**SPEAK UP! CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS AND ISSUES ADDRESSED IN THE PLAY**

Gordon: A teenage boy struggling with his sexual identity

In the play he addresses God.

Issues:

* Bullied by his classmates
* Struggling with his relationship with God
* Feels abandoned by his father who committed suicide (Suicide often runs in families)
* Feels abandoned by his sister when he tries to talk to her about his sexuality
* Feels helpless, hopeless, and in despair
* This “aloneness” leads him to take his life

Gwen: A teenage girl struggles through grief with her mother

In the play she addresses her mother.

Issues:

* Feels guilt for not “speaking up”
* Feels guilt for not being there for her brother
* Feels invisible to her mother as the surviving child
* Complicated grief: both father and brother committed suicide
* Struggles with her relationship with her mother who is in denial and won’t talk about it
* Ultimately seeks help at school and wants to share Gordon’s story to prevent it from happening to others (Important theme – his story isn’t over)
* Wants to help her mother by sharing brochures and information about support groups

Reese: A teenage girl who has recently been sexually assaulted at a party.

In the play she is writing a suicide note to her parents.

Issues:

* Has PTSD and keeps reliving the trauma through flashbacks
* Is dealing with shame and blames herself
* Deeply regrets her actions of lying to her parents and going to the party without permission
* Has decided has to take her life
* Is stopped when Catherine comes to her house to offer her support

Catherine: A teenage girl in an abusive relationship

In the play she is talking to a therapist.

Issues:

* Her character changes – she is resistant to talking at first and ultimately finds the strength and courage to speak up!
* She tells her story about her abusive boyfriend and how she went along with him, gave up her own voice and friendships
* Was physically abused by her boyfriend
* Wore short sleeves to school – no one said anything
* Her boyfriend drinks and pressures her in to having sex
* Her boyfriend goes to a party without her and rapes a girl from another school (Reese)
* Catherine sees pictures on social media
* Decides to reach out to Reese and to speak up
* When she arrives at Reese’s house, she prevents Reese from taking her life
* They both speak up
* One person can make a difference