



# Preview Guide for Teachers and Parents to Childsplay's Production of **ERIC AND ELLIOT**

We hope you find this guide helpful in preparing your students for an interesting and educational theatrical experience. Included you'll find things to talk about before and after seeing the performance, as well as resource materials.

## The Story...

*Eric and Elliot* is the story of a family struggling with the aftermath of suicide. The mother has spiraled into a severe depression, while the younger of two brothers, Eric, is in a state of complete denial. Elliot, the older brother, takes Eric on a journey toward healing. Along the way, the boys meet three whimsical characters that demonstrate a range of unsuccessful ways of dealing with the past, present and future. Finally, the brothers arrive at the realization that healing comes through facing the past and, in this instance, the tragic day when hope was lost. The play ends with Elliot encouraging Eric not to let go of the hope in his heart, and to seek help for their mother.

## About Theater Etiquette...

Since this may be the first live theater experience for some of your students, please take a moment to discuss appropriate audience behavior. Sometimes when confronted with serious issues audience members may feel uncomfortable and react in a way that would be looked upon as inappropriate (laughter, comments, etc.). Since theater is live, the actors can see and hear the audience just like the audience can see and hear the actors. Please encourage students to be respectful of the fact that this is serious subject matter and a challenging piece for the actors to perform.

## **ERIC AND ELLIOT**

By Dwayne Hartford

Directed by  
**Anthony Runfola**

Scenic Design by  
**Jeffrey Lemire**

Costume Design by  
**D. Daniel Hollingshead**

Sound Design by  
**Anthony Runfola**

### THE CAST

Mother/Daisy. . . . . Kristin Hailstone  
Elliot . . . . . D. Scott Withers  
Eric . . . . . Noah Todd  
Mr. Willoughby . . . . . Jon Gentry  
Miss Hadden . . . . . Katie McFadzen

Spring, 2006

### The production is supported in part by:

Arizona Commission on the Arts  
Bashas' Markets  
City of Tempe/Tempe Municipal Arts  
Commission  
Tempe Diablos  
Wells Fargo



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✓ **SUICIDE IS A PERMANENT SOLUTION TO A TEMPORARY PROBLEM**

## **ERIC & ELLIOT BOOKLIST**

Prepared with the help of Tim Wadham, Youth Services  
Coordinator for the Maricopa County Library District



### Fiction about suicide and depression:

*St. Michael's Scales* by Neil O. Connelly  
*Darkness Before Dawn* by Sharon M. Draper  
*Fat Kid Rules the World* by K. L. Going  
*Things Left Unsaid: A Novel in Poems* by Stephanie Hemphill  
*Damage* by A. M. Jenkins  
*Drowning Anna* by Sue Mayfield  
*The Cloud Chamber* by Joyce Maynard  
*Aimee* by Mary Beth Miller  
*Shizuko's Daughter* by Kyoko Mori  
*Under the Wolf, Under the Dog* by Adam Rapp  
*Tribes* by Arthur G. Slade  
*Inside Out* by Terry Trueman

### Non-fiction about suicide and depression:

*The Silent Cry: Teen Suicide and Self-Destructive Behavior* by Joan Esherick  
*Depression* by Faye Zucker

All materials are available through your local library. Check it out!

## Things to Talk About Before the Show...

**Talking about SUICIDE does not cause SUICIDE! When you talk about SUICIDE with teens it gives them resources that can help them or help others make choices other than SUICIDE.**

### Some Facts About Suicide:

- ✓ Arizona ranks first in the nation for teens who complete suicide with guns
- ✓ Each year since 1985, Arizona has ranked in the top 10 states for teens who have completed suicide and currently ranks ninth
- ✓ In Arizona suicide is consistently one of the three leading causes of death among youth (19 years of age and younger)
- ✓ The American Association of Suicidology estimates there are 25 suicide attempts for every completion
- ✓ Every suicide intimately affects at least six other people
- ✓ 90% of the people who commit suicide suffer from a mental disorder
- ✓ Geographic and socio-economic diversity, growth, changes, immigration, loneliness and depression are risk factors for suicide
- ✓ Male teens complete suicide at a 5 to 1 ratio to female teens, but females attempt suicide more often than males
- ✓ In Arizona during 1999, the highest mortality rate was among Native Americans, followed by the white, non-Hispanic group
- ✓ A previous suicide attempt greatly increases the risk of a young male eventually committing suicide

### Be Aware of the Warning Signs:

A suicidal person may:

- ✦ Talk about committing suicide
- ✦ Withdraw from friends and/or social activities
- ✦ Be preoccupied with death and dying
- ✦ Have a recent severe loss
- ✦ Experience drastic changes in behavior
- ✦ Lose interest in hobbies, work, school, etc.
- ✦ Prepare for death by making out a will and final arrangements
- ✦ Give away prized possessions
- ✦ Have attempted suicide before
- ✦ Take unnecessary risks
- ✦ Lose interest in personal appearance
- ✦ Increase their use of alcohol and drugs

### Links Between Depression and Suicide:

- ✦ Major depression is the psychiatric diagnosis most commonly associated with suicide.
- ✦ About 2/3 of people who complete suicide had a depressive disorder at the time of their deaths.
- ✦ The risk of suicide amongst people with depression is approximately 30 times that of the general population.
- ✦ Suicide is particularly likely during early stages of a depressive episode, which is why early intervention should be encouraged.
- ✦ People who drink alcohol or take drugs in addition to being depressed are at a greater risk for suicide.

## Things To Talk About After the Show...

The Mental Health Association of Arizona (MHA) will be on hand to answer questions after the show. Childsplay and MHA have enjoyed a close working relationship since the development phase of this production in 2001. MHA does suicide prevention education for Arizona schools, community

groups and others—sharing the message that depression is a real, common and treatable illness. For more information on youth depression—including depression screening opportunities and mental health resources in your community, contact MHA's Information and Referral line at 480-994-4407, ext. 13. If you're living with depression, it's not your fault. Don't be afraid to talk to someone. Reach out—get help.

The performance will be followed by a discussion with the actors and a representative of the Mental Health Association of Arizona about depression and what to do if you or someone you know needs help. **PLEASE ALLOW AT LEAST 20 MINUTES FOR THE DISCUSSION** as it allows students to process the information and if necessary, ask for help.

### Depression & Suicide Questionnaire:

#### Are you...

- irritable or quick to anger?
- often sad?
- unable to concentrate?
- having difficulty making decisions?
- receiving failing grades?
- feeling helpless or hopeless; asking "why bother?"
- isolated or withdrawn?
- quick to make threats?
- violent toward yourself or others?
- suffering from eating disorders (lack of appetite, overeating)?
- suffering from sleep disorders (insomnia or oversleeping)?
- having recurring thoughts of death or suicide?

If you answered yes to 5 or more of the questions and symptoms continue for 2 weeks, **GET HELP!** If you notice these symptoms in a friend or relative, **GET HELP!** Don't ignore the signs!

### Internet Links:

- [www.mhaarizona.org](http://www.mhaarizona.org)  
~Mental Health Association of Arizona
- [www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org)  
~National Mental Health Association
- [www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org)  
~American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists and includes dozens of great Facts for Families
- [www.yellowribbon.org](http://www.yellowribbon.org)  
~Yellow Ribbon International Suicide Prevention Program
- [www.psycom.net/depression.central.suicide.html](http://www.psycom.net/depression.central.suicide.html)  
~Links to MANY articles about teen suicide and depression
- [www.withonevoice.com/new/facts.html](http://www.withonevoice.com/new/facts.html)  
~Some startling facts and stats on suicide

### Community Resources/Important Phone Numbers:

- Mental Health Association of AZ:**  
480-994-4407; 800-MHA-9277 (outside Maricopa County)
- ValueOptions:** 602-914-5800, 800-564-5465
- ValueOptions Crisis Line:** 602-222-9444
- Impact** (Counseling Services): 480-784-1514
- Teen Lifeline** (24hr. suicide prevention hot-line; peer counselors from 3-9pm): 602-248-TEEN (8336)
- Impact's 24 hr. Crisis Hotline:** 480-784-1500
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**  
1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- National Hopeline Network**  
1-800-SUICIDE (784-2433)

**\*If a student is suicidal, call these numbers. A counselor can help determine the best course of action OR call 911**