Notes for teachers while teaching *This Book Betrays My Brother*
by Kagiso Lesego Molope

This Book Betrays My Brother raises issues that could be perceived as sensitive and controversial. Different learners will react differently to the content. As a teacher, you play a vital role in mediating the story to your learners and helping them understand the issues.

The possibility exists that some learners in your class might have experienced and/or witnessed sexual violence. The main aim of this document is to provide you with some useful information and material that should help you in supporting those learners.

Disclaimer: This material is for educational purposes and should not be used as a diagnostic tool. These notes should not to be seen as a substitute for professional advice.

1. What signs/behaviours might alert me to the fact that one of my learners may be distressed or having problems? (These signs are generic for distress but could be indicators that the learner may have experienced and/or witnessed sexual violence.)

- abrupt change in personality or behaviour
- withdrawal from friends and things they used to be interested in
- poor peer relations
- difficulty concentrating, learning difficulties/deterioration in school
- depression
- hopelessness
- irritability and bursts of anger
- anxiety
- shyness, reservation, fear
- withdrawal, fantasy, infantile behaviour
- exaggerated startle response (jumps at small noises, or if their name is called)
- loss of appetite
- unwillingness to change clothes for physical education class
- wears layers of clothing/double dressing
- crying
- mutilating behaviour
- inappropriate sexual knowledge and seductive behaviour (this can be a sign of sexual molestation, particularly in younger children)
- delinquency, runaway, truancy
- regression and compulsive behaviours
- over-compliance

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2. What should I do if I know or suspect that someone in my class has experienced and/or witnessed sexual violence?

- It is important that you do something about it and not wait until the learner approaches you. The learner might experience various emotions like fear or embarrassment that will stop her/him from approaching you.
- If you are comfortable to use a direct approach, you can ask the learner to remain behind in class and tell the learner that you noticed that there is something wrong or that she/he seems unhappy, etc. and that you are available if she/he wants to speak to you.
- Use sentences starting with "I noticed" or "I saw" so that the emphasis is on your observations and not the learner's actions.
- If you find a direct approach difficult, you can ask the learner to come to you about something else (e.g. low marks or a late assignment) and direct the conversation towards the suspected abuse.
- It sometimes happens that a friend of the learner might approach you and tell you about it. In cases like this, encourage the friend to bring the learner to you.
  If the learner is not willing to come with the friend, discuss options for the friend to be able to help the learner.
- Discretion is crucial. Please make sure you always speak to the learner in a private place. Asking in front of the class if you can speak to her/him in private may also call attention to the learner and make her/him less willing to speak to you.
- Never mention your discussion with the learner in front of other people (not even if you use different names, places, etc.). You may be tempted to give examples from her/his experience, but that may lead to the learner not being able to trust you.
- Probably the most important thing to keep in mind is that the learner needs to know you believe her/him.
- If the learner opens up and speaks to you, use phrases like:
  "I'm so glad you told me."
  "I am here for you."
  "There is no excuse for sexual violence."
  "No one ever asks to be hurt."
  "It's not your fault."
- Let the learner take her/his time to tell you what happened. Don't push. Don't let your own curiosity lead the discussion.
- Make sure you understand what is being said. Don't assume you know what the discussion is about. Ask the learner for an explanation if you are not sure what she/he means.
- Don't force her/him to tell people close to her/him if she/he is not comfortable doing so. Saying "you really should tell your aunt/sister/father/mother" may be what you feel is right but it may only put more pressure on the learner. Let the learner decide who she/he can trust.

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- Do not place any blame on the victim. Asking questions like, “Why did you go with him?” or “What were you wearing?” can sound very blaming. These questions put the learner in a position of having to defend herself/himself. This only further traumatises them.
- Never say it wasn’t that bad or that the learner should forget about it. Let the learner tell you exactly how she/he feels.
- Never sympathise with the abuser.
- Check to see that the learner is not in danger. If she/he is considering or is engaging in behaviour that may harm her/him, use the counselling/public-service resources near you to assist her/him in getting help.
- Ask the learner how you can support her/him. Offer some suggestions of what you can do, e.g. meet regularly to talk.
- Let the learner know she/he is not overreacting/abnormal. Tell the learner that many people, both women and men, have been through this and that she/he is reacting normally. Tell the learner that everyone deals with things at their own pace. It can be a very slow healing process.

3. Where can I get further help?

Find out what counselling resources there are in your community. If your school has a student counsellor, or if the district has resources, ask them for help. You could ask someone from a victims’ services group to come speak to your class.

Some support contacts follow:

Childline (for children and adults)	0800 055 555 (toll free) Website: www.childlinesa.org.za
LifeLine (rape counselling and trauma counselling)	0861 322 322 (shared call) Website: www.lifeline.org.za
iThemba Rape & Trauma Support Centre (support for rape and traumatic events)	011 422 4107 (Gauteng) (standard rates) Website: www.traumasupport.org.za
Rape Crisis (support for rape victims)	021 447 1467 or 021 447 9762 (CPT) (standard rates) Website: http://www.rapecrisis.org.za
Rape Wise (specialises in legal aspects)	031 572 6690 (DBN) (standard rates) Website: http://www.rapewise.co.za

Sometimes you will find it difficult to deal with what you are being told. You might not understand your own emotions and reactions. It is important that you seek the help and support that you need so that you can focus on the learner/victim.

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4. Some terms defined and explained:

What is rape?

Rape is any sexual penetration (oral, anal or vaginal) without consent (forced) irrespective of the gender of the victim or perpetrator.

What is consent?

Consent is when both parties have agreed to engage in a sexual act. If at any point, even in the middle of the act (even if you agreed at first) you decide to stop, resist or say "no", it stops being consensual.

What is statutory rape?

Statutory rape occurs when a person commits an act of sexual penetration with a child below the age to consent legally to the act (under the age of 16 years), i.e. even if the child consented to the act, it is still statutory rape.

A male or female person under the age of 12 years is seen as incapable of consenting to a sexual act by South African law.

This information about age groups can be obtained in the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Amendment Bill.

What is date rape?

Date rape is committed by someone who knows the victim. It can occur between friends, acquaintances or people who are dating, or starting to date.

Date rape takes place during a voluntary social meeting in which the victim did not intend to submit to the sexual advances. The victim resists by refusing verbally, pleading with the other person to stop, and/or physical resistance.

Date rape is one of the least talked about kinds of sexual assault. The victims feel as though they might have agreed to some part of it. They feel that the lines are blurred, i.e. if they agreed to be bought lunch or to kissing then they were actually agreeing to more.

What is confidentiality?

Confidentiality means you keep the information you have been told to yourself. You do not tell the story with substitute names or places because someone who knows the victim might recognise some of the details.

The only time you can talk to other people is if the victim is hurt, is likely to hurt herself/himself or if the victim is likely to hurt someone else. Tell her/him that you need to get help and that you will be telling others what happened. Tell her/him who you will tell.

Reassure the victim that you will be there to help and support her/him throughout the process and that you will not be telling anyone any details.

Refer to a professional sooner rather than later if you feel out of your depth.

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What is trust?

An educator needs to build up trust over a period of time so that a learner can approach him/her. Often a learner will approach the educator with relatively minor problems to test if the educator can be trusted before coming with the actual problem that she/he needs to deal with.

Trust is a process and is established by:

- not judging the learner.
  Listen to what they are saying without criticising what they are saying or what they have done.
- letting the learner feel safe.
  The learner must know that the educator will act in her/his best interest at all times and will not betray her/him in any way.
- confidentiality.
  The learner needs to know that everything the educator is told will stay with the educator. If the educator needs to consult with others because the learner is at risk, it is advisable to tell the learner and ask her/his permission in connection with what you will be doing.

5. How do I teach this book to a class with boys and girls?

Teaching a mixed class can be challenging as the learners (especially the boys) might be silly, joke around, treat the subject lightly or try to shock in order to disrupt the discussion to hide their embarrassment or discomfort, especially around sensitive topics that they are not used to speaking about in public. Based on your knowledge of the individual class, decide what class management strategies will work for your class.

Boys often resist discussions around this type of topic because they feel attacked. An idea is to give examples of situations (refer to the articles listed at the end of this document) where boys have been sexually abused/assaulted. You can say that more girls are sexually assaulted than boys, but that this occurs across genders.

You could divide the class into groups and have group discussions. Mixed-gender groups might be better in some cases than gender-specific groups, as the boys might engage more if there are girls in the group. Group discussions could be valuable in terms of discussing sensitive issues. As a teacher you need to consider the composition of each individual group and broach group discussions according to your gut feel. Think about what will work in terms of your particular class bearing in mind their backgrounds, known experiences, etc.

Ask the learners questions and let the learners lead. Often it is better to let the learners tell you what they thought about what they have just read. For example, you could ask: What do you think Basi was feeling/thinking when Moipone resisted? The answers that the learners give will inform you of their understanding of consent. They may open up more if they do not feel judged, and feel it is a discussion.

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6. Useful resources for extra reading:

General articles

http://speakoutfreely.co.za.dedi132.cpt1.host-h.net/site/what-is-sexual-abuse

http://www.education.gov.za/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=HK47YbUHSr0%3D&tabid=685

http://www.secasa.com.au/pages/helping-the-abused-student-in-the-classroom/

http://jff.org.za/Emergency_Info.html

Articles relating to male rape

http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/2-in-court-for-mentally-ill-boys-rape-20120423

http://www.health24.com/news/General_health/1-915,47362.asp

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