

# listen<sup>®</sup>

CELEBRATING POSITIVE CHOICES

JANUARY 2008

**SUICIDE:**  
*What Can You Do?*

**SCARY STEROIDS**

**EQUESTRIAN  
VAULTING**

*The*  
**Blue  
Angels**



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**R**ight after a big winter storm that buried us in a couple feet of snow, Max and I went snowshoeing. The snow was like wet cement, and at every step I'd slide into the snow and then yank my snowshoe back up for the next step. It was tiring. To make matters worse, Max was walking behind me and every now and then he'd try to hitch a ride on my snowshoes. Let me tell you, when it's all you can do to pick up your legs, the last thing you need is a full-grown German Shepherd standing on your snowshoes.

When we almost got to the farthest end, where we would start back to the car, I realized that I was getting really tired. It was such hard work walking in the deep, sludgy snow that every step was like a marathon. I decided to take a shorter route back but I kept wondering, "What happens if I can't walk any further? What if we don't make it out?"

Needless to say we did make it out or I wouldn't be here writing about it. But it got me thinking about being prepared. I wasn't really prepared when I left home to go

snowshoeing because I thought I'd be right back. I didn't have supplies or warmer clothes or anything I really needed to survive if I hadn't made it out of the woods.

You don't have to be going into the woods to need survival skills. Today you're probably headed to school. On the bus someone may offer you drugs. In the locker room you might get bullied. Behind the bleachers someone might pressure you to have sex. Do you have the survival skills you need to get yourself safely out of those dangerous situations? If not, take steps today to get the skills you need to face whatever life will throw at you. Reading Listen is a good start.

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



Céleste Perrino-Walker  
Editor


Member of the  
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By Christina Struyk-Bonn

Illustration by Stephanie Shieldhouse

# My Brother Spencer

**MY BROTHER SPENCER IS A GENIUS.**

He received college-level SAT scores in seventh grade, he read *Moby Dick* for fun when he was 11, and he has an IQ of 170.

But even though schoolwork comes easy to him while I struggle with everything, I'm way smarter than my brother.

I realized this when I was in seventh grade and he was in ninth. That year Spencer tried out for the All-State Band with his trumpet and made it. First chair, first try. After the All-State Band concert, two different colleges offered him music scholarships if he'd go to their schools. Spencer figured if colleges wanted him when he was 14, why should he attend high school? He started skipping school all the time.

When he was a junior and I was a freshman, he still skipped his classes. I, on the other hand, never skipped. By the end of that year, I had a 3.75 GPA and his was a whopping 1.35.

That same year Spencer started hanging out with a new crowd. Before, he'd hang out with the music geeks, but he got bored with them and started hanging out with kids who offered him "mental stimulation." This stimulation came in a variety of forms: leafy green, white powder, little pieces of paper, mushrooms, you get the idea.

At the end of his junior year,



Spencer took his SATs and got a perfect score. 1600. Flawless. He was Ivy League material. But after he'd applied to seven different universities, he hadn't been accepted to a single one. No one wanted a student without a work ethic. When Spencer realized this, he started tripping every night. He stayed at a friend's apartment and barely came home. That's when I decided it was time to talk to Spencer.

Three weeks before he was supposed to graduate, Spencer and I had a confrontation. He'd been coming home in the afternoons, when my parents were at work, so I knew when to catch him.

"Hey, Spence," I said when he walked through the door.

"Lucy," he panted, startled. He looked terrible. He was a pasty green color and had dark rings around his eyes.

"Spence, you have got to stop doing drugs. Look at yourself," I said.

Spencer was shaky, on edge, unstable. He glared at me.

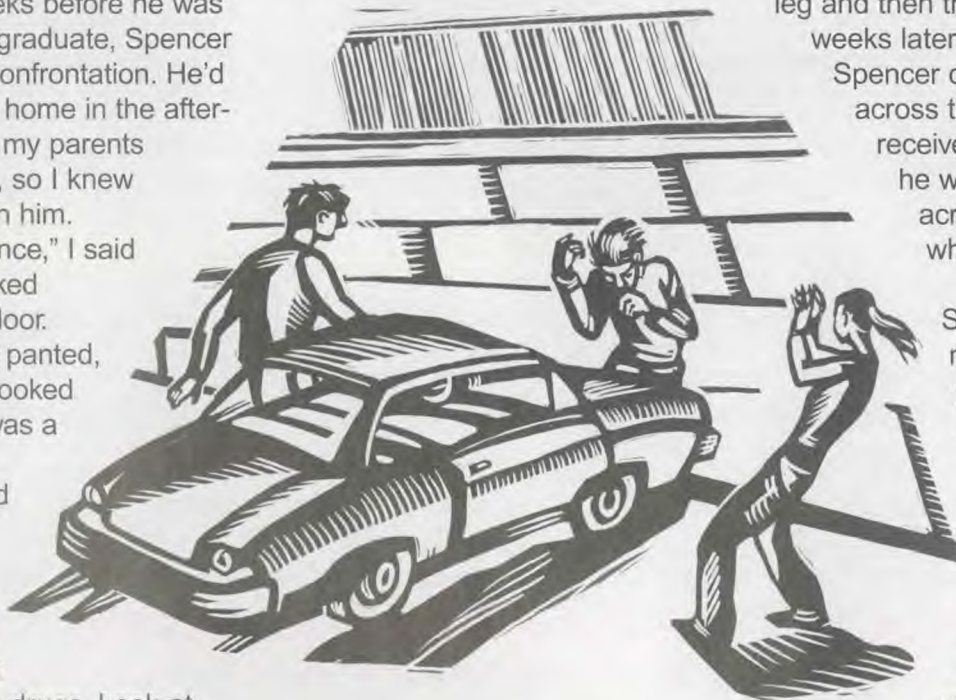
"Leave me alone, Lucy. My body, my life; get your own."

"You know, Spence, brains don't do you much good if you don't use them." Spencer ignored me, grabbed some clean clothes, stuffed a grocery bag full of food from the kitchen, and left. I waited a few minutes and then followed.

About three blocks from his friend's apartment, a car

screamed down the road and pulled up right beside Spencer. He got into the car and they peeled out. I kept going to the apartment building where Spencer's friend lived.

I sat on the curb and waited until the car roared around the corner and pulled into the parking lot. Spencer and Ty Mason stumbled out of the car, along with a lot of smoke. They slammed the doors and the car started



rolling backward. Ty jumped back into the car, started it up, hit the gas, and then hit the brakes. Spencer ambled over to the apartment building wall and leaned against it.

And that's when the game of chicken began.

Ty hit the gas and then the brakes. He hit the gas and then the brakes. He was within a foot of my brother. Spencer lounged against the wall, his eyes barely open; he wasn't going anywhere. Ty hit the gas and then

the brakes. And then he just plain hit the gas.

Both Spencer and I screamed at the same time. Spencer stood pinned to the wall. Ty got out of the car, looked at Spencer, jumped back into the car, and put it in reverse. The car spun backward and Spencer fell to the ground. He couldn't move.

Both of Spencer's shins were crushed. The doctors, in a 10-hour surgery, reconstructed one leg and then the other. Three weeks later at graduation, Spencer didn't walk across the stage to receive his diploma; he was pushed across in a wheelchair.

And what is Spencer doing now? After a year of physical therapy, he's trying to salvage his GPA by attending community college. I have been accepted at a university and will be headed there next fall. Spencer's done doing drugs. He can't believe he got so wrapped up in them. But drugs can do anything to you—take away your potential, take away your brains, leave you with braces on your legs.

I've got my brother back. I'm glad about that, but I wish he was still ahead of me instead of having fallen behind.



**G**uys, do you ever admire men with bulky, strong physiques? Girls, how about the lean, slinky girl in your class. Sure, those bodies are likely obtained by trips to the gym and healthy eating, but according to NIDA (The National Institute on Drug Abuse), 2.6 percent of twelfth graders admitted to using anabolic steroids at least once over his or her lifetime. Contrary to popular belief, steroids aren't used only by guys. Considering trying these get-bulky-fast/gimme-lean-muscles treatments? Read on and think again.

### **Steroids explained**

The NIDA for Teens describes steroids as synthetic substances that replicate the male sex hormone testosterone. Some steroids may be used by a doctor to reduce swelling, but steroids that are not prescribed are illegal. A substance similar to steroids and thought to enhance performance is creatine—an over-the-counter substance found naturally in the human body. Though legal, creatine's side effects and impact on performance are not conclusive. The use of steroids and creatine is not something to be taken lightly.

Peer pressure is not the only form of pressure that teens receive to consider trying steroids. Some coaches and parents may influence steroid use. "Comments such as 'You could stand to gain a few extra pounds' or 'If you were bigger you could play on the team' send a message," says Dr. Joseph Berning, an exercise physiologist and assistant professor in the Department of Human Performance, Dance, and Recreation at New Mexico State University. With the spotlight following athletes and firm-bodied celebrities, teens are under more stress to conform to a specific body image without much thought to how those bodies are obtained. The risks of steroids, however, are clear and present.

For both sexes, the sharing of needles for steroids can increase risk of HIV/AIDS. While the effects of steroids on the outside may be more obvious, "we don't see the internal damage that can be occurring until it is too late," says Dr. Berning.

By Jessica Burkhardt

# SCARY Steroids





Josh, a teen athlete who never considered steroid use, knows all too well the price to pay for steroid use. He witnessed it in people around him. Josh is an 18-year-old Minnesota resident headed to play Division I hockey for an Ivy League university. Josh was never pressured to take steroids and he found other ways to improve his physical performance. "By continually changing up my workout routine, my body never adapts, and thus I am always making gains in the weight room," Josh says. "I stay clean for three reasons: I know the negative effects of



steroids, I know how to train smart, and I believe that taking steroids is cheating."

Determined to take his love of sports and health to the next level, Josh created the Web site Fortismag.com. The Web site, Josh says, "offers athletes, particularly those between the ages of 14 to 25, free workout information, nutritional information, and articles on training-related subjects."

For someone using steroids and deciding to go clean with a routine such as Josh's, it's never too late to stop. "Anabolic steroids are not physically addicting," says Dr. Berning. "There can be a psychological need to grow and get strong and peer pressure to use steroids, but no physical addiction exists."

#### Safe alternatives

As Josh knows, there are numer-

ous ways to achieve full-strength and performance potential without using steroids. Proper exercise, variation of workout routine, and a healthy diet are the safest ways to achieve an optimal body. Consider visiting your doctor and starting a vitamin regimen if your diet is lacking.

## RISKS OF STEROIDS according to NIDA:

### For guys:

Lowered sperm count  
Shrinking of testicles  
Baldness  
Breast development  
Cancer risk increase

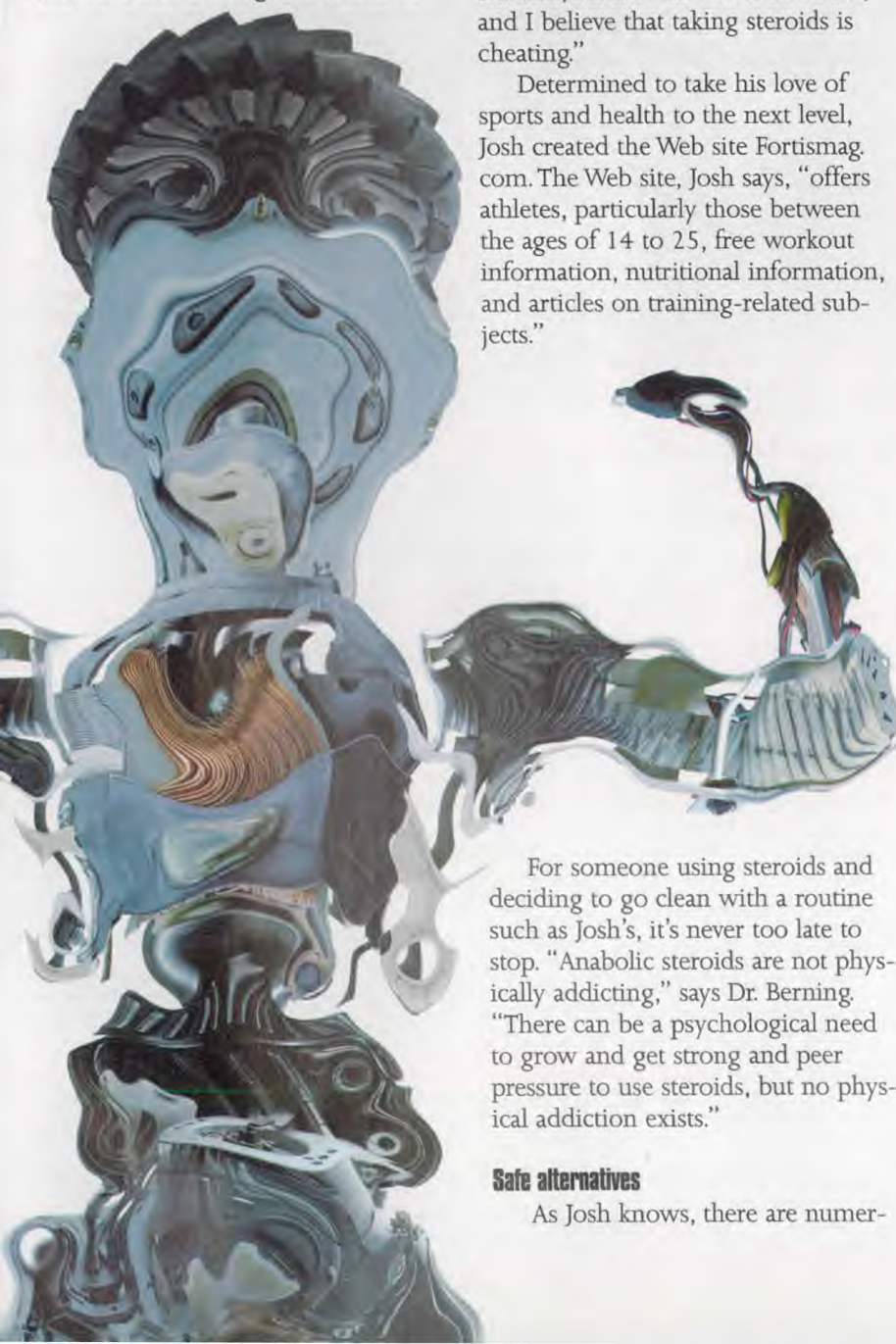
### For girls:

Fast growth of facial hair  
Baldness  
Changes in period cycles  
Deepened voice  
Stunted growth

Dr. Berning adds final words of caution for those using or considering steroid use. "All great athletes train extremely hard for their sport and activity both in the weight room and on the field. They eat right, practice hard, sleep for recovery, and study their sport. They don't let others dictate their dreams or influence their decisions." But, the use of steroids often leads down a self-destructive path of cheating and covering the steroid use. "The risk of using anabolic steroids is not worth the cost or the stigma if you get caught," he adds. "True satisfaction in winning comes from knowing you won by hard work. Remember, you have to live with your conscience."

#### More info

For more information on the harmful effects of steroid use, visit NIDA for Teens at [www.teens.drugabuse.gov](http://www.teens.drugabuse.gov).





# It's a Bird, It's a It sure is!

By Mark N. Lardas, photos provided by the author



**Y**OU HAVE PROBABLY SEEN THE U. S. NAVY'S FLIGHT DEMONSTRATION SQUADRON, THE BLUE ANGELS. They performed 66 shows at 35 different air fields in 2007. In a typical year over 15 million fans watch the Blue Angels strut their stuff in the Navy's newest fighter—the F/A-18 Hornet.

Have you ever wondered what it takes to become a Blue Angel pilot? what it is like to fly for the Blue Angels? what they do, on and off the field?

*Listen* magazine did. We talked to Lieutenant Commander Thomas R. Winkler. He flies "slot" for the Blue Angels. Slot is the number 4 airplane,—the jet tucked in at the back of the diamond. Winkler joined the Blue Angels in September 2005.

Winkler considers himself an unlikely Blue Angel. "I came to aviation late. I was not someone who grew up wanting to be a pilot as a kid." And he doesn't come from a service background.

Home is Washington, D.C., where he grew up. "I got interested in the Navy because of a neighbor. He was a Vietnam veteran, a retired Navy captain. He mentored me. I learned about the Navy through him. It seemed like it would be an interesting first job out of college. I could have some fun, travel, and serve my country."

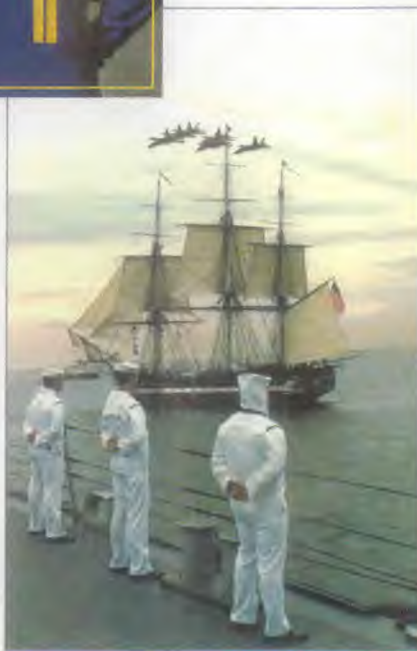
Winkler joined the Navy Reserve Officer Training Corps unit at college, the University of Virginia. Then he got interested in naval aviation. "I went out for flight training. They sent me to Pensacola." (The Navy has its flight school there.)

"Then I asked to fly jets and got that." He has been flying the Hornet since January 2000, first in a Navy fleet squadron in South Carolina, and

later as an instructor pilot. He decided to apply to the Blue Angels.

You have to volunteer. Competition is intense. Being the hottest pilot in the sky is not enough. The Blue Angels look for pilots who are team players. "You spend 280-plus days together in a high-stress environment," Winkler says. "When we interview volunteers, we ask 'Who do we want to be around? Who will best represent the Navy, Marines, and the Armed Forces?'"

If you get in, you are in for the busiest two years of your life. From November to March you fly six days a week, learning the routine. When air show season starts, in April, you get busier. On Tuesdays





# Plane



*The U.S. Navy's  
Flight Demonstration  
Squadron, the*

## *BLUE ANGELS*

and Wednesdays you practice at Pensacola, the Blue Angels' home base. As slot pilot, Winkler is training officer. "Our routine takes an hour. We fly one of three shows, depending upon the weather. Then we debrief. I do the debrief. We review the maneuvers. It takes an hour and a half—longer than we fly."

On Wednesdays they spend an hour at the Navy Air Museum at Pensacola, meeting visitors and signing autographs. "It is a lot of fun," says Winkler. On Thursday they fly to

their show site. After they arrive, they do a flyover to review the terrain. Then they fly their routine. On Friday mornings they visit schools in the area—talking to students about what they do. They do a full-out dress rehearsal in the afternoon.

Saturday and Sunday are showtime. That is when they do their act for the air show. Sunday evening they fly home. Monday, they rest.

What is the best part of the





job? "Visiting the people we meet around the country," says Winkler. "The speed and smoke and all that are fun, but my biggest reward is speaking with kids and sharing our experiences. Flying is great, but meeting people is the best part."

And the worst? "You get only two years," mourns Winkler. The demonstration pilots stay only two years. The pilots who fly the C-130 "Fat Albert" support plane get a three-year tour. "I would stay longer if I could," says Winkler.

Is it dangerous? Winkler says no. "It has the appearance of danger. It is a dynamic environment, but there is a lot of preparation that goes into each show. There is danger, but the relative danger is not high. The accident rate is lower than at a fleet squadron. Safety has priority."

As for the thrill of flying? "It is a great feeling. I have been flying 11 years. It is lots of fun; an intense environment. Imagine riding on a really fast roller coaster." Winkler loves flying the Hornet, but the T-34, a primary trainer, comes a close second. "Flying the T-34 is pure aviation. You feel like you are part of the sky."

What else does it take? "Fitness is critical," Winkler says. "You have to eat healthy, and work out. Flying is a physically demanding environment." Winkler lifts weights to build strength and rides a bicycle or runs for a cardio workout virtually every day.

As for drugs and alcohol? "The Navy has a zero-tolerance policy

toward drug use or alcohol while flying," states Winkler. "It is not an option to be flying jet aircraft and be involved in drug use at the same time." Too dangerous.

What about when you are in high school or college? "Avoid them and you keep your options open. Once you start doing drugs, you lose options. You do not want to do that."

Winkler views life as being about options. "Do as well as you can in school. That keeps your options open. You do not want to close out your options. Work hard in school."

He also points out: "You do not have to be a pilot in your teens to become a Blue Angel pilot. You can pick that up after you join the Navy." But you do have to get a four-year



# BLUE ANGELS



degree. "You have to be an officer," says Winkler. "Look for a college with an ROTC program, or the Naval Academy."

A final pointer from Commander Winkler: "You might not know about something. Learn about it. Do not let anyone else's answers limit you from doing what you want to do. Keep after it."



# Good for You

## Don't Pass the Salt

**Salt**— it's everywhere. We use it to preserve and flavor foods, make homemade ice cream, and keep

our sidewalks and roads from getting slippery in the winter. Hardly a meal goes by in America without somebody saying, "Could you please pass the salt?" But next time, before you reach for that shaker to add a little flavor to your green beans, consider the following:

**Salt is made** of a combination of two elements, sodium and chloride, and is an essential ingredient in a healthy diet, helping to maintain proper acid-base balance in the body, and helping nerve transmission and muscle contraction.

**Salt comes in many forms**, including: Kosher salt, used to preserve uncooked meats; sea salt, which also contains other minerals like calcium, iron, potassium, magnesium, and zinc; rock salt, used to make homemade ice cream and to prevent ice buildup on sidewalks; and common table salt, the stuff you shake on your food.

**The average person needs** about 2,400 milligrams of sodium per day. That's just a little more than a teaspoon of salt. The average American consumes 4,000–6,000 milligrams per day.

**A well-balanced diet** already contains all the salt our body needs, so throw that saltshaker away.

**Too little sodium** in the diet can lead to weakness, confusion, and fainting. Too much sodium can cause elevated blood pressure, fluid retention, edema, and may lead to heart disease, stroke, bone loss, and obesity later in life.

**Want to lose weight?** Decrease your salt intake. Excess salt intake causes water retention, and water is heavy. Also, foods high in salt tend to be high in fat. So lay off the salty snacks and watch the numbers on your scale head south.

**Warning!** Salt is sneaky. Many times it hides in plain sight. Up to 75 percent of the salt we eat is hidden in our food. Avoid things like processed meats, canned or smoked fish, canned soups, chips, crackers, salted nuts, popcorn, pickles, salad dressings, sauces, processed cheeses, and prepackaged and frozen foods. They are often loaded with hidden salts.

**Beware the fine print!** Products labeled "reduced sodium" or "no salt added" can still be high in sodium, but at a lesser amount than comparable products. Look instead for words like "sodium-free," "very low sodium," or "low sodium."

**Now the good news.** You don't have to give up flavor when you get rid of the salt. Add some salt-free zing to your foods by seasoning them with lemon juice, herbs, spices, garlic, or onions, instead of salt. Cutting back on salt may help you lose weight and live even longer and healthier, but at first your food may taste a little bland. Don't worry. Within a few weeks your taste buds will adjust and you'll discover you actually like your food better without all that salt covering up the natural flavors. So, at your next meal, do your taste buds—and your heart—a favor and say, "Please, don't pass the salt!"



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



High school students are working harder than ever.



By Christelle Agboka

# Bird by Bird

Do you ever feel like there are not enough hours in the day? Several studies report that high school students are working harder than ever. If you are an average teenager, for instance, you may juggle one or more difficult AP courses with your regular course load. You may also work part-time for an average of 23 hours a week. Finally, you may participate in 10 to 15 hours of extracurricular activities a week. The good news is that there are benefits to being involved in various activities while in high school. Among other things, extracurricular activities or part-time work may increase your self-knowledge, goal-setting, social skills, and sense of responsibility. The key to making the most of these years is to set up a system that makes time work for you.

## Personal Time Survey

To start, track how you spend time over a week. In this "personal time survey," include: (1) sleep; (2) grooming time; (3) hours for meals/snacks per day; (4) weekly travel time; (5) hours per week for regularly scheduled events (e.g., extracurricular activities); (6) chores; (7) paid work; (8) class time; and (9) social time. Now add up the totals. Subtract the total number from 168. The remaining hours are study hours. Next, note and attempt to limit time gobblers. These may include talking on the phone, surfing the Net, or watching TV.



## Avoid Overcommitment

After limiting time gobblers, you may still struggle to find time for homework. As you determine your larger life goals, focus on activities that will help you achieve those goals. For instance, if you dream of becoming a magazine editor but are short on time, join the yearbook staff, but forego the drama club. Also try a simple add and subtract method: avoid adding a new commitment without subtracting an old one. You may do activities on a rotating basis as well. In the summer you may target paid work, and during the school year work no more than 10 hours per week, focusing on homework and extracurricular activities.

## Time Management Tools

A large monthly calendar can serve as a long-range timetable for academic and nonacademic goals, deadlines, or events. On your calendar, list large assignments, music recitals, sporting matches, or major social events. Also note regularly sched-



**Set up a system that makes time work for you.**

uled appointments or events. Try categorizing different items by color.

For instance, write academic items in red, work in green, and sports in blue.

Then determine the steps to accomplishing your goals in different areas. Break each goal down into smaller steps, and attach a deadline to each small step. Note these smaller deadlines on your monthly calendar as well. Once you have a general time line for the month, create prioritized to-do lists. List all of your goals for the week and categorize them in order of importance, using the A-B-C method. In the A section place items that need to be done right away; in B, items that can be completed within the week; and in C, items that can be completed within the month. Write a categorized weekly to-do list on a separate sheet of paper at the beginning of each week, and then transfer the items on this list to your day planner.

Strive to make a daily plan each night for the next day. At the end of each day and each week review your plans. If you notice several unfinished tasks, revise your to-do lists as necessary. In your daily and weekly plans, after you've noted things you're obliged to do, establish a set time for other things that take a high priority in your life. Setting up routines will help you be more productive and consistent.

### Study Time

If possible, review your notes soon after class time to avoid forgetting. Also, try to get in the habit of using even small chunks of time, such as time on the bus to and from school, to do homework. For home study time, determine how long you can stay focused on one subject. If it is 50 minutes, study for that amount of time before taking a short break. After the break, move on to the next subject. A kitchen timer may help you stay on task. Also, be sure to keep all the study materials you need at hand.

### Bird by Bird

Finally, consider a lesson from Anne Lamott's autobiography, *Bird by Bird*. In a classic childhood scene, her older brother sat behind a pile of books at their family's cabin, head in his hands. He had a single evening to complete an extensive report on birds, and he had not even started. Patting his shoulder, their father said, "Bird by bird, buddy. Just take it bird by bird." Similarly, if you attack your time-management goals step-by-step, or bird by bird, you will eventually get to where you want to be.



**Attack your time-management goals step-by-step.**



By  
Dallas  
Woodburn



Dear Dallas,

My mom recently got remarried, and now my stepdad and his teenage son live with us. I like my stepdad OK, but my new stepbrother gets on my nerves! He's always making fun of me at home, which is annoying, but I can deal with it. The really annoying thing is that when I see him at school, he completely ignores me. I mean, I'll say hi to him in the hallway and he won't even look me in the eye, much less say hi back. It bothers me that he acts like he's embarrassed to know me. I mean, we sleep in adjacent bedrooms! Do you have any advice?

—Invisible Stepsister

Dear Invisible,

A divorce is a difficult experi-

ence, and remarriage can be just as difficult because your whole family structure has changed and new people are brought into your life as family. I'm so proud of you for embracing your stepfather and stepbrother and trying to become closer to them. Perhaps your stepbrother is having a more difficult time accepting his new life and family. I know it hurts when he ignores you at school, but for the moment try giving him some space. He may just need time to sort everything out. If his behavior persists, talk to him about it. Invite him to do something fun with you outside of school and casually bring up his actions. Ask him for an explanation. It's possible he's trying to act "cool" in front of his school buddies by ignoring his new sister, and hasn't even considered how it hurts you. Hopefully, once he realizes what a neat person you are, he'll open up to being your friend, both at home and at school. If all else fails, talk to your mom and stepfather and see if they have any insight.

Dear Dallas,

There's this guy at my school I really like. He knows that I like him too. But the thing is, he doesn't like me. Not even as a friend. Sometimes he catches me staring at him and yells he is going to turn me in for it. I know he can't do that, but his coldness hurts me. I wish we could at least be friends. I don't know what to do

because I still really like him.  
Please help.

—Unrequited Like

Dear Unrequited Like,

I can completely relate to the frustrating experience of having feelings for someone who doesn't share those feelings—I think we all can. But it's not healthy to keep pining after a guy who doesn't even want to be your friend. Take a step back and try to look at him through objective eyes. Why do you like him so much? What has he ever given back to you? You can't force someone to be your friend—and, in all honesty, why do you want someone as a friend who isn't interested in being your friend? Friendship is a two-way street, and he has made it obvious this road is a dead end. I know it hurts and I know it takes time, but my advice is to try your best to get over him. Focus your energies on sharing your great qualities with your true friends. Throw yourself into your passions—sports, drama, art—or take up a new hobby. You are an amazing person, and anyone who doesn't see that doesn't deserve you anyway!

Dear Dallas,

I borrowed my sister's jacket without her knowing and—oops!—got a huge stain on it. She'll be mad that I took it without asking—and REALLY mad that I got a stain on it. What should I do?

—Don't Let a Klutz Order Spaghetti

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 "DON'T LET A KLUTZ ORDER SPAGHETTI":

- Slip the jacket back into her sister's closet and hope she won't notice the stain—and, if she does notice, deny knowing anything about it?
- Buy her sister a replacement jacket and try to pass it off as the original?
- Confess to her sister, apologize, and offer to buy her a new jacket?



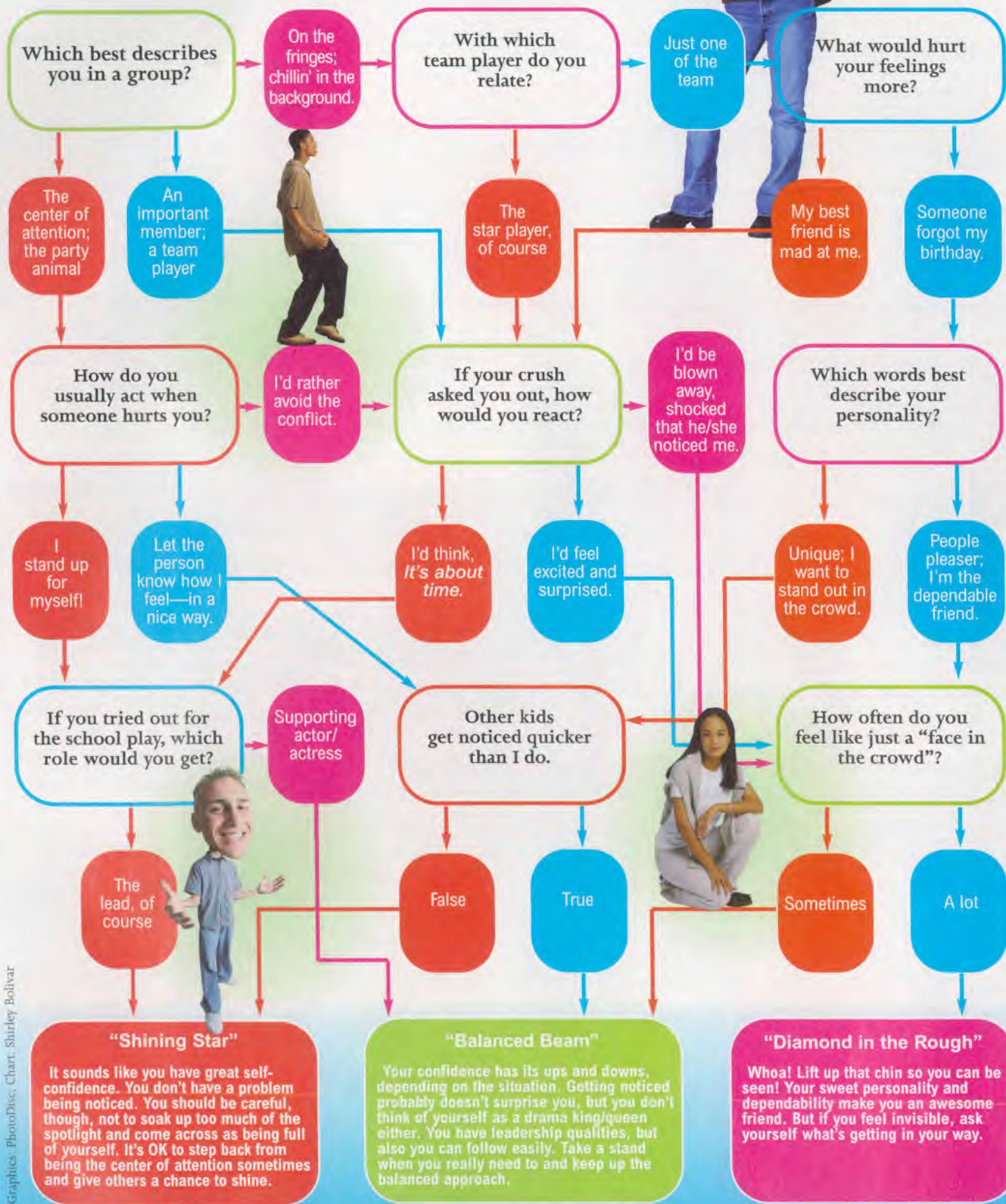
# What's Your

by Angela Thomas

# IQ

(Invisibility Quotient)?

Answer these questions to find out how you show up in the crowd.





# Eban & Ani-Mai

By Dallas Woodburn

Illustration by Jason Cole

Hello?

Hey, Ani-Mai, *Space Adventures XIII* is playing at the two-dollar theater tonight. Wanna go?

Sorry, Eban, I can't. I still have 200 pages of *A Tale of Two Cities* to read.

C'mon, it's winter break! Time to have fun! We have plenty of time till school starts.

Only six days. And we have to write a five-page book report!

You're such a worrier, Ani-Mai. You'll get it done.

I know-- but only if I stay home and do it! It's not gonna write itself.

Suit yourself, but you'll be missing out on a great movie.

I can see it later.

2 days later...


The movie was AWE-SOME!

Shhh, don't spoil it for me! I'm seeing it tomorrow with my brother.

So are you free to hang out today?

Sure! I finished my report last night, so I'm home free for the rest of break!





Hey, Eban, the Starstruck Monkeys are playing at Sam's Coffeehouse tonight and I scored two tickets! Wanna go?

I can't

What do you mean? They're, like, your favorite band of all time!

I know. But I haven't started my book report. Actually, I haven't even finished reading the book!

WHAT? It's due tomorrow!!!

I know. And it's completely my fault. I procrastinated big-time. I'll be up all night, and even then I'm not sure I'll get it done in time.

How was the concert?


Amazing! I missed you, though.

Thanks. My New Year's resolution is no more procrastinating, especially on homework! It feels good to put it off, but it only makes life a million times more stressful down the line!




# SUICIDE

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?



**1. LAST YEAR, APPROXIMATELY ONE IN FIVE TEENS SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED SUICIDE.** One in six made plans. One in 12 attempted suicide. Suicide is the third-ranking cause of death for teens in America. Chances are someone you know has contemplated or attempted suicide. What can you do?

Over 90 percent of teens who attempt or commit suicide are depressed and/or abuse alcohol, illegal drugs, prescription or over-the-counter medication, or other substances. Girls attempt suicide more frequently; but boys are four times more likely to actually kill themselves. What do these statistics mean to you, in your school, with your friends? What's one of the best things you can do for a friend who seems suicidal?





"Most suicide attempts are expressions of extreme distress, not harmless bids for attention," warns the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). "A person who appears suicidal should not be left alone and needs immediate mental-health treatment." For your part, eliminate access to tools they might use, such as guns, rope, illegal drugs, and unsupervised prescription or over-the-counter medicines. Don't leave your friend alone. Encourage him or her to call a doctor or suicide hotline, or offer to go to the nearest emergency room together. Immediately tell an adult. Let your friend hate you for narcing. Hey, at least they'll be alive to do it! However, while limiting access and opportunity may help in the short-term, it doesn't address your friend's underlying issues and reasons for believing suicide is their only option—the heart of the matter.

Where does one start a list of why teens think about, plan, or commit suicide? The reasons prove as individual as the person. "Research also shows that the risk for suicide is associated with changes in brain chemicals called neurotransmitters, including serotonin" (NIMH). Decreased serotonin often contributes to depression and other mood disorders.

The teen years will probably be the most difficult of your life, especially emotionally. But since that's not very helpful, watch for these signs of trouble—signals that something may be going wrong inside. If you see yourself or a friend in one or more of these signs adapted from the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Web site, please call a trusted adult or trained professional—try 1-800-273-TALK.

▼ Thinking about hurting or killing oneself.

▼ Seeking access to firearms, pills, or other tools.

▼ Feeling as if no one is paying attention to him/her.

▼ Feeling anxious, agitated, or unable to sleep (or eat, or work) or sleeping all the time.

▼ Experiencing dramatic mood changes.

▼ Seeing no reason for living, having no sense of purpose in life, can't seem to get control.

because they eventually come to realize that the crisis is temporary and death is not," says the American Association of Suicidology. "On the other hand, people in the midst of a crisis often perceive their dilemma as inescapable and feel an utter loss of control."

The first thing to do for a suicidal friend is listen. Discuss suicide openly and honestly—acting shocked will just raise barriers. Let your friend express his or her feelings, and accept them nonjudgmentally. Now isn't the time to debate the morality of suicide, which feelings are good or bad, or if life is really worth it all.

Next, make yourself available and get involved in your friend's life. Be supportive and encouraging, but don't swear secrecy. You can't handle this by yourself—help your friend find the professional support they need.

Finally, offer them hope, minus glib

**"REMEMBER THE 4 E'S: EXPECT A LOT OF YOURSELF. EVERYONE HAS STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS. EVERYBODY NEEDS HELP SOMETIMES. EXPRESS YOURSELF: YOUR IDEAS AND FEELINGS MATTER."**

If you want to be proactive and head off suicidal thoughts and actions before they become realities, check out this great (and easily memorized!) advice from the Family and Youth Services Bureau. "Remember the 4 E's: Expect a lot of yourself. Everyone has strengths and limitations. Everybody needs help sometimes. Express yourself: your ideas and feelings matter."

What else can you do for a friend you're worried about, whether they're suicidal, thinking about it, or just really depressed? Many people think about suicide at some point in their lives. "Most everyone decides to live

reassurances and pat answers. Alternatives are always available, although your friend (or you) may not be able to see any at the moment. "There isn't any magical answer that will always make life easy," says the Family and Youth Services Bureau. "For all of us, there are both hard times and good times." But with help from professionals, family, and friends, you and your friends can survive tough times and begin to put your lives back together again. True friends stick together for both the unexpected difficulties and life's good surprises.



# Wow



**A**lmost everyone is afraid to speak in front of an audience. Movie stars get wobbly knees giving speeches about awards they've just won. Your teacher probably had butterflies in her stomach before she first stood up in front of a class. Even the president of the United States can find giving speeches a nerve-racking experience. Sooner or later, you'll have to write and deliver a speech in front of your entire class. But don't freak out! There are easy steps you can take to wow your audience and make it look like a piece of cake, because it is!



By Joel Schwartzberg

## Step 1: Ask Yourself Questions

Let's say your speech is on butterflies (and not the kind in your stomach), but you don't know what to say about them. Well, pretend you're about to listen to a speech on butterflies. What questions pop into your mind? How do they fly? What makes their wings colorful? Where do they live? Your audience is going to be wondering the same questions. Write these questions down. If more pop into your head, write them down too. Then go to the library or an approved Web site and find the answers. Collect all the interesting facts about your subject that you can, as if you were catching them with your own information butterfly net.

## Step 2: Organize Your Speech

A speech and your bedroom have one thing in common: the more disorganized they are, the harder they are to get through. Here's how to start organizing: Put all your answers and information into main groups, like rooms. The rooms can be columns or big circles or separate sheets of paper. One room could be titled "Butterfly Lifestyle." Another could be "Butterfly Wings." A third could be "Butterfly Flight." Fill these rooms with your research.

If you've ever taken a trip, you know how it really helps to know where you're going. Your audience is on a trip too, so let them know what rooms you'll be leading them through. It's called a "preview" and should sound like this:

"In my speech today, first we're going to examine the lifestyle of butterflies, then we're going to look closely at the butterfly wings. Finally, we'll see how butterflies fly."

Once you've said this, just present your information exactly as you said you would, room by room. Now your speech has organization. (Your bedroom is another story.)

## Step 3: Create an Introduction

The introduction, which is the very first thing you say, is often called an "attention grabber" because it's supposed to keep your audience from tuning out. A great way to begin a speech is to ask a





# Your Audience

*There are easy steps you can take to wow your audience.*

question related to your topic, like: "How many of you have ever seen a butterfly up close?"

Or share a story: "My Dad and I used to catch butterflies every summer in my backyard."

Or tell a joke: "Some people believe that butter comes from butterflies!"

Easy, right? Once you've written an introduction, follow it up with your preview. Now your audience is tuned in and ready to hear exactly where you're taking them.

## Step 4: Practice!

**Practice! Practice!**



They say practice makes perfect. Well, nobody's perfect, as you probably know. But practice will make you better. Just ask any sports star how important practice is. Public speaking is the same way. Practice in front of a friend, your parents, or a mirror. Whether your speech is on paper, on index cards, or completely memorized, you'll be surprised how much more comfortable you are in front of an audience if you've practiced your speech the night before and again that morning.



## Step 5: Smile and Breathe!

Funny things happen to people when they give a speech. Hearts beat like crazy, mouths start twitching, and it seems like you have to force every word out of your mouth. Hopefully none of these things will happen to you, but one way to be more relaxed is to smile, even if you don't feel like it. It'll make your audience more comfortable to know you're enjoying your talk with them, and you'll soon feel more comfortable too. Also, remember to breathe between sentences and paragraphs. Even if you have to stop to take a long, slow breath, it will almost always put you back on track to a great speech.

Remember, a speech is not just about what you're saying, but how you're saying it. Will you still be nervous even after doing all these things? Probably. Even people who give speeches for a living admit to being nervous each and every time. But if you take these steps, something amazing happens—all that nervousness curling up in your stomach will suddenly become energy. And that energy will wow your audience.

Illustration by Ralph Butler



# TIP TEENS

## Shine in a Crisis

WHEN ALEX CHOI ARRIVED AT HIS FIRST TIP ASSIGNMENT, THERE WAS A DEAD BODY LYING ON THE FLOOR.



By Elisabeth Deffner

Photos provided by Sandy Hill

**I**t was the first time I saw a dead body," says Alex, 17. "I was flustered."

But he was also well trained as a Trauma Intervention Programs, Inc. (TIP Inc.), volunteer, and he knew what he had to do. He pushed away his shock at seeing a corpse in a suburban home and focused on the family of the deceased man, offering them comfort with his presence, with simple words, and with cups of water.

"It was very impacting," says Alex. "It was a very big first call."

### Why TIPTeen?

Alex signed up to train as a TIPTeen volunteer to fulfill his high school's community service requirement. He undertook the 55 hours of training and learned about different trauma situations—from deaths in the home to car accidents, from fires to suicides—as well as emotional first aid: things to say and

do to support people in a crisis.

"You don't want to ask, 'Are you OK?'" Alex explains. "Obviously, they're not."

But, he adds, "there's a lot of difference between learning it and doing it."

Jessica Gutierrez heard about TIP from her mom, who underwent training after she read about the program in a local newspaper. "After her first call she came home and told me about it," recalls Jessica, 18. "I thought it was so cool."

But teen volunteers need to be at least 16 years old, so Jessica had to wait nearly three years before she was old enough to be trained as a TIPTeen volunteer. She didn't mind the wait, though; she was determined to become part of the program because she remembers well what her family experienced after her father's death when she was just 5 years old.

"We didn't have anybody," she says simply.



TIP volunteers provide immediate support to survivors of fires, traffic accidents, and other traumatic incidents. TIP Teens have a special role when there are young people involved.

"We thought that having their peers there could benefit our team," explains Sandy Hill, crisis team manager for TIP Orange County. TIP Teens are "also valuable when there are young children involved."

### Small Acts of Kindness—Big Impact

For Jessica, just as for Alex, one of the toughest TIP lessons was learning that a small gesture can have a huge impact. As Alex says, it's not uncommon for TIP volunteers to finish an assignment and leave with a sense that they didn't do much; but their mere presence can provide intense comfort to families in hospital waiting rooms and to survivors at the scenes of accidents or in their own homes.

"You can make a difference just by taking a cup of water to someone," Jessica says. "Just a simple hug can make people feel better."

Teen volunteers are on call two days a month for a 12-hour shift each day. Jessica is usually on call from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. two Sundays a month. She learned early on that she had to finish her homework assignments on Friday, because a TIP call could throw off her whole schedule!

Her first TIP experience came when her mother was called out to respond to a freeway shooting; a 22-year-old man had been shot in the head. The call came at 10:30 p.m. Jessica and her mom stayed at the hospital with the family until almost 4:00 a.m. And it was a huge family: nieces and nephews, uncles and aunts, godparents and siblings. Jessica hung out with the kids while her mom focused on the adults.

"To date, I think that was the most intense call," Jessica says. "It was just overwhelming."

Shubir Dutt, 17, was concerned that TIP might be too overwhelming. "I've never dealt with death in my life," he explains. "It seemed like a really intense thing for me."

But the program sounded so intriguing—and the power to impact people was so real—that he went through the training anyway.

His first call took him to a hospital to support the family of an older man who'd died of cardiac arrest. Shubir and one other volunteer stayed with about a dozen of the man's family members for nearly six hours. "It was really intense," Shubir says.

The toughest part was when the victim's grandchildren arrived at the hospital—and Shubir realized they were just his age. "Seeing that happen to them was crazy—but it was real."

### Feeling Good—Even When They Feel Bad

Sometimes volunteers have a tough time managing their own emotions. If you've ever seen one of your friends cry, you know how hard it can be not to start crying, too! TIP volunteers are taught that it is OK to cry—but not louder or longer than the family members they are there to help.

Not all families respond enthusiastically when a stranger approaches them during such a difficult time, volunteers note. But most of them are touched that strangers—espe-



Photo © Jupiter Images



cially teens—would take the time to be with them while they are struggling with a loved one's injury or death, with a traffic accident, or a fire.

"I feel I was able to comfort them at least a little bit," Jessica says. "It makes my day."

That's a bonus all the volunteers enjoy—but that's not why they signed up for TIP. "I'm not doing it for myself, to make myself feel better," Shubir says. "I'm doing it for people that need it."

Alex agrees. "To be there for someone in the worst part of their life—how much more impact could you make on your community?"

"I think teens can have just as much of an impact as an adult."

Trauma Intervention Programs, Inc., is active in Arizona, California, Florida, Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington. Find out more at [www.tipnational.org](http://www.tipnational.org).



# *Horse Flies:* Equestrian



By Danielle Tate-Stratton  
Photos provided by the author

*Part precision sport and part  
carnival trick riding, this is the discipline  
of equestrian vaulting.*

**I** imagine someone in a shiny costume running beside a cantering (running) horse, propelling him- or herself onto its back and performing elements of dance and gymnastics to music as the horse continues to move at a steady pace. They dismount with a flourish and bow to the audience. Part precision sport and part carnival trick riding, this is the discipline of equestrian vaulting.

Equestrian vaulting is often described as gymnastics on horseback and incorporates elements such as stands, arabesques, cartwheels, handstands, and dance—on a moving horse! Beginning vaulters start at a





# Vaulting



walk and then progress to working at a trot and canter as they learn more skills and become more competent. The horse is always controlled by a "longeur," who stands in the middle of a circle with a long rope (longe line) connected to the horse. The longeur's job is to make sure that the horse moves in a perfect circle and at a steady pace while the vaulter is mounted.

Like figure skating, a vaulter prepares two sets of exercises. The first are the compulsory exercises—seven basic exercises that test the vaulter's competence on the horse and ensure a solid grounding in the basics. Some of the moves, such as the basic seat, where the vaulter sits with their arms extended at shoulder height, are quite easy to master; whereas others, such as the stand, are much more challenging! I started vaulting at 18, and for me, the stand was one of the most exciting things to do for the first time—it looks so impressive to be standing on the back of a moving horse. Even though it can be really hard to keep your balance up there, it's one of my favorite moves—not too many people can say they've stood up on top of a cantering horse.

Along with compulsories, vaulters also work on a one-minute freestyle, which is set to music and called a "kur." Kirs consist of at least 10 moves, and you are





marked on degree of difficulty, musical interpretation, choreography, and execution, just like in gymnastics or figure skating. This is where a vaulter's individual personality shines through, and it's the most exciting part of a competition to watch. Sixteen-year-old Jess, who has been involved in the sport for seven years, enthuses: "I love the challenge and the creativity involved in vaulting. Being able to interpret your music and make it your own is a lot of fun!"

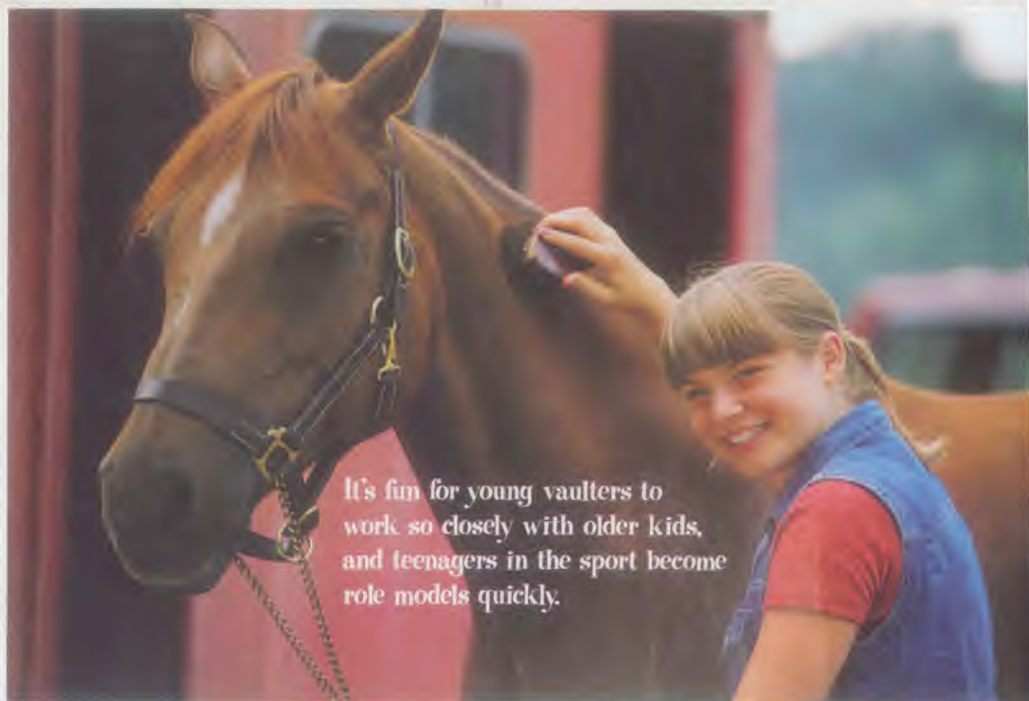
Vaulting is also a team sport, and it's a great way for older vaulters to learn leadership skills. There are up to six people on a team, and three people are on the horse at any one time. Older and stronger vaulters generally act as the "bases," much like in cheerleading, and lift up the younger flyers. It's fun for the young vaulters to work so closely with older kids, and teenagers in the sport become role models quickly, passing on tips and suggestions to their younger teammates.

With its breathtaking tricks, which can include back flips off the horse, jumps where you return to the horse's back, and moves with only one "point of contact," vaulting might seem like a dangerous sport, especially since vaulters don't wear helmets. But it's actually the safest of all equestrian sports. The first thing a vaulter learns is how to "bail," or safely jump off the horse, and land correctly to minimize the chance of injury. The horses used for vaulting are very special as well—they are hand-picked for their temperament and are amazingly calm. Vaulters don't use a saddle, but there is a large, thick pad on the horse's back to protect its spine from injury, and a special vaulting "surcingle," which is like a belt going all the way around the horse's stomach. It has two han-

dles, called grips, at the top which are used to help secure hands or feet, as well as long loops called stirrups, which can be used for moves off the side of the horse.

Vaulters can also compete in a barrel division, where the degree of difficulty often goes way up (a barrel

teenagers starting out in the sport: "Stick with it. One of the hardest parts as a teenager starting is that you're going through a lot in your life—changes in your body that make things harder, as well as the drama of growing up and your life becoming more stressful and busy. But instead



*It's fun for young vaulters to work so closely with older kids, and teenagers in the sport become role models quickly.*

is like a pretend horse that vaulters use to practice and refine technique on). It's much easier when your "horse" isn't moving, and this can mean difficult and inventive performances. The barrel division at my first competition was great. I got to use my gymnastics background and even ended my routine with a back tuck dismount. That's something I want to do off a horse eventually, but I'm not ready for that quite yet. There was also a costume division, and some of my friends from another club did a fantastic *Grease* number. The crowd loved them and so did the judge—she gave them a 9.3 (out of a possible 10) for creativity!

Even though vaulting is a great sport for teenagers, it's understandable that some might be hesitant to start vaulting at an older age. Jess has some encouraging advice for

of doing the easy thing and quitting . . . stick with it. It's an amazing thing that can really help you through tough times and bring you back together again."

There is no need for prospective vaulters to have any experience in dance, gymnastics, or horseback riding, and all ages from 4 through adult can participate. Vaulting is also used in therapeutic riding programs across the country. Even though vaulting is more popular in Europe than in North America; there are clubs across North America; and with Megan Benjamin of the U.S.A. winning the women's title at the World Equestrian Games in 2006, expect to see even more vaulting clubs starting up. Visit [www.americanvaulting.org](http://www.americanvaulting.org) to find out more about vaulting and to look for a club near you.





Rachel  
Bishop

Curt  
VanderWaal

# What's up with that?

**My boyfriend, Chris, recently told me that he is addicted to porn. He got addicted to it when he was only 11 and didn't even know it was wrong. He wants me to help him get over it, and I love him and want to help, but I don't know how. What should I do?**

—Kari, age 15

This is becoming a common problem in relationships, Kari. Sex is incredibly powerful, and pictures and videos of people posing nude and having sex can create intense feelings that are tough to manage. It sounds like the pictures are starting to control Chris's life. Many people can't stop themselves from regularly visiting these Web sites, and most people start looking for rougher, more graphic pictures and videos to satisfy their sexual desires. They may become moody and lose sleep by staying up late on the computer to secretly view the Web sites when no one is around. These Web sites can also change a male's view of girls and women, turning females into sex objects instead of real people.

I would recommend that Chris discuss these issues with a trusted adult, such as a school guidance counselor. Given how easy it is to get access to such Internet sites, and how powerful sex is, it is going to be challenging for him to break the hold this problem has on his life. Second, if Chris is really serious about getting away from this prob-

lem, he needs to have strong controls placed on his computer time, or the temptation to get in and view the pictures will overwhelm him. This may mean that he doesn't use a computer without someone else in the room, or that he or someone else places strong site blockers onto the computer he uses so he is blocked from getting into the computer or overriding the controls.

Kari, my advice for you is a bit more complicated since I don't know the nature of your relationship with Chris. I'm going to talk fairly bluntly since this is an important issue that has a lot of implications for your life. First, if you are not already sexually active, I would strongly suggest that you stay that way. Chris may try to convince you that having sex with him will help him to avoid temptation and the Internet, but that is extremely unlikely. If you are already sexually active, he may ask you to have sex more frequently or in ways that make you uncomfortable. Again, this isn't a good idea since people who have a sexual addiction can push for more and more sex and often get involved in more extreme sexual behaviors. It may also be important for you to get counseling on your relationship since sexual issues spread into all other areas of your relationship as well. This is a tough issue that more and more people are dealing with, so I hope you and Chris get the help you need.





By Jennifer Garver

# END OF THE LINE

*I wish I had a mother like my friends—one I could laugh with, cry with, and just depend on.*

I climb the stairs leading to Mom's townhouse. It is a bright, warm Saturday morning, but Mom's curtains are still tightly drawn. Has she forgotten that I am coming this weekend? In the years since my parents' divorce, I have spent countless hours commuting the distance between their homes. They have shared joint custody of my sister, Kelly, and me since I was 4. Now that Kelly is away at college, I drive back and forth myself. I really enjoy it . . . driving alone gives me time to think about things.

I ring the doorbell several times before giving up and dumping out my entire purse to search for Mom's key. I enter and call for her from the dim foyer. There is no answer . . . she must not be home. I drop my bags at the door and head upstairs to her room. The lump in her bed solves my mystery. She is here and still sleeping. This is not a good sign—neither are the empty wine bottle and glass sitting beside her bed.

"Mom, I'm here," I whisper as I gently shake her.

She rolls over and, with shaking hands, rubs her eyes. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see that Mom had a rough







night. This is not the greeting I was hoping for.

"Oh, Nancy . . . what time is it?" asks Mom.

"11:00," I answer. "Did you forget I was coming?"

"No—I was up late and forgot to set my alarm," says Mom. "Do you mind making some coffee?"

I quickly exit and descend the stairs to the kitchen. This is a drill with which I am very familiar. She will shower and dress, come downstairs, then try to play the perfect mom role. We'll eat lunch, maybe go out and shop for a while, but then the long evening of self-pity will begin.

By dinnertime she'll have had a glass or two of wine and would start the "you-don't-understand-how-hard-I-have-it" speech. I will listen and comfort her, as always, and then a couple glassfuls of wine later, I will put her to bed. It is the same routine, and has been, for as long as I can remember.

There were moments of hope when she would swear off drinking and commit to change. I used to be proud of her at these times. The disappointment I'd feel when she would regress is indescribable . . . like being kicked in the stomach.

So here I am again, making strong coffee and feeling the crushing blow of disappointment in my mother. I wish I had a mother like my friends—one I could laugh with, cry with, and just depend on. I am so sick of this! I am only 17 and I am the parent here. I am constantly passing up times with my friends and events at school to come here and take care of Mom. She has no idea how much I sacrifice to mother her. I don't think she would even care if she knew. I can't do this anymore . . .

I search for a pen and painfully jot down several sentences: "I will not enable you anymore. I will be at Dad's until you are ready to choose me over your wine. Please get help. I will be waiting, Nancy."

The shower is still running upstairs as I collect my bags and retrace my steps back out the front door. The future is uncertain, but I can no longer be a prisoner to Mom's problem . . . her alcoholism. This is the end of the line.





# Lauren Berger

**L**auren Berger knows personally about the importance of creating opportunities for yourself. As a college student, she landed 15 internships and discovered how valuable these experiences were, both in giving her a taste of what it would be like to work for a variety of companies, and also in boosting her résumé when she eventually did apply for jobs. But she realized there were limited resources available for students looking for internships, and also for interns looking for advice. So she started Intern Queen, Inc., in May 2006 with the goal of creating a "media/lifestyle destination" for interns. Her site, [www.internqueen.com](http://www.internqueen.com), includes helpful links, resources, her blog, a clothing line, and more. Read on for Lauren's tips about setting goals, following what's important to you, and landing your dream internship!

**LISTEN: How did you get the idea for Intern Queen?**

**Lauren:** I started writing for magazines and decided I was going to be the expert on interning! I began writing advice columns and a book on



## Spotlight

By Mary Rahn  
Photo courtesy of the author

interning, developing an intern-themed clothing line, and creating an intern consulting service.

**LISTEN: Why should teens apply for internships?**

**Lauren:** Interning has taught me so much about what I do and don't want to do in life. For example, I interned for a few magazines and decided I didn't want to work for them after all. I interned in lots of different business environments. Interning at different types and sizes of companies helps you to understand what you do and do not want to pursue as a career.

**LISTEN: What have you learned in starting your own company and interning with many different companies?**

**Lauren:** I've learned it's important to always stay focused on the job—you want your coworkers to recognize that you are hardworking. Never assume things; always ask questions and be clear about the way things need to be done. Remember to get a letter of recommendation from your boss before your internship is over. Finally, go out of your way to meet people—don't miss out on a great opportunity to make friends!

**LISTEN: What tips do you have for teens who want to land an internship?**

**Lauren:** Start your internship search three to four months before you want to start interning. A great book is the Princeton Review *Internship Bible*. Go to the library and copy down information for the internships that look appealing to you. Don't miss the deadlines! Call the internship coordinator and make sure your résumé and materials were properly received. When interviewing, be confident and remember to speak slowly and clearly. And write a handwritten thank-you note after the interview to make a good lasting impression.

**LISTEN: Where do you find your inspiration? How do you stay motivated?**

**Lauren:** I'm very inspired to help students realize how important internships are. These days most students need internships on their résumés to get jobs. I want to help students realize that they can achieve their goals and dreams, and interning is just one way to get closer to achieving those goals.

**LISTEN: What is your advice for other young people reaching for their dreams?**

**Lauren:** Stick with whatever you want to do but make sure you are actively taking baby steps to achieve your goal. Lay out your plan on paper and make small goals that will ultimately help you meet your larger goals. Don't talk about your plans—do them! Stay passionate and believe in yourself.



**R**ecently someone asked us, "What's the quickest way to become a person who will be super-successful?" A very good question. Without hesitation we said, "Surround yourself with extraordinary people who are successful or are committed to becoming super-successful."

Ask yourself, "Who are my friends?" We're not suggesting that you merely name your friends, but rather, describe them. What kind of people are they? Do they support your wildest dreams? Do they challenge you to become more of who you really are? These are very important questions to ask yourself.

You see, your friends play a much bigger role in your life than you may think. Your friends influence your attitude, opinions, and the way you handle situations in your life. Whether you recognize it or not, you will rise or fall to their level.

Take sports for example. When a good team plays a better team, they usually rise up to the challenge and play better. And when a good team plays a weaker team, they often play down to the weaker team's level. We can't emphasize this enough: Who you hang out with will affect your potential.

So how do you know if you're hanging out with the right people? Well, take this into consideration: The friends you choose are a reflection of you. Spooky, huh? There's an old proverb that states:

**"A person can look in the mirror,  
but if they really want to know themselves,  
they should look at the friends they choose."**

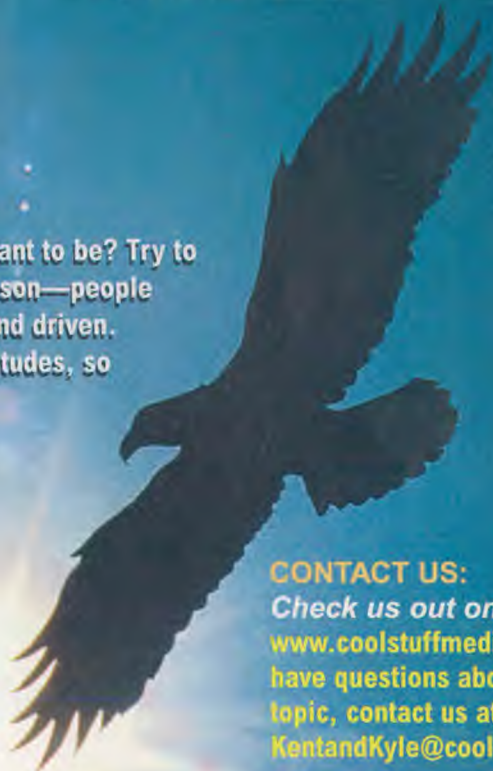
Do your friends represent the kind of person you want to be? Try to find friends who challenge you to become a better person—people who are positive, enthusiastic, intelligent, creative, and driven. Inevitably, you will begin to adopt their habits and attitudes, so choose your friends carefully.

After all, "You can't soar like an eagle when you hang with turkeys."

#### THE NEXT STEP:

For tips on finding good friends and being a good friend, take the next step. Go to [www.listenmagazine.org](http://www.listenmagazine.org) and click on our picture for your next assignment.

## SOAR Like an Eagle



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# The LISTEN Pledge

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to you.*

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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