

# Listen

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## ROBERT TOWNSEND

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*"The school has a rule," Mrs. Rosten said.*

BY DONNA GETZINGER

Sometimes the only way to prove your innocence is to show that someone else is guilty. That's what happened last year after the police officer came to talk to our class about drugs.

"I think you understand what illegal drugs are now," Officer Mannings said as she leaned back on Mrs. Rosten's cluttered desk.

"But some harmful drugs are legal to use when you are an adult. What are they?"

That's when I saw Jessie sneer at me and shift her chair away. And I noticed other classmates also shooting sideways glances at me. I pretended not to see, though. Patty, who sat right in front of me, blurted out an answer. "Cigarettes are legal," she said.

"When you're a *grown-up*," Jessie added, looking at me and not Officer Mannings. I looked at my desk.

A couple kids explained why cigarettes are bad for you. They mentioned cancer and second-hand smoke.

Then Jessie, plugging her nose with her fingers, shouted, "Plus, it makes you stink!" Jessie, Patty, and everyone around me snickered.

I slouched farther into my seat and pulled my smoky sweater together around me.

Officer Mannings talked a little while longer about the dangers of smoking and drinking alcohol before giving out "No Drugs" stickers and leaving. Then we went to recess. As usual, no

one played with me.

Sitting alone at a lunch table that day, sucking on a breath mint and finger-combing my greasy hair, I realized I would never have friends unless . . .

Unless what? *I* didn't smoke. It was time to show everyone the truth. Determined not be friendless anymore, I came up with a plan.

The very next day, while the class was busy working on history assignments, Mrs. Rosten pulled me aside for a private talk in the art room. I could hear the whispering begin as we went out the door.

"I think you know that the school has a rule," Mrs. Rosten said gently, "that teachers can examine students' backpacks and desks if they suspect the student of doing drugs or smoking."

My face felt hot. I knew she had snooped.

"I looked in your backpack," Mrs. Rosten said, "and I found these." She took two packs of cigarettes out of her pockets.

"I took them from my parents," I explained. At this point I knew it wouldn't do any good to explain why.

"I've called your parents," Mrs. Rosten continued. "We're all meeting with the principal after school."

She sent me to the library until school got out. I went without complaint. I'd be proved innocent soon enough. When the last of the lockers slammed shut after school, Mrs. Rosten fetched me (continued . . .)

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"I LOOKED IN  
YOUR BACKPACK,"  
SHE SAID, "AND I  
FOUND THESE ..."



for the big event.

Opposite Principal Dixon sat my parents in their work suits, looking as uncomfortable as two people could look.

"Can we hurry this along?" Mom asked. "I have a client at 4:00."

"We'll do our best for you," Mrs. Dixon said. She looked at me then. I still stood in the doorway with Mrs. Rosten behind me. I didn't feel much like sitting down. "Well, Nicole, do you want to start?"

Mrs. Rosten put a hand on my shoulder. I jerked my shoulder away. "I took my parents' cigarettes," I confessed.

My parents glared at me. I wondered if they were mad that their cigarettes had been missing all day, or if they were mad that I might have been smoking them.

"Why would you do such a thing?" Mom asked.

"I didn't want you to have them. I figured if you didn't have the cigarettes, you couldn't smoke them."

Dad raised his voice. "That's not your choice to make." He didn't lift his eyes high enough to look directly at Mrs. Rosten or Mrs. Dixon. His cheeks reddened.

Mrs. Rosten turned me around to face her. "Are you telling the truth? You haven't smoked any?"

"I wouldn't. Ever." Then I let it all out. "I hate it when my parents smoke. It makes me cough and smell."

Mom stood up and smoothed out her skirt, interrupting my prepared speech. "I think we can handle this at home." She reached for the cigarettes, but I darted my arm out to grab them first.

"Give those to me," Mom shouted. I grabbed Mom's purse also and pulled out the gold lighter that had her initials engraved on it.

Dad rose to his feet. "You

## "I HATE IT WHEN MY PARENTS SMOKE," NICOLE BLURTED.

heard your mother, Nicole."

"No," I said, fumbling with the pack until I got one cigarette out, then let the rest fall to the floor. I stuck the white stick in my mouth and flipped open the lid to the lighter the way I'd seen Mom do a million times, and then I backed into the corner.

"So, how does it feel, Mom, Dad, to know that my teacher and principal know that you smoke?" I held the cigarette in my mouth with two fingers like Dad did when he talked on the phone. "Don't you know it makes them like you less? How much will they like you if you let *me* smoke?"

My parents' faces twitched as they stumbled through their emotions.

"My friends hate me because *you* smoke. Is that fair?"

"No," Mom stammered.

"My friends think I smoke, because I smell like *your* cigarettes. Is that fair?"

"No," Dad mumbled.

I lit the lighter with the same thumb action I'd watched Mom do every night of my life. I raised the flame to the end of the cigarette. I was concentrating so hard that it was hard to move my lips around the filter to talk. "If they think I smoke, I might as well, right?"

None of the adults moved. The flame hovered a millimeter away from the tip of the cigarette.

"What do we have to do to make you stop?" Mom asked.

"We'll do anything," Dad added.

"Promise me you'll never smoke another cigarette again," I said, looking straight into their eyes. "And if you break that promise, I'll smoke. I'll smoke here at school. I'll smoke in your offices. I'll even smoke in front of Grandma."

My parents looked at each other for a long, hard moment.

"Time's up," I finally said, touching the flame to the tip of the cigarette. The end blackened quickly.

"OK, OK," they both shouted. "We'll quit."

"Just don't breathe in," Mom cried.

I grinned and removed the cigarette from my mouth, handing it to Mrs. Rosten, who quickly took it outside. My parents hugged me tightly.

After a moment Mrs. Rosten came back in with a weak smile on her face, and everyone sat down. Mrs. Dixon looked at me with a softness in her eyes that I don't think most of the students ever saw.

"I just want you to know, Nicole, that quitting smoking is very hard to do. Be tough on your parents, don't let them slack, but don't panic if they do pick up a cigarette. Just remind them of their promise, and they'll come through for you."

"I understand," I said, but I honestly wasn't thinking about any of that. I was thinking about my skin smelling like soap and my sundresses smelling like lemon. The thought of my teeth smelling like mint and my hair smelling like strawberries pleased me.

Still, my plan a success, I reached into my pocket for the two sticks of bubble gum I brought for them. "Here," I said, handing a stick to each parent. "To get you through the day."



# ASK GARY

**A teammate of mine at school claims that using "recreational drugs" before a football game gives him the winning edge. Is this all hype, or what? Tony.**

Dear Tony:

This is a good question. First, there is no such thing as "recreational" drugs. Recreation involves meaningful, healthy, and stimulating activities. Drugs provide the opposite. Second, it's nearly impossible to win on the playing fields while under the influence of an illicit drug, including alcohol. No one can have the winning edge when they lack coordination, insight, logic, and the will to be the best they can be. That's how drug use affects those attempting to play the game. Sports should be fun and exciting for those fortunate enough to be on the field. Why spoil it by letting drugs get in the way? It's clean and sober people who win games, not those bullied, tempted, and controlled by alcohol and other substances.

**What do you consider the safest drug? Karen.**

Dear Karen:

That's a simple question to answer in one word—none. There are no safe drugs. All drugs, including alcohol and nicotine, are dangerous. The reasons are simple. Drugs have the potential to create legal problems, family discord, lowered grades, poor health, low self-esteem, and addiction in those who follow their path. Even though different drugs affect different teens in different ways, they all have one thing in common—the destruction of lives. A good thing to remember is this: "A drug is a drug is a drug." No matter what it is, what it looks like, how it tastes, or what it does, it's still a drug. It takes only one kind of drug to ruin forever all kinds of dreams, goals, and visions

for a bright, happy, and hopeful future.


**If drugs are so bad, why do teens use them? Susan.**

Dear Susan:

There's no single answer to why someone would choose to harm themselves or others around them. Some use drugs out of curiosity, others because of peer pressure, some because of a lack of knowledge of their harmfulness. Some use drugs to escape, to feel bolder, stronger, or more grown-up. But I have yet to see one person become involved in drugs who actually changed his or her life for the better. I *have* seen those who have refrained from drugs leading positive, empowering, and high-achieving lives. A life without drugs is a life built on hope, trust, and positive self-worth. A life built on drugs is a life without a meaningful, worthy, and enthusiastic future.

**Are cigarettes really as dangerous as people say they are? Annette.**

Dear Annette:

Cigarette smoking is perhaps the most devastating but preventable cause of disease and premature death there is. Nearly 50 million Americans smoke, with as many as one in five teens a regular smoker. The result is nearly 450,000 deaths each year. Smoking is particularly dangerous for teens, because their bodies are still developing and changing, and the 4,000 chemicals (including 200 known poisons) in cigarette smoke can adversely affect this process. Cigarettes are also highly addictive, both mentally and physically, and can serve as a major gateway to other forms of drug addiction. Teen smokers are 100 times more likely to smoke marijuana and to use other illegal drugs, such as cocaine and heroin, in the future. Believe what you hear about the effects of cigarettes—they are definitely dangerous! 



**G**o ahead, ask Gary his advice on some of those big, serious, touchy questions. This guy enjoys the rough-and-tumble of helping teens with some serious problems. Gary Somdahl is a dad who puts his skills as a licensed youth chemical dependency counselor to the real-world test all the time. His latest book is *Drugs and Kids*.

Send your questions to:

**ASK GARY,**

*Listen* magazine,

55 West Oak Ridge Drive,  
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740.



BY  
MICHAEL  
WARREN

# AND SO FORTH

## OUTLAW GUITARISTS BEWARE

(AND OTHER CRAZY LAWS)

❑ In Lugert, Oklahoma, it's illegal for men with mustaches to teach females to play guitar.

❑ In Farmerville, Louisiana, you aren't allowed to play guitar while riding an "ugly horse."

❑ You may not wear a hat that "would scare a timid person" while

playing guitar in Sparta, New Jersey.

❑ In Keyser, West Virginia, no woman can play guitar in public on Sunday unless she is "properly looked after" by her husband. He must follow close behind her with a loaded gun "over his left shoulder."

❑ In Russellville, Pennsylvania, you aren't allowed to tickle a girl under her chin with a feather duster while she's playing guitar.

## MEN HAVE BIGGER BRAINS

(BUT NOT FOR LONG)

It's true. A recent study found that a male's brain is usually larger than a female's brain—even after adjusting for the difference in body size.

So does this mean that boys are smarter than girls? Probably not! Or at least not for long. After age 18 the male's brain shrinks at a rate three times faster than a woman's brain.

## IN SEARCH OF BERLIN

A photographer named Harry Hempel is searching for the city of Berlin. Hey, it's not as easy as it might seem! So far he has found 97 cities named Berlin in 15 different countries.

He is attempting to photograph every Berlin in the world for a book of Berlins. So far he has visited 35 of the cities named Berlin. Believe it or not, 26 of the Berlins he photographed are in the United States. He's visited another six Berlins in Bolivia.

## MAKE MONEY THE EASY WAY

A recent graduate from the University of Michigan found he could make \$6 an hour just by leaning back in a comfortable chair. So what's the gig? He's a chair tester for La-Z-Boy. Campus Life magazine reported that his cushy job does involve some work: he has to rock back and forth 2,800 times a day!

## CALLING DOCTOR NURSE!

Three doctors in the United States have the last name Nurse. Big question is—how many nurses are there named Doctor?

## HIGH-TECH LOUDMOUTH

Enterprising doctors in Bethesda, Maryland, have invented a hearing aid that is mounted on a retainer in your teeth. The device uses a shirt-pocket microphone that transmits the sound to your teeth, where it can be picked up by your auditory nerves.

## REMEMBER, NEATNESS COUNTS

The United States may be experiencing a handwriting crisis. The confusion caused by poor script costs U.S. businesses about \$200 million a year. Poor handwriting also creates a lot of lost mail: the U.S. Postal Service gets 38 million pieces of illegible mail each year!











**T**he Black teenager could hardly have guessed that one day he would be a well-known actor/writer/director/producer of film and television, but young Robert Townsend did know

## HIS OWN MAN

that he did not want to grow up to be like many of the men in his neighborhood.

“As a kid growing up on the West Side of Chicago,” he *(continued on page 28)*

BY LEE ANNA JACKSON



*WB Television's Parent 'Hood cast.*

ROBERT

OWN  
MAN



A woman with short, curly brown hair and a young girl with blonde hair tied in pigtails with green hair ties. The woman is wearing a dark sweater over a patterned scarf and has her hand near her chin in a thoughtful pose. The girl is wearing a denim jacket and looking directly at the camera with a serious expression.

UNDERSTANDING PARENTS

WHEN YOU & YOUR  
**PARENTS**  
DON'T SEE  
EYE TO EYE



**K**elsey is furious with her parents because she thinks they're too strict. "They

get on my case when I wear makeup. I'm 14, but they think that's too young," she complains. "But I love the way makeup looks. Why can't my parents understand how I feel?"

Jason hasn't spoken to his mom and dad for two days. "They're making my life miserable with an ultra-early curfew," he says. "I can't even go to 7:30 movie showings because my parents want me home by 9:00 p.m.—it's totally ridiculous."

Kelsey and Jason are hardly the first teens to clash with their parents. You, the teen, are fighting for your independence. At the same time, your parents are fighting to guide and protect you, and it's hard for them to deal with the fact that their children don't need them as much as they used to.

"In some ways teens and parents almost have mutually exclusive agendas," says Kathleen Galvin, Ph.D., associate professor of communication studies at Northwestern University. "Parents are probably still focused inward in terms of what's going on with the family, and most teens are beginning to focus outward, paying a great deal more attention to their peer groups as sources of influence."

As a result, teens clash with their parents about everything from parties and grades to how neat their bedrooms need to be and their choice of friends. You may think your parents are unreasonable when they tell you to get off the phone after you've been talking for *only* two hours, but it doesn't have to turn into a big blowup. Here are some suggestions for working out your differences.

## GET TO KNOW YOUR PARENTS

You can put an end to a lot of misunderstandings with your parents just by learning more about them. "I thought my dad was horrible for not letting me go ice-skating on the pond," admits Melodie, age 14. "But then my dad told me the story of how his best friend almost died when they were teens, playing hockey on a pond that hadn't frozen over completely. My dad's friend skated over a patch of thin ice and fell in. Now I understand why my dad is so concerned about me."

Take some time to talk with your parents and get to know them better. Ask what it was like when they were teens. What did they do for fun? Did they have a lot of friends? What was school

like? Discover if their past experiences are contributing to the way your parents deal with conflicts and rules. Try to find out where they're coming from and why they react the way they do. Any effort you make to learn more about your parents is going to be helpful in knowing how to interact with them in the future.

## GIVE YOUR PARENTS A CHANCE TO GET TO KNOW YOU BETTER

Picture yourself at the dinner table. Your mom asks how school was today and you respond "Fine." Your dad asks what plans you have for the weekend, and you say "I don't know." Your mom asks how your friend is doing, and you say "All right." While you may be tempted to respond to your parents' questions in this way, doing so, according to Galvin, "closes your parents out in terms of being able to make any kind of predictions about your behavior. Your parents will be much less likely to grant certain privileges or permission to do something, because they don't have much to go on to help them make a decision: they don't know your friends, and they don't know how you feel about various issues or how you interact with your peers."

Teens who relate best with their parents are those willing to talk about everyday happenings, so their parents have some sense of what their child's life is like. Tell your parents about school activities. Introduce them to your friends. Let them know what you think about current events. You may not want to share the most



private details of your life, but at least your parents have some idea about what you're thinking and will feel as though you can be trusted.

## DISCUSS CONCERNS BEFORE THEY TURN INTO CATASTROPHES

Set aside a time and place to talk when both you and your parents feel relaxed and stress-free. You may want to plan weekly or monthly meetings with your parents to share your concerns, discuss social activities you'd like to go to, privileges you'd like to work toward, what you'd like to do on summer vacation, etc.

Don't tell your dad Sunday afternoon that you want a later curfew that night and expect a positive response. "The key is to give your parents as much advance notice as possible," says Mary Halpin, Ph.D., an adolescent psychologist in Deerfield, Illinois. "If you spring things on your parents at the last minute, you will probably get a flat no with no compromises. Give your parents a reasonable amount of time, several days or longer, depending on what the event is, to think about your request."

Try to see things from your parents' perspective and anticipate what questions they're going to ask. Think your proposal through ahead of time. You're going to have a better chance of getting a yes if you make your parents comfortable with your plans. If there's a lot of gaps and I'm-not-so-sures, you'll be less likely to ease your parents' concerns.

## BE WILLING TO NEGOTIATE

"After I got my driver's license, I asked to use my mom's car so I could drive some friends to a school party," says Breanne, age 16. "When my mom asked which friends I planned to take, I didn't feel like

telling her, so she wouldn't let me take the car, and I didn't go to the party. The next day at school everyone was talking about how much fun the party was, and I wished I'd been willing to give in a little with my mom."

You will be setting yourself up for disappointment if you expect things always to go exactly the way you want them to. Learn to compromise and negotiate. "That means sometimes you may get most of what you want, sometimes you get some of what you want, and other times you get very little of what you want," Halpin says. Seek a compromise in which both you and your parents come away feeling satisfied. Remind yourself that a partial solution is better than getting nothing at all.

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**YOU WILL BE SETTING YOURSELF UP FOR DISAPPOINTMENTS IF YOU EXPECT THINGS TO ALWAYS GO AS YOU WISH.**

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## PICK YOUR BATTLES CAREFULLY

What are the issues most important to you? Using the family car? Going on a ski trip with your friends? Extending the curfew? A raise in your allowance? Dropping piano lessons? Not everything is worth fighting for. If you are constantly approaching your mom and dad with complaints, life at home won't be pleasant for you or your parents.


"Some teens go to the wall even on issues really not that important to them—it's like something triggers, and the teen thinks, *I have*

*a right*, and the issue seems more important than it is," Galvin says. Save your confrontations for the things that really matter and learn to put up with minor inconveniences and disappointments. Then when you do confront your parents about a problem, they'll know this is something that means a lot to you.

## DON'T THINK OF YOUR PARENTS AS THE ENEMY

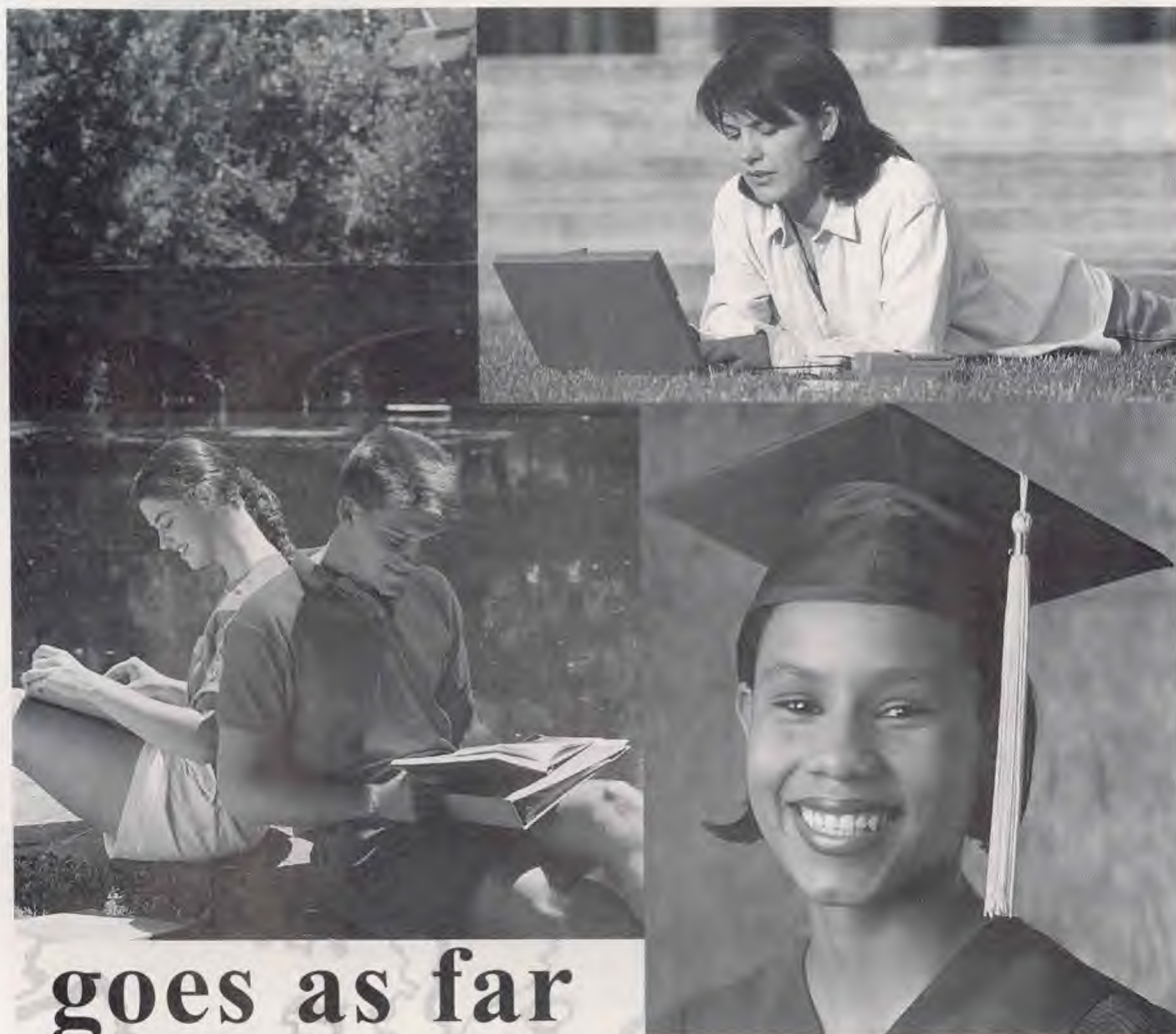
"When I told my mother about the party I wanted to go to, she instantly jumped on me with questions like Who's going to be at the party? Will a parent be there? How late will the party go? It's as if she doesn't want me to go and doesn't care if I have any fun. But I'm just trying to be like everyone else and have a good time," says Brandon, age 16.

While it may not feel that way right now, your parents are on your side. They're looking out for you and aren't getting thrills about telling you no. Says Halpin: "Teens tend to think their parents grew up in the Stone Age, back in the fifties and sixties. Yes, things are different in the nineties in the sense that it's probably a faster-paced world, and there are less-strict guidelines about what's appropriate behavior and what isn't. But teens are still teens, and even though they may seem more sophisticated on the surface, they're still not adults."

Your parents are the people responsible for helping you make decisions until you're 18. They want you to enjoy your teenage years. They want you to grow up and become well-adjusted, successful adults. And sometimes their way of getting there may be different from what you'd like to do. Remind yourself that they're your parents and they care about you—even if their behavior sometimes seems foreign! 



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# • HONEST • 12 REASONS TO TELL THE TRUTH

**I**n the movie *Quiz Show*, the Rob Morrow character is asked whether he would tell lies if he was offered thousands of dollars, his own television show, and the adoration of fans, as the main character had when he decided to lie.

Morrow flat-out says no. He's not tempted; he doesn't have to think about it. Lying is just not part of who he is as a person.

But it's not always that simple for many people. Lying is often made to seem glamorous, as when the liar gets the money, the girl or boy, and the praise.

Telling the truth isn't always easy; that's one of the reasons people lie—it's easier at that moment than telling the truth. For instance, if you see a friend stealing makeup from a store, should you confront your friend, let the store manager know, or just shush up and let it go away?

With thorny questions like these, people sometimes need help understanding why it is imperative to tell the truth.

For starters, here are a dozen reasons you should tell the truth:

**1. Truth is right.** Lying is wrong. It's that simple. Almost

every culture and religious system recognize and teach this moral truth.

**2. Lies will come back to haunt you.** You can't hide from your lies; you can sweep them under the rug for a while, but in an hour, a day, a month, or a year, they will wiggle back out on the floor into daylight for everyone to see.

For example, if you lie about where you went last Friday, and someone innocently asks you what it was like, you'll have to make something up. You'll have to lie again.

And someone else is bound to say, "Oh, is that street open now? I thought it was closed until . . ." or some other revealing bit of information, and you'll have to lie again.

From then on, rather than just calling up the truth from your memory, you'll have to remember the *story* you made up, and the second story you made up to cover the first story you told. That's hard work.

Meanwhile, part of your brain has to make an effort to remember your lie, which detracts from your quality of life, and also puts you on edge and makes you suspicious.

*Do they know? How much do*

*they know? How did they find out?*

And the truth is: the people you don't want to know *will* find out, and you will have lied for nothing. In fact, your punishment will doubtless be worse for having lied. "The truth will come out" says an old saying.

**3. Lies weigh you down.** If you lie about a friend or acquaintance—maybe you say that Sean cheated on the test, otherwise how could he have gotten such a good grade—then a little bit more heaviness is added to your brain. Every time you see Sean afterward, your gut will wrench. You won't want to talk to Sean or spend time with him. It's like a food poisoning that lasts for weeks, months, even years.

You know you lied; you feel bad; you wonder what he knows, and if he'll confront you. In a way you become a fugitive, running from the lie you told.

**4. Lies prevent you from developing as a person.** You might easily spend time, energy, and worry on lies instead of concentrating on friendship, learning, joy, and having fun. Plus, each lie makes it easier to tell the next lie and harder to tell the truth. Lying tends to become a habit.

And to what end? Who wants

B Y B I L L V O S S L E R



to spend time with a person who lies? I know you don't. Friendships suffer, because if your friend lies about another person you both know, why wouldn't that friend lie about you, too, when you're not around?

**5. Truth enhances your reputation.** If you work hard at telling the truth, other people will notice. They will also respect you for it, because they know how difficult telling the truth can sometimes be. Eventually they will come to you for honest opinions and answers to dicey problems because they know you'll tell the truth. They will also know they can't get those truths from many other peers.

**6. Truth will make true friends for you.** Friendship is built on shared interests, caring for each other, and honesty, or telling the truth, among other things. If you tell the truth, your relationships with friends will flourish, and those relationships will plant deep roots that won't be torn out by the first storm that comes along.

**7. In truth, you will feel better about yourself.** Truth is a gentle, healing sponge that keeps your conscience clean and spotless, and you happy.

This does not mean that you won't have anguish, be tempted, be filled with fear, or even sometimes lose friends—at least people who *called* themselves your friends—through telling the truth. Even though telling the truth is the right way to go, it will challenge you.

But in the long run you will feel powerful and clean because you have done the right thing.

**8. Truth makes you a better person.** If you choose to tell lies, then you will probably begin to choose other wrong directions in life. One violation can lead to other kinds of violations—lack of respect for your body to drinking,



**LIES WEIGH  
YOU DOWN...  
IN A WAY, YOU  
BECOME A  
FUGITIVE,  
RUNNING  
FROM THE LIE  
YOU TOLD...**

smoking, doing drugs, sex; the desire for new products to stealing, and so on.

If, on the other hand, you choose truth, that means you are making positive, clean, strong choices that will lead you into a straight but better and happier way of life.

**9. One truth-telling makes the next one easier.** Telling the truth requires practice. Each truth-telling strengthens you for doing the right and truthful thing the next time. Each one gets easier, until telling the truth becomes second nature to you.

**10. Your truth makes it easier for others to tell the truth.** You become a role model. When


friends and acquaintances (even strangers) see that you walk taller, have more confidence, and win friends because of telling the truth, they will try to model that behavior.

Plus, your being truthful makes it easier for others to be truthful with you, and it is through knowing these truths—even such small ones as bad breath that keeps you from getting close to someone you'd like to—that you can make changes to accomplish many of the things you want to accomplish in life.

**11. You'll be different.** Truth-tellers are few and far between.

**12. You have to live with yourself.** People often ask "Who'll know?" when it comes to stealing things or telling lies. The answer is: you'll know. You will lose respect for yourself. You will feel worse about yourself.

Because of being human, everyone falls short of always telling the truth. But if you try hard, and are gentle and kind and caring when telling the truth, you'll gain friends, fame, and riches in your personal life that you can't now imagine.

And that's the truth! 





C H O I C E S

# TOO COOL, TOO NERDY, OR A GREAT DATE?

BY KAY D. RIZZO



**H**ow would you describe yourself when you're around the opposite sex—cool or nerdy? When a "hot number" walks by, do you throw yourself at his/her feet, or do you melt into a blotch of bubble gum on the concrete? Either extreme can ruin your social life. Take the following

quiz to find out where you fit in the crazy game of love. Evaluate each of the answers, including the "other" category, to determine what kind of a catch you are.

• **1. When the star of the senior class play met you in the video store, he/she flashed you a to-die-**

**for smile and waved. You . . .**

- ☐ a. smiled and said something dumb, like "Have you seen *The Terminator*?"
- ☐ b. grabbed the nearest video box and pretended to be interested in it.
- ☐ c. felt your heart leap into your throat. Your mouth felt like it



was filled with cotton balls. You thought you'd pass out right there at his/her feet. You just stared and grinned.

☐ d. followed him/her around the video store suggesting videos you could watch together.

• **2. A new guy/girl at school has caught your interest. What do you do to get things going?**

☐ a. Look at him/her directly and smile.

☐ b. Wait and see if he/she shows any interest.

☐ c. Get his/her phone number from a friend and call him/her.

• **3. Your current crush seems to be losing interest. You are afraid he/she is interested in the girl/guy next door. So you drive by his/her house . . .**

☐ a. every once in a while.

☐ b. Are you kidding? Drive by his/her house? Never!

☐ c. every chance you get!

• **4. You've made a date with your best friend to spend the day together at the spa. The night before, the guy/girl you've been trying to attract for months calls and asks you to meet him/her at the library to help him/her study for his/her history test. You . . .**

☐ a. tell him/her sure, then call your friend and beg off, claiming you have a bad cold coming on.

☐ b. tell him/her you have other plans and suggest another time you could study history together.

☐ c. say "No, I can't," then hang up.

• **5. You finally land a date with Mr./Ms. Right. You have a wonderful time together. At the end of the date you . . .**

☐ a. kiss and run before he/she can object.

☐ b. run before the possibility of a good-night kiss comes up.

☐ c. stall and hope the

mood will be right.

• **6. The day after your fabulous date you . . .**

☐ a. hang around the house, hoping he/she will call.

☐ b. buy him/her a box of candy and deliver it to his/her house.

☐ c. get on with your life. It was just a first date.

• **7. In chemistry class you are teamed up with the coolest guy/girl in school and the class nerd. How do you treat the nerd?**

☐ a. Pretend he's not there.

☐ b. Make fun of him to get a good laugh.

☐ c. Include him in your conversations.

## ANSWERS:

1. If you answered a, you probably reacted like any normal person would. To ignore him/her, b, would not only be rude, but also would turn off any possible development of your friendship; c would do the same. And d would drive your heartthrob up one wall of videos and down another—bad, bad choice.

2. If the new student at school glances at you and smiles, return the smile—answer a. If you wait to show interest, as in answer b, you might miss a great opportunity to make a friend as well as meet a love interest.

3. If you are afraid your current heartthrob is losing interest in you and gaining interest in his/her neighbor, driving by the house won't help. Talk to him/her about your fears. While answer a isn't necessarily bad, it certainly won't be helpful to your relationship. And answer c can lead to stalking charges and a harassment suit.

4. If you lie to a friend in order to spend time with a heartthrob, you make a pretty lousy best friend. And hanging up on the

poor guy/girl leaves him/her wondering what she/he did wrong. Your best bet is to tell your heartthrob that you have other plans and ask for a "rain check"—another time you can spend together.

5. A first date, even one that was nothing short of perfection, does not need to be followed by a kiss. As to the correct answer, what do you think? Is any answer definitely wrong or right? What matters is that both parties must wish to share the affection of a first kiss for the kiss to mean anything.



6. The day after a great first date? Get on with your life. It was only a first date. While it is nice for a boy to call the girl and thank her for a lovely evening, wasting away at the phone is useless. A guy could get away with a box of candy, but for a girl to give one to a guy, especially if he didn't bother to call her the next morning, would be awkward.

7. Obviously the courteous thing to do is include the "nerd" in your discussions. Treat him/her the same way you treat your heartthrob. By ignoring him/her or making fun of him/her you cheapen yourself as a person. You'll be telling your heartthrob that you are not a quality person, not worthy of his/her attention. And besides, when it's all over, you may discover that the nerd isn't a nerd at all, but kind of cute, in his/her own way.

So, are you cool, too nerdy, or a top-quality date? And remember, you *can* improve your Guy-Q or Girl-rating to become a top great date. ▀







S E L F - H E L P

# DRUG-PROOF YOURSELF!

THE FOLLOWING TIPS COULD SAVE YOU FROM A LIFE OF SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES.

**I**t could be a high school in any city in the United States. The halls are filled with scrambling students, opening and slamming their lockers, each in a mad dash to get to their next class before the bell rings. In the girls' restroom a small circle of eleventh and twelfth graders pass a crudely crafted pipe filled with marijuana with a light sprinkle of cocaine on top. Some of these girls have already been initiated into smoking pot; most have not. Not wanting to be ostracized or looked upon as weird, wimpy, or weak, those who never have done so before take a puff from this curious-looking gadget.

Each of these teenagers wishes to belong. There isn't one among them who wants to feel left out. And most of them have been taught about the dangers and consequences of drugs. They've

heard the lectures before and the assurance that saying no will get them out of just this sort of situation. Obviously, this advice isn't enough. What these young people have failed to do is "drug-proof" themselves.

When Jeffrey was 15 years old, he made an honest commitment to his parents, friends, and himself that he would never even consider the use of alcohol or other drugs, including tobacco. Jeffrey had seen their effects on other teens,

**WHAT KIDS  
DON'T KNOW  
IS HOW TO  
DRUG-PROOF  
THEMSELVES.**

and he wasn't willing to place his future on the line for instant gratification. He read all he could about the different types of addicting substances and their negative repercussions on a person's physical and emotional well-being. In fact, Jeffrey even turned in a report to his health teacher on the escalating drug problem among high schoolers. He proudly showed everyone the A he deservedly got on it.

Jeffrey may have known a lot about the use of illicit substances, but what he didn't know was how to drug-proof himself. Then he found himself in a situation he wasn't prepared for. A situation proving that common knowledge about drugs isn't always enough to stay clean and sober.

"My parents informed me one evening after school that they had decided to separate and possibly divorce," says Jeffrey, now 17. "I knew things weren't the best

BY GARY L. SOMDAHL



between them, but I never expected this. My entire body went numb."

Thinking he was in a nightmare, Jeffrey left his house filled with emotional hurt, fear, and pain. Where he ended up wasn't the safest place to be—a well-secluded neighborhood park, well known as a hangout for drug users.

"The next thing I knew, I was puffing off of a joint laced with crack. It seemed that after what my parents had told me, my mind lost all its reason and logic. At this point I didn't care about anything," Jeffrey explains. "For the next several months I hit the drugs pretty heavily. It wasn't until my grades began to drop and my attitude and behavior started to get ugly that a school counselor intervened and helped me. My parents insisted I enter a drug rehab program, which I did."

Thirty days later Jeffrey completed his treatment program and returned to his community and school. "Looking back," he says, "I never once expected to get caught up in the mess that drugs create. It showed me that I had forgotten one thing—to take personal responsibility for my actions by putting into motion certain steps that would guarantee me a drug-free life, no matter what the circumstances. I have no control over my parents' or anyone else's hardships, but I do over my own."

The most important factor in not falling victim to substance use or addiction is to take a stand and build a solid foundation to protect your best interests in the future. Have you ever thought of drug-proofing yourself? Is it possible that a situation might arise that would put you in the same frame of mind as Jeffrey? How would you have dealt with his situation? What steps would you have taken?

The following tips could save you from a life of serious consequences:

## ☐ REHEARSE

Be prepared for what you will say and how you will react in a situation in which drugs are available or offered to you. Surprises and unpredictable circumstances happen all the time. If you're on your toes and ready and willing to respond to such situations at any moment, you're well on your way to drug-proofing yourself.

## ☐ HANG OUT WITH NONUSERS

They're out there, you know. All you have to do is look around and you'll find them. The majority of teens don't mess with drugs. They just don't get talked about like those who do.

## ☐ REACH OUT

Life is filled with ups and downs. When you find yourself in a depressed or angry mood, talk to a friend, a parent, a teacher, or a counselor. Get involved in an activity that will boost your esteem and take your mind off the worry track that can easily poison your whole outlook.

## ☐ VISUALIZE THE CONSEQUENCES

Those who use drugs hardly ever make rational choices. Stop and think about what could happen if you give in to the pressures to use drugs. Remember that you will pay a long-term price for a short-term high.

## ☐ STAY INVOLVED

Participate in school sports and activities. Doing volunteer work is another great way to be involved, and it makes you feel good about yourself. Being a part of your school and community can give you emotional strength that can drive away inclinations to use drugs.

## ☐ BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

Know that you are as important as the next person. You *do* make a difference in this world! Stand tall and take pride in your decision not to be a part of the drug scene.

## ☐ GOAL GAZE

Look at what you have planned and the ways you have devised to get there. Keep in mind that those who do drugs "dream dreams—but do nothing." Know that you have the advantage over others who make the poor choice to get stoned. Your future counts.

## ☐ RESPECT YOURSELF


Your mind and body are important assets. Know that the use of drugs will only create extra stress and could possibly turn you into a statistic on somebody's fatality count.

## ☐ ELIMINATE DRUGS AS A CHOICE

We all have choices in life. Some are good, and many are bad. Look at the use of drugs as a nonchoice. Don't let it be even the slightest part of your thinking. There are more important things to fill your head with than thoughts of drug use.

## ☐ TRUST YOUR CONSCIENCE

If something feels uncomfortable and wrong to you, don't do it. It's important to respect others as well as your own integrity. Be guided by your morals and values. Keep in mind the differences between right and wrong.

Taking precautions to drug-proof yourself is a lot like putting on a bullet-proof vest. It might not keep you out of the line of fire, but it will harmlessly deflect the danger the next time you're caught off guard. 





... I SIT IN MY POLICE CAR,  
AND I CRY AND I CURSE ...

# MR. BAD GUY

**I**t's a cold and blustery Friday night in December. The wind blows, and a chill settles into my bones. I've been at the accident scene for more than an hour. Rescue personnel have just extricated the last victim, but my work is far from over.

The wreck, a family station wagon, is resting in a mangled heap against a tall, lone pine. Two of its occupants lie cold and silent on the snowy ground. Both ejected from the car on impact.

I may seem a little callous right now, because my mind tells me to ignore the sight of death while conducting my

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HOW DO  
YOU TELL  
THE PARENTS?

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BY "A TROOPER"



investigation of the accident. The medical examiner has pronounced them dead. There's nothing more that can be done. My emotions struggle with the situation, but I do my job. I take the measurements. I take the photographs. I look for skid marks. The bodies lie there covered with white sheets.

Spectators gather and gawk. Some make unintelligible comments, shake their heads, and walk away. Some boldly ask "Who are they?" Others don't dare. I can't tell them. After all, their next of kin don't even know.

and I'll be at their home. I rehearse again and again the technique that I'll use and the words that I'll say. The images of the lifeless bodies and their horrified expressions haunt me.

I don't know these people. Mom's a stranger. Dad's a stranger. I can't call on clergy. I don't know their faith. I can't call on their friends. I don't know who they are. I can't call on their relatives. They're strangers too. I'm on my own.

The 15-mile trip is going too fast. I don't want to get there. I don't want to tell them. But it's my job; I have to tell them. I

could tell them.

I exit my car and walk up the front steps. My heart pounds. I can't breathe. I take a deep breath. I take another. I knock on the door. Seconds seem like minutes. The world slows down around me. I need to get this behind me.

A woman peeks through the front door window. She opens the door with a nervous grin and gazes at me—the man in uniform. "Good evening," she says. "How may I help you?"

"Ma'am, is your husband home?" I ask.

She calls to her husband, and the three of us gather. I can feel the anxiety building.

I begin to convey my message and only stutter. I've forgotten my lines. *Get it out, get it out*, I say to myself. They know. They're reading my face. Her eyes begin to water. All time has nearly stopped. Struggling to form the words, I finally say it. "I have some terrible news. Your son has been . . ." They know the rest. I don't have to continue, but they need to hear me say it.

She weeps. She collapses. Her husband holds back his tears. He pretends to be stronger. He comforts her in silence. Moments pass, and then we talk. I explain. I justify. I apologize. I offer help. I can't help. They've just lost their son.

My shift over, I pull into my driveway and sit in my car. I think. I question. I curse. I'm angry. I'm angry with those kids. I'm angry for what those kids have put me through. I'm angry for what those kids have put their mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters through. I yell at them: "Look what you've done!"

I sit in my police car, and I cry and I curse.

I don't like my job tonight. ■

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## "I'M ANGRY WITH THOSE KIDS . . . FOR WHAT THEY'VE PUT ME THROUGH . . . FOR WHAT THEY'VE PUT THEIR MOTHERS, FATHERS, BROTHERS, AND SISTERS THROUGH."

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But I know who they are. Kids 16 and 17. Kids out having fun. Kids who just left a school dance. Kids experimenting. Kids playing with speed. Kids who lost. I know them too well. Met them before in similar circumstances.

The evidence is gathered. The car is loaded on the wrecker. The dead are in the hearse. Now the most dreaded task lies ahead.

How do I tell them? What do I say? I have done this before, and I hate it. Fifteen miles to go,

hate my job.

There's the house. A half mile to go. I've memorized and rehearsed the words along the way. Maybe it will be easy now. I just have to remember my lines.

My training has taught me one thing about these kinds of tasks. When mom or dad answers the door, don't dillydally. They know it's not good news, and you've got to get it out.

The outside light is on. A car is in the driveway. I wish they were away. I wish someone else







A low-angle shot of a man in a blue swimsuit jumping high into the air. He is in a tucked position with his knees pulled up towards his chest and his arms wrapped around his legs. His hair is flying upwards, suggesting motion. The background is a clear, bright blue sky. In the bottom right corner, a portion of a building's roofline is visible. The word "Diving" is written in large, white, stylized letters with a blue outline, slanted upwards from left to right across the lower half of the image.

Diving



# TAKE THE PLUNGE INTO A GREAT SPORT

Everybody into the pool!" is a great suggestion on a hot summer day. But to many people, *how* you launch yourself into the water is more significant than actually getting wet. For most of us the extent of our catapult is an enthusiastic cannonball to annoy a dry friend, an aerodynamic swan dive, or a springy jackknife. Maybe, if we're really gutsy, we might go for a full flip.

But outside the realm of recreational pool plunging lies a whole other world of diving. We're talking triple reverses, layouts, and inwards with twists so intricate you wonder why these divers don't end up looking like soggy pretzels or something. To the average aqua layperson this type of diving is called *fancy diving*, and originated in the seventeenth century. (Just when you thought your ancestors were boring and proper!) It all started in Germany and Sweden, in connection with the huge gymnastics movement of the time. Gymnasts actually took their equipment to the beaches and did acrobatics over the water! (Can you imagine a high bar competitor landing a dismount next to today's bodyboarders catching a five-foot swell?)

Platform diving (33 feet high) gained international recognition at the 1904 Olympic Games in St. Louis when it was included on the men's swimming program. Springboard diving was added for

the 1908 games in London. Women's diving was slower to catch on: it wasn't until 1912 that plain high diving was included in the Olympics, and not until 1920 was the first women's springboard contest held. Actually, women's fancy diving didn't become an international affair until 1928.

Not surprisingly, Germany and Sweden dominated the early competitions. Then in 1920 the United States got the hang of things and won three gold medals (men's and women's springboard and men's platform). Since then the U.S. has continued to lead the world in diving. From 1904 through 1992 the total count of U.S. Olympic gold medals is 46 out of 74 (not counting the latest from Atlanta).

Two men have been quite significant influences in developing this U.S. diving supremacy. Ernest Brandsten, called the "father of diving in the United States," immigrated from Sweden. He brought with him a thorough knowledge of the fundamentals of the sport and some revolutionary ideas for developing divers. Among his many contributions was the construction of a "sand pit"—a diving board mounted over sand. This apparatus allowed the diver to practice many of the movement patterns of diving, especially the approach and takeoff, more efficiently.

But it was Mike Peppe, the swimming and diving coach at Ohio State University from 1931 to 1963, who did more to

promote and develop diving in America than any other person. He maintained a strong squad of divers on his collegiate swimming teams and treated diving and swimming with equal importance. Peppe encouraged other schools to emphasize diving in order to compete with his teams. His influ-



• (Opposite): Diver Brian Early in full flight. (Above): Mary Ellen Clark draped in gold!

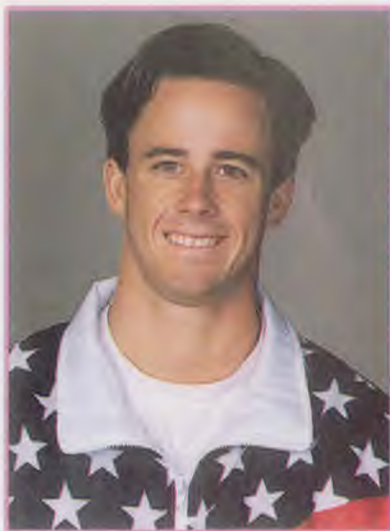
ence on college programs has resulted in improved facilities for diving, more practice time being made available, greater respect for the sport, and the birth of a new type of coach—the diving coach. Thus he may be referred to as the "father of collegiate diving in the United States."

BY SHELLIE M. FREY





**"WHETHER IT'S ART, MUSIC, OR SPORTS, IF TEENS COULD DIRECT THEIR ENERGY TOWARD THOSE THINGS, IT WOULDN'T LEAVE MUCH TIME TO GET INVOLVED IN DRUGS OR ALCOHOL."**



Since 1904 diving has grown by leaps and bounds (and twists and turns) and is still rapidly progressing and evolving. In the early days there were only 14 platform and 20 springboard dives. Today there are 82 and 87, respectively. Difficulty has changed from the point where a double somersault from the platform was dangerous in 1904, to flawless performance of the reverse three-and-a-half somersault today. Some say that we have just about reached a peak regarding the difficulty of the dives performed. However, since that statement was also made by many people 20 years ago, perhaps it's best to just watch and see what happens. We may just *flip out* at what is still to come!

One thing that has helped divers continually achieve and raise the standard for competition is staying away from drugs. Olympic medalist Mary Ellen Clark is a prime example of how being motivated toward her goals has helped her stay drug free. "Some of my friends in high school went through that experimentation stage," she says. "But I was always too busy with other things to get involved. It wasn't a part of my life, and that was definitely a bonus. The goals and dreams that I had in sports were always on my mind. So when I would go to a party and people would offer me stuff, I would just say, 'No way. This doesn't jive with what I'm trying to accomplish.' Kids need to realize the true potential that they have. Whether it's in art, music, or sports, if they could direct their energy toward accomplishing those things, it wouldn't leave much time or energy to get involved in drugs and alcohol."


Attitudes like Mary Ellen's are being recognized and rewarded

◀ (Left): U.S. star divers Janae Lautenschlager and Brian Early. (Above): Mary Ellen Clark in form at the Alamo International Competition.



personally and publicly more and more. In fact, former Olympic diver Dr. Sammy Lee presents an annual award of \$1,000 to one coach and one national competitor for successfully avoiding drugs and alcohol. (During Olympic years he presents four cash awards.) The WhoSam Foundation was established in 1983 as a nonprofit organization by Dr. Lee and his wife, Ros, to foster the pursuit of excellence in diving and to encourage adherence to the highest standards of physical and mental well-being by avoiding drugs and alcohol. The foundation originated after an honorary dinner called "Who the Heck Is Sammy Lee?" During this tribute the county of Orange, California, recognized Dr. Lee for his achievements in international diving and coaching. The \$26,000 raised at that dinner has continued to grow through investments and additional honorariums Dr. Lee receives for public speaking and appearances.

More than 20 divers and coaches have received the WhoSam Award during the past decade. Some recent divers include Brian Early, Janae Lautenschlager, Mary Ellen Clark, Krista Wilson Mein, and Matt Scaggins. Dr. Lee says that he thoroughly enjoys recognizing these special divers and coaches through his award, because it's something he really believes in and feels is absolutely vital to the success of young athletes.

There's no doubt that everyone who resists drugs is rewarded with the gift of good health, a clear mind, and higher self-esteem. Through their examples Olympic divers have literally demonstrated that people can *make a splash* in life without drugs. Now, "everyone into the pool!" 

## DIVING DATA

*From U.S. Diving Inc.*

❑ There are three events for men and women in diving compe-

titions: one- and three-meter springboard and platform.

❑ A background in gymnastics, trampoline, and/or dance can be beneficial for aspiring divers.

❑ The 10-meter platform is approximately 33 feet high—about equal to a three-story building.

❑ A "rip" is an entry into the water that makes a "ripping" sound and leaves little splash.

❑ Divers choose from six groups of dives: forward, back, reverse, inward, twisting, and armstand. Armstands are only for platform competition.

❑ The official dive chart lists 87 basic dives. With body positions of straight, pike, tuck, or free for the three events, 338 dive variations exist.

❑ The degree of difficulty (DD) of those 338 dives ranges from 1.2 to 3.5.

❑ The standard number of judges for major national and international meets is seven.

❑ Judges' scores range from 0 to 10 and are awarded only in full or half-point increments.

❑ A point total for a dive is derived as follows: The high and low judges' scores are thrown out. The sum of the remaining five scores is multiplied by the DD and then again by three fifths (.6).

## TYPES OF DIVES

There are six groups of dives. The first four involve rotating in directions relative to the board and starting position. The fifth includes any dive with a twist. The final group, used in platform diving, begins with an armstand.

**1. Forward group:** The diver faces the front of the board and rotates toward the water. Dives in this group vary from the simple front dive to the difficult forward three-and-one-half somersault.

**2. Backward group:** All dives in the backward group begin with the diver on the end of the board with the back to the water. The direction

of rotation is away from the board.

**3. Reverse group:** Formerly called "gainers," these dives begin with the diver facing the front of the board (using a forward approach) and rotating toward the board.

**4. Inward group:** The diver stands on the end of the board with back to the water and rotates toward the board or opposite of the backward group's movement. The earlier term for these dives was "cutaways."

**5. Twisting group:** Any dive with a twist is included in this group. There are four types of twisting dives: forward, backward, reverse, and inward. Since there are many possible combinations, this group includes more dives than any other.

**6. Armstand group:** Here the diver assumes a handstand position on the edge of the platform before executing the dive.

## BODY POSITIONS

When each type of dive is performed, the diver utilizes one or more of the four types of body positions:

**1. Straight:** This position requires no bend at the waist or knees. Depending on the dive, however, there may be an arch in the back. Arm placement is either the diver's choice or is defined by the dive performed.

**2. Pike:** The legs are straight with the body bent at the waist. As with the straight position, arm placement is dictated by the particular dive or by the choice of the diver.

**3. Tuck:** The body is bent at the waist and knees, with thighs drawn to the chest and heels kept close to the buttocks.

**4. Free:** This is not an actual body position, but a diver's option to use any of the above three positions, or combinations thereof, when performing a twisting dive. A combination of straight and pike is common, while tuck is rarely used.



# ROBERT TOWNSEND

(continued from page 9)

• The versatile Townsend is shown below with the cast of the WB television network show *Parent 'Hood*.



**"I THINK EVERYBODY CAN DO ANYTHING AS LONG AS THEY PUT THEIR MIND TO IT AND WORK AT IT."**

remembers, "all I saw was pimps and hustlers, and though I was fascinated with them, I didn't want to be them. . . . I used to say that when they get old they have no [retirement] benefits."

Robert is currently the executive producer and cocreator of *The Parent 'Hood*, which appears on the WB television network, and he continues to hone his craft as a thespian on the program, as well. When asked why he chose acting, Townsend jokes, "I wanted to be a basketball player, but I really wasn't that good." Answering the question more seriously, he said he considers himself among the privileged few who love their jobs. "I go to work and basically laugh all day," he admits. In case you haven't guessed, he's also a comedian, and that's

about as serious as he gets.

Townsend, now 39, remembers his childhood as a rough time. He was one of four children living on welfare in a single-parent household. Then at 15 he realized he had a talent for doing impressions and mimicking people. With a little encouragement, he auditioned for a play with the Experimental Black Actors' Guild and fell in love with the theater. Fascinated with television and the movies, Townsend went on to study acting in college. However, he grew disappointed after a few television commercials and other small roles. It seemed that the only available roles portrayed Black men as pimps, drug dealers, or illiterate athletes.

"When I was starting out, there weren't a whole lot of roles. I always

just wanted to play a human being. That's all I ever wanted to play," Townsend says. "What eventually happened was that I started to feel trapped in the roles that I was being offered as an African-American actor. And then I decided I would write, direct, and produce my own stuff."

Townsend describes his best days as the ones during which he feels fearless. He must have been referring to a few months back in 1987, when he wrote, directed, and starred in his first film, *Hollywood Shuffle*—a film budgeted not by Paramount, Twentieth-Century Fox, or another major movie studio, but by his 40 credit cards. The semiautobiographical lampoon, cataloging the struggles of African-Americans in Hollywood, allowed him the medium to vent his concerns about the portrayal of Blacks. With this successful project under his belt, Townsend has continued to prove he's no here-today-gone-tomorrow filmmaker.

Although it took three years to plan his next project, *The Five Heartbeats*, Townsend, as with his first motion picture, wore many hats while writing, directing, and starring in the film that showcased the glamour and pitfalls of performing in a popular singing group. In between producing films, he took his act to television with comedy specials on HBO and Townsend Television on Fox Television. Townsend Television, an upbeat program that featured comedy skits as well as the hottest rap stars, did not survive for long, however. Even his last movie, *Meteor Man*, featuring a star-studded cast that included James Earl Jones, Bill Cosby, and Nancy Wilson, was not exactly a box office hit. The movie told a humorous story about a superhero who was afraid of heights and flew only four feet off the ground. It emphasized that everybody has the power within to make a difference in life—a moral that Townsend appears to embody.

Robert Townsend's other film



credits include roles in *A Soldier's Story* and in *The Mighty Quinn*, alongside Denzel Washington. He believes people perceive him as an underdog who should be on the same level with Washington, Wesley Snipes, and Tom Hanks, making incredible money.

Living in a world in which movie ticket sales often determine your worth, Townsend says he fights the fear of rejection. But his record shows that he's no quitter. "I think that everybody can do anything as long as they put their mind to it and work at it," he says. "There is no shortcut for hard work." With this philosophy, Townsend has not given up trying to find his niche in the glamorous world of film and television, despite what many might have taken as major setbacks. "I've always believed in myself. I have a vision of things that I want to do, so I am constantly pushing myself," he maintains. Even as a grown man Robert remembers the words of his mother, who "always told me to keep God first. [She told me] anything you want in life, just pray [about] it."

Determined to present quality programming in spite of what seems like an anti-family atmosphere on television, Townsend, the father of three girls—ages 5, 4, and 2—created *The Parent 'Hood*. Townsend plays the father of two teenagers and a younger daughter in the series, now in its second year. "I created *The Parent 'Hood* because I looked out and saw a void," he remembers. To fill this void, Townsend created a sitcom that deals honestly with what's going on in the nineties. Programs have dealt with such topics as sex, self-esteem, teenage pregnancy, drugs, and other issues in a way that Townsend feels will help teenagers and young adults address them positively.

Townsend admits that when he first started working in the industry, he was not prepared for the criticism that came along with the Hollywood experience. In fact, even with the success of *The Parent*

• Robert and his *Parent 'Hood* costar Suzzanne Douglas. The show deals with real issues facing families today.



**"I NEVER THOUGHT SMOKING OR SNORTING SOMETHING AND BEING OUT OF (ONE'S) MIND WAS FUN."**

*'Hood*, he still worries about the critics' comments. He is not, however, interested in living the fast life that is so often associated with those in "the business." Townsend acknowledges that there are drugs and drug users in Hollywood. "There's a lot that comes with success, and not everybody can wear the coat of success. I never thought that smoking something or snorting something and being out of my mind was fun. For some reason the idea of wondering 'Where am I?' and then saying 'This is the greatest time of my life' and 'I don't even know where I'm at'—I could never understand it."

Townsend says he doesn't understand why people consider using drugs exciting. He personally would much rather be flying to an all-star

game and sitting courtside, where he can watch Michael Jordan slam-dunk, or watch Mike Tyson ringside. "That to me is the better way to have fun, . . . rather than be at some party making my heart rate accelerate to where it could explode. I never thought that was fun."

In his leisure time, Robert Townsend enjoys playing basketball and spending time with his children. Aware of the pressure to look cool and be accepted in a certain group, he says, "It takes a lot of courage to be your own person. I think a lot of times people buckle under to peer pressure." Buckling under to pressure is not something you're likely to find Robert Townsend doing—not to the pressure of his chosen profession, and especially not to drugs. ▀



# EDITORIAL

## JUST BETWEEN US

### SMART DRUGS

A few months ago there was a lot of noise in the media about some new "smart drugs." Maybe you picked up on some of the hype.

Put simply, the idea is that there are some drug substances that, when taken regularly, will actually increase your IQ and mental capacity.

Now, I can remember some pretty dicey moments before final exams back in high school and college when the old gray matter seemed to be slipping away on me. And maybe a high-octane brain booster would have come in pretty handy. It sounds too good to be true, and like all such things, it really is too good to be true.

I read all the articles on the topic very carefully, and the bottom line is that scientific studies show no clear increase in real-world mental ability. And as is often the case, they do show some real risks. So, sorry—better kiss the Einstein pill goodbye.

What's really worrisome about the whole rather humorous idea is that too many people in the media and the so-called general public took it seriously. They should know from observing the likes of Timothy Leary and a whole slew of dizzy, drug-addicted rock stars that the result is anything but mind-expanding. Drug use creates an inner confusion, delusion, and euphoria that actually destroy real-world performance. Maybe someday those captivated by the allure of "smart drugs" will smarten up and realize, along with *Listen* readers, that positive choices and healthful living lead to intelligent thinking.

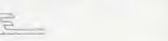
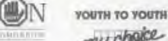
Parting tip. Try this latest news report for an interesting postscript to this "smart drug" illusion. I picked it up from the Health and Fitness section of the Orlando *Sentinel*, under the heading "Exercise—Bright Idea for Your Gray Matter." "Smart thinking: there's evidence that exercise is good for the brain. Researchers have found that older people who remain physically active suffer little or no loss in memory and other brain functions, compared to those who are relatively inactive. Exercise isn't the only factor in staying mentally alert. There's a lot of evidence that an active social life is also good for the aging brain." Well, forget the aging brain stuff, young *Listen* readers. Latch on to that Factoid truth of exercise and increased mental vigor. Enjoy!

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BY JULIANA LEWIS

# A "HANDY" PUZZLE

Hands are probably the busiest part of the body. We use them to grip, press, twist, squeeze, pull, and manipulate in countless ways. Some of the following sentences about our hands are true, some are not. Put a check by those that you believe to be true.

- ☐ 1. The palms of your hands will tan faster in the sunshine than other parts of your body will.
- ☐ 2. Both of your hands contain less than a fourth of the total number of bones in your body.
- ☐ 3. You can bend your fingers because the bones in them are joined in two places.
- ☐ 4. There are more than 25 bones in each of your hands.
- ☐ 5. Perspiration makes it harder for your hands to grip.
- ☐ 6. The palms of your hands (and soles of your feet) perspire a lot more than the rest of your body.
- ☐ 7. The chance that your fingerprints will match those of another person is one out of 10.
- ☐ 8. The only living part of your fingernails is their roots.

☐ 9. About one out of every 10 people is left-handed.

☐ 10. Keratin in the top layer of the skin that forms your fingernails causes the nails to harden.

☐ 11. Only human hands have thumbs that can move across the hand and press against the fingers.

☐ 12. The three basic patterns of fingerprints are loops, whorls, and squares.

**ANSWERS:** 1. False. The palms of your hands (and soles of your feet) are the only parts of your body that never tan. 2. False. They contain more than a fourth of your total number of bones. 3. True. 4. True. 5. False. Perspiration helps your hands to grip. 6. True. 7. False. No person has fingerprints identical to yours. 8. True. 9. True. 10. True. 11. True. 12. False. The three basic patterns are loops, whorls, and arches.



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