



Hilltown  
Families.org

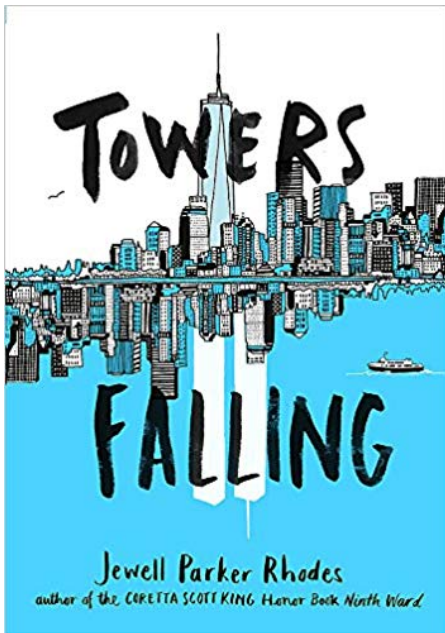
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COMMUNITY-BASED  
EDUCATION NETWORK

Titles for Exploring  
**Mental Health**  
with Middle Grade and Young Adult Readers



**Trauma/PTSD**



Towers Falling  
Jewell Parker Rhodes

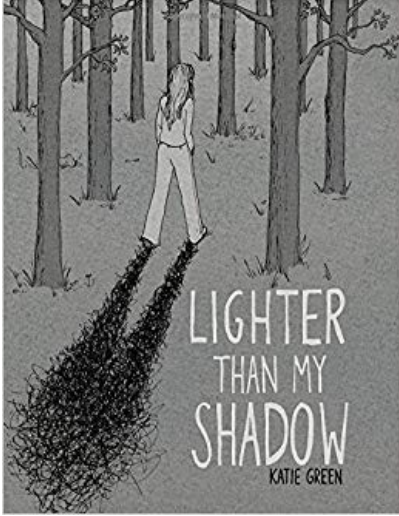
Deja and her family live in a homeless shelter in New York City, where her father's mysterious illness makes getting back on their feet challenging. When a new school year begins, Deja is asked to explore ways in which the Twin Towers missing from the city skyline are connected to her own life. Through this work, she learns that her father once worked in one of the buildings and discovers that he suffers from PTSD from the day of the attacks - challenging her to show compassion, love, and understanding.

Half a World Away  
Cynthia Kadohata

Jaden feels connected to no one - not a single human being. In order to try to feel, he steals, lights fires, exhausts himself with anger - but he can't seem to find a way to feel any emotion deeply. Adopted by American parents from an orphanage in Kazakhstan, Jaden can't help but feel that he is a failure, destined to be unwanted forever. An unexpected breakthrough comes when his family revisits Kazakhstan in order to adopt another child, giving life meaning for Jaden for the first time in as long as he can remember.



## Eating Disorders



### Lighter Than My Shadow Katie Green

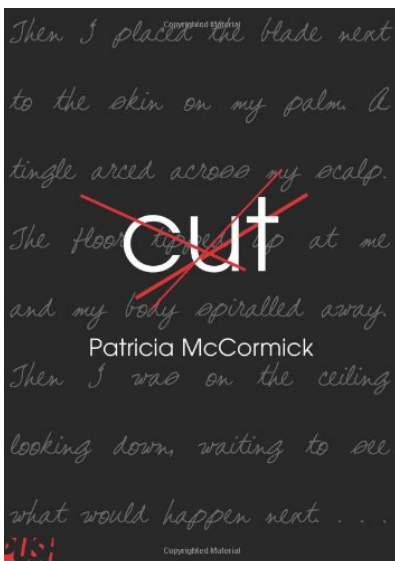
This autobiographical graphic memoir explores circumstances in which eating disorders develop on their own, seemingly out of nowhere. Katie's eating disorder starts in high school and follows her into adulthood, where she learns that even after she has recovered from anorexia, her emotional responses to life can manifest in her relationship with food.

### Everything I Know About You Barbara Dee

Sonnet is sure she's in for the worst when she finds out that her roommate is Ava, a "popular" girl with whom she never gets along. The trip turns Sonnet's social world upside down with crushes, friend shifts, and the unexpected discovery that something's just not quite right about Ava - including her tiny notebook of mysterious numbers and the fact that she never seems to eat at meals.



## Self Harm



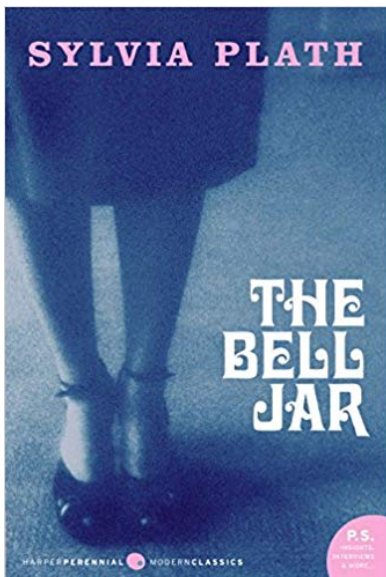
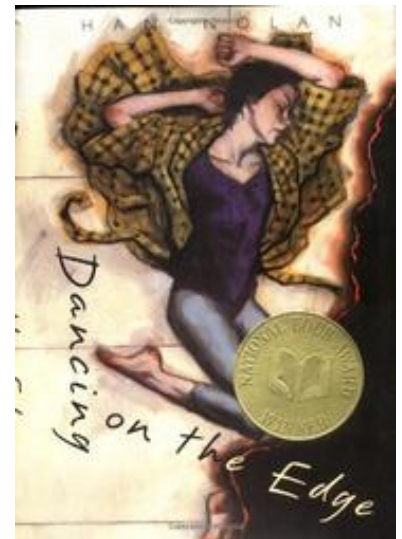
### Cut Patricia McCormick

Callie doesn't want to die, she just cuts herself because it hurts - a feeling she needs. When her school nurse discovers her behavior, she is brought to Sea Pines, a psychiatric hospital. Not yet ready to wrestle with the underlying causes of her behavior, Callie loses her voice, shaping her existence in the teen unit with her silence. But like all things, her silence can only last so long.

## Suicide

### Dancing on the Edge Han Nolan

Miracle isn't like most people her age. Raised mostly by her psychic grandmother, she believes deeply in magic, spirits, and auras - all things that no one else can see. When her father "melts" one day, Miracle is determined to get him back, no matter what kind of magic it takes. The more she works to find him, the more she loses herself - until one last desperate attempt sends her life literally up in flames.



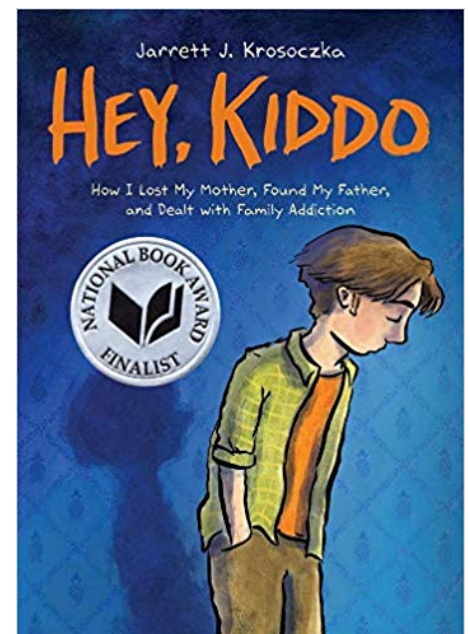
### The Bell Jar Sylvia Plath

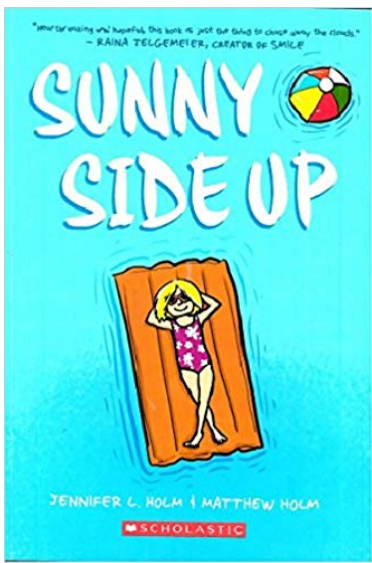
This classic piece of literature chronicles the extreme discontent suffered by a smart woman in the midst of the 20th century's strict cultural expectations for women. Despite being smart, skilled, and given enormous opportunities, Esther's life is marked by extreme depression. Not only do readers explore the mind of a woman experiencing extreme mental illness, the story presents an insider look into the oppressive nature of the gender expectations typical of American culture in the 1900's.

## Substance Abuse

### Hey, Kiddo Jarrett J. Krosoczka

This graphic memoir tells the story of a child growing up in a complicated family. Jarrett's mother was an addict who came in and out of his life, and he was raised by his grandparents. He never knew anything about his father as a child, and was acutely aware of the fact that his family didn't look like most other people's. Readers experience the headache and frustration that marked Jarrett's childhood and while the story is set in the 1900's, it provides a look at what many families today experience as a result of the opioid crisis.

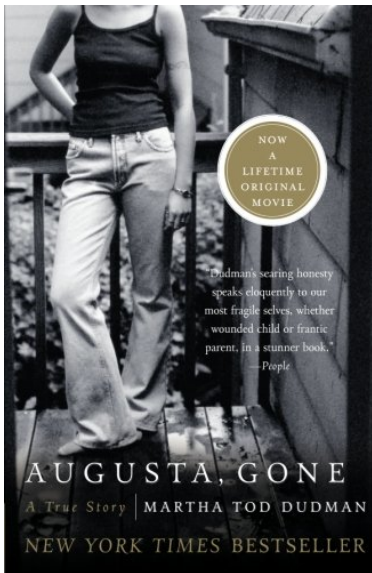
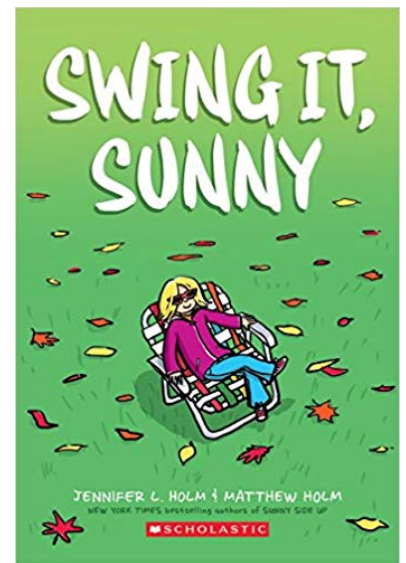




## Sunny Side Up & Swing It, Sunny

Jennifer L. & Matthew Holm

Sunny Lewin, protagonist of Sunny Side Up, is just a regular kid looking forward to fun with friends and family on her summer vacation. When her older brother Dale's strange behavior escalates, she is sent to stay with her grandfather in Florida for the summer while her parents try to help Dale with his drug and alcohol abuse. This pair of graphic novels examines the ways in which sibling relationships are impacted by substance use and the hole that's left when a family member can't be at home.

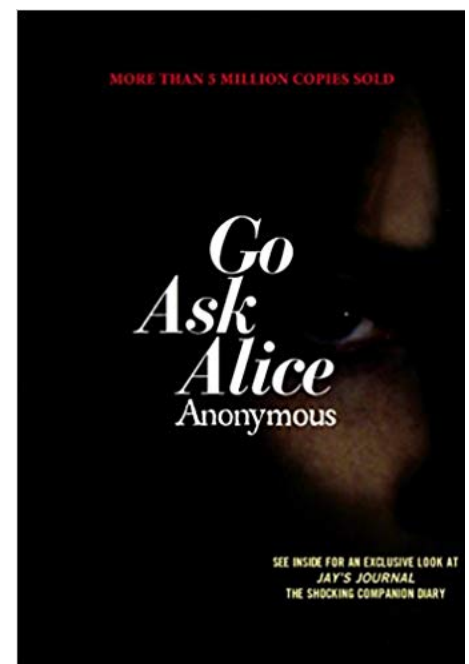


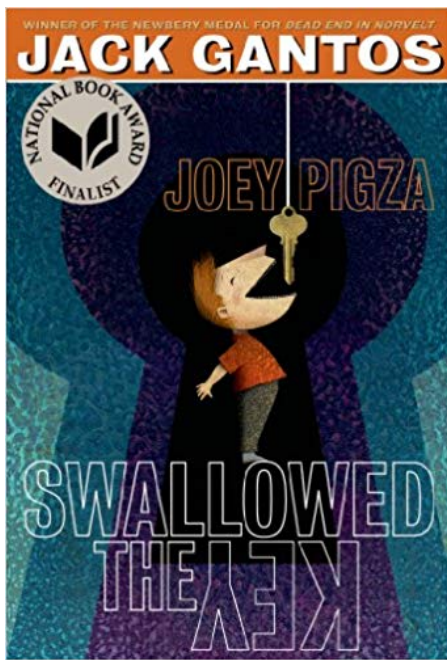
## Augusta, Gone Martha Tod Dudman

A mother in a rural Maine community reflects on parenting her teenage daughter through years of drug use and self-destructive behavior. Augusta's teenage depression drives her to make choices that are not only completely out of character for her, but are well outside the realm of things that her mother feels prepared to deal with. Through strict parenting, wilderness therapy, boarding school, and a host of other extreme measures, Augusta's spirit endures - and she eventually finds herself again.

## Go Ask Alice Anonymous

This well-known classic chronicles a teenager's experiences with drug use during the 1960's. Based on the journals and experiences of a real person, Go Ask Alice sheds light on the naivete that is often associated with youth substance use. While some portions of the story have been imagined and are perhaps contrived, the narrator's thoughts, feelings, and choices are incredibly realistic given the circumstances.





## Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key

Jack Gantos

Joey is wired, and there doesn't seem to be anything he can do about it. His wired-ness gets him into trouble at school, where he runs away during a field trip, spins himself down the hallway bouncing off of lockers, and accidentally snips off the tip of a classmate's nose - the incident that gets him sent to a special classroom. On top of all that, his father isn't in his life and his single mother requires an awful lot of drinks to get through each day. Despite the subject matter, this book is upbeat, funny, and will make you fall in love with Joey.



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