



*Written by
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“Growing Ups and Downs” *Pictorial Scenario*

Scripture: Proverbs 22: 6

“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not turn from it.”

This play was written in the spirit of the wise challenge of Proverbs 22: 6. It was originally performed by a college-age children's theater touring group for elementary-aged children during the "Just Say, 'No' to Drugs," week in the public schools. It does not contain overtly Christian dialogue because it ministered to children in a secular environment; however, please feel free to add overtly Christian dialogue to the ending scene if you want to perform this for Christian schools. This was exceptionally well received in the public schools; I recommend that you take a team from your church and be "light and salt" to a hurting world filled with confused children.



“Growing Ups and Downs” is a surrealistic "dream play." The theme is hard to miss; it presents a visual picture of "growing up" in a child's mind by connecting good choices to stepping up the ladder and bad choices to sliding down it.

Two adults, Molly and Brian, sit a-top a long plank. They are suspended between two ladders. They look down onto the stage where “child versions” of themselves are trying to "grow up." Each time the child versions of the adults make good choices, they take a few steps up the ladder toward adulthood. However, each time they make choices that hurt their own bodies, or the feelings of others, they slide down the ladder and land in miserable little heaps on the floor.

The flashback scenes are woven together by Chris, a newspaper reporter, and Bonnie, a girl who sells newspapers by shouting out the headlines, just like the old 1940's newsboys did. The subject of Chris' report and Bonnie's headlines is "Kids Grow Up and Down... Get the facts."



The children in the audience watch as the child Molly deals with her mean, judgmental spirit in a scene entitled, "Lunch." She verbally rips another girl to shreds because she is "different" from other people.

Molly's behavior makes it difficult for her to take any steps up the ladder toward "growing up," so she slides down, having learned a hard lesson about the power of words.



In a scene entitled, "*Play Ball*," Brian reinforces the result of being mean-spirited and sharp-tongued as his temper gets the best of him during a basketball game.



Child Brian also tries to grow up, but he slides down the ladder too, ending up as a lonely boy, who discovers that growing up alone is no fun!

Adult Molly and adult Brian watch these scenes and comment on the difficulties of growing up. They lament that they missed out on so much joy in their child lives, and they confess that they should have grown up smarter and had more fun.





In keeping with this play's suspension of reality, Chris, the reporter, shows Bonnie the advantages of learning one's lessons well, by rewinding the action and letting the child Brian and the child Molly try growing up again. This time, Brian extends a helping hand in the retake of "Play Ball," and Molly learns how powerful carefully chosen words can be to build another person up.

The child Molly and the child Brian both "grow up," and make it half-way up the ladder, as the children in the audience learn the importance of "The Golden Rule": treating others as you want to be treated.





In the next scene, "*Loaded*," child Brian's adventures in growing up become more complicated as he deals with peer pressure to use drugs.

His older brother, Mike, is more than willing to pave the way for his little brother, Brian, to become "hooked," in exchange for the total surrender of Brian's allowance for the next month.

Needless to say, Brian does not make it up the ladder at all after he tries the pills Mike offers him. Instead, he passes out at the base of the ladder. Molly doesn't fare any better in her scene, "*Sweet Dreams*," when she clearly places greater



Both adult Molly and adult Brian wonder how they ever grew up. They understand that they made it so much harder than it needed to be because of the choices they made that hurt themselves and others.

During a desperate "Twilight Zone" moment, the adult Brian finds a two-way radio and communicates with his child self, just in time to save the life of his older brother who did not have to die of a drug overdose, if only someone would have warned him.



Brian summons his courage and presents a stirring anti-drug speech to his brother. Molly apologizes to her friends and tells them that they are valuable to her because of "who" they are, not because of "what" they have. The child Brian and the child Molly learn their lessons well and successfully climb the ladder all the way up to the top to symbolize that they truly have grown up. This highly visual program communicates an unforgettable truth: Life is all about choices, the results of which can grow you "up or down."



MUSIC NOTE:

This play lends itself to "live" accompaniment, like the old-fashioned soap-opera or silent movie sound tracks. Have a musician sit off to the side, playing a synthesizer, who provides a musical background for various scenes that lend themselves to music, for example:

1. Play a happy tune for the opening rhyme that introduces the show.
2. Create the "up and down" slide sound as the child versions of the adults try to climb the ladder toward adulthood.
3. Play a carousel-type tune during the rewind sequences that replace the negative scenes with positive "retakes."
4. Play a somber ending measure of music in scenes where the kids "blow it."
5. Play a positive ending measure of music in scenes where the kids make wise choices.
6. Play triumphant music at the conclusion.

In short, punctuate this entire play with spontaneous music that breathes along with the action and creates a "musical carpet," serving as a sort of "emotional barometer" that helps the children understand the thematic meaning behind the lines.

“Growing Ups and Downs” Cast:

“Flashback”

- Chris:** *An energetic, adult reporter with a New York accent*
Bonnie: *A newspaper girl, selling papers, played by a small adult or a child*
Adult Brian: *An adult actor who sits on top of the ladder and comments on the actions of the child version of himself*
Child Brian: *A child actor who portrays the child Brian in the various “growing up” scenes as the Adult Brian: watches and remembers*
Adult Molly: *An adult actor who sits on top of the ladder and comments on the actions of the child version of herself*
Child Molly: *A child actor who portrays the child Molly in the various “growing up” scenes as the Adult Molly: watches and remembers*

“Lunch”

- Mary:** *A poor girl with glasses*
Becky: *A very snooty girl*

“Play Ball”

- Sam:** *A defensive kid*
Mark: *A kid who gets knocked over in the basketball scene*
Jeff: *Another kid in the basketball scene*

“Loaded”

- Mike:** *Brian’s older brother*
Pete: *A friend of Mike’s who’s also into drugs*
Allen: *Another friend of Mike’s who’s also into drugs*

“Sweet Dreams”

- Beth:** *A friend of Molly’s who becomes deeply insulted*
Sue: *Another friend of Molly who turns on her*
Kathy: *Another friend of Molly who also is disgusted by her*