ELEBRATING POSITIVE CHOICES

P. 26

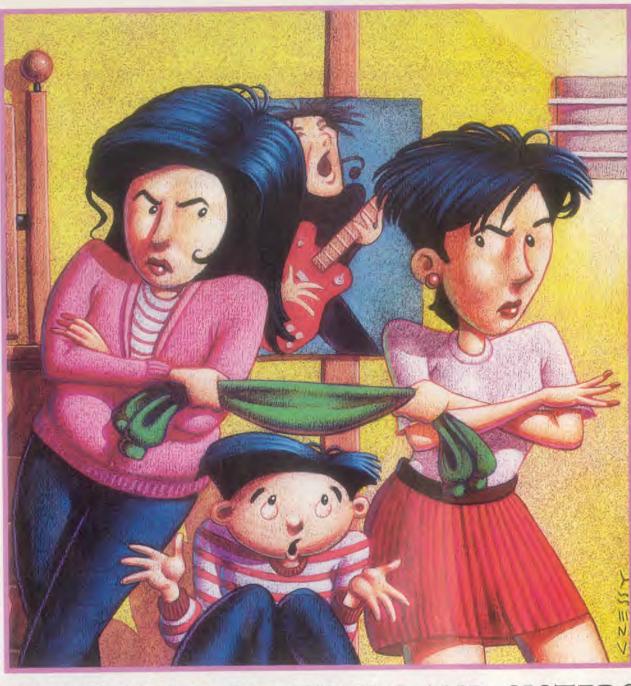


George BUSH Texas Governor An Advocate

for Teens



From TV's Sister, Sister DYNAMO DUU DUU TAMERA & TIA MOWRY



LIVING WITH BROTHERS AND SISTERS BOUND TO GET BELLEN

LISTEN/NOVEMBER-1998

Article by Rebecca Sweat

hey share a room, but Jennifer, 15, hasn't spoken to her sister, Nicole, in more than a week. "Nicole is always taking my clothes and wearing them without asking," Jennifer says.

"Last week was the final straw. I found my new sweater tossed in the laundry room, and it had a big stain on it. When I asked Nicole about it, she acted like she had no idea what I was talking about."

Ryan, 16, says he's tired of his younger brother, Sean, 13, hanging around when his friends are over. "He's such a pest. Every time my friends come over, Sean turns into my shadow and wants to do whatever my friends and I are doing," Ryan says. "I wish Sean would find some friends of his own so that he would leave me alone."

Just what is it that makes siblings get on each other's nerves? Well, lack of privacy can be a factor. "When living in a family there is generally a lack of privacy for everybody," says Clifton Saper, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist in Elk Grove, Illinois. "That's not usually a problem for young children. But as kids hit adolescence, privacy becomes more of an issue."

Maybe your brother picks up the second phone and listens in whenever you make a telephone call. There may be nowhere to go for peace and quiet when you need to do your homework. Perhaps your sister sees nothing wrong with "invading" your bedroom closet and taking your clothes, CDs, and other possessions without asking.

Age differences also have a part to play. "The difference between a 16-year-old and a 13-year-old in interests, capabilities, freedom, and activities can be huge," says Peter Goldenthal, a child and family psychologist in Devon, Pennsyl– vania, with a special interest in sibling rivalry. "Typically older siblings want to differentiate themselves from the family, so they're not that interested in hanging around with their younger brother or sister."

Tim, 16, says he just doesn't think he has much in common with his 12-year-old sister. "My little sister, Emily, keeps bugging me to play games with her, and she acts all hurt and upset when I say I've got other things to do," he says. "But I just got my driver's license, and my friends from school want to go places with me, so what can Emily expect?"

Siblings who are close in age often view each other as rivals and may compete for friends and popularity, for academics, and for athletic accomplishments.

"My sister, Kelly, is just a year younger than I am, and it seems whatever I do, she does the same," says Amanda, 17. "When I decided to try out for the lead in the school play and Kelly found out, she decided to try out too. When I took up tennis, Kelly also learned to play. She seems bent on proving that even though she is a year younger, she can still do anything I can and better."

Another cause of sibling conflict is perceived unfairness. "One sibling may think the other is getting more than his/her fair share of attention, privileges, space, or other perceived limited resource," says Charles Thompson, professor of counselor education and counseling psychology at the University of Tennessee. There may be only one car or computer at home and you think your brother gets to use it a lot more than you do.

Maybe you feel your parents are tougher on you than they are on your younger brother or sister. "The older sibling is the first to enter high school, to ask for a later curfew, to drive a car, and typically parents are more cautious with firstborns because they're inexperienced at having an older teen, and so their rules are stricter," says Mary Halpin, an adolescent psychologist in Deerfield, Illinois.

"Then when the younger sibling comes along, the parents are usually more relaxed with the high school scene, and so they allow the younger one more leeway, and the older sibling thinks that's unfair," Dr. Halpin explains.

Challenge yourself to try to understand what's going on in your brother's or sister's life.

There are bound to be minor tiffs now and then, but there don't have to be—and shouldn't be constant blowups and tension. Here are some suggestions for improving the relationship you have with your brother or sister and becoming better friends:

B efore you get defensive ... is it possible that the statement is not criticism? that maybe what they really are saying is "I care about you"? CHANGE YOUR PERSPECTIVE

Your younger sister asks, "How come you always have time for your friends, but you never have time for me?" Before you get defensive or angry, ask yourself, Is it possible that that statement is not criticism? that maybe that statement is really saying "I care about you"? See if you can really understand what your sibling is trying to get at rather than immediately coming back with a punch or comeback. Challenge yourself to try to understand what's going on in your brother's or sister's life.

If you have younger siblings who follow you around, realize they're not trying to make your life miserable. "What usually happens is that younger siblings tend to idolize the older siblings, and that's why they want to follow in their footsteps. They very often see him/her as a role model," says Dr. Saper. Understand that the reason your younger sibling is so pesky and doing everything you're doing is because he/she looks up to you. Try to find ways to include your younger sibling in your activities every once in a while and he/she will feel less need to "pester" you for attention.

DON'T COMPARE YOUR-SELF TO YOUR SIBLING

You may look at your brother's abilities and think to yourself, *It's* not fair—he's better than me at everything. But try to realize he may be thinking the same about you. Everyone has unique talents, and no one will succeed in everything all through life. Let your siblings shine in their own particular areas of strength. Rather than wish you had the same strengths and abilities as your brother or sister, look for your own talents and strengths and work on developing those.

GIVE YOUR SIBLING SOME SPACE

If you are sharing a bedroom with your brother or sister, sit down with him or her when you're both calm and come up with a system of rules for the room that both of you can agree on.

Make it a rule that you will not borrow each other's things without asking. Set aside a quiet time each night so you can get your homework done. Each sibling should have some of his/her own wall decorations. You might want to designate certain areas of the room as being one sibling's. Talk about how you will handle situations when your friends are over and you want to talk with them in your room. Once you agree on your rules, stick to them.

BUILD POSITIVE

Rather than always focusing on resolving conflicts, ask your sibling to take part in some kind of fun noncompetitive activity with you. Spend a couple hours at the park or pool; take a walk together; treat your sister or brother to a sundae at the ice-cream parlor. Give yourselves a chance to do something enjoyable and positive with each other, so that you're not always quarreling and getting on each other's nerves.

LOOK AT THE LONG TERM

During your teen years you may feel very different from your siblings, and life with them may even seem intolerable at times. Try to look at the big picture. Just because you are not presently close with your siblings doesn't mean it will always be that way. "Many adults who are close with their brothers and sisters will tell you they didn't get along with each other when they were growing up," Dr. Thompson says.

The relationship you have with your siblings is unique. Unlike a friend, who may suddenly decide they no longer want to be your friend, your siblings will *always* be your siblings. Chances are, your siblings will be the people in your life who are constants, whereas friends will probably come and go.

Granted, it's no fun when your little brother reads through your diary or your sister helps herself to your clothes. It may seem hard to believe, but years from now, as an adult, you will probably look back at your teen years and laugh about the stunts you and your siblings used to pull on each other. And for the present, try to have a sense of humor. It's bound to get better.

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Isten up, teens. Say Hi to Jennifer Acklam, a Miss Texas Coed and America's Homecoming Queen. Jenny wants to hear from you. Send your letters to us at **LISTEN** magazine, P.O. Box 859, Hagerstown, MD 21741, and

We'll pass them on to her for the column. I just turned 16 and got my driver's license. All my friends have been driving for several months. Most of my

friends have been driving for several months. Most of my friends even have their own cars. How can I convince my parents to let me borrow the family car once in a while?

First of all, remember that all parents get a little nervous when their children start to drive. Parents think of all the horrible accidents and tragedies that they have read or heard about, and suddenly they become scared that their child will be the next statistic. The only thing that really changes that picture is trust, which is built up over time. Try talking to your parents about allowing you to use the car for brief periods of time, to do specific things and to go specific places that are near and comfortable to them. Parents have this fear that all kids want to do when they get their licenses is cruise around aimlessly and daredevilishly. Using the car to go to the library or to a friend's house for a visit is a good start. In time your parents will feel more comfortable and will be willing to grant you permission to take along some friends and to go more places for more extended periods of time.

I'm 17, and I have been going out with the same guy for a year. My family loves him, and his family adores me. Our families have gone on vacations together, spent holidays together, and really become like one big family. The problem is that now my feelings are changing for this guy. I like him, but I don't want to be his girlfriend anymore. I'm scared that everyone in both his and my families will hate me. I don't have anyone to talk this over with. Help!

The flame went out, and you're feeling all alone and in the dark, right? Unfortunately, situations like yours occur often. While you are dating and like each other, it's a great situation to have both families enjoy each other's company so much. Then when feelings change, it's a difficult dilemma. You have a right to your true feelings-so don't feel guilty about what you are feeling. The two families can still remain friends and continue to plan activities together. It may be slightly uncomfortable for them at first, but you shouldn't bear any guilt for that. Tell your mom and dad what's in your heart-and also express your sadness and fears about how this may affect the bond between both families. I am confident that your mom and dad will understand and support you. Parents know that relationships at 17 usually don't last forever. In all honesty, I'm sure they have even thought about and considered the possibility that this scenario would occur. Once you have talked to your parents and feel you have their support, you will feel more confident and comfortable in discussing your feelings with the guy. Assure him that you still want to remain friends-and stress how important it is that your families continue to be friends. It may sting him at first, but in the end he will understand and respect you for being honest with your feelings and with him.

In September my best friend, Heidi, and I both tried out for eighth grade cheerleader. Heidi made it, but I didn't. Everything was OK with us until just a few days ago. Then she changed. She kind of dropped me and wanted to do everything with the other cheerleaders. I feel so left out. What should I do?

You aren't the only one who

has felt left behind because a friend has gone off in another direction that doesn't include him/her. It's so common in junior high and even high school that friendships and associations revolve around the clubs, groups, activities, and/or sports in which people are involved. Heidi, or anyone in a similar situation, probably is not trying intentionally to hurt you. She is busy with her new activity and doesn't realize that she is now cutting you out of the picture. Your best bet is to get involved with some groups in which you are particularly interested. This will occupy the idle time you now have and will also create new friendships to fill the gap left by Heidi. The most well-rounded and balanced person, and therefore the happiest and most content also, is the one who participates in a wide assortment of activities, clubs, and organizations, and thereby creates a varied network of friendships.

I come from a good home. My parents have taught us good values and beliefs. My boyfriend goes to my church also, but it bothers me that all the tapes in his car are satanic. We've talked about this—and he says he doesn't worship the devil. He says he doesn't even listen to the words of the songs. What can I tell him so that he will stop buying and listening to this type of music?

Even if he says he doesn't listen to the lyrics, I believe strongly that the subconscious message comes through. A person's thinking starts to change through exposure to this type of audio/video rubbish. Over time the effects start showing on the person's values and reflect this immoral attitude. In other words, what a person sees and hears has a huge impact on the type of individual that person will become. Whether your boyfriend believes it or not. his character will suffer in the long run. If you can't persuade him to throw these tapes away, then perhaps consulting with the youth director of your church would help. If your boyfriend chooses to ignore the warnings, it would be wise for you to consider your relationship doomed. There is no way the goodness you see in your boyfriend now will remain for much longer.

Teens help rescue food for the hungry... WORKING ATTHE BANK

t's mind-blowing when you think about it: 13.8 billion pounds of food get thrown away each year in the United States. And it's not rotten or spoiled. It's what people don't eat at cafeterias and restaurants. It's fresh fruits and vegetables that are left unharvested in fields. It's slightly dented cans that were never bought at the supermarket.

S. WELLNER

ALISON

While all of that food rots in dumpsters, there are children, men, and women all across the United States who don't get enough to eat. It's a big problem. But teen volunteers are doing something about it.

Rashad Rodgers is a junior at St. John's College High School in Washington, D.C. He's a busy guy—plays football, basketball, and works at the zoo. Every weekend he

volunteers his time at the Capital

- Area Community Food Bank.
 That food bank is involved in a
- process called gleaning, which
- means "rescuing" food that no one else wants, before it hits the
- dumpsters. (Don't worry, they
- aren't picking through the garbage.) Restaurants,
- supermarkets, and cafeterias
- donate food to a "bank," where the food is sorted and then
- distributed to soup kitchens and other places that provide food to the hungry.
- At the food bank Rashad sorts boxes and helps get them ready for
- distribution. Actually, it didn't
 - start out as something he really
- It's an eye open-
- er. Many people
- · aren't aware

.

- that hunger
- exists in their
- own communities.
- wanted to do. "Teenagers like to
- do lots of different things on a
- weekend . . . and I have to give up a lot of stuff that I like to do," he
- explains. In fact, the whole reason
 he did it in the first place was that
- his school has a community
- service requirement.

But Rashad decided to keep helping out at Capital Area Food

- Bank after he met his requirement.
- You could say that he's hooked on the good feeling of doing
- something good," as he puts it.
- Before doing this work, he didn't realize that hunger was a

LISTEN/NOVEMBER-1998

6

problem in this country: "It wasn't a thought in my head. But now my eyes are opened to all the food that's wasted," he says.

Many people aren't aware that hunger exists in their own communities, notes Joel Berg, director of national service at the United States Department of Agriculture. The fact that people living right next door to you might not be able to get enough to eat can be a big shock. "It's an eye-opener," he says. Working at a food bank is a good crash course in the real world, and a concrete way to help people at a very local level.

Besides being able to give back to the community, Rashad is finding that his volunteer work is actually a lot of fun. "I get to meet a lot of people, talk, and do fun

This is a crash course in the real world and a concrete way to help at the local level.

things," he says. It makes giving up weekend time a lot less difficult—and he has the satisfaction of knowing that he helps his food bank contribute to about 200,000 meals each month.

There are many ways to help rescue food and get it to the people who need it the most. Food banks and other organizations involved with gleaning need lots of different kinds of help. As a volunteer, you could sort food, like Rashad. Or you might find yourself:

• organizing a standard canned LISTEN/NOVEMBER-1998 food drive at school.

• using computer skills to make a model for food redistribution.

• helping to collect leftover produce from a farmer's field.

- talking to a local food service business about donating their unused food.
- starting a community garden.

• helping to distribute food directly at a soup kitchen.

You can get started by calling 1-800-GLEAN-IT, the United States Department of Agriculture's Food Recovery Hotline. They can help you to find places that need your help in your own community. They can also give you more information about hunger, nutrition, and other related issues. For a larger commitment, you might want to do an AmeriCorps internship. AmeriCorps volunteers provide community service in exchange for educational awards, such as scholarships. Last summer, during AmeriCorps' "Summer of Gleaning," volunteers recovered over 1,000 tons of food.

Precious food goes to waste each day. All that's needed is your energy to bring that food to the hungry people in the United States.



•Get involved, help the hungry. Call 1-800-GLEAN-IT to get started. Rashad Rodgers (inset) got involved and now he's "hooked on the good feeling of doing something good."

CHOICES

BY KAY D. RIZZO

hat would you do if . . . a giant hot-air balloon landed on the roof of your house? a major tidal wave hit the beach on which you were sunbathing? a lightning bolt zapped your electronic pet, Abner? What ifs—there are zillions of them. And people can scare themselves comatose if they spend a lot of time thinking about what may happen or may never happen. Kind of silly, huh?

I agree. Many worries do nothing more than give us a negative adrenaline charge. That's probably why viewers enjoy watching scary monster movies. But in reality, knowing what to do the next time you encounter a creature from the tar pits of Kansas is probably not high on your "worry list."

Safety information on real dangers *is* worth taking a moment to think about. For instance, if you live in an earthquake-prone area, it's smart of know a little about earthquake safety. If you spend much time in tornado regions, you'd be wise to acquaint yourself with tornado safety tips. If you are a snowboarder in the Rockies, or a

LISTEN/NOVEMBER-1998

Sea-dooer on the Great Lakes, you'd be wise to learn all you can about the dangers inherent to your sport. That's just common sense!

What about the dangers found at home? Again, "What would I do if?" is a good question to ask yourself. Below are some "what ifs" that could make a difference in your life.

1. What if your burning Pop-Tart breaks off below the rim of the toaster?

Answer: If you said "Stab and remove it with a knife or fork"—zap! You've just been shocked by electricity. If you said "Wait till it cools," you might smoke up your mom's kitchen. But if you said "Unplug the toaster and turn it upside down over the sink," you might lose the Pop-Tart, but save your life and home.

2. What if you're frying eggs in a pan on the stove and the fumes set off the smoke alarm?

Answer: If you said you'd "dismantle the smoke detector" first—eek! If you said you'd "dump water on the pan"—ouch! Water makes grease fires spread. If you said "Remove the pan from the stove and put a lid on it before turning off the smoke detector," you may keep from singeing more than your eyebrows.

3. What if, when a favorite uncle visits your home, he makes you uncomfortable by the way he looks at you and touches you when you pass his chair?

Answer: If you avoid being around him or tell him to "bug off," you've made the first attempts at major "pest control." But if your warnings aren't enough, you know you should go for the big guns. Tell your parents how you feel and let them handle your roach problem. You know that if you find yourself in a threatening situation, you can call 911.

4. What if you come home from school and find your mother unconscious on the bathroom floor? Answer: If you said "Call 911," you're in the know about first-aid safety. You know that you need to stay on the line and follow the directions given by the emergency professional.

5. What if you're home alone and a stranger comes to the door?

Answer: You know that you should not answer the door. And you know that if the stranger becomes insistent, call for help, call a neighbor, or, if necessary, call 911.

Safety information on real dangers is worth taking a moment to think about ...



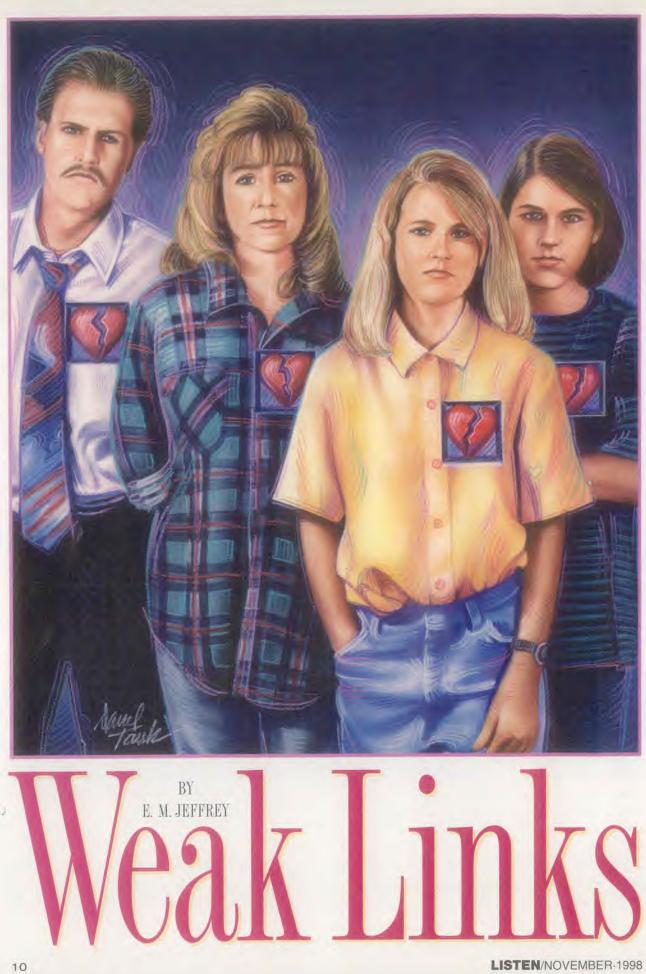
6. What if an Internet "friend" asks your real name and wants to know where you live?

Answer: If you said "Not gonna happen, dude," you answered wisely. You know that predators on the Internet are much more unpredictable and dangerous than any wild animal in the jungle.

7. What if you are baby-sitting your 2-year-old brother, and he's taking his evening bath when the phone rings?

Answer: If you said "Stay with the baby and ignore the phone," you get a baby-sitter's gold medal. You know that one should never leave a small child or infant unattended while they're around water.

LLUSTRATION: NATHAN GREENE



"I'm not the parents —you are!" I yelled in desperation.

om is standing outside the bathroom door, demanding that I vacate it at once. She is just back from sitting with a friend at the hospital. She is irate because she knows I am methodically brushing my teeth, combing my hair, peering at each imperfection in the mirror. I answer coolly, because I know it enrages her.

With an authoritative "I'm coming in!" she opens the door (there are no locks in our house) and sails over to the sink. She talks at me as I finish brushing. She is emotionally drained, she says, because her friend has not known during the past several hours whether her daughter would pull through an operation to remove a tumor. The girl seems fine and is now resting.

Mom is not fine, though! Berating me for my thoughtlessness and self-absorption, she smartly informs me that I should have more compassion for her. Somehow I am expected to be as emotionally involved as she is. I am expected to feel sorry for her. I'm tired of feeling that I have to make up for so much to Mom.

It was supposed to be a fun weekend. We'd been invited to a friend's lakeside cabin. Intent on splashing and frolicking, we kids left the cabin to the adults who were boozing it up—drinking, talking, laughing, arguing.

Something has happened when we come in for dinner, because my sister and I are abruptly loaded into the back seat of our Buick and Dad drives us around the lake, searching for Mom. As we swing around a curve in the gravel road, an oncoming car brushes by too close. Dad quickly steers far right to avoid it. Gently, gently, we skid off the road and down a short embankment. Coming to rest against a cottonwood tree, my sister and I find ourselves bundled against each other on her side of the car. (I sit behind the driver even when no one is up front in the passenger seat, because I have heard it's the safest place in an accident. I am often afraid when we ride with our parents: they can drive so angrily.) Dad silently opens the door and goes for help.

B ack on the road an hour later, we leave the lake and set off down the highway. It seems that we are going home without Mom (and I am relieved and frightened at the same time), until Dad pulls over onto the shoulder a short distance later in front of a solitary figure. Mom has walked quite a way by herself. She gets in without a word, and we drive back to town. My sister and I are silent. I don't understand these adult games, and I am tired of them. I do not relish the role of being a game piece between two unhappy players.

Another evening I sit in the blue plush armchair, impassively watching my father swing my older sister by the arm in an attempt to lasso her, to hold her down so he can . . . what? Spank her? Beat her into submission? I think the time is past for submission, and anyway, he is not a violent man. My parents know they have lost my sister at 16. But she has resisted Mom again, and Mom has called Dad into the fray. I want to get up and go to my room, but I'm afraid someone will notice me then. So I sit, watching, expressionless. I don't know what to do for my sister.

She has protected me so often. She shuts off movies I shouldn't watch, debates which parent we'll live with if they divorce, knocks the bullies at the playground down the slide before she pushes me after them. She also bends me out of second-story windows and threatens to let go. There are bald spots where my hair is afraid to grow again after being pulled out. She invites her friends to try to make me cry. She can take out her anger on me. It seems there isn't much she can do about our parents except deflect their attention from me with her own outrageous behavior.

One night Mom comes to sit on the edge of my bed. She has been drinking. I'm just starting to make the connection between alcohol and erratic behavior, ugly words, threats, accusations, and unfulfilled, unspoken need. Mom tells me she knows that she hasn't been a good mother and she is sorry. I hear again how unloved and unwanted she felt as a child. I know she is trying hard, but 1 won't meet her halfway. It seems too late for such a complicated mutual understanding. Lying there, rigid and silent, I strategize. Should I close my eyes? pretend I'm asleep? Her closeness is almost suffocating. Eventually she gets up and leaves. She may be crying as she walks out of the room.

n a sunny afternoon drive Mom brings up a topic in a dangerously casual tone. It seems my grandmother has shared something I said in confidence. Mom asks, "Is it true that you don't ever intend to drink because you think I have a drinking problem?" The beautiful day turns cloudy immediately. Asked point-blank like this, I cannot tell the truth. I mumble something about my grandmother misunderstanding what I said, resolving never again to reveal our private lives.

The turning point—the point at which I really begin to understand what has driven my family—comes when I am about 16. Mom and Dad are arguing; my sister has long since moved away; I'm alone in my room, lost (almost) in yet another book.

There is a lull, and Mom marches to my room. She announces dramatically, "I'm leaving!" Rather than saying, as I have privately thought for the past few years, *OK*, get on with it, then, I talk her out of it; reason with her; tell her not to go. I can't go reassure Dad in the same way, as Mom will think that I'm disloyal. I finally yell out in desperation, I 'd come to recognize my parents' courage in determining to hold fast to the children they had connected with, not letting go even when it hurt..."

"I'm not the parents—you are! You're supposed to take care of me!" My mother stares at me speechless.

In a flash I see my parents for who they are-people estranged from healthy human connections, wallowing in need and emptiness and despair and pulling others in after them. The pieces fall together, and they add up to this: my parents, both from broken homes headed by wounded. abandoned women, came to their marriage hungry for what they didn't receive as children. Like all hungry children, they stuffed anything into their lives to fill the void—alcohol, prescription drugs, unhealthy relationships, play rehearsals, and community projects, and cast parties, and meetings, and, and, and. They turned to their children, too, for much-needed affection, but we rebelled against this too-heavy demand. The more they pressed their need, the more we struggled and pulled away.

And their needs did not do away with our needs. My sister vented hers by becoming the "problem child," assuring her of plenty of attention, while I made sure my needs were met by being the "good child," my good behavior masking a lot of selfdestructive acts. My sister more honestly suffered as she prayed and hoped for a reconciled family.

I wished that once and for all they would carry out their latest threat to break up our family. I would watch with insincere relief as they reconciled yet again in the front row of the theater or the front seat of the car, their audience of two sitting in stony silence. In my naïveté, I believed that all our family needed was to make a clean break, a final disconnection of the two main links so we could all move on to other, happier connections. I thought of a movie I had seen in which a little girl and boy, diving into a special swimming pool to escape their parents' divorce, came up into a wondrous place where children were laughing, playing, being children, undisturbed by discord. How I wanted to find that fantasy.

Within days of my pronouncement my mother took herself off the prescription diet pills and nightly highballs. She began to meet with a support group through our church and to share her childhood needs with other adults. She didn't stop drinking all at once, and our family battles didn't end either. But we learned new ways of filling all of our needs. All of us had to learn how to forgive, even when we didn't understand the offense or the offender.

Some years later I again saw that movie about the children's fantasy world on a late night show. But the fantasy no longer held any fascination for me, because I knew I wouldn't find the solution to my problems by running away and leaving people behind. Instead, I'd come to recognize my parents' courage in determining to hold fast to the children they had connected with, not letting go even when it hurt, because letting go would only hurt more.

LISTENING FEEDBACK FROM READERS

LISTEN

I feel your discomfort, I don't know what to do. I know you're hurting inside, But I don't know what the correct words are to say. I've been there before, But I don't want to go back. I can't make your anger go away, So I'll be your friend. I'll just sit here for a while and listen. Amanda Freedman New City, New York



Sometimes I am a bear in hibernation. At times I like to be alone with my own thoughts and ideas, not caring about the world around me. Sometimes I am a bear in hibernation.

Sometimes I am a lion, the king of the jungle. I am independent, have my own opinion, and stand alone, not with the crowd.

Sometimes I am a lion, the king of the jungle.

Sometimes I am an eagle.

I go wherever I want,

not caring about the troubles that wait for me, at times I am aware.

Sometimes I am an eagle.

Lori N. Bryant, 15 Decatur, Georgia

CONFIDENCE

So many times I'd try To reach for the stars and fly high. But how can I,

If I always think of the blue sky? Because of things unknown to me,

It's always hard to find a way, But I remember my friend did say,

Have confidence, then it will be easy. Jhie I. Macabulos

Davao City, Philippines

Jhie is an avid Listen reader who lives in Davao City, Philippines. There are Listen readers all over the world—from Africa to Australia.

TIME OF DAY

When 6:50 a.m. comes around,

- It hits me down to the ground.
- Then it picks me up and throws me into the shower—
 - I was asleep for just six hours.
- How I dread this time of day.

It comes around, and that's OK. I fight against it with all my might,

- Then my mom comes into sight.
- When she calls to me and tells me to awake,

I know I've made a terrible mistake,

For now she'll be in a cross mood And for breakfast I may have no food.

Michael Kuniansky, 14 Atlanta, Georgia

NEW LAND

From across the big blue waters we've comefrom very far. People wishing for freedom, that is who we are. We came across the globe by land, but most by sea, and once we made it over here, indeed, my friend, we're free. A land of independence, democracy, and trust. To see every person free there is a lust. Years ago we came to live, from there to run away. We didn't want to live or stay there, not another day. Now that we are gleaming free, and all live happily, I pledge allegiance to our flag, But more . . . to our country. Aaron R. Maller, 13 Syracuse, New York

ILLUSTRATION: DARREL TANK

What...cough...teen smokers have to say. SOCIAL THING NATALIE D'AUBERMONT

S moking kills at least 350,000 Americans each year. Studies show that smokers are also much more likely to contract cancer, emphysema, chronic bronchitis, and heart diseases. With statistics such as these in mind, why would anyone want to smoke? Yet the majority of smokers begin smoking as teenagers.

Surveys show that 70 percent of young people aged 12-18 who smoke believe that they are already addicted to cigarettes. What is it that causes these young people to begin smoking at such an early age?

One series of interviews with teenagers between 16 and 18 revealed that the average age a female begins smoking is about 15. Most females first tried it because they were curious. Asked why they continued smoking, they replied: "It made situations more comfortable sometimes"; "When I turned 16 I drove around a lot and needed something to do while I was driving"; "I like to have things in my mouth, kind of like an oral fixation"; and "It's a social thing." The replies from a male point of view differed slightly. Most males had their first cigarette when they were 12 or 13 years old. When asked why they continued, they remarked: "Every time I have a beer I have to have a cigarette it feels natural"; and "Cigarettes help me wind down, especially with a drink." Yet many smokers do not realize that nicotine is the substance that causes the habit of smoking.

On weekdays the average female smoker has about four to five cigarettes a day, increasing to about a package a day on weekends. The average male smoker has about three a day and a package each weekend. The smokers were given statistics about the health risks that smoking causes. However, many smokers were confident that they will not be harmed by cigarettes. Some said, "I figure that I don't smoke often enough for it to be bad for my health." One smoker said, "I am aware of the health risks, and I plan to quit smoking once I get out of college." Unfortunately, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that "40 percent of high school senior smokers have tried to quit and failed." Also, according to Larsen Thomas, M.D., from Princeton, New Jersey, "Eight out of 10 smokers say they wish they had never started smoking."

What about nonsmokers? Many female nonsmokers who tried cigarettes had unpleasant experiences. One female said, "It tasted awful and the overall effect just didn't do it for me," while another said, "Smoking is not worth dying over just for a little buzz, and on top of that, it's disgusting!" Other views included "I hated kissing my ex-boyfriend because whenever I kissed him he tasted like smoke, and it was awful," and "Nothing special about it. It is gross and

E ight out of 10 smokers say they wish they had never started smoking.

it kills people."

Male views included some responses such as "I don't see the appeal," "My parents would kill me," "It stains your teeth," and "I don't really want black lungs."

Although nonsmokers are confident in their decision to not smoke, there is always the danger

ED GUTHERO

of secondhand smoke. Carl M. Browner, an administrator of the **Environmental Protection** Agency, states that secondhand smoke is responsible for approximately 3,000 lung cancer deaths annually in nonsmokers in the United States. Henry A. Waxman, chairman of the Health and the Environment Subcommittee of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, reports that each year "exposure to tobacco smoke causes 150,000 to 300,000 cases of bronchitis and pneumonia in infants and children . . . and a million children suffer asthma attacks when exposed to the smoke of even a single cigarette."

How do nonsmokers feel about this? Nonsmokers' comments ranged from feeling "violated" when smokers smoke around them to "It is inconsiderate"; "It makes me mad, because by smoking they are showing that they don't really care about my health"; "It's gross—like someone spitting in my food"; "I don't like it, but I can't yell at them"; and "They can kill themselves, but I don't want them killing me." One female nonsmoker explains how she

Secondhand smoke is responsible for approximately 3,000 lung cancer deaths annually in U.S. nonsmokers.

deals with smoking situations: "I start coughing. I act really obnoxious and pretend that I'm hyperventilating. I get dirty looks from smokers, but they usually end up putting the cigarette out, and that is all that matters."

Many smokers admit that they smoke around nonsmokers. They



Says one teen: "Smoking around someone who is trying to eat is just rude. I might as well dump an ashtray over my food."

TEENS DIALOGUE ON SMOKING "Smoking is not worth dying over for just a little buzz."

A nonsmoker says: "By smoking (around me) they are showing they really don't care about my health."

"It's gross—like someone spitting in my food.... They can kill themselves, but I don't want them killing me."

explained that if they are in their own car, "It's my right to smoke," and "I smoke unless someone asks me not to."

The teenagers were given a hypothetical situation in which two smokers and two nonsmokers go out to eat together. Which section will they sit in—smoking or nonsmoking?

Of the smokers, 40 percent would choose smoking, 40 percent would discuss the situation with the nonsmokers, and 20 percent would automatically sit in nonsmoking. Of the nonsmokers, 20 percent would sit in smoking, 50 percent would prefer nonsmoking but sit wherever, and 30 percent would let the smokers decide. One nonsmoker spoke strongly about the subject: "Smoking around someone who is trying to eat is just rude: I might as well dump an ashtray over my food!"

Sadly, some young people are beginning to smoke at a very young age. Children are starting as young as age 11! By starting this young, they are reducing their chances of being able to quit when they get older. Many younger smokers are optimistic about quitting, but they have not experienced nicotine withdrawal yet, and there is a high chance that they will never be able to quit.

Smokers do have a right to smoke, but nonsmokers also have a right to breathe clean air. The good news is that smoking is becoming more socially unacceptable. Margaret O. Hyde, author of *Addictions*, explains that more young women are trying to quit smoking. "The girls may be more eager to stop because they are more apprehensive about the health hazards, cigarette odor, and possible harm to future children."

Whatever the reasons for smoking may be, the reasons to quit outweigh them. As a wise nonsmoker once said, "I just don't want to die—breathing is a hobby of mine."

Natalie d'Aubermont wrote this a few months ago when she was a senior at Lovett School in Atlanta, Georgia.





SISTER, SISTER STARS TIA AND TAMERA MOWRY

ARTICLE BY JULIA BROOKS

ia and Tamera Mowry, in real life, are very much like their characters on *Sister*, *Sister*. Tia is the more levelheaded of the two, while Tamera likes to have more fun.

The twins, who have been performing since they were 10 years old, were born in West Germany on July 6, just two minutes apart. (Tamera is the older, however.)



Listen interviewed the girls to learn their feelings on what it's like to be a teen, moms, acting, drugs, and each other.

Listen: How did you break into show business? Was it separately or together?

Tia: It was probably about 10 years ago. Our whole family was living in Texas at the time. My mom and dad were in (continued on page 22)



ARTICLE BY AUDREY T. HINGLEY

Marijuana contains more than 400 different chemicals. Evidence continues to mount that long-term marijuana use is harmful to the heart, brain, and reproductive system.

The first time I tried pot was last year,

and I was with a friend named Troy," says John, 17. "I knew about the dangers of using drugs, because I had a good relationship with my parents, and we had talked about drugs. But Troy made it sound like so much fun."

He adds, "Basically, I was curious. I guess I just wanted to try marijuana to know what it was like."

During the next two months John smoked pot with Troy every week. Troy would always have the marijuana that he and John shared. The scariest time, John says, was the one time he actually bought pot from someone.

"I had heard this kid at school sold drugs, so I approached him. He said he could sell me some pot for \$10," John recalls. "I met him at a gas station near my school, gave him the \$10, and hid the pot in my pocket. I was so scared, carrying it around the rest of the day at school, because I knew what I had done was illegal. I kept looking over my shoulder all day, hoping that no one had seen me at the gas station with this drugdealer kid.

"I was sort of relaxed when smoking pot and a little dizzy when I used it, but I didn't notice any big changes—at first," he recalls.

But changes were occurring. His grades at school dropped dramatically, hurting his hopes for a college scholarship; he stopped seeing nondruggie friends, concentrating his social life exclusively around Troy; he became argumentative and irritable, especially with his parents, and had trouble concentrating.

The turning point came when John's parents noticed the behavior changes brought about by drug



produced when marijuana is smoked contains more cancercausing substances than tobacco. use and confronted him about their suspicions. At first he denied using drugs, but the truth came out one night when his parents caught him trying to sneak out of the house to meet Troy after the family had gone to bed.

"We had a big blowup, and I finally admitted to my parents what I had done," John recalls. "I not only realized I had hurt myself and risked arrest for drug possession—not to mention the one time I actually *bought* drugs but I realized how much I had hurt my parents. We've always had a great relationship, and they were so disappointed at my lies and deceit.

"They grounded me," continued John, "and it took months for them to start trusting me again. They told me they loved me, but I had to earn back their trust. When they pointed out how my grades had dropped, how I had changed, how I'd dropped my old friends for Troy, and most of all, how I was lying to myself and to them, I suddenly realized everything they were saying was true."

John is one of the lucky ones, a teenager who experimented with marijuana for several months before waking up to its dangers and quitting. Marijuana, which goes by many names in the world of drug slang (weed, pot, grass), remains the most widely used illegal drug in America. A recent survey found that 45 percent of high school students had tried it at least once.

Marijuana is among the world's oldest drugs. Growers pick its leaves, stems, or flowering tops, which are then dried and shredded into a leafy green or brown mixture. Although marijuana can be used in a "marijuana tea" or eaten (in the 1960s marijuana eaten in chocolate brownies was popular with the dropout crowd), the majority of users smoke it, either in homemade rolled cigarettes, called "joints" or "reefers," or in a pipe.

Most high school students say getting it is easy. Like John, many buy it from a classmate. But you never know what you are getting, since marijuana sold on the street can include a variety of substances, everything from the common spice oregano to a herbicide called paraquat.

Marijuana itself contains more than 400 different chemicals, but its most potent ingredient is delta 9-tetrahydrocannabinol, known as THC. THC is an oily liquid substance affecting the heart, nervous system, and blood vessels. The amount of THC in marijuana varies, depending on where the plant is grown and whether flowering tops, stems, or leaves are used. When marijuana smoke is inhaled, THC passes into the tissues and body organs. THC from just one joint can stay in the body for a week, and if you smoke pot several times a week, it may take up to a month for all the THC to leave your body. In fact, traces of THC will stay in hair until the hair is cut or falls out, sort of like growth rings in a tree. The amount of THC in your body varies according to how much pot you smoke and the strength of the marijuana itself.

THC is the substance in marijuana that produces a "high," a feeling of well-being, or the relaxation that John experienced. Experts note that today's marijuana has more THC than ever before. It is up to 15 times stronger than the pot available 20 years ago. This higher potency not only means that smaller amounts of the drug will produce a "high," but today's stronger pot increases the chances of bad psychological effects on the user.

High doses of marijuana can cause hallucinations, paranoid feelings, panic, or anxiety, and such risks increase with the stronger amounts of THC. Other effects of marijuana include impairment of short-term memory, alterations of the sense of time (minutes may seem like hours), problems with balance and stability, and the inability to do things that require multiple steps.

"Algebra was always my worst subject in school, but when I was using pot, my grades dropped from C's to F's," John explains. "My mind would wander as I sat doing homework, but at the time I didn't connect my school problems to pot."

Just like cigarette smokers, marijuana users also face the possibility of cancer, chronic bronchitis, and lung disease. Studies show that the tar produced when marijuana is smoked contains more cancer-causing substances than tobacco smoke; in fact, when researchers rub tar from marijuana smoke onto the skins of lab animals, tumors grow.

"It's funny that I ever tried marijuana, since I'm really into health and stuff, and I never smoked cigarettes," John says. "I guess I thought that because marijuana came from plants, it was healthy or something."

The physical effects of marijuana include red eyes and a faster heartbeat. The increase in

Just like cigarette smokers, marijuana users face the risk of cancer, chronic bronchitis, and lung disease.

heartbeat has led doctors to warn people with heart disorders to avoid pot, but some people with no heart problems have complained of chest pains after using marijuana. Evidence continues to mount that longterm marijuana use is harmful to the heart, lungs, brain, and the reproductive system. But perhaps the most potentially deadly problem is pot's ability to harm the immune system. Marijuana can destroy white blood cells, which fight infection and disease, making the user more susceptible to sickness than other people. In an age of AIDS, which kills by destroying the body's immune system, the relationship between pot and the immune system poses serious concerns.

The more pot someone smokes, the harder it is for them to stop. The tolerance factor leads to pot's being called a "gateway" drug, since it opens the gate to using other drugs to get the high lesser amounts of pot used to bring. Most people who use drugs say pot is the first drug they ever tried.

John says that although the blowup at home with his parents was hard, he's now glad his parents cared enough to confront him.

"They kept riding me until they got the truth," he says. "I stopped using marijuana, and I also stopped hanging out with Troy. I found that some of my old friends didn't want to be my friend anymore because word had gotten around school that I was a druggie. I sort of had to rebuild my life."

He adds, "I heard Troy is going to fail school this year, and I also heard he's using cocaine and other drugs now. I haven't used drugs since my parents confronted me, and I don't intend to ever use them again. I'm just thankful I never got any deeper into it, and that I was able to stop when I did."



There's this boy who attends the same church youth group as me. Everyone thinks he's so pure and perfect because he's always bragging about never doing drugs. The truth is that he gets stoned every chance he can. I know this for sure. Should I expose him as a liar to everyone? And if I do, what if they don't believe me? *Sonya*

Letting others in on this young man's dishonesty and deceit might backfire unless you can back it up with hard proof and facts. Drug users can sometimes be quite successful in keeping their dark secrets under wraps. Eventually the truth surfaces, exposing them for who they truly are. Your best bet is to call this boy aside in private and inform him that you're on to his game. Then suggest that he get real and reveal the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Maybe this approach will shock him into a confession and determination to mend his ways. If this doesn't work, consider confiding in your church's youth pastor or a parent that you trust.

Please answer me this: Is there a way to control my drinking so I don't get so drunk I get into trouble? Spence

The fact that you're concerned about finding a way to consume alcohol without going overboard shows me that you might have a slight problem to begin with. And if you are underage, you could get in trouble without even being under the influence. The most efficient and proven way to steer clear from literally thousands of potential problems in the future is not to use tobacco, alcohol, or any other kind of drug at all-period. Worry more about controlling your life, your dreams, and your future than your drinking. They're a whole lot more important to your future than a bottle of booze.

I'm 15 and have kind of decided to enter a treatment center for my addiction to crack cocaine. My friends tell me these places treat you cruelly. They yell, scream, and are real mean. Are they right? I'm scared and really need to know. Willy

Treatment professionals like me are held to the highest standards of ethics. I don't know of any drug and alcohol program that treats people wanting help with unkindness. The goal of treating those with dependencies is to build them up-not tear them down. As a valued human being with basic rights, you're guaranteed to be treated with dignity, respect, and compassion. There are all kinds of horror stories that are simply untrue. Forget about what your friends tell you and go for the gold. Your life could depend on it. Write back and let me know how it went. I care.

I hope you can help. I think my cousin has an alcohol problem. He's 15 and drinks all the time. When I told him he should quit, he said that it wasn't a problem and that I should mind my own business. Don't tell me to tell his parents; they could care less what he does. I'm afraid for him. What should I do? *Katie*

If possible, confide in your parents, a teacher, minister, or another grownup. It's important that someone intervene and try and save your cousin's life before it's too late. Alcohol in any form has the potential of creating major health problems, not to mention emotional and spiritual impairment. Denial is a sinister enemy that has the power to convince many with an alcohol or other drug problem that they don't have one. Your cousin probably has little or no idea what he faces if he continues on the road to ruin. Whatever you do, don't mind your own business. Take action now by letting someone else know what you know. You'll be doing him a lifesaving favor. Z



o ahead, ask Gary his advice on some of those big, serious, touchy questions. This guy enjoys the roughand-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 realworld 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.

DYNAMIC DUO

Tia and Tamera Mowry (continued from p.17) the military. We were just watching television one day. Actually, the program we were watching was Star Search. I don't remember who it was now, but we had seen someone on Star Search who is now a big star. And we said, "Oh, that's so cool the way he automatically became a starand you know, he's in the business and he's an actor now." That's what really gave Tamera and me, both of us at the same time, the idea that we wanted to be actresses.

I can remember telling my mom, "Mommie, I want to be an actress." And she said, "Well, honey, in order to be an actress you have to move to California or New York, where you can pursue your career as an actress, 'cause that's where the business is." And we begged our mom, we just begged her so much, and that's what we really, really wanted to do. It was in our hearts and in our souls. We felt that it was what God had called us to do.

Our mom said, "OK, Tia and Tamera, we'll go to California for two months. If you get a job within that period of time, then I know that you guys are for the business."

We were determined and dedicated, because we remembered those words that Mom had said. Well, Tamera and I went on a couple auditions. As a result we got this job for a commercial. Actually, both of us got it, and we had to double Dutch. That's basically how our careers started. And Mom kept her word. She said, "OK, Tia and Tamera, we're leaving for California and you guys are going to be actresses." So it's really a blessing the way it happened. Our mom actually sacrificed her job-she gave up being in the military-for our careers. And that was her love. Mom loved being in the Army, but

she gave it up just so her children could pursue their careers and do what we wanted to do. Now that I'm older, I just sit back and think to myself, Would I do that for my children? So I really, really thank Mom for doing that. Without my mom and without God's help, I would not be here today. We had a beautiful home, we had so many friends, Mom had so many friends-she was content-but she actually gave up that lifestyle in order for us to move to California, start from the bottom again, and go all the way up.

Listen: Do you think you might venture into solo careers, or are you going to stay together for a while?

Tamera: As long as society accepts Tia and me, we'll be here. But once [that changes] we'll go do something else. Maybe we'll play child psychologists. Or lawyers. We see ourselves as Lucy and Ethel. We would love to be together for that reason. The chemistry and the way we bounce off of each other works well for comedy.

Tia: That's how I see Tamera and myself, as a team, not twin sisters, not sisters, or twins, but as a team. So right now, maybe even five years down the road, I still see Tamera and myself together, no matter what it is, still acting. If we're not acting anymore we'll

You can't say 'Well, I took drugs because soand-so pressured me.' It's your decision; your decision to say no." probably have a business together, because we're so strong when we're together. When we work together we're solid; we're a team. So I really see us working together in the future.

Listen: What would you say to kids who are tempted to try drugs?

Tia: I remember in ninth grade how they usually had searches. They would check backpacks just to see if kids had drugs on them or in their lockers. Well, I remember I was in the classroom and saw this guy who, when his name was called, was just tripping out because apparently he did have drugs in his backpack, and he knew he was about to get caught. He asked me if I would hold it for him, and I said *no*!

I think a lot of kids out there need to realize that they can make their own decisions against drugs. Sure, they pressure you, but you can't use that as an excuse. You can't say "Well, I took drugs because so-and-so pressured me." It's your decision; your decision to say no! That saying is still strong today-but a lot of kids don't seem to be following it, I guess, because they think it is old or it's corny. The most important thing is to just say no. That's the easiest thing to say. Just say no and back away. That's exactly what Tamera and I did.

I think a lot of parents should tell their children that they are going to be pressured. And that's what my mom did. "Tia and Tamera," she said, "I know you guys are going to be pressured one of these days, but you know what? You've got to say no." It's not all about being cool, it's not all about being popular. You're cool and you're popular when you say no, and you're strong enough to say no. I don't care if everyone's doing it. I'm not like everyone else. A lot of kids need to stop comparing themselves to other kids. You don't have to do it just because your

t's just not worth it to be beat up by drugs. By doing drugs you are just damaging yourself, your life, and your body."

best friend's doing it. A true hero is someone who stands up strongly and firmly and says no!

Tamera: It's just not worth it. Don't be afraid to say no, because you end up having the biggest laugh in the end. It's just not worth it to be beat up by drugs. What's so fun about almost dying? I don't see that as fun. A lot of people think, *Oh, I'll just try it one time*, but it's very addicting. Don't be afraid to say no. You have to keep your body pure and righteous. By doing drugs you're just damaging yourself, your life, and your body.

Listen: What would you like to say to the readers of *Listen* magazine?

Tia: What I see lacking in a lot of teenagers and young people today is morals and values. Not enough of them believe in themselves. If they see a doctor on television, or if they see an actress on TV, they constantly put themselves down by saying "Oh, I would never be that," or "Mom, I can't do that." And it's

so weird, because you should never say can't. My mom would always tell us that. Never say can't.

The key is to believe in yourself. Because if you don't believe in yourself, you're not going to make it. So never put yourself down. And I always tell other people, kids in particular, to





go ahead and reach for the stars. They might seem far away or unreachable, but with dedication, focus, determination, and believing in yourself, one of these days, if you have patience, you will be able to grab one. Nothing comes easy. That's what a lot of kids need to know. Whenever you see someone on TV or whenever you see someone successful, they had to work to get there. They had to crawl before they walked. It never happens just like that.

A lot of kids seem to give in. But I always say, You're never a failure. A failure is someone who stays down. If you get knocked down, get right back up. Brush the dust off and keep on movin'. Keep on striving, keep on working hard at it, believing in yourself, no othing comes easy. That's what a lot of kids need to know.... Go ahead and reach for the stars...if you have patience you will be able to grab one." —TIA MOWRY

matter how long it could take. I guarantee that you *will* reach your goal if you have focus. Focus is another thing; you really have to focus.

Tamera: Morals and values are disappearing. It really is sad. We were brought up to say, "Yes, ma'am." That's a good thing. It's a sign of respect. There are still people out there like my mom and my family who teach morals and values.

And whatever you do, love and respect yourself, because if you can't love yourself, how can you love others? Have faith in yourself, believe in yourself, never give up, and be all you can be. So never limit yourself, never. If you want to be a lawyer, you can do it if you put your mind to it. Just have fun!

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ARTICLE BY DEBRA MCARTHUR

ust how far up is 40 feet? When you're standing on the fifth floor of a building, the floor beneath your feet will be about 40 feet off the ground. Then take away the walls and add the wind in your hair, and you'll know what it's like to stand at the top of a 40-foot-high rappel tower! Next, call out "On rappel!"

and wait to hear the reply of "On belay" from the person on the ground who holds your rappel rope. Now grab your rope firmly, step backward over the edge of the tower, and slide down the rope to the ground.



You don't think you could take that first step over the edge? Maybe you could—maybe you should try it sometime.

Rappelling, climbing, and other "high adventure" sports are gaining popularity every year as more people seek to conquer their most basic fears and add excitement to their lives. For some teens, however, simply participating in these sports *(continued on page 29)*

•PHOTOS: (Left top): Julia on rappel; Lorien on belay. (Left bottom): Julia attaches a safety line to the instructor's harness as part of the practice rescue. (Above left): At basic training Lorien helps Julia adjust her rappel harness. (Above right): Julia helps a participant over the edge at the top of the tower.

CTTEXAS GOVERNOR GEORGEE





BY DOUGLAS BANFIELD, TEXAS *LISTEN* COORDINATOR

act: Texas is the secondlargest state in the Union. Fact: George W. Bush is governor of that state (familiar name-his dad, George, was president of

the United States during Desert Storm).

Fact: governor George Bush is married to Laura, a former teacher and librarian, and they have twin 16-year-old daughters, Barbara and Jenna. (The family also has a dog, Spot, and two cats, India and Cowboy!)

Fact: The Governor has made it very clear that a top priority of his administration is ensuring the security of teens and young people within Texas society. He has consistently spoken out against the drug culture manipulation of teens and also encourages teens to reserve sex for marriage.

Fact: We spent some time interviewing Governor Bush for this Listen magazine story and discovered that he is every bit as committed to a great future for teens nationwide as any of his press releases might suggest. This is a politician, a father, and more important a caring guy who wants to make a difference in society. Sure, he's not a teen any longer, but he's from a generation of politicians that is looking seriously at life in the next millennium and how teens can make the most of it. He wants Texas to lead the way, and he is determined to speak out and forge the way for moral values and security for all citizens.

"are not afraid a distant threat from

PHOTOS: PORTRAIT C/O GOVERNOR'S OFFICE, INSET: LINDA KAY

The governor's aides sometimes refer to the "Legacy Speech" he so often gives. In it he speaks of the sacrifices made by his father's generation. After all, his father was a World War II hero. The governor then challenges this generation to respond to its own very particular set of threats. "Today's children," he says, across the world, but of threatening violence in their own schools, their own neighborhoods. Today's challenge lies not so much outside our borders as inside our souls."

In fact, the governor has taken this statement a step further by turning the lessons his generation has learned into the message to the teens of today. "The signal that we ought to send to our children," he urges, "we have learned from what happened in the sixties and seventies. And the lesson ought to be 'Don't be using drugs and alcohol. Learn the lessons from the past.""

Before the interview, we scanned over some of the newspaper reports of the governor's public statements and public appearances, and we picked up very clearly that the governor routinely speaks to young people in the crowd. His message to them is to shun drugs and alcohol,



and he tells them, "There is honor in abstaining from sex until you have found the person you want to marry." Now, that's not always the message that young people want to hear, nor is it always the message that some less responsible adults are communicating through mass advertising and movie plots. But it makes sense, and the governor has not hesitated in advising teens to act responsibly.

You can be sure that as we came into the interview situation, it was important to me to find out exactly what the governor really was willing to say on these topics. It's one thing to have newspaper reports, but what is he willing to tell me and Listen readers directly? When I asked what advice he would give to young people as they look to the

future and to this new millennium, his answer was visionary and embraced a lot of the themes that we had already noted. "First and foremost," he answered, "it is important for our youth to understand that they must stay in school and aim high. Sure, you can drop out of school and survive, but you are not going to be able to realize your dreams by dropping out-because the world is changing to where your capacity to earn a living will be based on your knowledge.

"But there are some things that won't change," maintains the governor. "In my graduation speeches that I give in high schools and colleges I point out that even though the world is changing rapidly there are some things that won't change. First, God exists and will always exist regardless of how technology changes. Second, families are the backbone of a stable. society. Third, in order to realize the dreams of tomorrow, it is important not to abuse drugs and alcohol. Fourth, having a baby out of wedlock is a bad decision. Sure, we all love babies, and will help the mothers as we need to, but that doesn't take away from the fact that having a baby out of wedlock is a bad decision to make."

As the interview progressed, the governor elaborated on his concern for the alarming number of teen pregnancies. He agreed with Listen's position, which deals with the problem, and also our tackling of the issue of sexually transmitted diseases. As he told us: "A surefire way to solve that is through abstinence." In fact, he told us that he is working to make government money available for such programs on the local level, where it can make a real difference in the lives of teenagers.

In talking abstinence and other value-related issues, the governor is

"Today's challenge lies not so much outside our borders as inside our souls.... You have to live what you talk. It is very difficult for a parent to say 'Don't smoke' to a child and yet continue to smoke themselves."

tackling issues of public morality. But there is a contradiction built into this situation. He told us quite clearly, "People should not look to government for moral guidance. People should look to people of moral foundation to serve in government. The government is only as good as the participants, and we should be electing people who understand that there are concepts greater than self—for example, the fact that there must be and is a God.

"What government can do is provide education. I believe that a literate child, a child who has learned self-esteem through learning, is going to be one less likely to fall prey to the false promise of gangs and drugs. Drugs feed on the vacuum of hopelessness. There is no substitute for loving parents. In my speeches 1 After spending some time in conversation with Governor Bush, we found it remarkable how often he refers to family values, to his own family, and his view of society being in essence a family relationship.

We took the opportunity to share Listen magazine with the governor. He appreciates what we are doing to inform teens and enable them to live drug-free and successful lives. We then asked the governor how parents could work with teens to ensure that their children make the correct and positive choices. His response was very interesting and very personal. "I used to drink," he admitted freely, "but I haven't had a drink in 12 years. I believe you have to live what you talk. It is very difficult for a parent to say 'Don't smoke' to a child and yet continue to smoke



"You are not going to be able to realize your dreams by dropping out (of school)—because the world is changing to where your capacity to earn a living will be based on your knowledge." The governor recently launched a program of reading comprehension goals for Texas youth.

sometimes say, 'I wish I knew the law to make people love one another: I'd sign it immediately. I wish I knew the amount of money it would take to make people love one another: we'd spend it immediately. Society is only as strong as loving people who are willing to love their neighbors as they would be loved themselves.'"

This man is concerned for his fellow citizens. He's not so much involved with political agenda as with mechanisms to make a difference in society. A prime example of that has to be his determination to protect young people from the tobacco marketers. As he says: "Teen smoking, is a health measure. Tobacco makes you sick; and we try to send a message to people who sell to teenagers that we don't want you to be aiding and abetting in a child becoming sick." themselves. I think that it is important to live a consistent life. 1 certainly have made mistakes in my life-but the question that we all have to address is Have we learned from our mistakes? I want to send a message to my girls that I don't want them drinking. I hope that they don't. But one way to undermine the message would be not to practice what I preach. It is very important for parents to understand that. Most of these issues begin at home. Unfortunately, in many homes parents are sending the wrong signals."

My impression after spending time with Governor George Bush is that much of his personal vision for the young people of his state and for the country as a whole comes from his own experiences growing up in the Bush, Sr., household, and from his day-to-day fathering of his teen twin girls, Barbara and Jenna. He is a caring parent who is concerned about doing the right thing by his daughters.

o it seemed appropriate for me at the conclusion of our interview time to ask him that very personal question: "What particular goals or aspirations do you have for your daughters?"

"I want them to be drug- and alcohol-free," he responded. "I want them to understand, most importantly, that you can't blame anybody else for your bad decisions. We need to be personally accountable for the decisions we make. I guess my main goal for them is health and happiness. The best way that I know to do that is to surround them with love."

And looking back on the interview, that is probably the best way to remember Governor Bush: a moment of introspection, thinking about the love and concern that he has for his own daughters and for the new generation of Texans and Americans. As president, his father was sniped at on occasion for dismissing that "vision thing." But what is abundantly obvious in talking with Governor George Bush is that his whole program centers around a vision. Rather than administrative policies and projects and legislation, his real agenda is best defined by his moral worldview. He is concerned that every teenager has access to adequate education. He is determined to protect every teenager from alcohol and drugs and sexually-transmitted diseases and the hazards of an uncertain tomorrow. He sees correctly that the security of this next generation is in the hands of his generation, and he is determined to encourage parents, teachers, and society at large to love, support, educate, and encourage teens everywhere to fulfill their potential.

I can see him still in that office as we said goodbye. He is a tall man, but not so much remarkable for his stature as for his calm, kindly demeanor. George Bush, father, visionary, and advocate for teen drug-free futures.

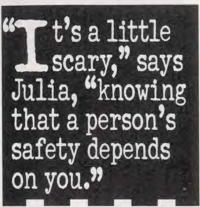
On Rappel! (continued from p. 25) isn't enough. A few have decided to

go beyond the basics of their own participation and have accepted the challenge of helping others enjoy the fun.

Julia Topi and Lorien Riead recently completed the rappel apprenticeship course offered by Mid-Continent Council of Girl Scouts in Kansas City, Missouri. They are now trained and qualified for volunteer work with children and adults at the rappel facilities offered by the council. "I have enjoyed rappelling for several years," says Julia. "Since I have several friends who are apprentices and instructors, I thought it would be fun to apprentice so I can help others enjoy the sport too."

But to become certified apprentice instructors, these busy teens have to make a substantial commitment of time and energy. They take six hours of basic training, eight hours of training at the rappel tower, and a minimum of six separate work periods totaling 12 hours to complete their apprenticeship.

Being a rappel instructor requires many skills. Because of the potential for falls, safety is always



the most important concern. Most of the participants Julia and Lorien will work with are children-Girl Scouts who come to the camps with their troops. "It's a little scary," said Julia, "knowing that a person's safety depends on you." In order to ensure the well-being of both instructors and participants, extensive training is essential.

Prospective instructors must first use their technical skills. They must learn the names and proper use of all the equipment needed for the sport. Since the ropes used in rappelling make the difference between fun and serious injury, rappel apprentices must learn just the right knots to secure rappel ropes and safety lines. According to Lorien, "it's really important to remember all the knots and tie everything right, because if you

mess it up, someone could be in really bad trouble."

Rappel instructors have a lot to remember. In particular, they must always be sure to attach safety lines to participants before allowing them on the top of the tower. The instructor must also know how to attach the carabiner and descender securely to the rappel rope and must make certain the person on the ground-the "belay"-has a firm hold on the other end of a participant's rappel rope before removing the safety line. The belay has the ability to stop a participant's fall if he or she loses a grip on the rope.

Rappel instructors must demonstrate strong reasoning skills. They must be able to spot potential dangers before a problem occurs, such as frayed ropes that could break under stress. They must also remember to check that a participant's harness fits correctly and is buckled properly. The harnesses shown have a red stripe on the buckle to make it more obvious if the webbing is threaded incorrectly. If the harness comes loose, the rappeller could become separated from the rappel line and fall up to 40 feet to the ground. That must never happen. Rappel (continued on p. 31)



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JUST BETWEEN US

DIGITAL ADDICTION

Oh, OK, enough of the class clown wiggling his fingers in the air in mockery of this title—I'm talking digital as in computer, not fingers. It's funny: No matter how many years have passed since I was in high school, I still remember the antics of the class clown. Not that I was ever the class clown, mind you!

Back to the premise. It all started when I read an exposé on the latest digital addiction—the Internet. It began with a very provocative question. Can one be addicted to the Internet? The USA Today correspondent quoted the author of one book who claims that "Internet addiction can damage children and teens' lives, wreck marriages, eclipse friendships, and cost you jobs." Big claims. Actually, these effects are not much under question. What is really under question is the term addiction.

What is needed is a clear distinction between the addiction process in alcohol and other drug use and the sometimes similar behavioral addiction that any imbalance can create.

Let me put it this way. Alcohol, tobacco, and the whole wide array of illegal addictive drugs are poisonous substances that your body does not need, and by using them you are clearly compromising its function and very survival. The addiction created by using these poisonous substances compromises every aspect of your physical and emotional being. This explains why only delusional types argue in favor of drug use.

Now, Internet addiction is a whole different kettle of fish! It seems rather pointless to argue that the Internet is wrong. The problem here is not the activity, but a possible imbalance of the activity or dependence upon it as a substitution for other important parts of life.

Put it this way—Internet addiction could mean that you don't take time to exercise and your body falls into couch potato disrepair. Internet addiction could mean that you fall in love with the typed words of a cyberpal while missing out on meeting that absolutely knockout beautiful new girl down the street.

I might as well sing the same old song. The answer to Internet addiction, as in so many other areas, is "choosing to celebrate positive choices." Say yes to life in all of its positive, upbeat, myriad ways. Enjoy!



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On Rappel! (continued from p. 29)

instructors must also check for loose clothing or dangling hair on a participant that could become entangled in the descender.

Another skill required of rappel instructors is physical stamina. The steel and aluminum descenders and carabiners, ropes, gloves, and rescue equipment must all be carried up the steep stairwell in the tower. The training also includes emergency rescues, in which an instructor must rappel part way down the tower to rescue a participant. The instructor must be able to attach a safety line between their own harness and the participant's, rig a rescue sling to the participant's ropes and then transfer the participant to their own rappel rope and lower them to safety.

Both Julia and Lorien agree that the mock rescue was the hardest part of their training. "It was complicated trying to remember all the steps and do everything in the right order," says Lorien. Julia agrees that the rescue made her pretty nervous. "If you do something wrong, someone else not just you—could get hurt."

Probably the most important skills a rappel apprentice needs is the ability to work with others. The apprentice must be cooperative in taking instruction from the master instructor. The apprentice must



"It gives me a good feeling knowing I can do this and take charge of people."

-Lorien, rappel instructor

also be able to work with adults, establishing a rapport with them and showing them that he or she is mature enough to be trusted. "It's a little difficult to be in authority over the Scout leaders who come out with their clubs," says Lorien. "They are used to being in charge, and they don't always like me telling them what to do." Julia agrees that it's hard for a teenager to tell an adult they're doing something wrong, "but you have to, or else someone could get hurt."

Finally the rappel instructor must speak in an even and reassuring voice to calm participants who may be very nervous the first time they stand at the top of the tower. The personality of the rappel instructor can often make the difference between a child (or adult) who successfully rappels and one who climbs back down the stairs. "My favorite part of being a rappel instructor is talking people into going over the edge of the tower," says Lorien. "It's really a creative exercise to figure out how to help the scared ones."

Despite the work, responsibility, and time required to take part in this volunteer activity, Julia and Lorien agree that it's worthwhile. "It's a challenge by choice for the Girl Scouts," says Julia. "Being able to do something exciting that they never thought they could do really builds their self-esteem."

Lorien says that being an apprentice rappel instructor is "terrifying and overwhelming because of the responsibility, but it gives me a good feeling knowing I can do this and I can take charge of people. Helping someone rappel successfully makes me feel happy that I was able to share this sport, and happy that they enjoyed it and will want to do it again."



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LISTEN MAGAZINE-NOVEMBER 1998-VOLUME 51-NUMBER 11

Bound to Get Better by Rebecca Sweat 2 Living with brothers and sisters

Weak Links by E. M. Jeffrey 10

"I'm not the parents-you are," I yelled in desperation.

It's a Social Thing by Natalie d'Aubermont 14

What . . . cough . . . teen smokers have to say.



Dynamic Duo by Julia Brooks 16 Sister, Sister stars Tia and Tamera Mowry

MJ Is Not OK by Audrey T. Hingley 18

On Rappel! by Debra McArthur 24 Taking that first step over the edge ...

Advocate for Teens by Douglas Banfield 26

Interview with Texas governor George Bush, Jr.

YO, JENNY ! Just Got My Driver's License 5

PRIME TIMES Working at the Bank 6

LISTENING New Land 13

CHOICES What Would You Do If . . . ? 8

ASK GARY Bragging About Never Doing Drugs 21

JUST BETWEEN US Because We Care 30

ext Month

BRANDON HAMMOND Young co-star of The Gregory Hines Show

STEROIDS: FALSE WINDS, HOLLOW VICTORIES

HE THRILL OF SNOWBOARDING

LISTEN/NOVEMBER-1998