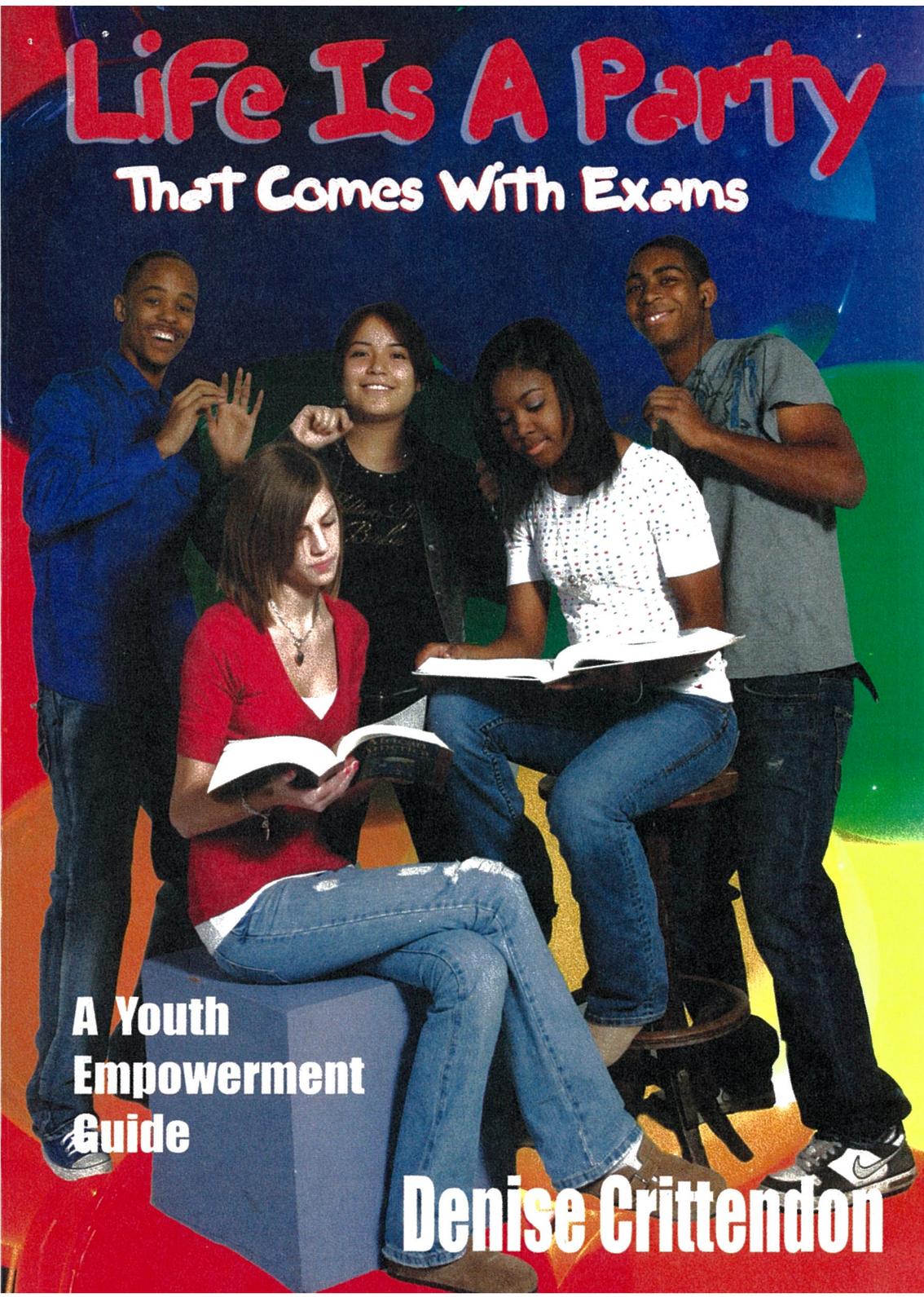


Life Is A Party

That Comes With Exams



**A Youth
Empowerment
Guide**

Denise Crittendon

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CHAPTER ONE

THE MUSIC IN YOUR MIND

Listen. Can you hear that sound? It's the rhythm of your own emotions. Be still and check it out. Do you hear it now? It's fast, it's furious, it's happy, it's sad. It's slow when you are not feeling well and quick when you're in a good mood.

It is the music in your mind.

Whatever you are feeling at the moment is like a string of musical notes rippling inside of you. It's the part of your personality that makes you unique.

What does your music sound like? Get quiet again and tune in to it. Is it steady like Chris Brown's "Run It" or mellow like Mariah Carey singing "E=MC2"?

Is it bouncy like Hannah Montana, smooth like Justin Timberlake or aggressive like Jay-Z? Is your music positive or is your music negative?



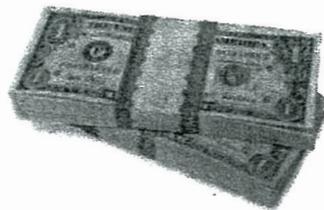
CHAPTER TWO

DANCE TO YOUR OWN BEAT

Quick, what's your favorite dance? Do you enjoy moving freestyle? Or would you rather take it slow? Whatever you like, when the music is pumping and the party is packed, there's only one thing that really matters: *that you dance to your own beat.*

That means not listening to what someone else has to say about what you should be doing on the dance floor and not worrying about what anyone thinks. If you're too busy concentrating on who's watching you, you're not going to enjoy yourself very much. And if someone tried to interrupt you and tell you how to move, that person wouldn't remain on your list of friends for long.

The bottom line is that everyone has his or her own form of self-expression. It's reflected in the way they dress, the way they talk and even the way they dance. It's a personal thing and most of us wouldn't appreciate a lot of criticism and unnecessary direction.



CHAPTER THREE

YOUR THOUGHTS ARE LIKE DOLLAR BILLS

The sun is shining, and the sky is free of clouds. It's the perfect day to hook up with friends, go to a movie or whiz by your favorite drive-through restaurant to pick up a bite to eat.

But first you have to find transportation. Next, you better make sure you have a pocket full of cash. You'll need it to pay for the burger, to get into the theater or just to buy a bag of chips.

Just about everything has either a price tag or an admission fee. Shoes, food, homes, fast cars. None of it is free and none of it is cheap. It costs plenty of hard-earned dollars to get your hair the way you want it and your clothes right. You have to keep the cash flowing. The more you have of it, the more you can buy and the more places you can go.

Yet, there's a catch to it! It's spelled **A-T-T-I-T-U-D-E**. You have to have the right attitude to get a job to earn a salary to help you pay for what you need. Either that or



CHAPTER FOUR

IF YOU'RE SO COOL, WHY ARE YOU PLAYING FOLLOW THE LEADER?

A grizzly wrestler with a humped back and tangled patches of hair snarls at a thin, rather pathetic looking man on the other side of the ring. But the skinny guy doesn't seem scared. It doesn't seem to matter to him that he's getting ready to fight an enemy who can't seem to stop growling. It doesn't matter that his opponent is angry and unruly. Or that he's more than three times his size. He faces him with confidence and both men prepare to swing.

But before they start, something odd happens. The small wrestler takes one deep breath and five quick steps backwards. Then, just as his opponent approaches, he stops and stares him directly in the eye. It is an intense stare. It is strong, focused and piercing. The big guy



CHAPTER FIVE

THE HARDER YOU BOUNCE THE BALL, THE HIGHER IT RISES

There's a whole lot of action on the basketball court! Cheerleaders are jumping, whistles are shrieking, fans in the bleachers are stomping, shouting, and screaming at the top of their lungs.

Then, just when it seems like it can't get any more exciting, something out of the ordinary happens. A player sneaks up on a member of the opposing team and lunges for the ball. He grabs it, rushes down the court, and then bounces it so hard that it rises, rises, rises to a level several inches above the net. At that height and with that much intensity, the ball seems out of control. But it isn't.

It drops through the basketball hoop with ease. The crowd goes wild. The winning school is chanting, yelling and dancing in their seats. It was an unusual move



CHAPTER SIX

STOP HATING & START PLAYING

It has happened so many times, you probably can't keep track. You're in class or standing in the hallway at school when someone makes a crack about the way you look or the way you dress. Maybe the person is joking. Maybe he isn't. Either way, you don't like being put on the spot like that and you don't understand why it's happening.

So what exactly is going on?

- (A.) This person is an enemy who's going out of the way to try and make you look bad.
- (B.) The person has an anger management problem.
- (C.) This is a clear case of player hating.

The answer is all of the above. The green-eyed monster known as jealousy has surfaced and when that happens, things can get pretty ugly.

But it does happen. No matter who you are, you're going to experience the effects of jealousy now and then. Sometimes, you're the victim — the person being envied and talked about. Other times, you might even be the



CHAPTER SEVEN

DON'T BE A PARTY CRASHER

That does it!
Boy, that person was soooo wrong. It's enough to make you start swinging. You're so mad you can't even think straight. It's like you've been blinded. You're boiling with anger. You're burning up inside. You're so upset, you see stars. And, before long, (gulp) you're plotting revenge.

STOP RIGHT THERE! Hold it a minute. Before you go any further, get a grip on yourself. Wait. Count to ten. Think. Take a deep, deep breath. Listen to the soft voice (those words of reason) within.

You're not behaving responsibly when you let anger rush into your mind like a burglar and kick in the doors that lead to your common sense. But when you get upset, that's what happens sometimes. Your thoughts become stormy and you get caught up in getting back at the person who harmed you. You feel injured. As a result, you start



CHAPTER EIGHT

WHEN LOVE CALLS

In the old days, street corner entertainers with shiny slick hair-dos' hung around lamp posts for hours singing about their undying passion for someone who dumped them and gave them the blues. They'd do anything, or so the songs said, to get their loved one back. As they put it, they even had to "go outside in the rain," to hide the tears (because they were crying just that much).

Today, ballads aren't so ridiculously sentimental and the lyrics aren't quite as syrupy. Artists aren't harmonizing about heavenly relationships as much or claiming they won't go on living if someone kicks them to the curb. But if you're attending a modern high school or middle school, you know that the invisible melody of love is still making its presence known. It's in the air. It's in the hallways. It's in the swagger of the boys, the giggle



CHAPTER NINE

LESSONS, THAT'S WHAT'S UP

Congratulations! You made it this far and you're ready to learn even more. Okay, well let's get going. This is a quick chapter, but an important one. Read through it and study the lessons. They're designed to help you enjoy the party of life and ace the big exam (coming up next).

1. Don't take or drink anything that clouds your mind and affects your ability to make decisions. Your friends will try to convince you that it's the thing to do. It isn't. It will have a weird effect on your brain and an even weirder effect on your life.

2. Things sometimes go wrong in order to go right. The situation might seem really tough. But hang in there. One of the rules of life is that nothing ever stays exactly the same. They either get better or they get worse. Try to make the best of bad times and watch them explode into good times and great opportunities.



CHAPTER TEN

THE BIG EXAM !

So we said life's a party. Well, what about the exams? Get ready. They're coming. This one is just the beginning.

1. What are affirmations?

- A. Original ideas
- B. Compliments you give to other people
- C. A positive statement you make to yourself about yourself.
- D. A positive statement you share with someone else.

2. What's so bad about comparing yourself to someone else?

- A. Comparing yourself to others makes you jealous of them.
- B. Comparing yourself to others is conceited.
- D. Comparison is time consuming.
- E. There's always someone more attractive or smarter. It's best to focus on your own unique talents and gifts.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A veteran journalist, Denise Crittendon is the founding editor of *African American Family Magazine* in Ferndale, Mich. and the first woman to be appointed editor of *The Crisis*, the official publication of the NAACP. Her true passion is motivating youth to be all that they can be. She speaks to young women and men at churches, schools and community centers and encourages them to reach deep within to realize their true power, strength and tenacity. She was honored with a Spirit of Detroit Award and the Life Direction's Mary Ball Children's Advocacy Award for her first book, *Girl In The Mirror, A Teen's Guide To Self Awareness*. It was recognized by *Essence* and highly recommended by *The Detroit News*, *The Detroit Free Press*, *The Michigan Chronicle*, *The Michigan Citizen*, *RawSistaz.com* and more. In *Life Is A Party*, Ms.Crittendon uses music, video game imagery and sports to lead teens on an exciting journey into self fulfillment, dignity and empowerment.