

listen

**The Mandatory
Diary of a
Fat Chick**

**Planes on
the Brain**

KENNY ROY

**Heroin: THE
NEXT GENERATION**

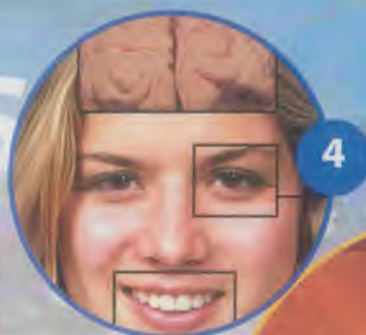
Lacrosse
An Extreme Sport

**Kicking
Butts from
Coast to Coast**

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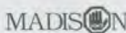
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YOUTH TO YOUTH



RESPECTEEN



Here's the thing

Mean People Aren't Nice

Have you ever wondered what makes mean people mean? I do. Often. Take today, for example. I was making a right-hand turn in my car, and the people going straight apparently got a green light at the same time. The car coming up behind me had to stop fast to avoid hitting me. Oops. Not smart, but certainly not intentional.

Now, your average Joe Schmo would have chalked that incident up to "Aw, well. It could have been worse. There could have been an actual accident." But not these guys. No, they sped up so they could pass me, and the kind gentleman in the back flipped me off. For a long time. Presumably he wanted to be sure I saw him—either that or his finger is stuck in that position permanently.

Why? Why be mean instead of grateful?

I think it depends on how you see life in general. If you are generally a thankful person, you see the things that happen every day in their best light, and you're nice. If you're basically angry and think the world is out to get you, well, life happens, and you take it out on everyone else. You're—let's face it—a meanie.

When it comes down to it, we all go through basically the same things day after day. How we react to those things is what's important. Part of making positive choices is dealing well with life's little curve balls. Do yourself a favor. Be a nice person. It'll give you a good feeling inside that you won't ever regret.

And as for Mr. Not-So-Nice-Guy, with his middle finger stuck in the locked and upright position—well, I feel sorry for him. It's going to be very hard to do ordinary things, such as shake hands, open doors, or hold a pencil. He probably won't care, but I sure hope his little display of affection was terribly gratifying to him. It will have to make up big time for the gnawing sensation in his gut telling him he's one of the mean ones. And as we all know—mean people aren't nice.

Céleste Perrino-Walker
Editor

MAX AND I
TRY TO BE NICE
AND PLAY WELL
WITH OTHERS



PHOTO BY ROBERT WALKER

The Big Kahuna

» September 9

Why do I have to take this class? Computer Literacy! I've been computer literate since third grade! Dumb assignment 1: Keep an online diary. Let the first entry serve as an introduction so the teacher can get to know you.

I am Miranda Cameron. Miranda . . . not Mindy. Mindy would be a size 2 cheerleader with perfect teeth and blond hair. I, Miranda, am fat. I refer to myself as FPLH. That's Fat Pathetic Loser Hog, in case you care. I'm the fattest freshman. How's that for an introduction? »»

[By Karen Frost]

» September 10

Assignment: Define your high school goals. My high school goal is to wear underwear that don't say "Just My Size" on them. That about does it. »»

» September 11

So why don't I do something besides whine about my weight? FYI I have tried! You name it, I've starved and failed on it. I have the world's most diet-resistant fat. There's something pathologically wrong with me, although two doctors have said otherwise. »»

Mandatory Diary of a Fat Chick



September 12

Saw an article in *People* about obesity. Some woman who made me look petite was on this "rah-rah-we're-fat" thing that was really disgusting. I'll bet she paid that man to pose as her boyfriend. What man is going to touch a woman who looks like that? »»

September 13

Mom says I should exercise, firm up, and forget the scale. Took my measurements and survived the shock. My best friend, Morleigh (size 6), says I should shut up about fat and get a life. She was born with a life. I was born with a Krispy Kreme obsession. »»

September 16

Got a job! I'm a part-time attendant at ClimberKids. I keep toddlers from getting stuck in the climbing structure and make sure no food comes into the play area. Unfortunately, I'm too big to get into the tunnels. If a kid gets stuck, a skinny attendant will have to help. Humiliating. The other big news is Dad bought a treadmill. Supposed to be for the family, but since he and I are the only chubs, we've made a deal. We'll walk 45 minutes a day at whatever speed we can tolerate.

Whoever doesn't make 45 minutes has to pay the other \$5.

U'mmm... I've just remembered another goal. I'd like to buy clothes somewhere besides the plus department. I don't want to

spend big money on big clothes, so I'm both fat and tacky. I want *Abercrombie and Fitch!* »»

September 17

Totally looking forward to treadmill today. I may be overweight, but I'll have the greatest plus-size calves around. »»

September 18

Dreamed I was in a convertible with a cow in the passenger seat. We had huge Taco Bell bags in our laps. Doesn't take a degree in dream psychology to figure that one out! I am the caloric equivalent of a wino. »»

September 19

Went to the mall after school and saw a busload of handicapped people. I kind of feel guilty about all the fat-whining I've been doing. I was looking at one girl in a wheelchair, and it occurred to me she'd probably like to be overweight and walking around. Fat legs aren't all bad... they work, anyway! »»

September 20

This treadmill thing is tight! The more I walk, the less I feel like eating. There's a gizmo that tells how far you've walked and how many calories you've burned. Today: three miles, 253 calories. »»

September 23

Great weekend. Rollerbladed with Morleigh and didn't have a heart attack. I've lost six pounds and lots of inches. Well, several inches. You may say that is a mere raindrop in a lake, but I refuse to think that way. I'm working my way backward from obese to full-figured, as the saleswomen in the big-chicks stores say. »»

September 29

Haven't written in days. I've been too busy. I'm losing inches! (Mom knew what she was talking about, for once). Here's one totally cool thing: I'm losing bulk without pills, vomiting, or starving. I am feeling powerful. I am feeling in control. I am sounding like Mom's hero, Oprah! »»



October 1

I know I'm getting a big fat F on this project, but I feel too good to care. *I am under 200 pounds!* I no longer need help in the tunnel at work. Having a boyfriend doesn't feel like a science-fiction scenario anymore! I may go for Mr. Big Jock if this keeps up. Think big, Miranda. Or, rather, think positively! »»

November 1

Assignment: Print and turn in diary. Can I get an extension for all the days I didn't write? I've actually learned something in the middle of this (formerly called dumb) project: I am still Miranda Cameron, just a few pounds lighter. I don't want to be "Mindy" after all. Just because I'm healthier doesn't mean I automatically defaulted to a different person. *I am me!* So, thanks for the assignment, and try not to be too hard on me when it comes to grading, OK? »»

When you think of "ecstasy," you might imagine wide-eyed kids tracing patterns in the air with glowsticks, dancing at all-night parties, friends confessing love for each other, hugging and kissing. But do you imagine the other side of "E"? When you're high, it's easy to forget these images: the flashing lights of an ambulance, friends huddled in crowded emergency rooms, or simply the masses of entire lives ravaged by the horrors of drug addiction.

After a failed suicide attempt at the age of 12, Rina* turned to ecstasy to help her feel excited about life again. For two years she was "rolling" almost every day. But the void reopened on Rina's fourteenth birthday: "I saw my best friend, the boy who introduced me to the life of rave and of lights and music, almost die."

Her best friend's body temperature reached 104.5°F that night—E interferes with the body's ability to regulate temperature, which can lead to kidney or liver failure.

"Hyperthermia almost killed my best friend. At age 14 I drove him... back to his house and put him in an ice bath, praying that his fever would drop. And thankfully it did."

"After that night," Rina remem-

Ecstasy, officially known as MDMA, creates feelings of euphoria, optimism, and empathy, but many users feel depressed or hung over for up to a week after using MDMA, which makes it very addictive. Regular users find they become bored without it, and they build up tolerance over time. The intense "crash" felt right after doing MDMA is what launches many first-time users into addicts by the end of a weekend.

So what makes ecstasy so dangerous?

You're Never Sure That It's Pure.

As the demand for MDMA has increased, dealers have responded by pawning off just about anything as X—with deadly or harmful results. In fact, E is more likely to be impure than any other street drug. "I ate a pill once that was cut with strychnine, rat poison," says Alexa,* a former drug addict. "My lips turned blue, and I passed out at the foot of a toilet."

Not Thinkin', Not Drinkin'.

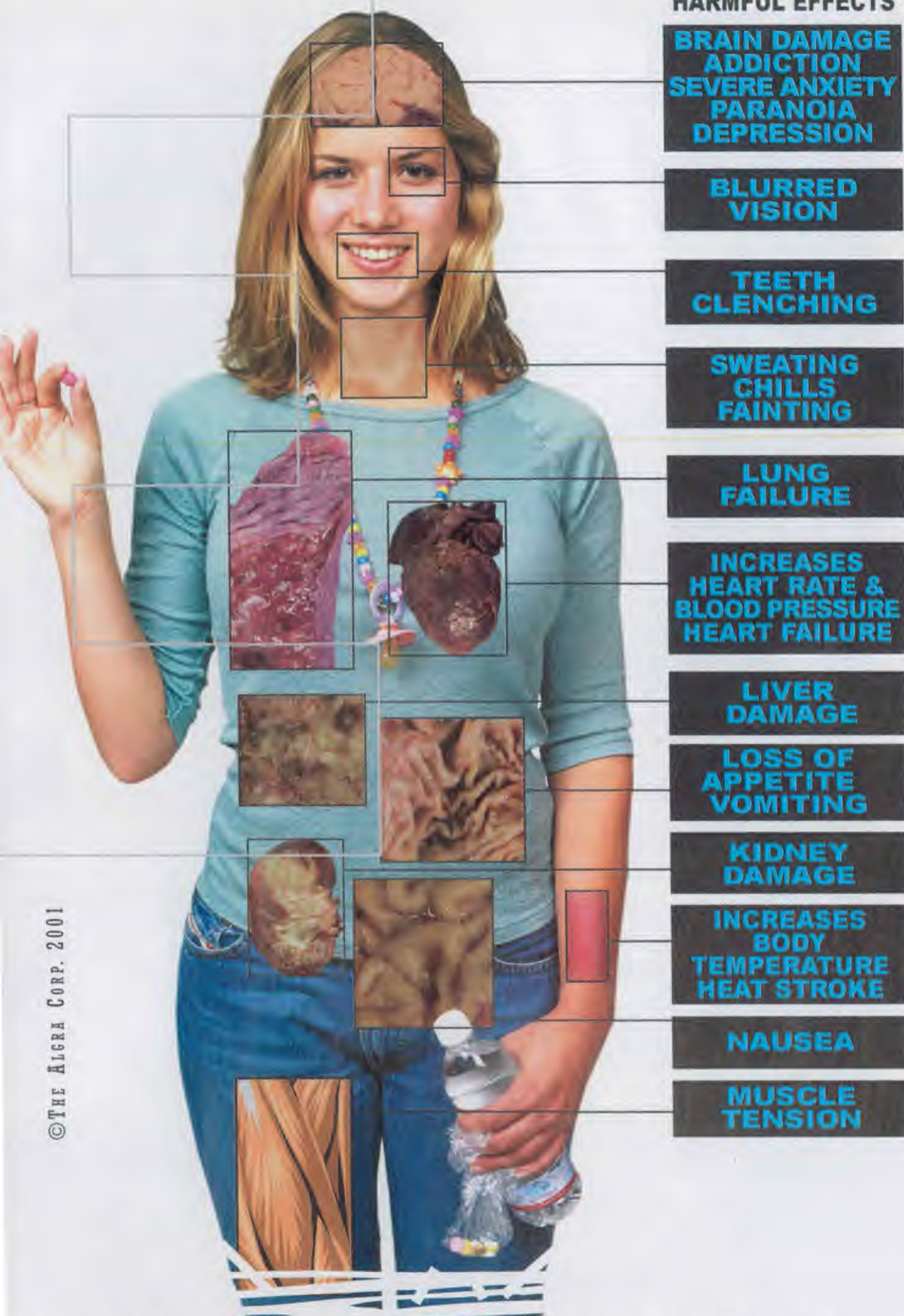
Not only do users put themselves at risk of taking pills cut with

By Marie Lyn Bernard

bers, "the magic was gone... at that point everything I learned in school about drugs didn't really mean anything—what I saw was a drug that almost killed the one person that meant anything to me. That was enough for us to stop."

Rina's friend was lucky, but many others have not been. In 2001 a 16-year-old Pennsylvania teenager died from an ecstasy overdose, after her drugged-up friends spent crucial hours debating if they should call 911 or just wait. In 2002 a 15-year-old Seattle teenager was killed by anoxic encephalopathy—lack of oxygen to the brain—after taking E for the first time.

NOT SO ECSTATIC AFTER ALL



HARMFUL EFFECTS

**BRAIN DAMAGE
ADDICTION
SEVERE ANXIETY
PARANOIA
DEPRESSION**

**BLURRED
VISION**

**TEETH
CLENCHING**

**SWEATING
CHILLS
FAINTING**

**LUNG
FAILURE**

**INCREASES
HEART RATE &
BLOOD PRESSURE
HEART FAILURE**

**LIVER
DAMAGE**

**LOSS OF
APPETITE
VOMITING**

**KIDNEY
DAMAGE**


**INCREASES
BODY
TEMPERATURE
HEAT STROKE**

NAUSEA

**MUSCLE
TENSION**

E feels so good they never want to stop taking it. And that's when troubles begin to mount. Alexa's descent into darkness was kicked off by E, and followed up by other drugs: "After the E was gone, I had a huge void in my life . . . nothing excited me. I was always angry and bored. So I started smoking crack and blowing lines all day, every day." After her dealer died of cancer, she would do anything she could to get high: "I'd take four E pills, drink Bacardi mixed with Jolt, take a box of cough-medicine pills, whatever I could get my hands on. I'm paying the price now; I'm 22, have kidney and liver problems, and get sick from every meal I eat."

Alexa is now on anti-depressants, but she knows much of her emotional capacity is gone forever. Furthermore, she's watched her friends continue down the road to addiction. "My friends I used to drive back and forth to the club are now either heroin junkies, crackheads, dead, in jail, or don't get out of bed all day. There's no joy in their life, 'cause they quit using E. Their serotonin's all dried up. Same with me."

Drugs such as E can seem like fun. That first burst of "feel good" tricks you into thinking there's more to come. But the only thing at the end of drug use is more drug use, until you're all dried up inside. Or dead. The drugs may be ecstatic, but you won't be. 

drugs such as heroin, cocaine, or just regular caffeine—the less potent drugs often inspire kids to take more and more, leading to dehydration. "My buddy was in a coma for two weeks from eating 13 pills in one day," Alexa remembers. "You forget about drinking water to prevent overheating." Dehydration while on MDMA is the

leading cause of MDMA-related death or injury—and it happens to kids taking "pure" E too.

Forever Becomes Never Really Fast.

The majority of MDMA users, of course, won't die from it—but their hopes, dreams, and lifestyle are still up for grabs. Users find that

**Names have been changed.*

Kenny Roy

took off in a Cessna 152. He stalled, preventing the plane from rising higher in the air. Then he took the two-seater into a spiral, banking down toward the ground.

After he'd led the plane through a whole series of maneuvers, Kenny, then 14, landed at Boundary Bay Airport in British Columbia, Canada. He stepped out onto the field, ready to hear if he'd earned his solo pilot's license.

"I was pretty confident I'd get it," says Kenny.

He already knew he'd earned 90 on his written test and had successfully demonstrated his knowledge of emergency procedures. So it was no surprise when he got the good news. Kenny returned to southern California's Compton/Woodley Airport with a Canadian solo pilot's license in his hand—and a record to his name.

As the youngest licensed African-American solo pilot in the United States, Kenny, now 15, has received certificates from the mayor of Los Angeles and California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. He's even been the grand marshal of several parades, along with Jimmy Haywood, 12, the youngest African-American to pilot a plane on a round-trip international flight. (He piloted the plane that carried Kenny to Canada and back.)

The recognition is nice, Kenny admits, but it's not the most important thing. What is important is the feeling he has when he gets behind the yoke of a plane.

"It's exciting," says the high school sophomore. "My favorite

part is taking off. You get unattached from the ground."

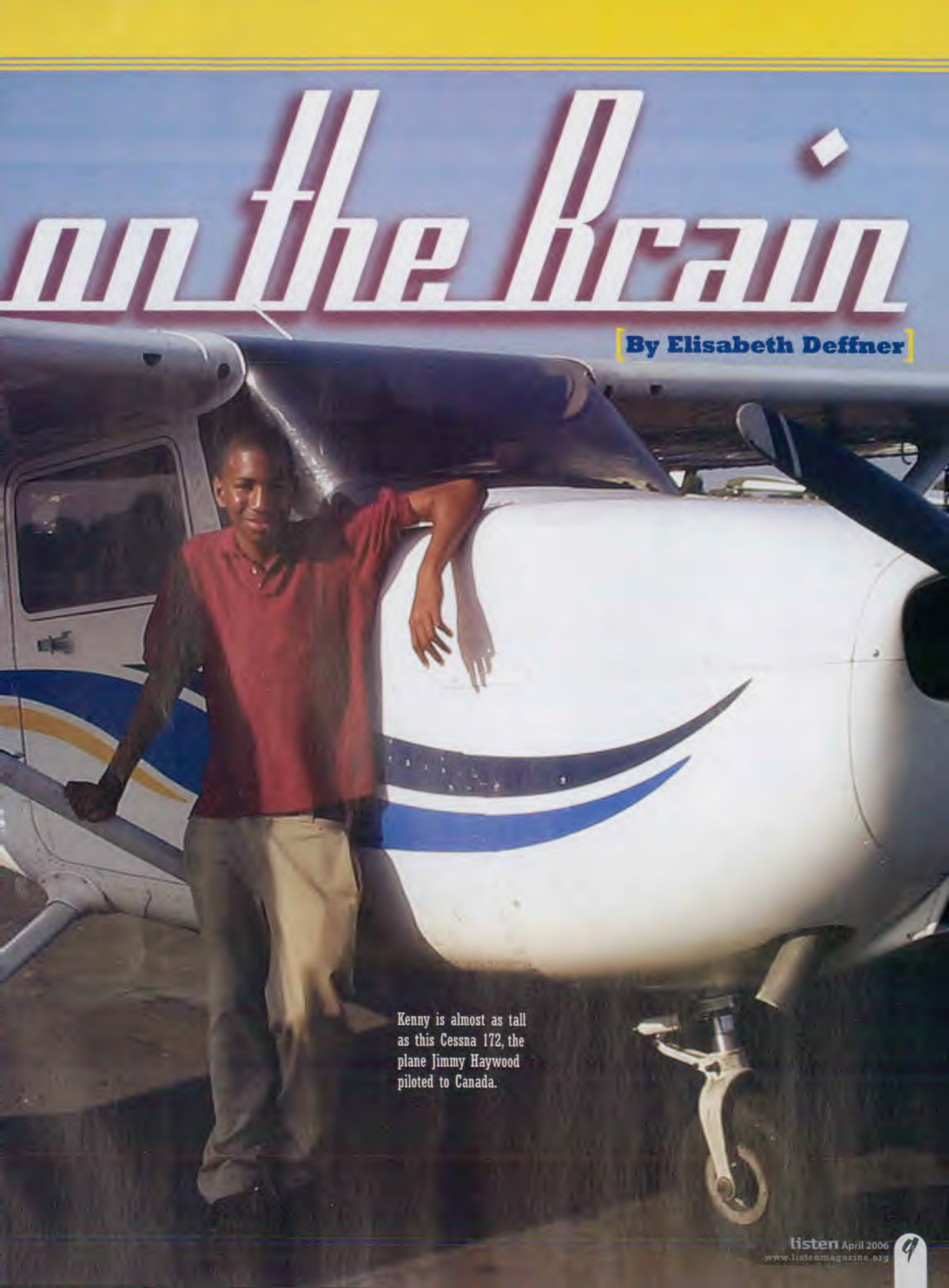
Kenny is one of 50 kids learning to fly at Tomorrow's Aeronautical Museum, based at Compton/Woodley Airport. The Compton airport isn't far from his home in Paramount, California.

Participants in the aviation program have to earn their way into an airplane. They work at the museum—cleaning planes, sweeping up trash, or doing other tasks—to earn "museum dollars." They are also "paid" to go through the museum's flight simulator program and to do community service projects, such as painting out graffiti. Kids get five museum dollars for every hour they work. After they've earned enough, they can spend their museum dollars learning how to fly. They have to work 22 hours to earn enough to go up in a two-seater for an hour.

PHOTOS BY ELISABETH DEFFNER

on the Brain

By Elisabeth Deffner

A full-page photograph of a man, Kenny, standing next to a white Cessna 172 airplane. The man is wearing a red polo shirt and khaki pants, leaning against the fuselage of the plane. The plane has blue and yellow decorative stripes. The background is a clear blue sky.

Kenny is almost as tall as this Cessna 172, the plane Jimmy Haywood piloted to Canada.

Kenny started off cleaning, but soon invested some real sweat equity into the museum. He helped build the café, and now he manages the little snack store, training employees, ordering new stock, and balancing the cash register.

Every weekday afternoon he spends an hour on a bus and an electric train to get to the museum from Wilson High School in Long Beach. Sometimes he does homework at the museum, and sometimes he saves it for home so he can work at the café or practice on the flight simulator program. Even manning the café is exciting, he says, because he knows it will lead to time in the cockpit.

"Once I did it, I kept working more and more," he explains. "It's

course of Kenny's life when she bought him a flight simulator computer game when he was in fifth grade. Years later, when he found Tomorrow's Aeronautical Museum, it was "like a connection" to that game he'd loved.

And it was a relief to Mrs. Esters, who was glad he'd found a safe place to go after school. Compton is notorious for being the California city with the highest crime rate—and the fourth-highest crime rate in the country. But getting in trouble is the last thing on Kenny's mind, his mom says with a laugh. Now he has planes on the brain.

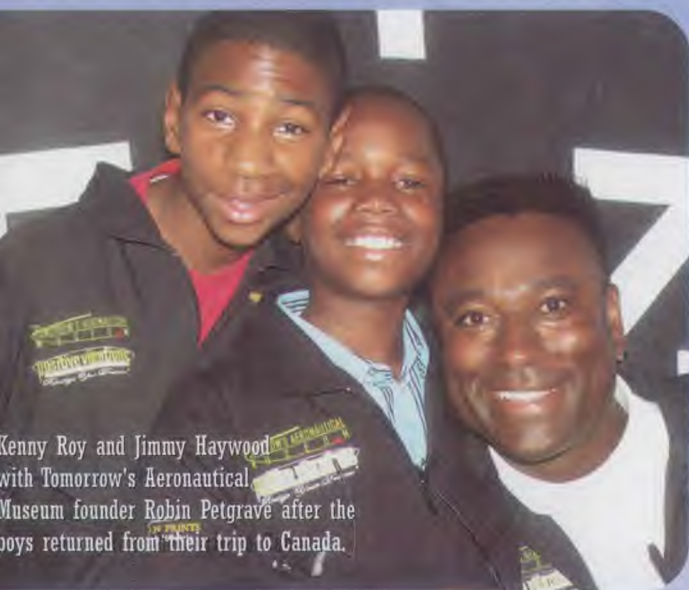
Still, she never expected him actually to fly a plane. Or to fly to Canada. Or to earn a solo pilot's license before he was even 15. "He

wants to go all the way with it," she says. "He's been places I haven't been! But I tell him, 'OK, see the world, baby. Enjoy life.'"

Like many teens, Kenny is eagerly awaiting his sixteenth birthday, but not so he can get his driver's license. When he's 16, he can get a U.S. solo pilot's license. (His Canadian license is valid for solo flying in

the United States only if he's behind the yoke of a Canadian-registered plane, an opportunity that hasn't come up yet.)

"With a driver's license, you've got to wait in traffic and stuff," Kenny says. "But with a plane, you just go." ☺



Kenny Roy and Jimmy Haywood with Tomorrow's Aeronautical Museum founder Robin Petgrave after the boys returned from their trip to Canada.

exciting. I'm thinking I want to do it as a career—go into the Air Force Academy and then transfer over to the airlines. If it wasn't for this, I'd probably be just at home doing nothing."

Kenny's mom, Linetta Esters, didn't know she was changing the



Ailerons—located on the wings, they bank the airplane left or right.

Bank—turn.

Elevator—horizontal, movable piece on the airplane's tail that makes the plane go up and down.

Flaps—located on the wings, they allow a plane to fly at a steeper descent angle without increasing air speed.

IFR—instrument flight rules, or regulations for flying aircraft.

Land—to descend and come to a stop on the ground.

Nose—the front end of the plane.

Preflight—a thorough visual inspection before the plane takes off.

Short field takeoff—ascending as quickly as possible, taxiing as short a distance as possible.

Simulator—a computer program that teaches how to take off, hover, fly forward flight, and land.

Soft field takeoff—taking off from a grassy or dirt surface.

Spiral—a very deep, descending turn.

Stall—to come to a stop because the air flowing over the wing cannot produce enough lift to support the weight of the aircraft.

Tail—the back end of the plane.

Taxi—to move along the ground.

Thrust—the force that drives the airplane forward.

Yaw—the nose-left and nose-right movement of the airplane.

Yoke—the handles by which the pilot steers the plane.

By Michele Deppe, D.T.R.

The Skinny on Stomach Stapling

Do you believe in magical weight loss? Some teens do. At least, those who hope to lose several hundred pounds following a surgical procedure. It's called gastric bypass surgery, or "stomach stapling." It is a permanent procedure to decrease stomach size so that it can't hold more than a cup of food. Ever! Or some people have a band placed around their stomach, to squeeze off a tiny portion of their stomach for digestion.

And bariatric (weight management) surgery isn't cheap. It costs as much as \$25,000, and teens don't get insurance help. Sometimes there are complications. Recovery is painful. Some people don't even lose weight. Worse, some people die. Not exactly a happy ending.

The Gory Details

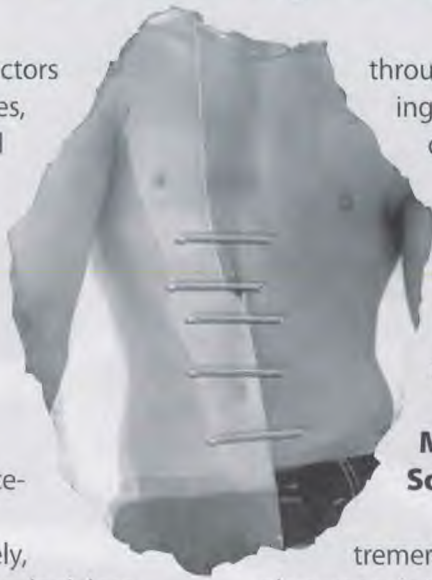
The hospital stay for weight loss surgery is usually a pain-filled three or four days. Many patients can't eat solid foods for a month. People often experience severe nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea if they attempt to overeat. Certain foods, such as bread and sweets, are permanently off the menu. Supplements, B₁₂ injections, regular doctor's visits, and a strict diet become a way of life.

Risky Business

There are at least 120,000 weight loss surgeries done in the United States each year, and there are no firm statistics on how many

are teens. Risk factors include gallstones, infections, blood clots, intestinal leakage, and bowel obstruction. One in several hundred patients dies within a month after a weight loss procedure.

Unfortunately, about 25 percent don't lose any weight after the surgery. Thirty percent regain the weight within five years. Potential patients go




through extensive testing by surgeons, psychiatrists, and dietitians. Bariatric patients have tried everything else; surgery is the last possible solution. It's desperate.

More Appealing Solutions

Although for some tremendously heavy people surgery is the solution, let's face it: it just isn't the answer for most of us. And surgery candidates know that the outcome may be disappointing or harmful.

What's the answer? Without adopting a healthy approach toward food and fitness, even a person who has had gastric bypass will pack on the pounds again.

The biggest change actually happens in your mind. Consider getting weight loss counseling from a dietitian. (Think that sounds expensive? Do you remember how much surgery costs?) Join a gym or the Y, where people will ask about you if you don't show up to work out. Accountability is priceless.

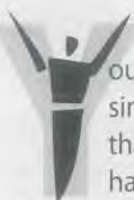
Don't put your hope in hocus-pocus. Begin a simple program: Eat less; move more. You'll enjoy amazing results! 

What's Your BMI?

Body mass index is a guideline for how much you should weigh. Multiply how much you weigh by 703. Divide that answer by how many inches tall you are. Divide that answer by your height in inches again. If your BMI is 25-30, you're overweight—or you are a muscle-bound bodybuilder. I am sure you know which category you're in. If your BMI is 30 or more, you're morbidly obese, and at serious risk for many health problems. Most weight loss surgery patients have a BMI above 40.



Michele Deppe, D.T.R.
(Dietetic Technician,
Registered)



ou may have been friends since kindergarten, but that doesn't mean you have to be friends forever. If someone is making bad choices and constantly trying to drag you down with them, then it may be time to terminate the friendship. Thing is, ending it badly can cause you grief. "It's important to end a toxic friendship gracefully so you minimize the toxicity," says Dr. Jan Yager, Ph.D., author of *When Friendship Hurts*. Here's how to do it the right way.

1. **Lose the guilt.**

No matter how terrible your friend's behavior is, it's natural to feel guilty for wanting to end it. "Many people want to hang on to a friendship after it's no longer offering the positive energy and connections that it used to," says Yager. "The question is why you feel the need to hang on rather than face the way the friendship has dwindled." Focus on why you want to end the relationship—if your buddy can't respect your feelings or boundaries, they aren't really a friend.

2. **Do you really want to dump them?**

Is that person going through something that you don't want to be a part of right now or is their behavior so awful that you never want to see them again? If they are going through a tough time, then it may not be a good time to judge their worthiness as a pal. Think it through carefully, because once you dump a friend, there is little chance of reconciliation.

3. **Suggest a cooling-off period.**

Yager suggests that some friendships can be saved by stepping back from a bad situation. This stops you from saying or doing something irretrievable. Giving yourself a chance to chill out can put things in perspective. Staying away from that friend for a few days or months could make things OK again later on.

4. **Ease out of it.**

The least stressful way to end a friendship is to try to gently phase it out of your life. Being busy when they suggest hanging out may mean that they take the hint. This way, everyone saves face—the two

of you just drifted apart. "Big confrontations may be dramatic, but after the excitement has diminished, those involved may feel residual anger that takes a lot longer to fade away than if the ending were handled in a more subtle, graceful way," says Yager.

5. **Terminate it immediately.**

"Sometimes, however, it's not possible to end a toxic friendship slowly. The situation requires a dramatic and sudden action," says Yager. For example, if a friend steals from you, a confrontation is pretty much unavoidable. You need to say your piece, but in a way that will not fuel a vendetta. Make it clear that what they have

Ten Steps to Breaking Friends



done is unacceptable and that you can no longer be friends with them, but try to stay cool (tough to do but so worth it) without resorting to slurs and insults.

6. Stay calm when confronted.

Being dumped by a friend is the ultimate blow, so you need to handle this awkward interaction as gracefully as possible. Explain that it is not them you are rejecting but the way the two of you interact. Be honest and nice so that both of you get out of the confrontation with your dignity intact. "This reduces the potential of despair related to the end of an intimate relationship," says Yager.

7. Stay nice.

Once the drama is over, it can be tempting to unload on your other friends, but this should be avoided. If people ask why you are no longer friends with so-and-so, resist the urge to spill and give the same reasons you gave so-and-so. It does you no credit to dis an ex-pal. We all know there are two sides to every story, and who's to say you'll get the sympathy if they tell too?

8. Understand their feelings.

If your friend gets upset and vents about you, let it go. Don't respond to insults or gossip about the end of the friendship.

9. Seek support if they hold a grudge.

If your ex-friend starts making life difficult in ways that verge on criminal behavior, don't be afraid to seek support from your parents or even the police. Nobody has a right to intimidate you because you don't want to hang out with them anymore.

10. Make better choices next time.

"Find more positive friends or spend more time with those friends who are there for you," suggests Yager, then there's less possibility of getting into this awkward situation again. Just think of all the extra time you'll have to hang out with people who make you happy—life's too short to spend it with people who don't. 🎧

Without Making Enemies



? I just moved, and I don't know what to do. I have no friends and no life. I tried doing stuff with some neighbors, but I feel like I have to be someone different just for them to like me, and I don't like it. What do I do?

I Yikes, I know it's hard to move. However, you don't have to feel like a loner or feel that you have to change yourself for others. First things first, do some research. Find out what school you will be going to and the community rules on bicycles. When I moved to a new place, it was really awkward till school started. I didn't know a soul and was feeling just as lonely as you seem to be. I used the Internet to research laws on bicycles and directions to the nearest mall. Before school started I spent those summer days riding my bicycle around so I would be more acquainted with the town. Also, when school started and people were talking about places, I knew what they were talking about.

Don't be shy or negative about your move. I made a lot of enemies by being angry and hating my new home. It's their home too, so many people didn't like me because of my negative attitude. However, once I got past my anger over my new home I began to see that these people were just like my friends back in my old home. They laughed at my jokes, and once I put down my bad front and became myself, they accepted me into the group! The best thing you can do is just be yourself.

? My friend is a freeloader, and I don't know what to say to him when my other friends and I hang out. He uses our money. He always forgets to bring money, and when he does have it, he doesn't use it. This one time my friends and I were getting tickets for a ride, and he just grabbed my money and handed it to the ticket person. . . . What can I tell him next time he tries something like that?

I He took *your* money to get *his* ticket! Who does this guy think he is? >:[OK, so you've got a friend who doesn't like paying for himself. The best approach is to pull him aside and speak your mind, nicely. Tell him that taking your money to pay for things isn't going to work. He has money and needs to pay for himself. If he laughs at you or tries to make a joke about it, ask him why he does it.

He may really not have any money budgeted for fun things and may not want to miss out, so he gets others to cover him. If this is the case, then work with him to try to get some money. Maybe wash cars together or mow some yards. If he still scoffs at you and tries to turn back on you, simply tell him that he's not welcome to join you and your friends anymore if he's not paying. You don't need a friend who isn't really being your friend.

? I like anime. My friend says I'm stupid and that I'm childish for liking Japanese animation and their storylines. How do I make her understand?

I Sit her down and make her watch a really good one. Point out that Disney and DreamWorks have added anime to their movie lineups. If she groans and complains about your choice of entertainment, then simply say, "To each his [or her] own," right? This may be one thing you don't agree on and can agree to disagree. It's your choice, and you like what you like. Don't change because someone thinks you're silly for liking it.

By Natalie Jacobs



Hey!

Do You Have an Online *Addiction*?

Take the
quiz
and find
out!

You hear it all the time. "This game is so cool; it's way addictive." The term *addictive* has become like a four-star rating. It's something we laugh about, even brag about. But there's nothing cool about habits that control you. If you secretly worry that your RPG, Web surfing, chatrooms, or IMing might be past the point of healthy, check out these questions. The chart below will let you know how you score.

1. Do you no longer enjoy going out with your friends, or being with your family? **Y** **N**
2. Have you stopped other hobbies that don't involve a mouse? **Y** **N**
3. Do you experience extreme agitation when your server's down? **Y** **N**
4. Do you have trouble logging off, even when you know you need to be doing something else? **Y** **N**
5. Do your online activities appear in your dreams? **Y** **N**
6. Ever find yourself thinking in the middle of the day about what you'll be doing online tonight? **Y** **N**
7. Does the cyber world seem more real than the real world? **Y** **N**
8. Would you be embarrassed to admit how much time you spend online? **Y** **N**
9. Do you turn down chances to go to a movie or attend a school event because you'd rather be connected? **Y** **N**
10. Are your grades falling? **Y** **N**
11. When you close your eyes, do cyber images stay in your mind? **Y** **N**
12. Are you having trouble getting to sleep at night? **Y** **N**

Now check your score. How many "Yes" answers did you have?

- 1—Keep clicking, you're OK.
- 2—Back off just a little; you could be close to developing problems.
- 3—Work out a plan to reduce your screen time.
- 4—It's getting serious, man; you probably need to come clean with a parent or friend, then ask them to help you out.
- 5 or more—Talk to your school counselor or parent. Get help now!

So what can you do if you're suffering from an online addiction? First of all, don't try to handle it alone. Overcoming any addiction is difficult. You're going to need the help of friends and family. Ask someone you trust to keep you in check. Be honest with them and tell them how much time you're spending online each day. Agree together what would be an appropriate amount to cut back, and then hold each other to that agreement.

Remember the goals you have that aren't contained in circuits or flashing across Web pages. Jot

down what you'd like to be doing a year from now. I'm willing to bet it's not checking your blog hourly. There's nothing wrong with enjoying a few hours on the information highway. But you'll enjoy it more if it's something you *want* to do and not something you *need* to do.

It's a big wide world out there, and what you see on your screen is just a little part of it. The computer is a tool, and it's also entertainment. It's not life, though. It's just a box. So kick the habit now, and enjoy yourself in the real world.

By Vannetta Chapman

CHATROOM

BY DALLAS WOODBURN
ART BY ANNIE HILL

discodiva87: spring break! whoo-hoo!!
girlsrcool114: i'm so xcited! we need 2 go shopping!
sk8erboy101: yeah! count me in!
bbeller2005: dude, u want 2 go shopping with the girlyz?
sk8erboy101: there's some cds i want 2 get.
girlsrcool114: great! meet u all @ the mall tomorrow @ 3! :)

k, i got my cd's. r we ready 2 go?

LOL, very funny. We still need to hit Macy*s, and J.C. Penney, and Urban Outfitters, and Banana Republic, and...

dude, told you we're gonna b here forever!

this shirt is adorable too! i NEED 2 get it!

cute dress, chloe.

thanks! It*s kinda expensive, but I'm gonna get it anyway. some things r 2 good 2 pass up :)

besides, i just got my first credit card...



and i
LOVE
these cool
jeans!



chloe, r u
sure u can
afford all
this?



- girlsrcool114: julia, don't b such a worrywart! of course i can
- discodiva87: it's just that sometimes these purchases really add up, b4 u even realize it.
- girlsrcool114: relax! i don't even need 2 pay till the end of the month.
- discodiva87: chloe, just bcuz u have a new credit card doesn't mean u should blow all ur savings on a shopping spree.
- girlsrcool114: *sigh* i guess yur right... i don't really need these jeans right now
- sk8erboy101: great!! now can we FINALLY go home???

cute new
outfit,
chloe!



thanx julia, but i'm paying
for it double: my mom grounded
me when she realized how much i
spent. i guess it's easy 2 forget how
much ur spending when ur swiping
plastic instead of forking over
actual cash. u can bet i'll b more
careful in the future!





rica's* dad died when she was young, making it even more important to her that she fit in with her friends. "I wanted to fit in with my sister and her friends who used. I started sniffing heroin in the beginning to calm myself down. It allowed me to sleep. It gave me a mellow feeling—there is no feeling like it.

"I was scared of heroin at the beginning. There were certain things I said I would never try, never do. Heroin is one of the things I said I wouldn't ever do. But when it came to getting high, my morals and beliefs were out the window. I don't think the thought of addiction ever crossed my mind. I didn't think



HEROIN!

The Next Generation

that I would go the lengths I did to get high. I never thought I would do those things. I never thought it would go that far."

For Erica, heroin was not hard to find. "All I had to do was go into the city and buy it. In the areas I would go to cop it, it was on every street corner, and it was cheap. My heroin use started spiraling out of control. I stopped going to school. I was leaving home for days at a time."

The scary thing is that the heroin market is becoming larger than ever. It is also being geared toward America's younger population. In the seventies, the average heroin user was in their late 20s and early 30s. Today, the average addict is a White middle-class teenager. The increased availability of high-purity heroin, which can effectively be snorted, has given rise to a new, younger user population.

While avoiding the fear of needle use, younger users are using larger quantities of the drug and, according to drug treatment specialists, progressing more quickly toward addiction. The mortality rate of heroin addicts is 30 times greater than that of the rest of the population.

Why is heroin so readily available? Why is it so cheap?

Within the past few years the heroin market has almost doubled and the price has dropped significantly. While the South American market is being scrutinized by U.S. law-enforcement officials, the Asian market grows each day. A good majority of heroin is now being produced and shipped out of

Afghanistan (since 2003), according to Professor Paul Barfield, the chairman of anthropology at Boston University. Until the infrastructure and law-enforcement community in Afghanistan reach the levels they were before the war, the opium farmers will produce unchecked amounts of heroin.

Why is heroin so dangerous?

With regular use, your body becomes accustomed to the effects of the drug. This means that the user has to take more to achieve the same effect of the last dose. As higher doses are used over time, physical dependence and addiction develop.

Heroin is one of the most addictive drugs you can find on the black market. Once your body gets a taste of it, you crave it like your body craves water in the desert. If someone is addicted and goes a certain amount of time (usually no more than a few hours) without a fix, extremely painful withdrawals occur.

Withdrawal symptoms begin within a few hours of last use and can include restlessness, extreme muscle and bone pain, insomnia, diarrhea, vomiting, cold flashes with goose bumps, and involuntary leg movements. These symptoms peak between 24 and 48 hours after the last dose and subside after about a week, but may persist for up to a month. Sometimes just the pain from the withdrawal symptoms alone leads to suicide.

American teenagers aren't the only ones at war with this drug. European teenagers are constantly fighting the pressures of new innovative drugs such as inhalable


heroin. According to Germany's former minister of health, Horst Seehofer, the use of drugs such as snortable heroin are infiltrating clubs and everyday-life events.

There is no escaping the pressures to use drugs, but there are ways to guard yourself from taking your life down a path of destruction. Take these measures to steer clear of heroin and other drugs:

1. Find a sport or hobby to release stress.
2. Don't hang out with people you don't trust.
3. Hang out in places that you can control (like the mall or a trusted friend's house).
4. Don't experiment. If you have to ask if it's bad, it probably is.
5. If you are considering taking heroin or any other drug get help from a trusted adult who can find you the best services in your area immediately.

And Erica? She was lucky. Fortunately, her mom finally realized she had a problem and made her get help. Eventually the court mandated her into treatment. "It was so hard to realize my addiction and even harder to kick the habit. Now I'm drug-free and ready to live my life. In September I am going to college, and I want to major in psychology. I plan to have a full-time job in the summer, and eventually I plan to be out of the program and out of the court system." 🍀

**Name has been changed.*



Kaitlyn Reilly remembers her grandfather's stories about fighting in the Korean War—and how he got hooked on tobacco when he was overseas, thanks to the cigarettes that were lavished on American soldiers.

"When he came back, he was addicted," says Kaitlyn, 17.

Kaitlyn's grandfather managed to kick the tobacco habit before she was even born, but the Dover, New Hampshire, high school senior is still passionate about tobacco prevention.

That's why she joined a local drug and tobacco prevention group, Dover Youth 2 Youth.

And that's why she participated in last year's Kick Butts Day.

In fact, Kaitlyn says, "We take Kick Butts Day and extend it. We have a huge bash on Kick Butts Day, but we do a variety of things during the week."

April 5 is the eleventh annual Kick Butts Day, a tobacco awareness event established by the Campaign for

Tobacco-Free Kids. Even though lots of kids know how hazardous tobacco is—

contributing to diseases including heart disease, cancer, and emphysema—more than 613,000 kids became regular smokers in 2005. Of those, 196,000 will die prematurely because of their addiction.

Tobacco use

Kicking Butts From Coast to Coast



By Elisabeth Deffner

kills more than 400,000 Americans each year. That's more than the number of people killed by alcohol, cocaine, crack, heroin, homicide, suicide, car accidents, and AIDS combined. Those are scary statistics, but Kick Butts Day isn't about freaking people out. It's an event that allows kids to share the truth about tobacco and have fun at the same time.

Thousands of events are held across the country on Kick Butts

Day, each one uniquely designed to reach the community where it will be held. Last year, for instance, students and faculty at Mark Koppel High School in Alhambra, California, dressed in orange to increase awareness of throat and lung cancer. Students in Abilene, Kansas, gathered tobacco ads and

held a march to the post office, where they mailed the ads back to the magazines that published them. Dover Youth 2 Youth always organizes a Gear Exchange, so people with backpacks, jackets, or other stuff with tobacco logos can exchange those items for gear that sends a positive message.

An event can be as simple as gathering a group of friends to hold antitobacco signs outside a neighborhood market, or as elaborate as organizing an antitobacco carnival. (See Sidebar for ideas for your own Kick Butts Day event.)

"It's a day of activism and advocacy around the country," says Holly Aprea, manager for youth advocacy at the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. "It is a huge opportunity for youth to take the lead."

"The best people to communicate with kids about not smoking, and the manipulation of big tobacco, are kids," adds Elizabeth Cholis, Kick Butts Day media representative. "You listen to your peers."

Kaitlyn knows that's true. More than 19 percent of New Hampshire's high school students smoke, she says, but in Dover, there are statistically fewer smokers than in the rest of the state. "You can definitely see how our work has paid off," she says.

"Kick Butts Day is a great day

for everybody across the nation to get together and celebrate our mission and our cause of fighting big tobacco—and helping people to quit," she adds. "It's a big celebration, a big party, for everyone to come together and do something nationwide."

Kick Butts Day Activities

It's not too late to organize your own Kick Butts Day activity! Be sure to check out www.kickbuttsday.org, where you'll find lots of tips for planning fun activities that will help your community see the hazards of tobacco use. In the meantime, here are a few ideas to get you started:

- **Ugly Face Contest:** Tell the contestants about the hazards of smoking, then ask them to make a face in reaction to the ugly truth.
- **Cigarette Butt Cleanup:** Get a group together and go to a park, playground, or other part of your hometown littered by butts—and get rid of them.
- **Antitobacco Track Meet:** Include events such as the "Smoker's Jump": Participants jump up and down on one foot while breathing through a straw so they can feel how difficult it is for smokers to breathe.
- **Numbers Campaign:** Go to www.tobaccofreekids.org and find out how many people in your state die each year from using tobacco. Then ask your principal and teachers for permission to put that statistic on every classroom's board. You may also want to create a T-shirt with that number on it to wear on Kick Butts Day, or hand out flyers explaining more about the dangers of tobacco.
- **Logo Lampoon:** Organize a contest in which kids can make fun of actual tobacco industry advertisements.



Day, each one uniquely designed to reach the community where it will be held. Last year, for instance, students and faculty at Mark Koppel High School in Alhambra, California, dressed in orange to increase awareness of throat and lung cancer. Students in Abilene, Kansas, gathered tobacco ads and

What's up with that???? up

whatsup@listenmagazine.org

A lot of my friends are drinking caffeinated sports drinks and energy drinks, such as Red Bull, Monster, and Venom. I've heard that they could be bad for some people. Is that true? Am I safe to drink them with my friends for energy?—Sarah

Good question, Sarah. While energy drinks claim to be loaded with healthful ingredients, many have as much caffeine as a cup of coffee—double the amount in Mountain Dew and almost triple the amount in Coke. They make you feel energetic because they kick up your heart rate and blood pressure. Ironically, sports experts recommend that you avoid energy drinks while exercising because you can become severely dehydrated through sweating and increased fluid loss caused by the caffeine. The dan-

ger is that it doesn't take your body very long to get used to the high caffeine level. Over time your body becomes addicted, and it is hard to function without it. Another problem that concerns doctors is that the intense stimulating effect of caffeine can actually damage teens' attention span, since their brains are still growing and developing. That lack of focus could really be a problem. So while energy drinks appear harmless, think twice before chugging one down.

Our school just started testing kids on our sports teams for drugs. I've used marijuana a few times in the past month. Will it show up in a drug test?—Charles

It might. It really depends on when you last used, how often you use, and how much marijuana is stored in your body. While the majority of the marijuana will disappear within five hours of your last use, small amounts are stored in your body's fat cells, and these levels can be detected for long periods of time. Even if you smoke only occasionally, you can test positive for marijuana from between 7 and 30 days after your last use. Someone

who smokes marijuana regularly can test positive for as long as 15 weeks after their last use.

In most schools, if a student tests positive, he or she is usually suspended from the athletic team and required to participate in a drug treatment program. The wisest action is to stop using marijuana right away. It certainly doesn't help your sports performance, and the long-term consequences of its use can be serious.

My dad told me that when he was little and had a sore throat, his grandma would give him a small glass of whiskey mixed with honey. I know alcohol isn't good for you, but if it takes away sore throats faster than medicine, does that make a small glass OK?—Johan

This was a fairly common folk remedy back in the late 1800s and early 1900s. In fact, lots of drugs that are now illegal were once sold through the mail and by traveling salespeople. For example, did you know that when Coca-Cola first came out, it contained cocaine? You could even order prescriptions containing cocaine and heroin through the Sears catalog. Our understandings of health and addiction have come a long way since then. Probably the effect your dad felt was caused by

a combination of intoxication and the coating effect of the honey on his throat. The real danger with this type of remedy is that it gives kids (and adults) the impression that small amounts of hard liquor are OK. That way of thinking can start people down a slippery slope of justifying its use on a more regular basis. We'd recommend sticking with modern medications to help you deal with your sore throat.

The Dark Side

OF THE INTERNET

THE AVERAGE TEEN

spends about 17 hours a week online, sending e-mail, chatting with friends, or working on homework. While the Internet makes it easy to communicate, there is a dark side. "People say things online that they would never say in person," says Vicki Courtney, founder of virtuousreality.com, an online magazine for middle and high school girls, college women, and women. "You really need to think before you press enter."

Internet users sometimes find a sense of anonymity when they go online. This anonymity can get people into trouble: according to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, one in five children between the ages of 10 and 17 received a sexual solicitation in the past year. One in 30 solicitations was "aggressive," meaning the solicitor asked to contact the child or send money or gifts.

With three teens of her own, Vicki decided to do a little informal research. "My daughter had five friends over, and I asked them

whether any of them were ever solicited online . . . three of them said yes."

The point hit home when Vicki showed her daughter how easy it is to find someone online. Vicki hit a popular blog site and searched for the name of her daughter's school. "In a couple minutes we found pictures of kids. Some of them were her friends . . . all this was within five to seven minutes. It was scary." That was with just the name of a school; with a little more information, it's possible to find phone numbers or even home addresses.

"You really can't tell who's on the other end," says Vicki. "Not immediately, at least. But there are things to watch out for."

Predators tend to be persistent when making contact. "They'll express an

interest in the details about your life," Vicki says. "A predator may come across as a comforter of sorts. They're especially interested in teenagers who are having a tough time or feeling depressed."

But the most dire sign is sexual banter. "The predator may use sexual banter or send pornographic material. They usually do this fairly early, in order to see what kind of reaction they'll get."

So what can you do to protect yourself? For teens, it begins with being very careful about how you share personal information. "The Internet is not private," Vicki advises.

Above all, Vicki stresses communication between parents and teens. Far too few incidents are reported; according to Vicki, out of 2,000 teens who reported having received a sexual solicitation, fewer than 500 reported the incident to their parents. "Whether it's online or not," Vicki says, "teens should tell their parents when something makes them uncomfortable."

[By Tim Morgan]



ILLUSTRATION BY NICOLETTE MOORE

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www.listenmagazine.org

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[By Marsha Sfeir]

An Extreme Lacrosse SPORT



When student Ashley Sfeir heard the announcement for a lacrosse team at Wade Hampton High School in Greenville, South Carolina, she was hooked. "It was something different and sounded like fun."

Oh sure, running up and down a field with sticks held high while a small ball zings through the air may look more barbaric than fun. But anyone can play. All you need to become a good player is the right equipment and a few skills.

No question about it, stamina and agility are important in this game. As you zigzag around the field, you need to keep an eye out for other players who want to stop you dead in your tracks or at least keep your team from scoring. But that's part of the fun. Looking for just the right moment to pass or slap the ball into the net is a great feeling when you score that point or are at least part of the team that did. As an extreme sport, lacrosse really gets the adrenaline racing and your heart beating.

Another valuable skill is cradling, or carrying the ball in the pocket of the stick. Some people cradle the stick around their hip area or shoulder, but there's no specific place to cradle all the time. Most players try to work the weak hand as much as the strong hand. Being able to use both hands will make you stand out to the coaches.

Occasionally an attack player will slip by you. Don't just stand there and watch them fly across

the field. No way! Recover, turn around, and sprint down the field after them. Then approach from the inside and try to steer them to the outside.

The goalie will look intimidating while standing there protected with a helmet, mouth guard, padding, and a stick that has a net at least twice the normal size. But they can't guard the entire space all the time. Most offensive players look for that one vulnerable spot and in a split second aim for the goal.

Of course, playing on a boys' team or a girls' team will decide the rules. Boys use sticks with deeper pockets and are able to make direct contact with other players. A whack to the head or shoulders isn't uncommon. Players know that absorbing some punishment comes with the game. That's why they need a helmet; gloves; chest pads covering their shoul-

ders, upper arms, and back; a mouth guard; and an athletic cup.

The girls aren't supposed to make contact, but wear goggles and mouth guards just in case. "You get your bumps and bruises," agrees Sfeir. "Just hang in there and keep going." Part team sport, part extreme sport, girls' lacrosse allows for more fluid play and use of mental skills.

Most players use the team



equipment, but some like to buy their own. As long as it meets lacrosse specifications, any brand can be used. Usually you can get a decent stick and goggles for under \$100. "It's all about preference," suggests one player. "You need to see how the stick feels for you and whether you like it or not."

Lacrosse is definitely one of the most exciting spring sports around. Many coaches like to start

conditioning at least three months in advance of the season. Finding a practice spot to share with other spring sports can be a challenge, but lacrosse players are a determined group and use parks or any open field to practice sprinting, throwing, and catching. A good team that works well together takes time to practice and coordinate their moves. Some even claim to practice during blizzards and

hurricanes. And they're quick to say, "Remember to use orange balls during extreme weather conditions. The white ones blend in."

There are also summer camps. This is a good way to learn new skills from expert players and coaches. No matter what your abilities are, they can help you keep improving. Don't run out and sign up for the first camp you see. Take a little time to check the place out



and make sure it's what you want. Some programs offer one-on-one instruction, while others work with an entire group. This is a good opportunity to work hard and improve, but also to have a little fun with your teammates.

With lacrosse popularity growing nationwide many high schools are adding this choice to their list. Just visit any search engine and type in the words "popularity of high school lacrosse." The results are endless, and appear from areas not previously known for lacrosse growth. In Utah there are 35 high school teams, made up of nearly 2,100 high school players, both boys and girls. And there are nearly 1,000 youth-league players. Arizona

started with only four teams and now has 21. South Carolina started with only one boys' team and one girls' team at Hilton Head

High School, but now has 16 boys' teams and 15 girls' teams. "It's like soccer was 20 years ago," commented a parent. Lacrosse may not be as popular as football or basketball, but fans definitely get their money's worth when attending a game.

Of course, one advantage of being new is not all parents understand the rules. Then they can't yell at players from the sidelines. Less interference from the crowd allows players to do their thing.

High school teams represent the greatest growth in the sport. How far has it come? Title games are now covered by newspapers and television, unheard of several years ago.

Lacrosse. Not a couch potato sport and definitely here to stay. 🏑



Is This Normal?

[By Gabriel Constans]

Sometimes people ask, "Is this normal?" Others wonder, "Am I going crazy?" or "Will I ever be OK?"

What they are referring to is the intense, overwhelming, and often bewildering experience of grief. The physical and mental reactions of shock, numbness, shortness of breath, racing heart, stomach upset, difficulty sleeping or eating, lethargy, exhaustion, forgetfulness, inability to focus, clumsiness, and confusion can all be normal reactions to loss. The emotional swings from intense anticipation of what will happen next to extreme pain, nonstop tears, and sadness are the body's natural response to the death of, or separation from, a loved one.

Alice's sister Jenny died two months before she came to see me. Her sister had died of ovarian cancer, and it had been a long, drawn-out experience. Alice provided personal, emotional, and physical care and support to her sister, her brother-in-law, and nieces. She said, "I think I did all I could to help, but it never felt like enough. It feels like my heart is breaking every day. Everything is upside down."

For many, whether you've had previous deaths in your life or not, grief can be a frightening, bewildering, and alienating experience.



Find solace with a friend, counselor, clergy, group, or family.

It feels like everything is hitting you at once, and you aren't sure what to do next. Overnight, your entire world has changed. Life seems to be out of control.


More than likely, whatever you are experiencing is to be expected, and there would be far more concern if you were not reacting at all. Having someone we love and/or have ambivalent feelings toward die (expectedly or unexpectedly) can bring even the strongest person among us to our knees.

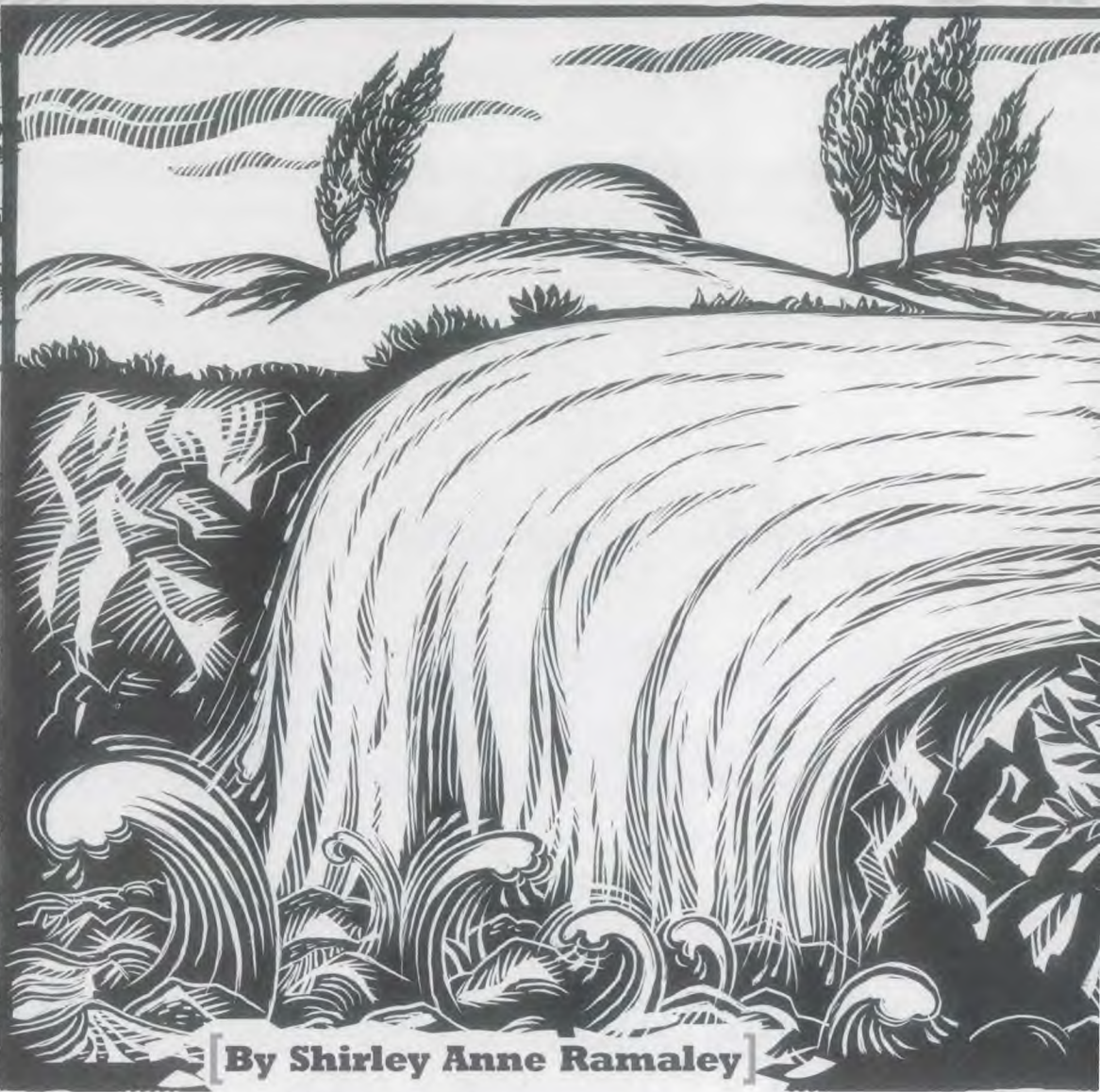
It is not necessary to grieve all the time or to shut it out. How long or how much you grieve has

no bearing on the depth of the relationship you had with the person who died. A daily dose (10-15 minutes) of recognizing what and who you have lost and how the loss affects you can help bring

clarity and insight about that person and provide an opportunity to choose how you wish to keep their memory alive. Do what works best for you to "get it out" during your daily time of remembrance—cry, scream, walk, write, build, or create something, look at

pictures of the person you lost, light candles, pray, and/or talk out loud. Be honest with yourself.

As part of humanity, you can use other beings for support, feedback, comfort, and encouragement. There is always someone who has had a similar experience and will understand. Find solace with a friend, counselor, clergy, group, or family. The pain of loss and grief doesn't disappear, and time alone doesn't heal all wounds, but paying attention to what you are experiencing, normalizing that experience and learning to share it with others can lessen the anguish, shorten its duration, and intricately bind you with the rest of the living. 



[By Shirley Anne Ramaley]

I stared at the computer screen. "Manny, what chat-room is this?" I asked.

"It's really awesome, Kinsey," she said. "Wait until Ben logs on. He's a new guy I met."

I knew my folks would never let me surf the Internet and go into chatrooms, unless it was an approved site, one they'd checked out. Rachel sat on the other side of Manny, and stared at the screen too.

"Do your folks know about this?" I asked.

Manny raised her eyebrows. "Where's the problem? I'm just talking with someone."

I didn't say anything, but my mind whirled.

Just then Ben logged on to the chatroom. "Oh, there he is!" Manny said, a big smile on her face as she sent him a message.

What if Ben wasn't 16 years old as Manny thought? He could be a grown man for all we knew.

"Hello," someone called out.

"Oh no, Mom's home." Manny quickly typed in a "goodbye" to Ben and logged on to a research Web site, one that she knew her mom approved of.

Manny's mom opened the door and smiled. "Hi, girls, working on your homework?" I saw her

glance at the computer screen, which now displayed information on Australian marsupials, a subject Manny was supposed to be working on for biology class.

"Yeah, we're doing fine," Manny said. "My project will be awesome."

Not if she keeps wasting time talking to Ben, I thought to myself. Besides, her mother wouldn't approve, and neither would mine, and I knew Rachel's mom wouldn't like it. These were my best friends, I reminded myself. Would they still be if I snitched on Manny?

That evening Mom asked me if I was OK. I told her I had a problem. Then I just told her every-



thing. "I guess I'd better talk to her," I said. "If she decides she doesn't want to be my friend, then that will be her decision. I sure hope it works out, though."

"I have a feeling that it will," Mom said.

The next day at school Manny asked Rachel and me to come over to her house again after school. She whispered in my ear, "Ben says he wants to meet me, and my mom will be at work, so we won't have to worry about being interrupted."

Now I knew I had to do something. It was hard to concentrate on my health ed test that day.

After school, as Manny, Rachel, and I walked up the porch steps to Manny's house, her mom said, "Hi, girls."

"What are you doing home?" Manny blurted out. "I mean, I thought you worked today."

"I had the time coming and took the day off."

"Oh, that's good," Manny said. But I could tell she didn't really think it was all that good.

That's when her mother said, "I'm going grocery shopping. Call me on my cell phone if you need me."

I saw the big grin on Manny's face. I knew it was up to me to do something. As soon as we heard

the door close, Manny quickly typed in the address for the Web site where she'd meet Ben. I put my hand on the mouse.

"What are you doing?" Manny asked.

"Stopping you from doing something you shouldn't," I said.

Manny stared at me. "What's with you, Kinsey? Are you afraid to meet new people or what?"

I kept my hand on the mouse. "Remember the girl last year who agreed to meet some guy she'd met on the Net? Lucky for her, her father figured out what was going on and stopped it. The so-called 'kid' was a man who'd met young girls before and didn't treat them all that nice."

Manny rolled her eyes. "Ben's not that way."

"How do you know?" I asked.

"Kinsey's right," Rachel said quietly. "I was afraid to say anything. But I'd decided not to come over anymore if you went to that chat-room again."

Suddenly the room was awfully quiet. A tear slid down Manny's cheek, and she swiped it with the back of her hand. "You guys must think I'm terrible," she whispered.

"No way," I said. "It's because you're our friend that we're saying something." I hesitated a minute. "Manny, you should tell your folks. Seems to me you've told that Ben person a lot about yourself. I mean, maybe he could figure out where you live."

She slowly nodded. I was surprised but relieved.

"Will you help me talk to my mom?" she asked.

I took my hand off the mouse. "For sure." ●

Poetry

A Small White Feather

By William-Bernard Reid-Varley

On lonely blade of grass so green,
Ere daylight fell to sleep,
A small white feather I did see,
Fluttering, oh so free.
And there for just a moment,
I paused so thoughtfully.
Oh how, oh how I wish
That I like the feather could be.
Then there and at that moment,
A breeze did float on by,
And plucked that little feather,
From the blade and made me see,
Though the fluttering feather's freeness
May to me eternal seem,
Freeness for all is fleeting,
And none are fully free.

Ballad of a Christmas Soldier

By Kami Finkel

Moonlight drips down
With cold upon his face,
Far away from home,
Lonely in this place.

Too many miles to count,
Maybe an ocean away,
A sweetheart sits at home
To worry the day away.

But soon two letters come
Through cold and bitter snow,
Guided by the love,
A trek almost too slow.

Her eyes light up with joy;
There are tears upon his sleeve.
Hope has finally come
On this Christmas Eve.

I Am

By Alexander Ryan Wagner

I am a wise but unbefriended man
I wonder why people resolve with war
I hear dreadful gunfire
I see ash, fire, and devastation
I want better government
I am a wise but unbefriended man

I imagine I can stop treachery with a single
statement
I feel that war is wrong
I touch freedom
I worry that this planet's inhabitants will
destroy the planet
I cry when people die
I am a wise but unbefriended man

I understand that I cannot stop war
I say that this war is ridiculous
I dream to have a voice in this world
I try to stop unnecessary wrongness
I hope this world will have peace
I am a wise but unbefriended man

Elegy to My Cat

By Mallery Aiken

Izzy, you are so beautiful,
With a sweet heart and so kind,
But why did you run away from me?
You are so hard to find!

Izzy, I finally found you,
But you were not awake.
You were in a forever sleep
On the bottom of the lake.



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I was in the wrong place at the wrong time and ended up doing time 'cause I got stuck holding the bag.

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Chatroom

bballer2005 wants to join some of the seniors in a prank to finish the year, but will things get out of hand?

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