

# Listen

CELEBRATING POSITIVE CHOICES

SEPTEMBER 2007

Breath  
of DEATH

Great  
GRADES

JESSE  
WHITE  
TUMBLERS

How to  
Choose a  
HOBBY





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**F**all always makes me want to go out and buy school supplies, sharpen pencils, and crack open a new textbook. OK, maybe we could scratch the part about the textbook. Still, even when your school days are over, fall always brings you back—just like the smell of lunch meat and paste. Unfortunately, going back to school means more than just pencils and books. These days it also means lockdown and evacuation drills.

A school north of me had so many bomb threats that they had to extend school into the summer to make up for all the days they missed having to evacuate. And I was talking to a teacher not long ago who told me that a guy was spotted in the woods near her school with what looked like a gun. The

school was locked down for three hours until it was determined that the guy only had a camera. She said it was hard being stuck in the classroom for three hours. The kids got restless and eventually some of them had to use the restroom, which they couldn't do because it was down the hall.

"I told them that they needed to be mature about the situation and if they couldn't wait, to go behind the desk and use the wastebasket," the teacher said. And some of them did.

What would you do if you were in that situation? Would you giggle and make fun or would you be supportive and mature? Our true character often comes out during a crisis. But you don't have to wait until a crisis to find out what your character is like. You can make it strong now by making positive choices every day. Choose now to rise above your circumstances—bad neighborhood, difficult family, mean friends, tough classes, lack of money, boring after-school job, physical or mental handicap—and make positive choices now so you will have a better tomorrow no matter what life throws at you.

Until next time, have fun, be cool, and make good choices,



Céleste Perrino-Walker  
Editor

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"There's no way I'm

"Anyone having difficulty?"

# The Geometry Lesson

"I just don't get those triangles, and they don't seem to like me either."

BY DIANE E. ROBERTSON

"Help class is an option for you."

I was probably the dumbest one in the classroom.



Geometry sure doesn't come easy to me," I told my smart friend, Kathy.

"The thing about it is, Bobbi, once you understand the formula, you can do any problem."

We were in the same high school geometry class. I knew I was headed for college after graduation, and that excited me. The down side was that I needed math to get in. "Geometry's the only subject I focus on these days," I told Kathy. "I just don't get those triangles, and they don't seem to like me either. To make matters worse I'm afraid of Ms. Meyer." Our teacher was a former Army sergeant with steel-gray hair. She was strict and quizzed us every Friday on what we learned that week.

"She doesn't accept excuses, that's for sure," Kathy said. "Miss the test and if you don't make it up, that's a fast zero. I'm thinking about dropping the class and taking it next time with an easier teacher."

"Now I'm freaked out. You've got a B average. Who will I lean on if you bail?"

"You ought to drop it too, Bobbi," Kathy answered. "You're sunk as it is."

"Thanks a lot."

As the weeks rolled by I watched many of my fellow students drop the class. When even Kathy jumped ship I panicked. But deep down inside a voice told me, "Hang in there, Bobbi."

Two painful weeks passed without Kathy to guide me through the

lessons, and geometry grew more confusing than ever. As I faced each increasingly difficult exam the desire to give up became stronger. I stuck it out, though. "Besides," I later told Kathy, "there's no way I'm going to repeat this agony next year."

I began to write down my questions, and when Ms. Meyer asked, "Anyone having difficulty?" my hand shot up.

"I'm hitting all kinds of stumbling blocks." I was probably the dumbest one in the classroom, but I didn't care who knew—all that mattered was finishing the course.

"Help class is an option for you," Ms. Meyer told me. "I also hold office hours. That way you'll be able to work the problems, and I'll be there if you get stuck."

"OK." Every day after school I became a visible presence at Help Class and during her office hours. I felt like I was living and breathing triangles. Unfortunately, even with the extra help I still struggled to grasp the principles.

One afternoon near the end of the term Kathy caught up with me in the hall. "Where are you going in such a hurry?"

"Ms. Meyer's office."

"You're still having trouble with that subject? I wish you had listened when I told you to drop the class."

"Leave me alone. Anyway, this torture ends next week." I didn't want to admit to Kathy that my grade was a borderline C/D. I felt doomed, so I changed the topic.

"You won't believe this, but once I got up close and personal with Ms. Meyer, she's not half bad. I actually like her now, and I'm not afraid of her anymore."

"Awesome," Kathy said as I turned into Ms. Meyer's office.

"Hi, Bobbi," Ms. Meyer said when she saw me. Her smile faded when she noticed I wasn't smiling back. "What's wrong?"

"I'm worried that I won't get into college if I only pull a D in geometry. Could I do a special project or an extra test? I'm willing to work twice as hard to raise it to a C."

"Bobbi," she told me, "you've been an asset to the class. If it hadn't been for your questions most of the students would've slept through the term."

I could feel my face burst into a huge smile as I took in what she'd just said. But there was more.

"I will consider your grade, and get back to you if I want you to complete a special project. I know this was a tough course, and I respect you for hanging in there."

As I walked out of Ms. Meyer's office I bumped into Kathy again. "You look kinda weird," she said. "Did she yell at you?"

I smiled. "Ms. Meyer told me I'm an asset to the class." Then I continued on my way, still stunned.

Ms. Meyer never touched base with me about doing a special project. Amazingly, she gave me a C. I was thrilled beyond belief, yet the grade was only part of the blessing. I learned to humble myself and ask Ms. Meyer for help even though I was afraid of her. I saw her compassionate nature as I got to know her. And I finished a difficult subject in the midst of peer pressure and despair. Now that I'm on the other side of this excruciating experience I see it as an incredible journey that I'm grateful I undertook.

Amazingly, she gave me a C. I was thrilled beyond belief.



# The Breath of Death

By Keri Collins

**D**avid Manlove knew he had a problem with drugs and alcohol and worked very hard with his family and counselors at a drug treatment center to overcome it. Slowly, everything in his life started to look up until he did one seemingly innocent thing. One beautiful, sunny day in June he got up early, mowed the lawn, and went swimming with friends. Later, they went to a neighborhood drugstore and bought a can of computer duster.

David's friend had showed him how to get high by inhaling it, and since it wasn't a drug it wouldn't show up on the drug tests David was taking as part of his recovery. In the pool he inhaled the propellant from the can while under water, which was supposed to make the high better. On his third or fourth try David's heart stopped, and he drowned before his friends or the paramedics could save him.

Breathing is a natural function of the human body required for life. So how can breathing be dangerous?

While air pollution and cigarette smoke are well-known health hazards, many people don't know that there are more than a thousand ordinary household products that are harmful when inhaled. Defined by the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) as "liquids, sprays, and gases that people sniff or inhale to get high or to make them feel good," inhalants have toxic effects on the human body. Harvey Weiss of the National Inhalant Prevention Coalition recommends: "Describe the products as poisons, not drugs."

## Death in a Can

Aerosols are sprays containing propellants and solvents in addition to a manufactured substance, such as household cleaners, spray paint, hair care products, and deodorant. It's the propellants and solvents that provide a quick, short-term high. Other types of inhalants are volatile solvents including paint thinners, degreasers, and glues; gases such as propane, butane, and nitrous oxide ("laughing gas" or "whippets"); and nitrites, which include the popular rave drug amyl nitrite, known as "poppers," "TNT," and "Liquid Gold."

Even "canned air," used for clean-

ing computers, is more than just air—it's liquefied gas that acts as a propellant. "The pressurized blast delivered when using such products is actually the gas vapors mixed with air," according to one manufacturer. Sixteen-year-old Erica Knoll of Bowie, Maryland, was found dead in her room the day after Halloween with a can of a popular computer "duster" beside her. Instead of watching their daughter enjoy prom, graduation, and college, her parents are trying to educate others about the dangers of inhalants. "Erica did not know that [a compressed gas computer cleaner] could kill her," her father said.

## When Breathing Leads to Death, not Life

The initial effects of huffing are like those caused by drinking alcohol: euphoria, lightheadedness, and dizziness. Continued use can cause hallucinations (seeing things that aren't there), delusions (believing things that aren't true), and "sudden sniffing death syndrome" that occurs when the inhalant interferes with the heart's normal function, resulting in fatal cardiac arrhythmias—heart attack. First-time users can die from huffing, and prolonged inhalant use increases



the chance of death as well as the long-term effects on all of the body's major organs.

Christopher Abraham was one of four people in the Tampa Bay area who died in 2004 from using inhalants. According to a family friend, she saw Christopher sitting in a dark living room. When she called to him, he didn't answer. She moved closer and discovered he had a

black plastic trash bag over his head. A reporter for the St. Petersburg Times wrote: "The circumstances of Christopher's death would not become clear until two days later, as family and friends gathered in his home to mourn. The air conditioner was running, but the

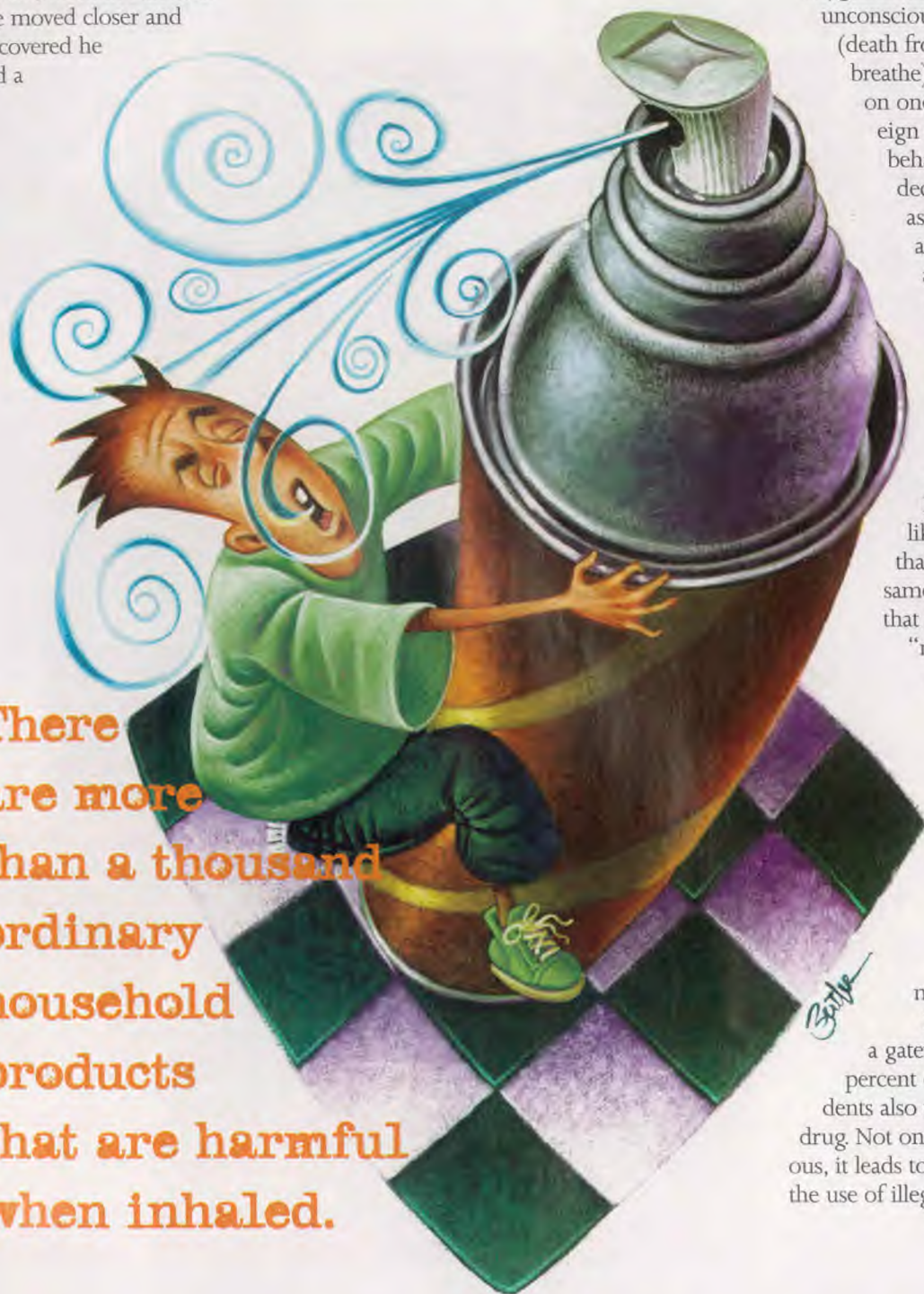
house was warm and stuffy. A repairman came and inspected the unit. The coolant was low." Christopher had filled a trash bag with refrigerant gas from the air conditioner, put the bag over his head, and inhaled to get high, but suffocated instead.

Besides heart failure, other causes of death are asphyxiation (lack of oxygen in the body resulting in unconsciousness), suffocation (death from being unable to breathe), aspiration (choking on one's own vomit or a foreign object), and dangerous behaviors resulting from decreased judgment, such as driving while high and causing a vehicle accident, exposure/hypothermia, or setting oneself on fire due to the highly flammable nature of most inhalants.

An NSDUH study showed that teens aged 12 or 13 were more likely to use inhalants than any other drug. That same study also revealed that inhalant users were "more than twice as likely to have been in a serious fight at school or work than youths who had never used inhalants, and they were six times as likely to have stolen or tried to steal anything worth more than \$50."

Inhalant use is seen as a gateway drug, with 35 percent of the survey respondents also using another illicit drug. Not only is inhaling poisonous, it leads to violence, crime, and the use of illegal drugs.

**There are more than a thousand ordinary household products that are harmful when inhaled.**





# THE JESSE WHITE TUMBLERS

By Mark N. Lardas



*Suddenly teenagers  
start flying through  
the air . . .*

**I**t's halftime at an NBA basketball game. It has been a grudge match, and fans are in an ugly mood. The tension is electric. Suddenly teenagers start flying through the air in the middle of the basketball court. The fans erupt. Shouts fill the stadium.

You look. You look again. Halftime basketball? Nope. The teens flying through the air, dressed in red, are the halftime show. They are the Jesse White Tumblers, young acrobats flying and flipping around the basketball court as if the laws of gravity have been suspended. The crowd has gotten into the act, and the mood has gone from mean to mellow.

Who are these teen men and women entertaining us during breaks at major league ball games? It turns out that members of the Jesse White Tumblers defy more than gravity. They also defy the odds against their success.

The performers live on some of Chicago's meanest streets—the projects where gangs, drugs, and death are everyday companions. The Tumblers are a refuge from those problems—and a way out of the projects.

The Tumblers started in 1959. Jesse White, then a teacher in the Chicago school system, wanted a positive outlet for children living in







Cabrini-Green and Henry Horner public housing. He drew on his own life experiences. Before settling down to teach, White served in the 101st Airborne as a paratrooper and had been a professional ballplayer. Skydiving and baseball were beyond the means of a lone educator—at least in the late 1950s in Chicago.

White told Listen, “I had been a gymnast as a kid and had taught gymnastics.” Tumbling does not require much equipment—and much less space than a baseball diamond. So he started a tumbling team.

It started out as a gymnasium



show in 1959. Soon White was finding venues for his tumbling team to show their stuff: community festivals, fairs, and as entertainment at ball games.

It was slow at first. For many years White paid the expenses out of his own pocket. By 1985 White was pumping \$19,000 a year of his own earnings into the Tumblers. (He was no longer a teacher by then, but even for a successful businessman, that was a chunk of change.) Then the program attracted commercial sponsors, and things really took off.

The spotlight lures teens in to participate, but it's not the most valuable part of being a Jesse White Tumbler. The real benefit comes from the rules that White set for team members to follow.

Participants must:

- Stay in school and be on time.
- Not dislike people—regardless of their color, religion, or where they live.
- Be smokeless, leafless, and pipeless—no tobacco or drugs.
- Not join the sidewalk crowd—stay out of gangs.
- Stay out of trouble with the law.

Staying in school and keeping their grades up prepares them for life. Staying off drugs, out of street gangs, and straight with the law gives them the chance to have a life. The discipline and skills they develop while in the Tumblers give them the self-discipline, confidence, and appreciation for teamwork they need to succeed as adults.

Jesse White has other methods to help the Tumblers. To join and stay on the team, participants must maintain at least a C average. The Tumblers provide tutors for team members and those who qualify for the group in tryouts but lack the grades to get in, to help them keep those grades up. Tumbling team members also receive college scholarships once



they graduate from high school, to allow them to continue their education. So far more than 10,000 young men and women have benefited from the program.

Jesse White Tumblers also provide their members a safe harbor from drugs and gangs. Jesse White told Listen how Tydell McNeal benefited from the program. Tydell was in the Tumblers, but moved into a new neighborhood. He wanted to be a good student and dropped out of the Tumblers to concentrate on his studies.

A gang dominated his new school. They thought McNeal must have belonged to a rival gang at his old school because most students there did. They pressured McNeal to join. He did not want to, but was

given no choice. He could not move back to his old neighborhood because the gang there thought he belonged to the gang in his new school. Instead of joining either gang, Tydell McNeal rejoined the Tumblers. That put him off-limits. He was able to finish high school in peace.

Joining the Tumblers does not wall out the world. Reality still intrudes. In 2005 two team members were shot and killed in two unrelated incidents. The young men who died were not doing anything wrong—they were just in the wrong place at a bad time.

Or take this story of three brothers. Jesse White called them Richard, Reginald, and William. Richard and Reginald had been in the Tumblers, but dropped out to run with a gang.

After they dropped out, William was shot and killed by a second gang. To avenge his brother's death Reginald shot and killed a teen he thought had done it. Turned out Reginald shot the wrong person. He was convicted of the killing and sent to prison.

Richard rejoined the Tumblers. He stayed with the program and finished high school, then used a Tumbler scholarship to go to Southern Illinois University. He followed that with Notre Dame Law School. Today he is a practicing attorney.


In 2006 the Tumblers had six separate units and put on 1,500 shows across the United States. They perform at many NBA halftime shows. There were 350 young people training to be Tumblers.

The Tumblers are open to everyone—regardless of gender or race—from 6 to 16. They hold regular tryouts for Chicago kids who want to join. If you live in Chicago and think you can make it, check the schedule and go for it.

Bring your report card, though.



# Good for You Good for You Good for You Teeter-Totter


A cartoon illustration of a girl and a boy on a teeter-totter. The girl is on the left, and the boy is on the right. They are both smiling. Below them is a large, smiling apple. The background is a dark, textured grey.


## TEETER-TOTTER SYNDROME


*Grades slipping? Studying late and still blowing it at test time? Falling asleep in class? No time for breakfast? Feeling crabby because you didn't get enough sleep? Guess what! You've got Teeter-Totter Syndrome!*


*Just like the teeter-totters you played on in kindergarten, we need to be in balance for our brains and bodies to work properly. This is especially true when it comes to school. If you study all the time and don't exercise, eat properly, or get adequate rest, you're going to suffer from Teeter-Totter Syndrome. Your life will be out of balance, and you may find your next report card weighed down with C's, D's, and even F's. Life, like teeter-totters, is a lot more fun when things are in balance.*


*So what can you do? Try these simple ideas to balance out your life:*


 **Go to bed early the night before a test. You are more likely to remember those facts you've been cramming into your noggin if you're well rested.**


 **Get up earlier and hit the books. Most people find they think better in the morning than late at night.**

 **Eat a hearty breakfast. Studies show students who skipped breakfast did significantly worse at problem-solving than those who ate a good breakfast.**

 **Don't forget iron-rich foods such as dark-green vegetables. Students whose blood count is low, due to lack of iron in their diet, have trouble concentrating, tire easily, and tend to be just plain grumpy.**

 **Get active! Students who are involved in regular, vigorous physical exercise such as running, hiking, skateboarding, or sports do much better at school, especially in areas such as mathematics and science. They also are able to concentrate better and get along better with other students and their teachers.**

 **Get your heart pumping! Strenuous aerobic exercise, the kind that gets you breathing harder and makes your heart beat faster, may improve your memory. The improved blood flow to your brain and increased oxygen intake may strengthen the connections between the neurons that carry the brain's messages.**

 **Exercise more, study less. This may not seem to make sense at first, but a study in California showed that when time in class was decreased by 240 minutes per week, to allow students more time for vigorous physical activity such as sports, their grades in math were consistently higher. Just make sure not to take this to extremes. Exercise is not a substitute for good study habits, but it may improve your ability to understand and remember what you study.**

*Remember, balance is important, whether you're on a teeter-totter or trying to pull a decent grade in math class. Don't let stress over grades throw your life out of kilter. Study hard, but make sure you balance "book time" with plenty of sleep, a good diet (including breakfast), and regular vigorous exercise. Don't fall victim to Teeter-Totter Syndrome. Keep your life in balance, and you might just find some pleasant surprises on your next report card.*



By Richard G. Edison,  
PA-C (Physician Assistant-  
Nationally Certified)



# Find Your

*Maybe it's time to  
open your mind to some  
new ideas.*

By Katherine Rone



**F**inding a hobby or leisure passion can make life more exciting. It can also provide a secure emotional ground that fills you with a sense of fun, purpose, and belonging. When you can create such positive emotions through your everyday activities, the false promises of drugs and alcohol are less likely to pull you in. A hobby can also help you beyond high school, leading you to ideal careers and life partners. It does this by connecting you to others of like mind and heart.

Choosing a hobby is easier for some people than others. You may already know something that you want to do, but are holding back for one or more reasons, such as low finances, shyness, or inexperience. Maybe you are confused about where to find the right connections, or feel that nothing particular speaks to your heart. Following the steps below can help you reveal hidden interests and help you

find a new and exciting hobby.

## **Step One: Set Limits**

First, you need to define your limits; just like when you play softball, the playing field boundaries are marked to keep the players focused and safe. Smart limits for a potential hobby include anything that keeps you "in bounds" of who you are and who you want to be. Some examples of what to avoid include any activities that require the following:

- Drug and alcohol use.
- Sexual activities.
- Breaking school or household rules.
- Overstepping religious or spiritual convictions.
- Dangerous physical activities



(unless a coach is part of the package).

- Spending more money or time than you have available.

## **Step Two: Explore the Possibilities**

After you mark your boundaries it is time to open your mind up to new ideas. If you begin looking for fun with a preconceived notion of what it "should" or "should not" be, then you may be blocking the door! Hobby possibilities are diverse, and no one activity fits everyone. This means that you may find interests inside of yourself that your current friends and family do not share. That can be a little scary, but it can also lead you to new friends and adventures.

Get started exploring the possibilities by writing down the answers to the questions below. These answers are clues to finding your fun and may not make complete sense in the beginning. Don't worry for now if some of your answers seem unrealistic. Just answer with whatever ideas come to you and you can work on



# Fun



the details in  
the next step.



1. When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?
2. When you were a child, what did you play most of the time?
3. List the times that you have felt the most excited and alive.
4. List the times that you have felt the greatest sense of peace, joy, and comfort.
5. What environments do you feel the most happy in?
6. What kind of people do you feel the happiest being with?
7. Name your best talents and skills.

special skills? What were you doing and who was it for?

9. List any creative activities, arts, or crafts that you would like to learn about.

10. List any sports, exercises, or outdoor hobbies that you would like to learn.

In addition to answering these questions, try to stay open in general to the idea of finding a fun hobby. You never know when you may run across a television show or a magazine article that describes a pursuit that you would never have dreamed of.

## Step Three: Begin the Journey

Each of your answers to the above questions is a clue that leads to an interest of yours. The next step is to find ways to experience your interests and also honor your current limits. This may feel like putting a puzzle

together and requires some initiative and creative thinking.

If you don't have the funds or the time to go full steam with your interest, try finding people who are involved in the activity already. Interview them and ask their advice on ways to become involved at your level. You may be surprised at how much others love to share their knowledge with you and at the helpful hints they provide.

If you lack connections, or don't know where to find people who share your interests, start asking questions of the people you do know. If you are shy about approaching people, pretend that you are writing a report for a class or that you are a reporter who is looking for leads to a story.

Most of all, set the tone by making this search into an adventure, and remember that you will find new answers to these questions as you grow and change. Have fun!





BY DALLAS WOODBURN

Dear Dallas,

**My BFF is acting extremely weird lately. I see her at school and everything seems OK, but she rarely returns my calls and when I ask her to hang out she's always "busy." She's had some problems at home before, but in the past she's always confided in me. What should I do? I really miss her.**

—Feeling Dumped

Dear Feeling Dumped,

I know this is difficult and frustrating for you. It sounds like your friend is going through a tough time right now, in which case she needs you more than ever even though she is acting otherwise. The important thing is to keep trying to get in touch with her so she'll know you aren't going anywhere. Continue to

ask her in a low-key way if everything is OK and remind her you are always there for her to talk to. Other than that, do your best to act as you always do around her—laugh at the inside jokes you share, tell her about your annoying little brother, complain about the super-hard math test. Make the most of the time you get to spend with her at school every day. It's fine to tell her you miss her, but don't make her feel guilty if she can't hang out. Instead, ask if there is a time that would work for her. By being flexible around her schedule you show that you really want to see her and that she can count on you to be a constant in her life.

You say your friend has had "some problems at home before," which worries me. If you are at all concerned about her safety or well-being, confide in your parents, a teacher, or a trusted adult. She needs you to be her friend now more than ever.

Dear Dallas,

**I really want to stay on top of my schoolwork this year. I always start out the year organized, but within a few weeks I'm a mess. You can probably guess: I'm a procrastinator. Do you have any tips?**

—No More Procrastinating

Dear No More Procrastinating,

A new school year, like New Year's Day, is the perfect time for a fresh start! Get a calendar-planner and set daily and weekly goals for yourself. Write down all your homework assignments and other commitments (sports, band, drama) so you can clearly block out your time. We often procrastinate because we are intimidated by the work we have to do. So instead of trying to tackle everything at once, break your schoolwork down into manageable chunks. Finish your math homework, then relax by listening to your favorite music for 15 minutes. Read a chapter of your biology book, then go for a walk around the neighborhood. Write the first paragraph of your English essay, then reward yourself with a snack break. Cross off each item in your planner once you accomplish it and enjoy the feeling!

Dear Dallas,

**My best friend comes from a really wealthy family. Last time I was at her house, I took one of her bracelets. She has so many, I doubt she even noticed. But now I feel terrible. If I tell her, I worry she won't want to be my friend anymore. What should I do?**

—Reformed Thief

It's  
Your  
Turn

Make your opinion heard at [www.listenmagazine.org/imlistening](http://www.listenmagazine.org/imlistening) and see how your advice stacks up against that of other *Listen* readers. You can see results from past polls here too.



READERS, NOW IT'S YOUR TURN TO GIVE ADVICE. SHOULD "REFORMED THIEF":

- Consider her guilt punishment enough and stay silent,
- Sneakily return the bracelet and consider it a lesson learned, **or**
- Confess to her friend, give the bracelet back, and apologize?



# YOU SNOOZE, YOU LOSE?

## Quiz

You might not want to visit the Sandman through this quiz! Read through each question, select which answer most describes you, and add things up to discover what kind of snoozer you are.  
A = 0, B = 1, and C = 2.

By Angela C. Hawkins

**C. 14-20 points:** Friends and school are important to you, and so is your body. You live without fatigue. Not only do you hear your body say, "Sleep!" but you also help others sleep well. Keep it up!

**B. 8-13 points:** Sleep is OK if it doesn't interrupt your schedule. Schedules are great, but so is your health! Sleep seems like an intruder, but enough will actually help you be more productive when you're awake.

**A. 0-7 points:** Your philosophy is to live, not sleep. Loving life is stellar, but sleep robbery is dangerous! Drowsy driving is like drink-driving and driving. Grab enough zzzs and rediscover life.

Answer Key:



- 1. You fought with your eyelids all day. Tonight you—**
  - a. Watch the late night show—you'd never miss it.
  - b. Plug away at your homework. Colleges are interested in grades, not sleep!
  - c. Hit the hay extra early.
- 2. That itch in your throat isn't playing tricks. Tonight you—**
  - a. Sleep less than usual—being active helps you forget being run down.
  - b. Sleep like usual—your schedule is set.
  - c. Make a *long* date with your pillow!
- 3. You usually snatch \_\_\_\_ hours of shut-eye at night.**
  - a. Four—time can't be wasted!
  - b. Six—studying through midnight makes the A.
  - c. Eight—you like feeling awesome in the morning.
- 4. During fourth period you really wanted a siesta. You feel like that—**
  - a. Every day.
  - b. Occasionally.
  - c. Rarely.
- 5. After lunch your eyes felt heavier than a sumo wrestler. You—**
  - a. Grab a cola.
  - b. Take a catnap in study hall.
  - c. Get up and groove—exercise can wake you up naturally.
- 6. Tonight you realize the foghorn coming from your brother's room is your brother. You—**
  - a. Buy earplugs.
  - b. Do nothing—why make him feel bad?
  - c. Get him to a doctor—sleep disorders can be deadly.
- 7. The school week is over. Tonight you—**
  - a. Party hard all evening (and sleep in tomorrow).
  - b. Party through the night and rise with the sunshine.
  - c. Hang out with your buds . . . before heading home early enough to sleep and wake up like usual.
- 8. It's time to meet the Sandman. You—**
  - a. Camp out in the living room—it's quality family time.
  - b. Climb in bed with your remote—TV helps you wind down.
  - c. Hop under the covers and wait for the Sandman.
- 9. You've spent an hour tossing and turning. You—**
  - a. Swallow a sleeping pill.
  - b. Stare at the ceiling until you're asleep or the sun rises—whichever comes first.
  - c. Take a break and read until you're drowsy.
- 10. After an all-nighter, your eyes hurt. But since your best friend's hosting a party, you—**
  - a. Grab your keys and go!
  - b. Swig down cola and go.
  - c. Snooze 15 minutes and plan on a short stay before coming home to crash.





# Eban & Ani-Mai

By Dallas Woodburn

Illustration by  
Jason Ente

HEY, Ani-Mai.  
Want to meet at  
the Grill for lunch?

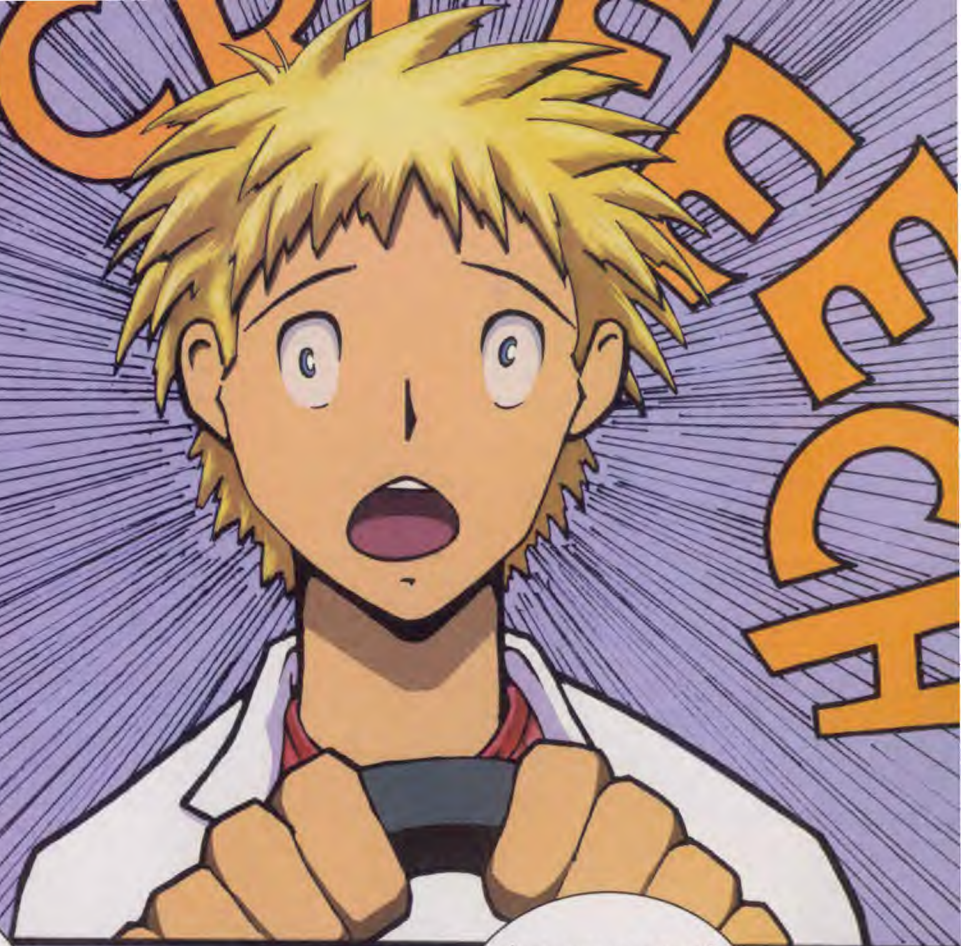
OK,  
Great!

See you in 20 minutes.

HONK!

Oh man,  
I'm gonna  
be soooo  
late!





Eban,  
there you are!  
I was worried  
about you.

Oh, no!  
Are you OK?  
What  
happened?

**Sorry,**  
I got into  
a slight  
**fender-**  
**bender**

I was **texting**  
you to say I was  
running late, and  
I wasn't paying  
attention.

Are you crazy?  
**Never** text while  
you're **driving!**  
You were lucky  
today—

you could  
get into a **serious**  
accident or worse!  
I'm just glad  
you're OK.



Me too.  
Next time I'm  
running late I'll  
**pull over** to call  
or text you!





**THREE OUT OF 10  
TEENS WITH  
DEPRESSION GET  
INVOLVED WITH  
DRUGS OR  
ALCOHOL**

# GETTING

# UP

# WITH BEING

# DOWN



BY MARK N. LARDAS

*Illustration by Lisa Mertins*

**W**inston Churchill fought it. He called it the black dog. Harrison Ford and Kurt Vonnegut fight it. It killed Kurt Cobain. "It" is a disease called clinical depression.

One out of five teens—20 percent—experience depression. Ten to 15 percent of teens show symptoms of depression. If it is bad enough, left untreated, depression can kill.

Depression is more than feeling sad or bad. Everyone feels down in the dumps at times. If you are normal, you feel bad—depressed—about failing a test, getting dumped by a boyfriend or girlfriend, or losing a pet.

Being depressed is different than suffering from depression. You get over being depressed—quickly for minor things, longer for major prob-



lems. Fail a test? You put that behind you in a few hours. Lose a pet—or a family member—you may grieve for days or weeks. That is normal.

Being depressed slides into depression when it lingers on and seems like it will stay forever. You feel worse and worse—a gray fog settles in and hovers over your life.

Depression is like diabetes. You have a chemical imbalance in your

betes through diet and exercise.

Others absolutely need insulin—and a doctor's assistance. While toughing depression out and treating yourself may seem macho, most people lack the needed knowledge and discipline to fight depression alone.

You have to help, though. Doctors and drugs are not enough to beat depression. A diabetic has to balance blood sugar levels. You have to help

yourself to be active if you have to, but get moving.

Another thing you can do is to stop setting yourself up for failure. Set realistic goals. Down because you failed a test? Set a goal of passing the next test, not acing it. Concentrate on making progress, not being perfect. Being down because you did not do as well as you could have can help you improve. Beating yourself up for



body that must be treated in order to live a normal life. With diabetes the chemical imbalance is insulin. With depression it may be something called serotonin. Doctors are not sure because the brain is more complicated than the digestive system.

Your brain produces serotonin. It sends messages the brain interprets as, "I feel good." Get low on serotonin and you can feel very "not" good. Other brain chemicals may be involved in depression, too.

Like diabetes, depression needs treatment. When you are depressed you let life pass you by. Three out of 10 teens with depression get involved with drugs or alcohol. Twelve out of every 1,000 teens with depression attempt suicide. One in 10 of these succeed.

Talk to your parents, or find an adult you can trust about getting help. See your doctor. There is no shame in seeing a doctor about diabetes—there also is none in seeing one about depression.

Some diabetics manage their dia-

control your moods.

Make sure you eat right and get enough rest. Fatigue messes up your body's ability to produce brain chemicals you need to keep from getting the blues. If you are not eating right, your brain may not get the fuel it needs to make them. You get depressed. You lose your appetite and cannot sleep. You run out of fuel and get more fatigued. You get more depressed. Get careless about food and rest and you get trapped in a spiral hard to get out of.

When you get the blues, do something active—something you normally like doing. Shoot hoops if you are into that, play a musical instrument, or take the dog for a long walk. Do it for an hour or so.

You should feel better afterward. Do something active and your brain pumps out serotonin, making you feel better. It causes the "runner's high" that joggers talk about.

When you have the blues it is hard to get started. You feel that there is no point in doing anything. Force

not doing the impossible just makes you blue.

Stop reinforcing failure. You are not going to get a perfect score if you failed the last test. Instead, feel good because you did better this time. If you lose a race badly, make your goal to finish ahead by two places next time.

Finally, avoid mood-altering street drugs and alcohol. They may make you feel better short-term, but the downs will be deeper. Drugs mess your body up and put you in the same downward spiral as fatigue and hunger. Natural, self-made doses of brain chemicals are better for you than the bliss-hit of street drugs.

Churchill saved England despite having depression. You, too, can change the world—if you do not let depression master you. Take charge of your life—don't let depression run it for you.



Here are a few  
sure-fire ways to turn your  
GPA around.

# GREAT GRADES

If you want a decent life, including a great job later on, you need good grades. Good grades make it easier to get along with your parents, make it more likely that you will get into a great university, and in general are nicer to have. Face it: No one actually likes getting D's and F's. You may think that you have to study for hours or be naturally brilliant to do well in school, but that's not true. If you find subjects that you love, it's probably pretty easy for you to pull in the test scores you want. Even if you find studying hard, though, and even if you have spent more time studying the ceiling tiles in math class than your textbook, there are a few surefire ways to turn your GPA around:

## Get help.

There are lots of volunteer and low-cost tutors around, and your teachers are likely available for after-school help, too. Having someone explain geometry or history to you can be a big help, and you can ask all the questions you want. Ask your



school guidance counselor for recommendations for a tutor, and don't forget to

talk to your teachers. Your teachers really want you to do well, and if you show interest they are far more likely to work with you to help you get the grades you want.

## Watch out for study groups.

It seems like a great idea: You arrange to get together with some friends, split a pizza, and



chat while going over notes. The problem is that most study groups are heavy on the chat and

pretty light on the study time. You'll get a lot more out of your time if you study by yourself. You don't have to shut yourself away with your cat and your books for four weeks before an exam, but don't rely on study groups for the bulk of your test prep. Treat them like the occasional good-for-you break from study time that they really are.

## Get organized.

You can't make the most of your study time if you can't keep track of test days or if you can't find your notes to study. Buy a calendar and





note down every important date for school so you always know what is going on.

### *Study in the right place.*

For most of us, that means somewhere quiet and comfortable. Look for someplace that is slightly cool so that you will stay alert when hitting the books.

### *Attack your homework.*

Once you sit down to study, make sure you have everything you need and start working. Don't get up to walk around, don't stare into space, don't answer the phone, don't take a bathroom break. Better yet, set a mini-goal before you start. If you tell yourself "I'm not getting up out of this chair until I've written the first paragraph of my term paper," you'll be amazed at how quickly your brain gets you through the work.

### *Figure out a realistic plan.*

Take a look at your situation and how much time is left before the end of the semester. Then make up a realistic plan that can get you through. If you have trouble with history and French, for example, do extra exercises from the textbook each night. Try to work a little on your worst subjects each night. Planning to do eight-hour marathons each night is not realistic.

### *Focus on what matters.*

If you go over the notes you already know and understand, you won't tackle the hard stuff. Always ask yourself, "What don't



I get yet?" and try to figure out the ideas, topics, and concepts you are struggling with.

### *Take good notes and review after class.*

It will keep you awake in class and will really sink the ideas and concepts into your head so that you have to study less at exam time.

### *Read more.*

Students who read almost always have higher grades than those who don't read outside of school. Read in your spare time, try to read about the subjects you are studying, and you will start to see dramatic results. You'll find that other books may be clearer or better written than your textbook, meaning that you remember more from them. Bonus: Your teachers will be really impressed that you went out of your way to read up about a subject.



### *Study at your right time.*

If you're not happy and fully awake until noon, don't try to get up at the

crack of dawn to tackle calculus. If you fall asleep by 9:00, don't try to stay up late to study. Always try to do most of your studying at the time of day when you are most alert.

If you want great grades, you don't have to spend all your time studying, and you don't have to lose your mind. It's not that hard. Starting today, practice these tips and you will turn your grades around by the next report card.



# PRIME REAL PEOPLE MAKING A DIFFERENCE TIMES

By Jessica Burkhardt

**I**magine being a rising pop star and songwriter. Your career is fabulous, you have legions of fans, and your songs jump to the tops of charts. Is being a role model on your mind? For 15-year-old teen singing sensation Whitney Wolanin, being a role model and spokesperson for the Youth Crime Watch of America (YCWA) and speaking out about Internet safety is perhaps her biggest accomplishment. "I was inspired by my personal everyday interaction with the Internet," says Whitney. "I use it daily to help me with my studies and for social purposes, and I know my friends do as well. I've realized how dangerous the Internet can actually be, and I wanted to let other people know. I hope that people will understand that danger is always present on the Internet, and you have to take precautions."

The YCWA's mission is to encourage youth to engage in community problems. The goal of the YCWA is to arm teens with tools to prevent violence, crime, and drug abuse. YCWA offers nine basic components to the organization's "Watch Out, Help Out"

theory. The nine steps include youth patrols, conflict resolution, bus safety, and mentoring.

Whitney's work with the YCWA led her to create "Whitney's Way to Online Safety" or 10 tips to keep you safe on the Internet. Whitney's tips include:

**1. Stranger Danger**—Don't talk to strangers or add them to your friends list.

**2. Who's Who?**—People may not be who they say they are, so don't assume they look or act as they do online.

**3. Speak Out**—If someone seems to be dangerous in any way, tell an adult or authority figure.

**4. Homeland Security**—Don't download anything that could possibly harm your computer or invade your privacy.



**5. Never**—meet someone in person you "met" online; it's extremely dangerous.

**6. Keep It 2 Yourself**—Don't ever tell anyone you don't know your address, phone number, school, or any personal information.

**7. Self-Conscience**—If something seems wrong to you, it probably is. Follow your instincts.

**8. Chats**—Don't chat with people you don't know, as it could lead you into risky situations.

**Whitney is currently recording a multi-song Pop/Rock EP titled "Loud and Clear" for TopNotch® Records, expected for release later this year.**







**9. R-E-S-P-E-C-T**—Respect yourself and others. Don't say or do things online that you wouldn't say in person, especially things that could embarrass you, your friends, or your family.

**10. Enjoy**—Most important, have fun and stay safe by chatting with people you know and avoiding bad situations. People can be much crueler online because they don't have to say things to you face-to-face. Avoid people who bring you down, especially online, and remember: you're better than that.

Whitney believes the dangers of the Internet leave many vulnerable to cyber bullying and cyber stalking. "You have to be so careful because you never know who the people really are," says Whitney. "Try to leave personal information off of the Internet as best as you can."

Whitney composed the tips because she witnessed cyber bullying firsthand. "A few kids from my high school spitefully posted bad reviews about me on Internet music sites that attacked me as a person through my music," says Whitney. "Any person who cyber bullies is simply a cowardly, cruel person." Whitney hasn't let the attacks stop her. She immerses herself in her music and hopes to influence others with her songs. "Music is a way that I can express myself and my emotions," Whitney says. "It's so therapeutic. When writing songs, I try to write about things that other people are going through as well. My dream is that one day my music will be able to help someone else get through a tough time in his or her life."

Whitney's music career is just getting started as she plans to release a new album in summer of 2007. "I've been writing all my songs for this EP by myself and also some of them with my sister Victoria, a talented pianist and composer," says Whitney. "Victoria is my best friend, and I'm so glad we've gotten to take this journey together. I hope everyone enjoys it as much as we've enjoyed making it!" No matter how busy life gets, Whitney will never stop taking time to work with YCWA and get the word out about Internet safety. Whitney adds a final piece of advice: "If you really love to do something, keep doing it no matter how hard it is or how long it takes. It's worth it!"

For more information on Whitney, visit [www.whitneywolanin.com](http://www.whitneywolanin.com) and be sure to check out the YCWA at [www.ycwa.org](http://www.ycwa.org).



**Whitney Wolanin performed the National Anthem at a Boston Red Sox vs. N.Y. Yankees game.**



Shutterbugs  
of the world  
unite!

# Shutter



By **Daniel** Bedell



**H**ave you got an itchy trigger finger? Camera trigger finger, that is. Whether you are taking pictures for the yearbook, for a family member who's been deployed, for a friend across the country, or just for your own amusement, the truth is taking a good picture is a lot less about what you are using and more about how you are using whatever it is you have. Some old-school photographers are all about film, while some up-and-comers are all about digital. In the end you can take a great picture with a \$10,000 Hasselblad, with a new point-and-shoot digital, or with your camera phone. Here are some tips on how to take better pictures of your friends and family or to start off a career in photography on the right foot.

## **Experiment, Experiment, Experiment!**

There is nothing better than trying new things when it comes to photography. Try shooting pictures crooked, upside down, while lying on the ground, or standing on someone's shoulders. If you can think of it,

do it! You can never try too many angles in photography.

## **Shoot and Shoot Some More**

The people who get the best pictures are often the people who take the most pictures. To get one usable picture in a photo shoot I will often take 200 or more pictures. Ever wonder how someone got that perfect picture of a model in an advertisement? Here's a big hint: they shot hundreds and hundreds of pictures.

## **K.I.S.S. Keep It Simple Silly**

Don't try and get everything in a picture. The best movies, books, and songs don't tell about every single part of life or an event; they just try to tell a slice. Think of your photos the same way, as just a slice of a story. So move closer, cut off someone's head, and just show their collar. Or just show



# bugs



their eyes and the top of their head. Take a picture of just a leaf and not the whole tree. Less is often more. Get to the action! Just like a good book or movie, find what is interesting and eliminate everything else.

## Looky, Looky

Once you have found that interesting subject to take a picture of, start looking at it every which way you can. The most

boring pictures are often straight on at eye level. Lie on the ground, stand up high, move to each side, go behind it and just try to look at things from every way you possibly can! Try moving the subject, too. Sometimes you can't, but often you can. If you are taking a picture of a friend, have them tilt their head. Have them put their hands on their face, cross their legs, or lie down. Don't be afraid to ask someone to do different things. Start doing this with friends and family, and once you get confident try it on people you don't know so well. You will be amazed at what people will do for a confident person with a camera.

## Be Nice!

Mommy was right. Playing nice with others is always good. If you can, always ask if you can take a picture of a person or their property. For all the times someone says "no" you will get 10 more who will say "yes." Many times people will be so excited and flattered that they will help show you an even better picture than you had imagined. Having a smile and

saying thank you is a must in my book. People are more comfortable and natural around nice people. They are also more likely to let you take their picture again. Not only that, but they are more likely to buy a picture from you and recommend you to their friends!

## Let There Be Light

Great light and great pictures go together. I am always looking for great light. Sometimes I see it coming from an open door, a stained glass window, or filtering down through the leaves of a tree. But wherever I go I am looking at light. As a general rule, the best light is in the morning or evening. Scenic, architectural, and landscape photographs are almost all taken in the morning or evening. So don't be lazy; get up early and shoot if you like scenic pictures. If you like people pictures like I do, don't let the time of day keep you from capturing a great shot. You can find good light if you look. Places where there is open shade, like in the shadow of a building or under an awning, offer some of the very best light for taking





Great light  
and great pictures  
go together.



people pictures.

### When Bad Is Good

People often put their cameras away when it starts to rain or when it gets dark. Don't be one of those people. At night try using a tripod and a long exposure. Or for more unpre-

dictable results, try hand holding a long exposure. Your picture may be shaken and blurred, but that doesn't mean it's bad. You can create a mood and feeling with a shaken and blurred picture that you can never get with a picture that is perfectly in focus and tack sharp. If it is raining, get an umbrella or a clear plastic bag to put on your camera and get outside! Some of the most beautiful pictures are taken in the rain. You almost never know what you will get in the rain, at night, or when hand holding a long exposure, so be ready for anything.

### Don't Be Afraid to Make Mistakes

People who don't make mistakes often aren't trying hard enough. This is especially true when you first

start taking pictures. Make mistakes and learn from them. Try to copy pictures that you like until you make your copy as good as the original. Then start over and do it your own way. Look at photo books in libraries and bookstores. Look at magazines, and not just at the cover and main pictures in a story; also look at the advertising. Some of the best pictures in magazines will be in the ads. Try to figure out what makes these pictures good. Or if you think they are bad, figure out what makes them bad, but don't just say "This is a good picture"; be able to show someone else



exactly why.

Finally, if you can find someone who knows about photography, take your pictures to them and ask them to give you an honest opinion of both the good and the bad of what you are doing. If they say something good, take it as a compliment and go make something better. If they say something bad, take it as a bigger compliment that they are being honest with you and want you to get better!

Then get out there and shoot, shoot, and shoot some more.







# What'supwiththat?

**My friend's little brother used to bounce off the walls until he was put on ADHD medications. Sometimes my friend brings some of his meds to school and sells them to other kids. Is this dangerous?**

**Susan, age 17**

More dangerous than you might think, Susan. Almost 4,000 emergency room visits were related to two of the major medications (Adderall and Ritalin) used to treat Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in 2004. These drugs are often used in nonmedical ways by high school and college students who like the stimulant effect of the drug (strangely, for people who have ADHD, the drug actually helps to calm and focus them). Most ER visits involved more than one drug, usually alcohol, marijuana, or another prescription drug taken at the same time. The most common ER symptoms were high blood pressure, heart attacks, and strokes. Taking medications that are prescribed to others is definitely not smart, but taking the drugs in combination with other drugs is just plain dangerous.

**I have some friends who started smoking every day and later began drinking heavily, too. Is this common?**

**Oliver, age 14**

Yes, it is, Oliver. Teen smokers have a 50 percent greater risk of developing a serious alcohol problem than nonsmokers, even when they drink the same amount as nonsmokers. Researchers think that smoking at a young age actually makes

the brain more susceptible to other addictions such as problem drinking. In fact, the younger a person starts smoking regularly, the more likely he or she is to have problems with other addictions. Our advice (since you asked ?)—don't start smoking in the first place. Your brain has more important things to do than wrestle with addictive and dangerous drugs.

**My mom got really mad at me when she found out that I was taking No-Doz to stay up late studying. What's the big deal—caffeine is legal, and it's in lots of our drinks.**

**Shelly, age 16**

You wouldn't be the first person to use caffeine to stay up late, Shelly. Caffeine is not seen as addictive or dangerous by many because it's legal and usually safe in small doses. However, researchers at Northwestern University recently reported on 250 caffeine-related cases in which overcaffeinated teenagers came into emergency rooms with symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, racing heartbeat, hallucinations, panic attacks, and chest pains. Twelve percent of these cases actually required hospitalization. Many people don't think that caffeine can be dangerous because it's used by everyone, but it's still a drug and it can definitely hurt your body. So before you pop any more caffeine pills or chug an energy drink to stay awake at night, think about the consequences and start a little earlier on your homework.



# Swinging



Illustration by Rusty Barger

By Johana Botha

**T**he bell screamed the end of the school day, and all of us bubbled out of the classroom. I had scrambled through the door when a hand clasped my shoulder and Andy stood there looking at me.

"Another Friday night, Devon," the tone of his voice sounded as if he was talking about a best friend's funeral, not the start of a weekend. I knew how he felt. Life has been a downer ever since . . . ever since I don't know. But I remember being a little kid, waking up every morning excited about my chocolate-flavored cereal. These days cereal didn't do it for me. Nothing did.

"Yup. Another Friday night," I said, sighing.

I heard Chad before I saw him.

"Friday night, baby! Friday NIGHT!" his voice bobbed ahead of him as he came galloping toward us, making sure to accidentally bump into at least one of the cute girls.

He reached us with the usual smile and blank eyes. I never really knew whether or not Chad was truly as cheerful as he seemed. As much as his lips stretched from ear-to-ear, his eyes always



# High

had a distant, spacey look.

"Devon, I have an idea," he announced. Andy was already rolling his eyes.

"No ideas tonight, bro . . . let's just go home. Hard week you know." I spoke with no conviction.

"No, listen. Tonight we do the real thing. Everything's been down the drain lately! Life stinks, dude!" Chad seemed excited, but I felt tired and Andy was looking at Chad in a way Einstein might have looked at a simpleton.

That's when Chad let it rip. "Alcohol, baby!" His eyes were wide and scared, grotesquely contrasting with his sunny tone of voice and ever-present smile. "Everybody's doin' it!" he shouted. "There's a reason why we've been crying and everybody else is laughing. Devon, your parents own a bunch of the stuff . . ."

Quiet for a moment, I glanced at Andy.

"That's right, you told me they did," he said. I was thoroughly surprised. *Andy and alcohol? What next?*

I walked home that day; every step a mile, every street a marathon. Money, ambition, stuff . . . happiness is all that matters—all that humanity really searches for. This is life's meanest curve ball. Sorry, that car won't solve your problems. Too bad, the new pair of jeans won't give you peace. You have to find happiness. How? Nobody knows. Well, maybe Chad knows. Get high.

Not a soul will discover the missing bottles; there's so many of them anyway. If it does make you feel happy, then why not?

I reached our house.

Why not?

I walked tentatively inside, listening. Funny how a guilty conscience

could make me feel criminal in my own home.

*It makes you feel relaxed.*

Guilty conscience? I hadn't even done anything wrong.

*Then why not?*

I angrily brushed hair out of my eyes and marched down the stairs. Mom won't be home until later. Dad never comes home. The stuff was kept in the basement. I stalled for a moment when I reached the cupboard—well, why not?—then jerked the wooden door to the side and started grabbing bottles. I didn't care about brands;

from a rainstorm. He had dark-green eyes—like mine—and wouldn't stop talking.

"We were just playing some ball over at my house . . . but then my friend hit the ball faster than I could run. I tried to catch it . . . really did . . ." he broke off as his eyes traveled to the bottles in my arms, which I quickly hid behind my back. The boy's eyes shone; maybe with tears, probably with innocence.

I picked up the ball. It felt good in my hands.

"Do you like playing baseball,

***I emerged at the top of the stairs with what must have been a wild-convict-just-broke-outta-jail expression. Juggling an armful of bottles . . .***

this was Happy Juice, whether it was orange or apple did not matter.

I emerged at the top of the stairs with what must have been a wild-convict-just-broke-outta-jail expression. Juggling an armful of bottles, I raced to the front door and flung it open.

Abruptly a gunshot resounded in my ears.

My first thoughts were *Police? Already?* I stopped dead in my tracks.

That's when I saw the baseball rolling past my feet, took in the scattered pieces of glass from our front window, and heard a small voice speak from the corner of the yard.

"I'm so sorry."

The young boy was as far away from a police officer as sunlight

bud?"

He stood still for a moment.

"I love it," he said. "It makes me happy."

I tossed the ball to him, truly smiling for the first time in . . . forever.

"Go have fun, man. I'll clean this up."

He gave me a big grin and ran outside.

"Thank you," I whispered. Putting the bottles back in the cupboard, I looked around for the phone; maybe Andy and Chad wanted to play some ball.





but I was just too excited!

## JESSICA BULLOCK

By Mary Rahn

If you're a teenager interested in politics, you might consider running for student government. However, Jessica Bullock, a 17-year-old high school junior, skipped that step entirely and went for a bigger opportunity: a spot on the State Board of Education of Vermont. Not surprisingly, she has a passion for learning and is interested in a variety of subjects, from music—she plays in a band called *Til We Have Faces*—to psychology; from foreign language—she's taking classes in French and Spanish and hopes to learn Chinese—to human anatomy. Read on for Jessica's tips about finding your passion and reaching for the stars!

**Listen: Why is this something you wanted to do?**

*Jessica:* I've always been focused on my academics and I've always loved school and learning. But I realize that, for a lot of kids, school is not so much

fun. I wanted to get involved and change that. When I heard about the State Board of Education opportunity, I thought, *This is my chance*. I hope this experience will give me a good background so that, in the future, I'll be able to be even more involved.

**Listen: Will you tell us a bit about the selection process? Was it what you expected?**

*Jessica:* To be honest, I didn't know what to expect. I was given an application by my guidance counselor. Then I received a telephone call requesting that I come to Montpelier (to the state capitol) for an interview—which went really well, despite the butterflies in my stomach. A few weeks later I received another call asking that I return for a second interview. This time I got to meet Governor Jim Douglas. (Needless to say, I was even more nervous!) When they told me I was the newest member of the state board, I was blown away. I tried to stay calm,

**Listen: What are some difficulties you have faced?**

*Jessica:* Well, I'm not a shy person, but at first I felt a bit intimidated. However, all the other board members have welcomed me and helped me to adapt. I hope that, as I continue my time on the board, I will become even more comfortable with speaking my mind and offering my ideas.

**Listen: What are your plans for the future? Has this affected your future goals or plans?**

*Jessica:* I view my future as a gift I've been given, but one I'm not quite sure what to do with. I believe my experience on the Vermont State Board of Education will affect my future. I know that, whatever I do, I will still be passionate about learning and will want to be involved. Learning is such a beautiful thing, and I want to help kids (and adults) see that beauty.

**Listen: Do you have any advice for other young people reaching for their dreams—especially for those who want to get involved in politics?**

*Jessica:* I'd say, "Look around!" You'd be surprised at what opportunities are out there if you take the time to look. Don't be afraid to ask guidance counselors, teachers, or community members for help or advice. When people see you're willing to put in the effort, they are usually more than happy to talk to you.



# COOL Stuff

By Kent and Kyle Healy



## Reality Check

**H**ey! We're Kent and Kyle Healy, and this is our cool space. When we were 14 and 15 years old, reality gave us a real wake-up call. We were shaken by this place called the "real world." Perhaps you've heard of it.

When we were 9 and 10, our parents moved our family halfway around the world to New Zealand, where we spent the next eight years of our lives. We attended five different high schools, lived in eight different houses, and resided in six different cities.

Although we were trying hard in school, we didn't know the first thing about how to control our attitude, set goals, manage our money, get a job, plan for our future . . . the list goes on. Fortunately, we knew enough to know that we didn't know enough. We didn't want to enter the "real world" with the same feeling you get when you enter algebra class four weeks late! No thank you!

Even though our introduction into the "real world" was harsh, we learned a valuable lesson: You have to be smart enough to appreciate how little you know, in order to become wiser.

We started doing our own research to find the tools and information we needed to better prepare ourselves for the years ahead. Now at ages 20 & 22, with more than five years of research under our belts, we've finished our first book, *"Cool Stuff" They Should Teach in School*, and we're on a mission to pass on what we've learned to make your journey into the real world a little bit easier.

There is so much information available that can literally change your life or just help you get what and where you want in life. For the next year we'll be providing you with short, bite-size sections that deliver the vital information you **NEED** to know to thrive in the real world.

Life's too short to be playing catch-up and making mistakes that could have been avoided.

### The Next Step . . .

We've learned that the best way to get the results you want is to get directly involved—and that's where this section comes in. Go to [www.listenmagazine.org](http://www.listenmagazine.org) and click on our picture. We guarantee that if you take the time to participate in these exercises you will walk away with some practical tools and insight that you can use to build the life you want.

Be sure to check out this section each month. You can learn from our mistakes and our discoveries so you can spend more time enjoying success. The bottom line is this: we're just like you. We want to make our dreams a reality and have fun in the process. We hope you'll check us out each month so you can learn some of the same "Cool Stuff" that has literally transformed our lives.

Does it sound like a deal? We hope so.

After all, why stumble into the real world when you can cruise in . . . with style? See you next month!

**CONTACT US: CHECK US OUT ONLINE AT: [www.coolstuffmedia.com](http://www.coolstuffmedia.com). If you have any questions about this month's topic, contact us at: [KentandKyle@coolstuffmedia.com](mailto:KentandKyle@coolstuffmedia.com)**



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As part of the community, I choose to be a part of the solution rather than the problem. I believe everyone is important, including me. I CHOOSE to respect and treat others the way I would like to be treated. I CHOOSE to set the example of a caring individual, regardless of what others may choose to say or do. I CHOOSE to avoid alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs, violence, and illicit sex, because these prevent me from reaching my goal of being the best I can be, and "doing the best I can do." **THIS IS MY PLEDGE.**

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