs to discuss. Ask for volunteer responses. Close by formulating a class list of things that could help a person who is struggling to cope with an illness.*

Activity #3: Listening and Showing Empathy

Ask students if they have ever talked to someone who they felt wasn't listening to them. How could they tell? How did they feel?

Explain that one of the challenges for people in Alicia's situation is to find others who will listen with their full attention and with empathy. Often, people with mental health problems avoid telling anyone because they fear they will be rejected, judged, or brushed off. Remind students that part of being able to recover from mental health challenges is having someone who will listen to you and be there for you as you work through your problems.

Connect to **Discussion Starter #6**: *Now and then, everyone has to deal with emotions such as sadness, anger, anxiety, or even depression. Why might it be difficult to talk to someone about feeling these emotions? Why is it often important to talk to someone if you are feeling strong emotions like these?*

TEACHER TIP

Be clear that in times of crisis, such as Alicia's situation, a medical intervention is necessary, but suggest that there are times when just talking to someone might be helpful.

Discussion Starter #6

Ask students to take a few moments to think about who they could reach out to if they needed help. Suggest that they make a list as a reminder. Emphasize the importance of making use of these options in times of trouble.

Next, work with students to help them practise being good mindful listeners. Divide students into pairs and ask Person A to talk about a life experience (for approximately 2 minutes) that made them feel stressed, uncomfortable, or sad. Ask Person B to listen actively to their partner by

- Establishing eye contact (where culturally appropriate)
- Using “open” body language—facing the speaker, leaning in, nodding, etc.
- Accepting what the other person says, without comment or critique.

The challenge is to listen but not interject. After each student has had time to play the role of active listener, ask

- *Do you think you were a good listener? How do you know?*

Now have students take turns responding to what their partner has told them. Their task is to be accepting, sympathetic, and, where possible, empathetic. Remind students that they are not health professionals but may offer some suggestions as friends if they are invited to do so.

Pivot the discussion to examine how Alicia was affected when she attempted to listen and show empathy for fellow patients during her hospital stay. Connect to **Discussion Starter #3**: *What is Alicia’s attitude toward the other patients in the general mental health ward? Do you think Alicia would react differently to those patients today? What evidence supports your opinion?* Make connections to earlier discussions about stigma and ask students whether they think Alicia’s opinions about mental health (and any stigmatized ideas they included) might have changed after her experience.

Close the activity by returning to the earlier discussion about the importance of talking to someone to help deal with strong emotions. It is also important to realize that there can come a point where, as a caring listener, a friend must tell an adult about a significant concern. However well-meaning they may be, when non-professionals try to do it all themselves, it is stressful for them, and could be very dangerous for someone in need.

Activity #4: Recovering

Read the end of the text where Alicia shares what she has done with her life since the episode when she was 13. Ask:

- *How has Alicia moved on? What factors do you think have contributed to her success in managing her mental illness?*
- *How has telling her story over and over again helped Alicia to move forward with her life? Explain.*

TEACHER TIP

Students are encouraged to relate a minor situation that made them feel somewhat stressed, uncomfortable, or sad. If this activity becomes too difficult due to their emotional discomfort, or if they are not ready to share with a partner, encourage them to use a fictional character to dramatize a stressful situation experienced by the fictional character. In either case, provide them with a few minutes to think about what they want to say before engaging in the activity.

Discussion Starter #3

TEACHER TIP

Remind students that **they are not health professionals and they cannot be responsible for others’ well-being**. Instead, their focus should be on supporting those others in finding help.

- *What advice do you think Alicia would have for someone your age who is feeling hopeless and depressed?*

Discussion Starter #5

Connect to **Discussion Starter #5**: *Has reading this book changed any of your ideas about people who have a mental illness? Explain what ideas changed (or didn't change) and why.*

Activity #5: Hope

Ask students to recount the role that hope plays in *Red Carnation*. Ask: When you hear the word *hope*, what feelings, emotions, and thoughts come to mind?

Explain that being hopeful includes setting attainable, predictable goals that can be measured and celebrated along the way. It means never giving up on “you.” It means finding new ways to move forward when old ones don't work. It means believing in yourself and others.

Have students work in pairs to record at least one page of thoughts about how hope makes a difference in life. What would life be like if you felt hopeless? How could you help build hope in someone else? After they have finished writing, ask students to create a wordle (instructions are available online) for the concept of HOPE. Print and post the wordles around the room as reminders of the importance of never giving up on hopes, dreams, and plans for the future.



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Activities Related to ... Writing to Understand Your Thoughts and Feelings

Activity #6: Keeping Track

Share the following dilemma with students:

Henry loved to dance. From the time he was four, he would watch his sister in her ballet class and wish that he could join her in the lesson. Before long, his mom noticed this interest and enrolled Henry in a dance class of his own. His enjoyment became a passion and he could hardly wait until the next class to learn more and to dance more. But Henry was also very good at basketball, and he had to make a very important decision. There was a basketball tournament on Saturday that would determine who went to the board finals. Also on Saturday, tryouts were being held for the city dance company, and Henry had been asked to audition. The stress of deciding what to do was just too much. When Henry asked his mom what to do, she suggested that he write down the pros and cons of each activity and then make his choice.

Divide students into pairs, labelling one Partner A and the other Partner B. Ask Partner A to make a list of the pros and cons of going to the dance tryouts, and Partner B to make a list of the pros and cons of going to the basketball tournament. Have them share their responses with each other. Then ask each pair to make a decision about what Henry should do. Once they have made their decision, ask,

- *How many pairs decided that Henry should go to the dance trials? How many decided that he should go to the tournament?*
- *What did you base your decisions on? Share.*
- *Did you find making the lists helpful? Why or why not?*

Explain that when dealing with duelling emotions or stressful situations, it sometimes helps to write down your thoughts, feelings, and emotions as well as what the consequences of your action(s) could be. As with Henry's dilemma, there is not always a clear and easy choice. The important point is to take the time to think through how you really feel and then make an informed choice. Writing can help you sort through these challenging times.

Activity #7: Journal Writing

Ask students if anyone keeps a daily journal. Share responses as to why they think many people write in a journal on a daily basis. You may wish to display **Line Master 9: Writing to Understand Your Thoughts and Feelings** and discuss the benefits writing can have.

Have students keep a journal that they write (or draw) in for the next two weeks. Some of the guiding questions for their entries might include the following:

- What happened today that made me happy?
- What bugged me?
- What challenged my patience today?
- What relationship challenges did I have today?
- What did I do to make a positive difference in someone's life today?
- What do I have to say about school? Activities? Friends? Family?

Explain that entries will be monitored for completion but not read (unless requested). At the end of the two-week period, have students bring in their journals and ask,

- *What did you learn by making daily entries in your journal?*
- *Do you feel that this activity helped you to reduce stress? To understand yourself, your thoughts, and your feelings? To make wise choices? Explain.*
- *Will you consider journal writing in the future? Discuss.*

Close by reminding students that journal writing is only one way to help them identify and manage their thoughts and feelings. Explain that they will be introduced to many more such strategies throughout their teenage years, and the important thing to remember is "Don't knock it until you've tried it!"



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Line Master 9

Focus On

Self-Regulation

E. A Step Further: Additional Learning Activities

Creating: *What are some other ways I can use what I have learned?*

The goal of this section is to extend students' learning across the curriculum and beyond the classroom.

Media Literacy, Expressive Language, the Arts

Have students design their own wordle-like posters for FEELINGS and EMOTIONS. Ask students to share, reminding them of the importance of using appropriate expressive vocabulary when communicating their personal stories and challenges with others.

Self-Regulation, Expressive Language

Explain that learning to stay in touch with your feelings when choosing how to respond to situations is called self-regulation. This term means

- Being mindful of what is going on around you and within you (e.g., your state of mind and emotions as well as feelings of hunger, fatigue, and irritation due to light or noise)
- Pausing and thinking about what you are feeling in a situation, rather than reacting impulsively
- Staying calm, alert, and focused on your surroundings and the events that you are engaged in (or if you become dysregulated, it means paying attention to what you need in order to become calm, alert, and focused again)
- Thinking ahead and being mindful of the consequences of your actions

One important aspect of self-regulation involves knowing your triggers or “hot buttons” and understanding when, where, and how you respond to them.

Ask students to interview a partner about what bugs them. To get students started with sharing, you might tell them a few examples of things that bug you. The activity could even be extended into a classroom blog that any class member can contribute to. Depending on the specifics of your classroom, you might encourage students to keep this fairly light in tone, or you may opt to invite students to share more serious irritations that they encounter. To debrief, ask,

- *Did you notice any similarities between what bugs you and what bugs your partner or others in the class?*

After students have shared, have them consider how they respond or react to the things that bug them. Ask them to think about their self-regulation in these situations. Are there other ways they could have reacted? Would those options have had a more positive or a more negative result?

Focus On

Self-Regulation

TEACHER TIP

Remind students that **they are not health professionals and it is not their role to “fix” friends who have mental health issues.** What they can do is listen, be supportive and accepting, and help them find further support.

Ask for volunteers to share examples. Close by inviting all students to share tips they have found helpful when they are feeling dysregulated.

Throughout the Learning Experience— Celebrating “I can!”

Celebration occurs at various points throughout the learning experience. See p. 7 of this resource for a discussion of celebrating learning.

An activity celebrating learning might ask students to complete the sentence “I can” This will help to promote confidence, self-efficacy, and self-concept. Here are ways you can incorporate celebration into this Invitation to Learning:

- Using the HOPE wordles for inspiration, have students think of ways to inspire hope in people who are experiencing challenges.
- Alicia temporarily forgets about her situation when she helps an elderly lady in the hospital move to music. Invite students to share examples of how they have helped someone lately. Remind them to take pride in this.
- Ask students to write a journal entry capturing at least one important thing they have learned from their work with this text.
- Invite students to write a letter to Alicia expressing what she has taught them about survival.

The Parent/Caregiver Connection

If you have not already done so, you may wish to send home the letter provided on **Line Master 3: Home Connection Letter—Introducing *Well Aware*** before addressing mental health in your classroom.

While working with *Red Carnation*, you may also wish to send parents **Line Master 11: Home Connection Letter—*Red Carnation*** to ensure that they are informed about the topics in this particular text. Additionally, you may work collaboratively with students to prepare a “talking page” that will note the important ideas they have learned from sharing Alicia’s story. Perhaps these could be written on a red paper carnation for each student to take home as an invitation to tell the story and talk about what they have learned.



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Line Master 3



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Line Master 11