

Reading Lines: Teens Finding Support

Kari, a 17 year old girl, had depression and took medication for over a year. Then she had to move to a new school and felt worse because she missed her old friends. She was trying to make new friends, but it was hard for her to do. She talked to her older sister about it:

Part 1

Kari: Something is bothering me. At school today, I sat by some other kids for lunch, but I didn't know who they were talking about. I felt so dumb that I didn't say anything. Why is it so hard for me to make friends? It was better in my old school.

Sister: In middle school and high school it seems like kids already have their chosen group of friends and are not really looking for more friends. There will probably be someone who will talk to you and become your friend if you talk to them first. Otherwise, they might not think you want to be friends with them. But not everyone will end up being your friend. You just have to keep trying.

Kari: If I do talk to someone, I am afraid of what they will think when I tell them I have depression and have been in a psychiatric hospital before.

Sister: You don't have to tell people about your illness unless you want to. When you trust your new friends, you probably want to tell them. There is no reason to feel ashamed of getting treatment for depression. It is common problem, even with teenagers.

Kari: I have heard that suicide happens a lot with teenagers. I'm glad I don't feel like hurting myself anymore. But, with my depression I have to be careful to keep taking my medication and get enough support.

Sister: That's right. There is a lot to do to keep mind, body and spirit healthy. Social activities are important to feel connected to others. You will make new friends someday, but it might take some time. Try not to worry about it right now. Remember, you still have your old friends you can talk to. I can take you to "hang out" with them a few times this summer.

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Kari: I'm glad to have you to talk to about this. But next year when I go to college, I'm going to need to be able to talk about my health. There will be times when I will be very upset about things that happen in school or at home.

Sister: Yes. Try to talk to Mom or Dad about it. But, you can always call, text, or e-mail me whenever you want to. Remember that there are also crisis lines 24 hours a day if you are feeling really bad and need someone to talk to. You can just dial 211 to talk to a counselor – It's even a free call.

Kari: Mom gave me some information about some activities at the Teen Center. I might try going there sometime next week. It sounds like fun. Maybe I'll meet some new friends there. Or, I can volunteer at the pet rescue center.

Part 2

Kari: At school, some of the kids are going to a party on Friday night. They said it would be a "wild party" and they plan to have beer. I like the idea of going to a party, but I am not sure I should go.

Sister: You are right to be worried about going to a party where there will be drinking. Besides being illegal, there are big risks, even if you don't drink. Drinking alcohol can lead to bad, impulsive decisions that hurt other people.

Kari: My psychiatrist told me that if I drink alcohol, my medication will probably not work as well, and my depression could get worse. He also said that illegal drugs and alcohol can interact with my medications, and be dangerous.

Sister: That's right. You don't have to do things to put yourself at risk just so you can try to make friends. It would be much better to spend time with people who don't drink. What do you think about having our own party and inviting some people from school? If Mom and Dad say it's OK, I'll help you plan the party, and I'll drive them home.

Kari: Yes! That's a great idea. I can think of a few girls that might want to come. Thanks!