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CELEBRATING POSITIVE CHOICES

listen

MARCH 2009

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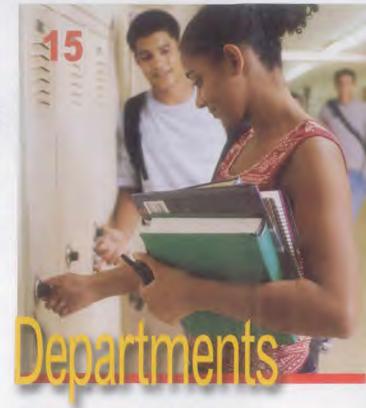
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I'm Just Saying . . .

ome teens I know (who shall remain nameless) informed me that they'd been grounded from using Facebook for a week because they'd pulled a bit of a stunt and their parents caught them. Apparently they posted some pictures that their parents didn't approve of. Nothing terribly scandalous, but nothing that belonged on Facebook for all the world to see, either. It was just a silly teenage prank to them. They didn't mean any harm; they were just having some fun, and took it a bit far.

What they didn't realize is that more and more people are looking to online sites like Facebook to check people out for important things such as jobs. Chances are these pictures won't haunt them for the rest of their lives, but some information teens are posting on such places as Facebook, all in the

name of fun, could very well ruin their lives, or at the very least make their lives more difficult than they have to be.

Sometimes we think that the only bad choices to make are ones that are obvious. A good choice, a bad choice . . . to start smoking or learn a new hobby, to drink or stop a friend from driving drunk . . . they could practically have labels on them, they're so obvious. But not all bad choices are so clear-cut. Some seem perfectly harmless at the time. They may even seem funny and innocent. But when you follow them through, or give them more thought, you realize that they're really

not so harmless after all.

Now You

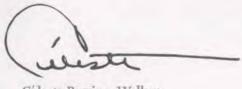
You Still

See It . . .

All of our choices—all of them—lead us down either a good path or a bad one. We get to make the choices, so we choose the path. It's easy to get carried away when you're having a good time, and make a choice that you later regret. Make a decision right now to think through your choices, maybe plan to run your ideas past a parent or teacher before you carry them out. Because the results of some choices, and not always the ones you end up being happy with, you get to keep. Forever.

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





Céleste Perrino-Walker Editor

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I COULDN'T BELIEVE THAT OUR GETTING TOGETHER MEANT THE END OF MY FREEDOM.



comes back, it was meant to be." But he didn't like the idea that I had many friends, especially guy friends. He didn't like it that I had a life apart from him. Little by little my friends noticed that I stopped going to afterschool club activities or any social events.

Sam isolated me. He kept me away from my friends, my family, and anyone he thought would threaten our relationship in any way. At first my parents didn't like the idea, but they later decided that we could go out, because he seemed so sincere. He was very good with people; he always made a good impression.

All of my friends were against us being together. I just believed it was out of jealousy. Well, within a month I found out why. My grades slowly slid from a 4.0 to a 3.0. He would not let me out of his sight. He would not let me go home until the wee morning hours, because he was afraid I would call one of my guy friends. I just continued to believe

always ended up apologizing just to get rid of that tension between us. It went in confusing cycles. He could be so loving one day, and so mean and hurtful the next.

All I can say is that with him, I became half a person. I didn't know what was real and what was not. Even if he didn't give me bruises, as my mom got from her first husband, he still hurt me emotionally and mentally. I lost my sense of self; I lost my sense of purpose. I didn't know who I was anymore. I was only his puppet. He ran my life.

I knew I shouldn't have, but I did the most stupid thing in the world: I married him. I married him because my mom thought that I was saving him. I married him because he had an affair with his first cousin who had a child, and they were going to elope to Florida, where marriage was

hen I first met Sam,* I was 16. I was a junior, and he was a senior. I was initially

attracted to his best friend. We hung out in a group: my crush, his best friend Sam, my girlfriend, and I. Sometimes a couple other friends of Sam's came along. We were always in a group of four or five. My crush soon found a girlfriend, so that left me with Sam, my girlfriend, and one other guy friend of Sam's. We would hang out at the arcade or at the movies. I used to admire Sam from afar; he seemed like Heathcliff from Wuthering Heights, with his dark, brooding silence.

My mom and dad were firm believers in education, and never wanted my older sister or me to have a boyfriend until we were out of college. I was on a faithful path following in my sister's footsteps until Sam came along. He seemed nice at first. But slowly what started out as shy blushes, secret hand-holding in the dark, and stolen dances turned into something different. I couldn't believe that our getting together meant the end of my freedom. The first card he ever gave to me said, "If you love something, set it free; if it

He knew how to push all the right buttons.

that he was so jealous because he loved me and was afraid of losing me.

My older sister was right about what attracted me to him in the first place, but it became something that bothered me later in my relationship with him. The dark, brooding nature was the darker half of him that others didn't see. I found myself unable to talk to him about anything. If I mentioned something about any of my friends and what fun we had together, he would get angry. My friends slowly drifted away from me. I didn't exactly push them away. I just found reasons I couldn't go out with them.

He knew how to push all the right buttons. He was very manipulative. He knew how to make me feel guilty. When we got into fights, he would become a solid block of ice; I

legal for first cousins. I married him because my mom thought that his "good-for-nothing, on-welfare cousin" would use him and destroy him.

My life has never been the same since. Although I am finally out of the marriage now; those memories continue to haunt me. I promised myself that once I got out of that relationship I would write about it so that I could help others. Make sure you know how to recognize what a healthy relationship should be like, and know the signs of an unhealthy one. If you find yourself in a situation like mine, get help from an adult. Immediately.

*Not his real name.

Dealine

BY MELISSA LAMBERT

ABUSE IS A BIG PROBLEM ALL OVER THE WORLD, but it's something that people often feel uncomfortable talking about. Sometimes kids and teenagers who are being abused might be afraid to tell someone that the abuse is happening. People who are abused can struggle for a long time to trust other people and feel good about themselves again.

It's important to know the facts about abuse. Most of the time, kids and teenagers are abused by family members, or people they know and trust. In families that have problems with alcohol and drug use, child abuse is more likely to happen.

There are four main kinds of abuse: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect. Physical abuse is an adult hitting, or physically hurting a child, leaving marks and bruises. Sexual abuse is an adult touching a young person on the private parts of their body, making them touch theirs, or forcing the young person to do something sexual. Emotional abuse is an adult using words, insults, or yelling to make a child feel bad about themselves. Neglect is parents or caretakers not giving a child the things they need to be healthy and safe, such as food and clothing, or care and protection.

All of these kinds of abuse are

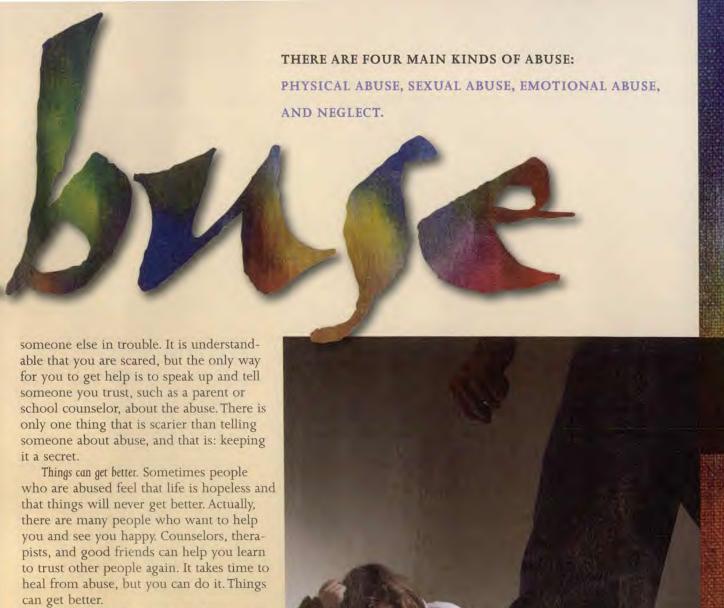
dangerous and have long-term effects on the people who are abused. If you or someone you know has been abused, the most important thing you can do is get help from a trusted adult: a parent, teacher, counselor, relative, or neighbor. By speaking up, even if it's scary, a victim of abuse can get the help they need to feel safe again.

For anyone who has been a victim of abuse, there are a few things that you should always remember:

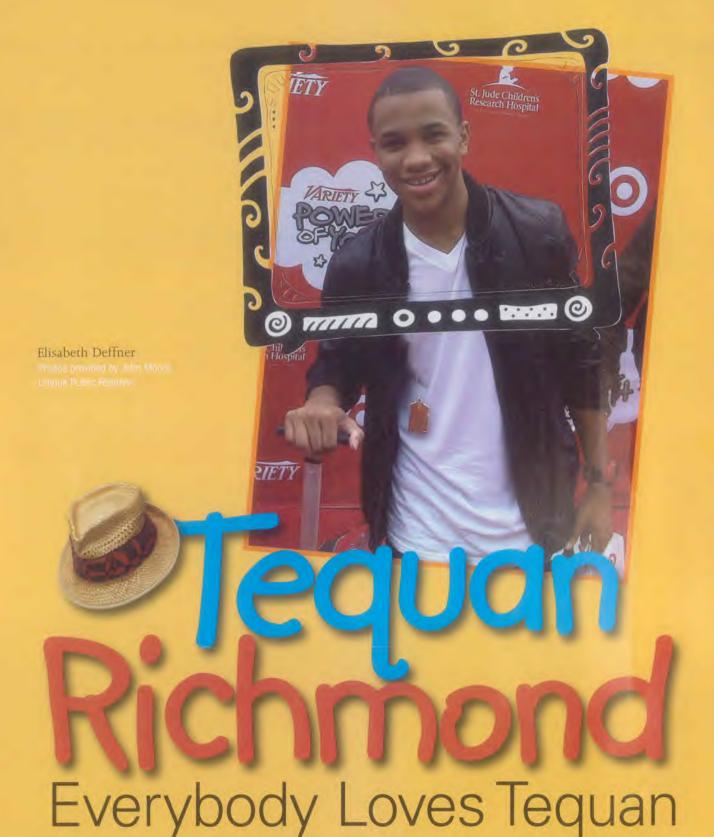
You are not the only one. It's hard to say exactly how many kids are victims of abuse, but we know that many, many people are abused. You might feel lonely, angry, sad, different from other people, and afraid to talk about your abuse. The truth is that there are many other people who have felt the things that you are feeling. Those are normal feelings to have.

It is not your fault. Abuse is never the victim's fault. Sometimes a person who has been abused might feel as if they did something to deserve the abuse—that is not true! This is one of the most important things for you to remember: Abuse is never the victim's fault. Never.

It is OK to tell. Maybe someone threatened you, or bribed you to keep a secret. Maybe you're afraid of getting in trouble, or getting



You can break the cycle. If you have been a victim of abuse in the past, now is your chance to take control and break the cycle. You have choices that will help you heal so that you can be good at whatever you want to be. You can choose to never use drugs and alcohol, to learn good stress-management and anger-control skills, to learn about how to deal with others, and to practice listening and communicating. By doing these things, you are choosing to take control of your future by learning from the past. You can't go back in time and change the things that have happened to you in the past, but you can control the present. You have the power to make decisions that will help you to accomplish many good things in your life and make a difference in the lives of other people.



equan Richmond auditioned for the role of Chris on Everybody Hates Chris three or four times. Things were looking good—until he found out he was too cool.

The show is based on the child-hood experiences of comedian Chris Rock, who thought Tequan would be a better fit for the role of his cool older brother Drew. So Tequan went back once more—this time to read lines with Tyler James Williams, who read the role of Chris. Tyler landed the title role on the CW comedy series, and Tequan plays Drew. "We worked so well together, that's the role they chose [for me]," says Tequan.

Now 16 years old, Tequan moved to Los Angeles from North Carolina when he was 9—after "auditioning"

for an agent over the telephone. His mom, actress Temple Poteat, had already been working and living in Los Angeles, and talked constantly about her son to her agent. One day she called and asked Tequan to sing for her agent on the phone.

Tequan sang "Just My Imagination," a hit by his favorite band, the Temptations.

"If you bring him out here," his mom's agent told her, "I'll represent him as an agent."

Smooth Sailing

It can be tough to break into show business—but it wasn't for Tequan. As soon as he moved to the West Coast, he booked a Discovery Channel commercial. A half dozen more gigs came along right after that. Recently Tequan finished his ninth national commercial. He's had guest spots on TV shows including ER, Numb3rs, CSI, and Mad TV. He played the young Ray Charles in the biopic Ray. And he's in his fourth season on Everybody Hates Chris.

"Everyone always tells me I'm so fortunate, I'm so lucky—but it's OK. I don't mind," he quips.

The jobs come easily—but making time to do everything he wants to do is more of a challenge! During the season, Tequan works five days a week on Everybody Hates Chris. He's usually on set from about 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. "I get up when it's not even light outside—the sun is like, 'What are you doing up?'" he says with a laugh.

After work, he may have to head out to an event to promote the show—such as a movie premiere.





Tequan doesn't have time for drugs, alcohol, or tobacco.

"And let's not forget my homework," he adds wryly. A high school freshman, Tequan hasn't attended a traditional school since sixth grade. Having his own teacher and learning one-on-one is great, he says, but he really misses hanging out with other kids in the classroom, and having the camaraderie of a big group.

There's a different kind of camaraderie on the set, where Tequan is surrounded by both kids and adults. And his character's personality is so close to his own that sometimes it's hard to differentiate between the two.

"Drew is so much like me, the similarity is crazy. I don't really do anything different but slap Tyler upside the head a couple more times than usual, and that's about it," he jokes. "Some days I go home as Tequan; some days I go home as Drew!"

One big difference between the

actor and his character is that Tequan is an only child. But taking on the role of an older brother isn't too tough—especially since Tequan is used to looking after his shih tzu, Gizmo.

Another difference is wardrobe. Drew's pants are super-tight (the show takes place in the eighties)! Off the set, Tequan's favorite wardrobe item is sneakers. He has a collection of about 50 pairs, which he takes turns wearing (sometimes switching in the middle of the day!). He even has "nice sneakers" for special occasions (they glow in the dark.) "I just love sneakers!" he says.

Off Set

Tequan hopes his career will shift more into moviemaking in the near future. "TV's a really, really heavy grind every day," he explains. "Not that movies aren't, but it's such a different schedule. I've done a couple movies, and I've seen how they go."

In the meantime he'll continue with his show, and various TV guest spots and commercials—and with producing music. Tequan started producing when he was about 13 years old. "I'm trying to work with all new artists—actor friends of mine who do music, a few rappers. My goal is to eventually become like a Timbaland," he says. "Hopefully by the time I get to a pretty good age—20, 21—I'll be an expert in that."

With so much work and so many goals to occupy his time, Tequan doesn't have time for drugs, alcohol, or tobacco. He wouldn't be able to do his job if he went to work drunk or high, he says. And he adds, "That's not the image you want to put out there as a young teen. Teens are always trying to put out this image that they're more responsible and that they can be independent. As teens we need to have less of that stuff [substance abuse] going around. I don't think that's cool."

And now for the big question: working with such stars as Chris Rock and Danny Glover, doesn't Tequan ever get starstruck?

Not usually, he says. "Maybe my favorite people, I'll be like, 'Wow!' It will hit me the next day when I wake up, but for the moment I'm cool."

Still, now and then he finds himself in a situation that's almost surreal—such as sitting at an awards show and realizing that George Clooney is right across the table from him, and that Leonardo DiCaprio and Cameron Diaz are at the next table over.

After a few more years in the business, some other young actor may look up at an awards ceremony and be awestruck to see Tequan Richmond sitting across from him! "That'll be my goal," Tequan says with a big laugh. "I'll be like, 'Yes! I made it!'"

GOOD 4

"Click." "Click." Oh, how I hate that sound—the sound of a dead battery. I'm in a hurry! Places to go, things to do, people to see! I don't have time for this! But luckily I've got jumper cables in my trunk. I hook them up to a friend's battery, turn the key, and "Vroom!" I'm on my way!

At one time or another we all feel like worn-out batteries, in need of a jump start. In the past few years energy drinks have become teenagers' "jumper cables" for getting that power boost they crave. But is this the best solution, or could there be a better way to jump-start your day? Let's find out!



By Richard G. Edison, PA-C (physician assistant, nationally certified)

Jumper Cables

Energy drinks are booming. More than 500 new energy drinks were introduced to the market in 2005, and the trend keeps growing. Red Bull sells more than 2.5 billion cans in 130 countries each year.

Overflowing with caffeine, energy drinks may also contain carbohydrates such as glucuronolactone, amino acids like taurine, and stimulants like ginseng, along with other herbs, minerals, and vitamins. We know very little about how these different ingredients interact, and what they might do to our bodies.

Caffeine, the main stimulant in energy drinks, does do a great job of perking you up. The problem is that the effect lasts for only a few hours, then it drops you, and you need another drink to get the feeling back. It can become an unending cycle of highs and lows.

Some drinks claim to be "natural" and boast about being loaded with vitamins and minerals. One drink has more than 4,000 percent of the daily recommended allowance of vitamin B₁₂. Unfortunately, too much of a good thing is not a good thing. Drinking too much of even "natural" vitamins and minerals can lead to toxic levels in the body.

Heart arrhythmias (irregular heartbeats), nausea and vomiting, irritability, and nervousness are just a few of the side effects that have been reported from drinking energy drinks.

Red Bull has been banned in France because of concerns about possible health hazards from drinking too much. There has even been one death reported from drinking too many energy drinks.

Danger! Don't mix energy drinks with alcohol! Drinking makes you feel tired. Caffeine and other stimulants in energy drinks mask this feeling. This could mean you'll end up drinking even more and really mess yourself (or someone else) up.

If you jump-start a car too often, you're going to end up killing your battery. The same applies to your body. If you keep running it on the edge all the time, jump-starting it with high-energy drinks, never giving it time to rest, it's eventually going to break down. You're better off giving your high-performance vehicle what it really needs—a well-balanced diet, adequate rest, plenty of water, and lots of exercise in the fresh air. Do this, and you won't need jumper cables to start your day!

Forgiving the ultimate friendship I A good

Learning to forgive and to accept forgiveness is one of the ultimate ways to ensure a friendship lasts.

Let's face it—forgiveness is not an exciting topic to discuss. When you've been hurt by someone, almost the last thing you want is to forgive them. Then there are the times you've messed up. Who wants to admit they're

wrong? It's so much easier to pretend as if nothing happened, and hope the other person will forget it. One of the greatest tests for friendships is forgive-

ness.
The
truth is no
one can hurt
you as much
as those you
love the
most. A hurtful word or
action from

your closest friends
can injure the relationship more than almost anything. You share a trust and bond
with friends that when tread upon
can be brutal. Learning to forgive
and to accept forgiveness is one of

the ultimate ways to ensure a friendship lasts.

A good place to start with this whole forgiveness thing is realizing that there are times you yourself are in desperate need of forgiveness, We say sarcastic things

that are hurtful, tell lies. cheat on homework assignments, and a whole lot more. None of us is perfect, and realizing that makes it easier to under-

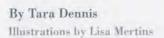
it easier to understand that no one else is either—certainly not our friends. And not only do we mess up, but sometimes we do it daily. So really we need to make forgiveness part

of our daily routine.

Another
thing to
think
about is
if we
expect
others
to forgive us
when
we've
messed up,

then we also must be willing to for-





give them when they do something stupid. Basically we must forgive to be forgiven. Let me put this differently using a sports analogy. If in basketball you never pass the ball to teammates, would you be surprised if they stop passing it to you when they have the ball? Obviously they

know if they pass the ball to you they're not going

to get it back. You wouldn't be playing fair. Next time you're having a difficult time forgiving a friend it's a good idea to take step back and look at yourself. Would you want your friend

As for those times you find it really tough to forgive but still want to, here are some things that might help:

done what they did?

to forgive you if you had

Focus not on being mad at them, but being mad at their action. If you focus on hating what's been done and not who's done it, it becomes easier to forgive.

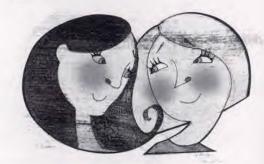
Try looking for rational reasons for their behavior. Maybe they were having a bad day, or didn't mean something quite the way you took it. Maybe they were misinformed, or really thought they were doing the right thing and it turned out wrong.

Sometimes it's helpful to ask yourself if you'd rather be right or reunite. If you're more concerned about being right in the matter, you

probably won't be able to forgive them unless they apologize and acknowledge you're right. But if they don't, how important is your friendship? Would you rather forget about being right and reunite with your friend? Sometimes you will have to choose.

Forgiveness isn't pretending something never happened, but working to put the past behind you so that you remain friends. What's a good way to know you've really forgiven your friend? Someone once gave me this bit of advice: If you can think about them and your thoughts are good ones, then you know you've forgiven them. Sometimes it may take a while (especially if they did something really hurtful), but keep working on it, and don't hang it over their head.

There may be a time a friend does something so terrible you have to end the friendship. Reuniting is not an option because whatever they did either put someone in have asked. Why? Because not forgiving someone can cause you to be resentful toward them, and that can make you a bitter person. If you've ever met someone who's really bitter, you know they're no fun and certainly not a person you want to be around. Bitter people are angry people; they think everyone is against them. They'll never trust you, and will always question your



motives.

Who wants to be that kind of person?

Finally, know that learning to forgive and to accept forgiveness is a life skill. If you work on it, you'll become a better person and friend. We don't all have this ability automatically—it will take practice. When something does happen that requires forgiveness, be quick to forgive others even when they don't ask for it.



harm or jeopardized your morals. Even if you don't reconcile the friendship, it's still a good idea to try to forgive them even though they probably don't deserve it and may not even



Dear Greg.

I signed up for our school talent show, and after I told my friend, she did too—to sing the same song I am going to! Should I ask her to change songs? I don't want to be compared to her, especially since she is a better singer than I am.

-Singing the Blues

Dear Singing,

By all means, ask her, and also tell her why—she will surely feel flattered. You could even suggest singing the song as a duo, which will mean less nervousness on stage for both of you!

However, if she feels strongly about sticking with her song choice as a solo, I'm sure if you try you can actually find a new song for yourself that you will like even better. Good luck, or as they say in show business: "Break a leg!"

Dear Odd Man Out,

While your situation might seem unique because of your tiny class size, in many ways it is a common problem faced every year by kids even in huge schools: feeling left out of a group.

Groups of three people, called a "triad," are especially tricky because invariably two of them will have a closer bond, causing the third to feel like the odd one out.

I urge you to be friendly with your two classmates at school and reach out by inviting them over to your house to play video games or hoops after school or on a weekend. Sometimes invite both of them together so that they don't feel as if you are trying to break them apart, but you can also occasionally invite one at a time so that you won't have to compete for attention and can get to know each classmate on a personal basis.

Good luck, and one final piece of advice: be patient, and don't forget about forming friendships with schoolmates a year ahead of you or a year behind you as well. Dear Greg,

I am going to a very small school this year—some kids who are home-schooled have more classmates than I do! There are only two other kids in my whole class. The problem is that they were already great friends, and I feel left out. What can I do?

-Odd Man Out



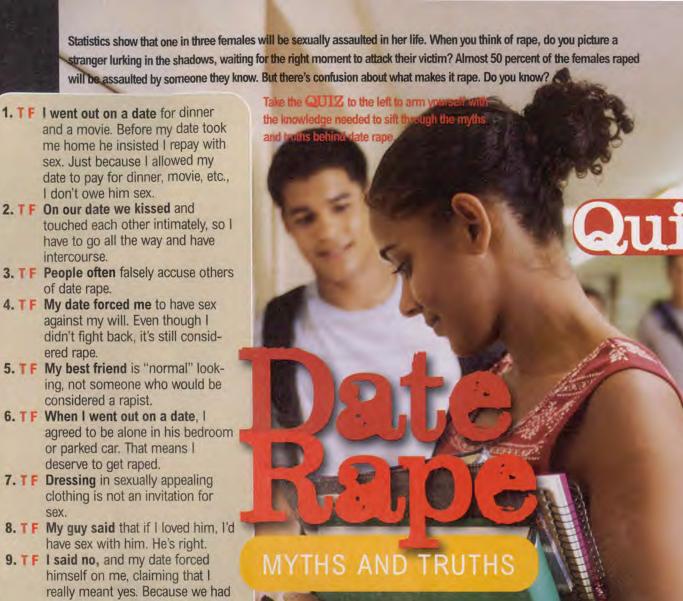
Make your opinion heard at www.listenmagazine.org/imlistening, Then check back next month when the results are posted! Dear Greg,

I want to get a small tattoo, but my parents say "No way!" As a minor, I need their permission, or the "body art" studio won't do it. I'm thinking of forging a note, or finding a shop that ignores my age.

-Th-Ink-ing About It

Should Th-Ink-ing About It:

- a. Go for it, and hope his/her parents get over it quickly?
- b. Try to talk his/her parents into changing their minds?
- c. Wait until he/she is 18 years old and then th-ink it over again before making a decision?



8. TF My guy said that if I loved him, I'd have sex with him. He's right.

9. TF I said no, and my date forced himself on me, claiming that I really meant yes. Because we had sex before, this isn't date rape.

Answers

9. False. No means no. It's never OK to force someone to have sex. respect your decision and not try to coerce you.

8. False. Love can be expressed in other ways besides sex. Each person has the right to say no. If your guy cares about you, he will never an invitation for sex.

By Tina O'Reilly

7. True. The way you dress may increase your risk of becoming a victim, but no matter how sexually appealing your clothing is, it is

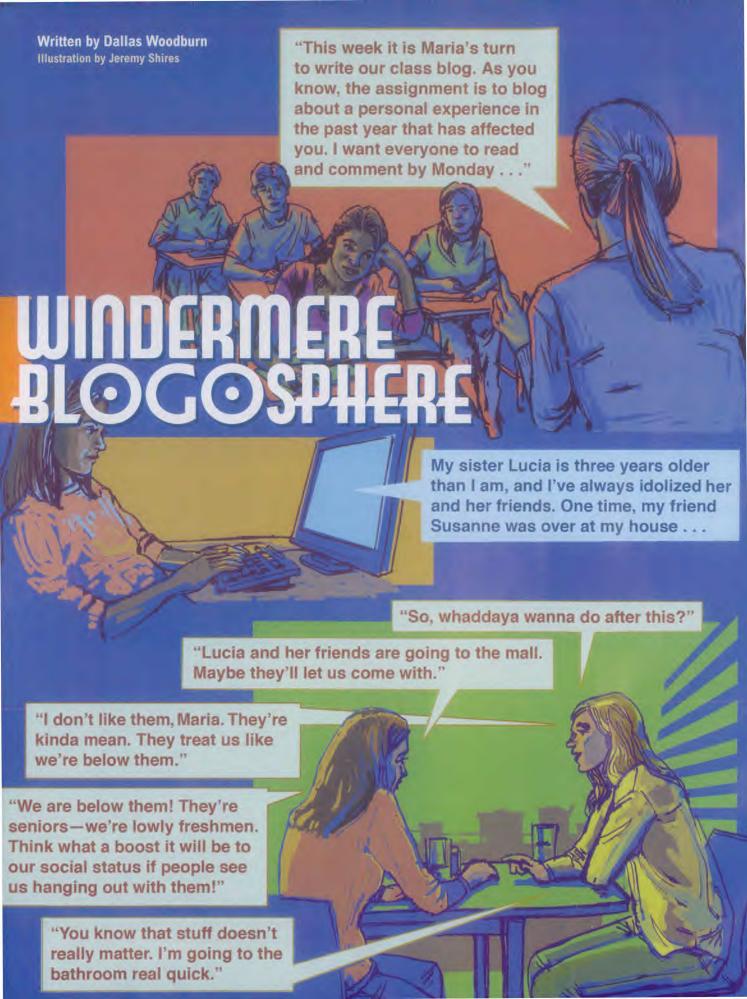
agree to go. Stay with others, and don't allow your date to take you somewhere isolated. Bedrooms and parked cars are not 6. False, Being alone with your date isn't an agreement to have sex. No one deserves to be raped. Stay sate; be careful where you

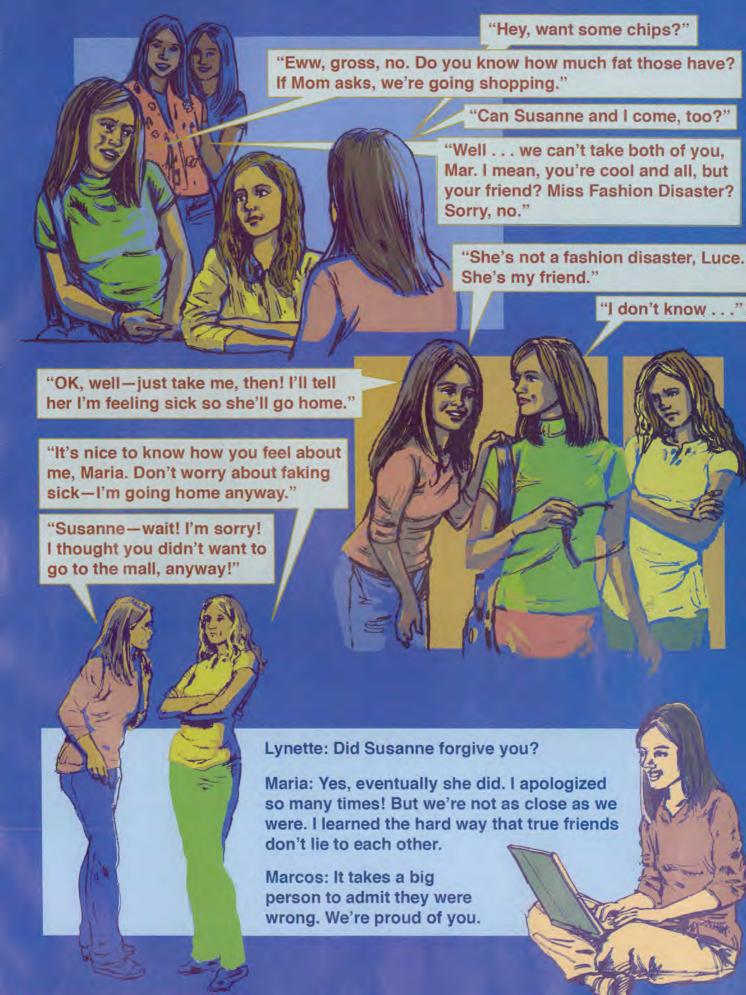
5. False. Rapists can be "normal" looking. They aren't easily identifiable as rapists.

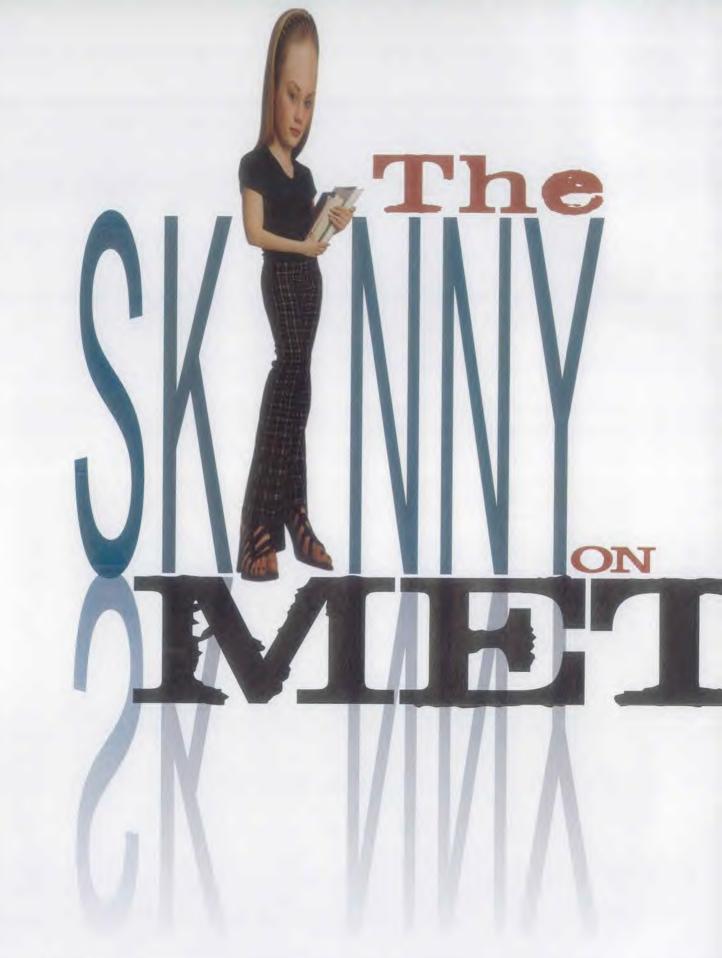
4. True. Regardless if you fight back, forced sex against your will is rape. not something most people would lie about.

3. False. Date rape occurs when someone feels forced, by someone they know, into having sex. This is a traumatic violation, 2. False, You have a right to say no at any point, regardless of how infimate you became.

1. True. No matter how much money your date spends on you, sex should not be an implied payback.







By Shirley Anne Ramaley

f you've heard that using methamphetamine, commonly called meth, will help you lose weight, you're right. But the price to pay is a big one: days without sleep, loose teeth that might fall out, infected skin eruptions, vomiting, dizziness, anxiety, depression, and even brain damage. And, in the worst case, you can lose your life.

Teens will see a dramatic loss in weight when using meth for any substantial period of time. In fact, it seems so easy to lose weight. But once someone stops using, the weight comes back quickly. Because of this, they'll use more meth, making it much harder to ever stop using, as the addiction takes hold.

Also called speed, glass, ice, or crank, meth is a powerful stimulant. The first few times someone uses meth, he or she might feel as if they can do anything. They're filled with

Eventually the user feels the need for the drug in order to even survive.

Rachel was 16 when she arrived in the emergency room for the third time in a month. Pregnant and scared, she wanted to stop using, but the symptoms of withdrawal were too much. She'd been introduced to meth by her brother and his friend, before she was pregnant. They said it would help her lose weight, something Rachel wanted to do. It was the friend who had taken advantage of Rachel one night when she'd been using meth, and it was his baby she was carrying.

Rachel had never known her real dad, and the series of "fathers" who'd lived with her mother were too many for her to remember. For years Rachel watched her mother using drugs, and vowed she wouldn't do the same. But when her brother told her how fast she'd lose weight, Rachel decided to try it once.

Once is difficult, because meth is so addicting. Rachel was hooked on it from that first try. Now she cried as she lay on a hard bed in the ER cooked methamphetamine in their home. Ben's mother was a steady user, chronically sick, several of her front teeth missing from longtime drug use, and she looked more like Ben's grandmother than his mother. It was the only life Ben had ever known. When the police took his father away in handcuffs, Ben cried for his dad. He was angry at the police, not his father.

homes, using materials and ingredi-

ents easily purchased in drugstores.

Because it's made in the home, it

often takes hold of entire families.

Ben was only 12 when his father

Taken by Child Protective Services to a foster home, Ben was separated from the only family he'd ever known. It wasn't the best family, but it was Ben's family.

Once a person is addicted, meth becomes that individual's life. Everything revolves around more of the drug. And it takes more and more all the time just to survive. Nothing is more important than the drug. Using meth becomes all that matters in life.

If you haven't used, it might seem like fun to try it that first time. Friends pressure you and say it won't hurt you. But because it's so addicting, tolerance develops quickly. By then the user needs more and more meth. Unlike other drugs, meth rewires the brain. It can take years to undo the damage. In fact, some damage may be permanent.

The way to avoid addiction to meth is to never try it. If you've already used meth, ask a trusted adult for help, or a teacher you trust. There is help available, and it's important to get it as soon as possible.

If you've heard that using methamphetamine, commonly called meth, will help you lose weight, you're right.

But the price to pay is a big one.

energy and a speedy rush. They feel euphoric in an intense high. When first using the drug, people have feelings of increased mental and physical awareness. With increased use of meth the user often experiences irritation and has outbursts of anger. Some have paranoia or hallucinations (seeing things that aren't there).

Users will take higher doses more frequently. They can go for days without food or sleep. But the initial feelings of well-being are not repeated. cubicle. With no one to turn to, she felt alone and afraid.

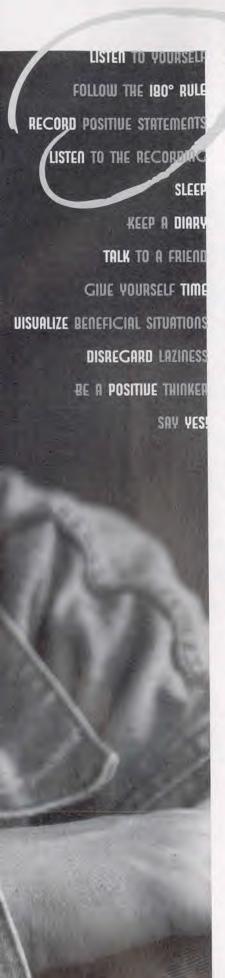
Even if you come from a home in which no illegal drugs are used, you might be introduced to it at a club or at an all-night dance party. Meth is gaining in popularity as a "club drug" or "party drug." Because it can be smoked, snorted, or injected, meth is often seen as a drug of choice.

It's also readily available, since many meth labs are set up in private Become a positive thinker, and positive things will happen!

THES!

By Jane Murray Alexander

Photo @ PhotoDisc



he power of positive thinking cannot be overestimated. It is what prompts inventors to keep on experimenting until they succeed. It is what makes mountain climbers think that they can climb Mount Everest. It is what makes football players think that they can come from behind and win the game. Positive thinking is an "I can do this" attitude.

We are always climbing a ladder in our lives because life presents challenges and changes. But giving up is not an option for a positive thinker. He or she keeps saying, "Yes, I can," "Yes, I will," "Yes, I am." Positive thinking is the ability to visualize the best possible outcome in any situation—good or had.

to visualize the best possible outcome in any situation—good or bad.

For example, let's suppose you broke your ankle, and are in a cast and on crutches. You can't drive because your right ankle is broken. The doctor says you'll be in the cast for six weeks. Bad situation. Right? Yes, it is.

Well, you can grumble and pout. You can say, "Why did this have to happen to me?" And you can make yourself and everyone around you miserable.

Or you can face the reality and do some positive thinking. You're pretty much stuck at home for six weeks. But ask yourself, "What can I do to make my situation better?" First, you can enlist the aid of your friends. Have them come visit and bring you some DVDs to watch or some CDs to listen to. Ask them to take you out for a meal, or just a drive.

This would also be a good time to read. Start writing poetry. Ask your girl-friend/boyfriend/bff over for dinner. Keep thinking of ways to enjoy your time off.

A good idea often leads to other good ideas. This is the nature of things. Don't sell yourself short by being negative.

Negative thinking is habitual. You may have learned to be negative about yourself from your parents, or what others say about you. But negative thinking is a dead-end street. It leads to hopelessness as well as negative behavior—drinking, drugging, gambling, and other addictions—to ease the pain.

An "I can't do anything right" attitude leads to depression. If you've been hurt by someone who doesn't believe in you or doesn't like you, tell yourself, "That person is wrong about me." Believe better things about yourself; believe in your potential.

When you're down on yourself, Dr. Suzanne Persons, a psychologist and licensed mental health counselor, has a series of steps that may help to change your negativity to something more positive. "First," she says, listen to yourself, capture what bad things you say about yourself, and write them down." For example, you may be saying "I'm stupid" or "I'm ugly."

"Then, follow the 180-degree rule," Dr. Persons says. Find the exact opposite and write it down. If you can't say "I'm smart," say "I'm smart about some things." If you can't say "I'm beautiful," say something such as, "I have nice eyes." Think of one thing that makes this new statement into a truth about yourself.

The next step is to speak these positive statements into a tape recorder. Dr. Persons says, "Speak quietly and slowly, as though you're speaking to a frightened 4-year-old child," This tone of voice will reassure you that you and your life will begin to be OK.

The next step is to listen to the tape recorder for a month before you go to sleep at night, and in the morning before you get out of bed. If you forget, tell yourself, "Sometimes I forget, and it's OK."

You can also keep a diary, or talk with a trusted friend, about what you're trying to do. Attitudes and thoughts do not change overnight. Give yourself time.

Always visualize only favorable and beneficial situations. Disregard any laziness or desire to quit. If you keep on being a positive thinker, circumstances will change accordingly. It may take a little while for the changes to take place, but good will come into your life and promote your sense of satisfaction and happiness. If you aren't one already, become a positive thinker, and positive things will happen! Say yes!



By Gabriel Constans
Photos provided by author

The team Shona traveled with came from throughout the U.S. and included two nurses, a psychologist, family therapist, nurse practitioner, dentist, minister, two teachers, journalist, photographer, and a quilting instructor. They worked with six

Birthday



olunteering for three weeks with a medical team, and trauma specialists to provide care to children orphaned by the 1994 genocide (the killing of a racial or cultural group) and AIDS in Rwanda, is not a young man's usual birthday wish. But that was Shona Blumeneau's wish for his fourteenth birthday, and it came true.

Shona, a high school freshman from California, and his family held yard sales, received donations from relatives and friends across the country, and had a local musician put on a piano concert to raise funds for their journey. "I worked as a referee, and as a coach at a summer soccer camp," Shona recalls. He saved half of any money he got for his birthday or holidays, and put it away for his airfare to Rwanda. He says he could have stayed home with friends, "but I really wanted to see Africa, and make a difference."

When he arrived in Africa and started working at El Shaddai Center for Orphans in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda, Shona found that "half the time the kids accepted me and tried to bring me into their culture, and the rest of the time they wanted me to get them things, or bring them home to the States." The average daily wage in Rwanda is about one U.S. dollar per day. "It would be hard to grow up in an orphanage and not have a family to support you," he reflects. Every morning when they returned, the boys and girls would approach, grab his hand, and ask if he remembered their name. They wanted to be seen, heard, and reassured that they would not be forgotten.



translators from early morning until evening. Shona assisted the nurse practitioner and dentist to give the children the first checkup they'd ever had in their lives. "At first I took pictures, and then I started taking their height and weight and testing their eyes with a wall chart," Shona explains. "Whitney [the nurse practitioner] taught me how to look in ears and what to look for, and Jim [the dentist] showed me how to record information about teeth and gums." Dr. James Hall, a retired dentist traveling with the team, said, "The children seemed to have a natural affinity to a person near their own age. Shona became a playful ambassador between the generations." Paula

Herring, another team member, added, "The boys at El Shaddai felt closer to Shona than any of us." Joanna Ransier, R.N., agreed: "He connected with them so easily, and put smiles on everyone's faces."

Most of the children at El Shaddai

since he was 4 years old, would try to play with his adopted brothers and sisters on the mud-and-rock-strewn field behind the orphanage, and come back after 20 minutes dripping with sweat. "Those guys are really good!" he'd exclaim, trying to catch

> his breath as he collapsed on

America was matched by his newfound appreciation and understanding of Rwanda. "Even though there is poverty, it isn't as bad as people describe it. Most of Africa is poor, but there is also a lot of development and hope. The kids really want to learn everything they can. I have a lot of respect for them."

When asked if he would like to





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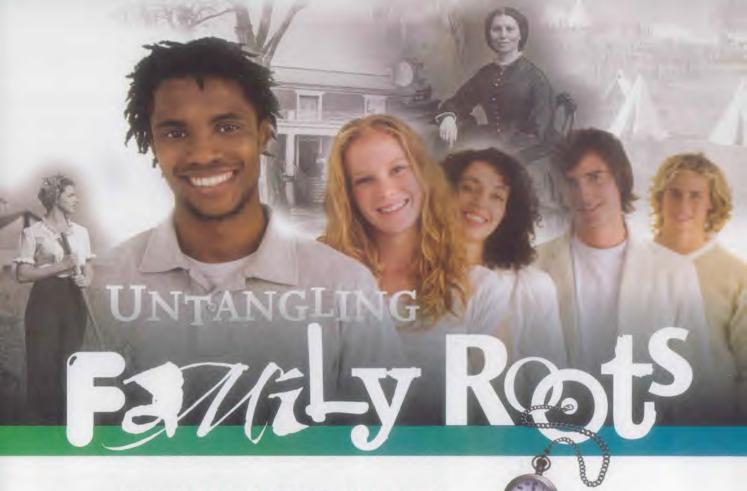
▲ Shona with Students ▼

are in their teens, and adopted the young American as their brother, or inshuti ("friend" in Kinyarwanda). "Everyone has a story," says Shona, "about how their life has been since the genocide. There was one kid whose parents and siblings were killed, except for a baby sister. They were stuck on the street, taking care of the sister and eating rotten food until the director of the orphanage [Sylvestre] found them and brought them to El Shaddai."

Shona's family also brought four suitcases of donated soccer uniforms they had been collecting from parents and kids back home, and provided enough outfits and balls for four teams. Shona, who has played soccer

one of the thin wooden benches used by students during class.

The word "life-changing" is often thrown around loosely in our society. To Shona Blumeneau, the word is real. "This trip has changed my life," he says. "I don't think I'll ever whine about anything again." His perspective on the privileges he enjoys in return to Rwanda, Shona quickly replied, "Absolutely! I learned that even though I'm in another country, I still like working with kids, and I can do that anywhere, even if I don't speak their language. I think I would like to work in the medical field, and I love traveling."



EVER WONDER WHERE YOUR FAMILY REALLY / CAME FROM?

By Jennifer Lee Spear as told to Terry Spear for two-a Frenchman from Alsace-

Way back in the olden days? Ever heard some really neat stories passed down from generation to generation and wonder how much of it is true?

I began researching my roots when my grandmother and grandfather on my mother's side passed down some interesting family tales. Often the stories have a lot of truth to them, enough to locate the whole story or at least some of it. But sometimes the truth leads to more puzzling questions, and the search goes on. My grandmother and all of her relatives were from Canada, except

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Lorraine who settled in Fort Wayne, Indiana, after his father deserted his mother and him, and George Washington Cramer, who was Pennsylvania Dutch. At least that's what she'd been told.

The oral history for the Frenchman goes like this: At the age of 7, Charles Adolphus Roux and his mother crossed the ocean to America and stayed with relatives in Indiana. When he was a young man, wearing the uniform of Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders, he met a Canadian woman at the World's Fair in Chicago, punched out the guy she was dating, and married the woman,



nia Dutch, he wasn't from Pennsylvania, nor had he ever stepped foot out of Canada! My grandmother thought she had a

The truth?

His grandfather was a 19-yearold German Hessian mercenary soldier who sailed to Quebec with one of the local German princes, paid to fight under the British against Americans vying to have an independent nation. Laurence Kremer (note the different spelling from Cramer) deserted the army with a friend while on a march in Massachusetts, and made his way to family living in New York. The church they attended was the Reformed Dutch Church, thereby giving my grandmother the notion that Cramer was Dutch. Laurence

then ended up in Canada. At least that was the story.

The truth?

Charles Roux was living with his real father in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and his stepmother, also of French descent, raised him. So what truly happened to his own mother? What female relative brought him over from France? Those are the questions that keep me searching for more answers. Oh, and yes, he had joined Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders, for my grandmother saw a photo of him dressed like that, and he did actually win my great-great-grandmother's heart by punching out her boyfriend at the World's Fair.

As to George Washington Cramer, I wanted to find out how he ended up in Canada. What I found was not only was he not Pennsylva-



connection to Patriot lines, to those who fought against the British during the American Revolution, determined to win their freedom. How in the world did a Canadian born and raised there end up with a name like George Washington, anyway?

Kremer had admired George Washington for fighting for independence. He passed this oral history to his son, who named his son after George Washington.

Discovering the truth concerning the family's oral history can be

time-consuming but fun. To get started in this interesting hobby yourself, find out the family names as far back as your parents and grandparents remember and strange tidbits of oral history concerning them; then you can do a lot of free research online. Census records often show the name, age, occupation, and where a person originated from. Variation in name spellings can trip you up, though. Roux was listed in one Fort Wayne, Indiana, census as Rux. Some of the Cramer

great-great-grandfather written in 1905. It detailed how his grandmother was the Duke of Argyle's daughter, and how she had eloped with the commoner MacNeill and ended up on Prince Edward Island.

The Church of Tesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has an extensive

library of census microfiche in Utah. but for a small fee these can be reviewed at a local Mormon church's Family History Center. Many names are already included on a free online search. There are often individuals

and geneal-

ogy societies who live in the area your relatives did who will help locate information on your family for free also.

Discover the truth behind your family's oral history. When you share it with your family, they might be as amazed as you are about what you uncover!



descendants changed their name to Creamer. Many people didn't read or write, and the census taker wrote the name the way it sounded to him or her.

I post messages on the Internet at family name sites, or at places they had lived, and receive messages from distant relatives I never knew I had. In one case a distant relation sent me a copy of a letter from my

FREE RESOURCES ONLINE

to get you started on family research:

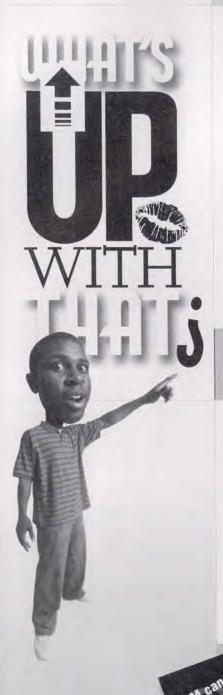
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints online search: www.familysearch.org Searching family trees online: www.rootsweb.com

Ancestry.com 14-day free trial for online censuses: www.census-online.com

U.S. free online genealogy for every state in the union:

www.usgenweb.com Immigrants online who passed through Ellis Island:

www.ellisisland.org Family History Center directory online search for the U.S. and other countries: www.genhomepage.com/FHC/fhc.html



A lot of movies show actors downing a few drinks before they do something dangerous. Doesn't that just mess up their coordination?

-Justin, age 16

You're right, Justin, but the movies 10% of all emergency room never seem to show that part of the picture. injuries are directly linked Usually the hero does amazingly athletic things and, against all odds, saves the to alcohol. day. OK, it's exciting drama, but let's come back to reality. Yes, it's true that alcohol makes you less likely to feel afraid and run away from danger or conflict, but in real life that often puts you at greater risk for getting injured or killed. Around 10 percent of all emergency room injuries (that's 7.6 million visits per year) are directly linked to alcohol use. So whenever you see an actor down a few drinks before doing something heroic, remind yourself that the stuntman or stuntwoman couldn't have been drinking before they pulled off that complicated athletic rescue.

My uncle keeps trying to stop using drugs, but he can't seem to quit, even though he's been in a treatment program two different times. My mom says he just doesn't have enough willpower. Why is it so hard for him?

—Mandy, age 14

Your uncle is facing a really tough battle, Mandy. People who have used drugs (or alcohol, for that matter) for long periods of time have actually changed the way the chemicals in their brains work, making it much harder for them to stop using drugs, even when they really want to quit. New research studies clearly show that the brains of people who use drugs actually work much differently than those who don't use drugs. This causes them to make quick and often stupid decisions without thinking through the consequences, and creates incredibly strong cravings to use the drugs again. Many addicted people who really want to quit still fall back to using drugs a number of times before being able to quit for good, even when they get professional help. Keep encouraging your uncle to quit—the longer he stays without drugs in his body, the more his brain

will go back to working normally, and the better his decisions will become.

My friends sometimes drink cough medicine to get a buzz. You can buy it in a drugstore, so is it really that dangerous?

—Devon, age 17

Yes, it is, Devon. The major problem is that over-the-counter medicines such as Nyquil, Coricidin, and Robitussin contain a cough-suppressing ingredient called dextromethorphan (sometimes called DXM or robo), which is safe and effective in occasional, recommended amounts, but can make a person high and possibly addicted at higher doses. DXM can produce hallucinations or dissociative, "out-of-body" experiences similar to those caused by the illegal hallucinogens phencyclidine (PCP) and ketamine. Let your friends know that even though they can buy these medicines in a drugstore, DXM is still a drug, and they can get into serious health problems by taking the product in ways that are not recommended.

Rachel Bishop Curt VanderWaal







By Elfriede Volk Illustration by Ralph Butler

F A GENIE COULD HAVE
GRANTED ME A WISH, ANY WISH, I
WOULD HAVE ASKED TO BE A FEW
INCHES TALLER—NOT TO BE TALL,
JUST SO THAT I WOULD NO LONGER
BE THE SHORTEST KID IN SCHOOL.

"Cheer up," Uncle Bob told me. "A man's worth isn't measured with a yardstick. Besides, you're not 16 yet, so you'll still grow."

It was poor consolation when I wanted to impress Marianne now. I thought about her on the way home from school, wondering how I could get her attention. Coming in the back way, I almost tripped over the suitcases Mom was wiping. I looked at her questioningly, then at Dad, standing nearby.

"Glad you're here," Dad said. "Aunt Jean had her baby, and we're going down there. You'll need to look after the horses and chickens until we're back Friday night."

"Lee's mom said he can stay here with you," Mom added.

When Lee and I came home the next day, we had a snack, then I took the keys that hung inside the broom closet. "Got to feed the horses," I explained.

I backed the pickup up to the barn, threw a bale of hay into it, then drove to the paddock. "Say," Lee said admiringly, "You really know how to handle this thing."

"Done it lots of times."

"And your dad lets you?"

"Of course."

Lee let out his breath in a whistle. "Wow!" he said.

Schools were closed Friday for staff development, so we slept in. After a leisurely breakfast I fed the chickens, gathered the eggs, and took more hay to the horses. Since Dad and Mom would be home that evening, I wanted everything in good order.

"Let's go down to Pyramid Point to watch the regatta," Lee said as we were driving back to the yard.

"Too far to walk."

"Why walk if you have wheels? You did say your father lets you drive, didn't you?"

"Yes, but"

"So let's go! You might see Marianne there."

At the thought of Marianne my objections vanished. I eased the truck up the road and onto the highway.

"This is great!" Lee exclaimed. "Why didn't we do this before?"

I could think of several reasons, but said nothing.

Lee chortled as a police car went by. "Did you see the look on that cop's face? It was hilarious!"

I glanced into the rearview mirror. "Oh, no!" I panicked. "He's turning around."

"So? You weren't speeding. Or don't you . . . ?"

"Of course not," I snapped, seeing the flashing lights behind him.

MEASURE

"You have to be 16 to get a license."

"I thought I was seeing things when this driverless truck came toward me," the burly policeman said. "But now . . . Say! Aren't you the Chalmers boy?"

"Yes." I nodded miserably.

"So what's your father going to say about this?"

"He isn't home."

"Well, you two had better get into the cruiser while I park this thing off the road. Then I'll take you down to the station."

When we were finally out again, even Lee looked white and shaken. "Maybe we can go to the Island and stay with my aunt until things cool down," he suggested.

I had never hitchhiked before, but Lee said he was an expert. Yet despite his expertise, it was already dark before we reached Vancouver. The Island was, at best, still more than four hours away.

"I guess we'll have to spend the night on the streets," Lee said miserably. "Unless . . . "

"Uncle Bob and Aunt Jean live here," I volunteered. "But . . . "

"Could we spend the night with them?"

"No way. Dad and Mom . . . "

"They went back home, remember? Or would you rather get mugged?"

I led the way, and timidly knocked on the door. "Are Dad and Mom here?" I asked anxiously.

"Why, no!" said Uncle Bob, clearly surprised to see us. "They left this morning."

"Good," I sighed.

"What happened?" he asked, pulling us inside. "Are you in trouble?" I just nodded.

"So what are you going to do?" Uncle Bob prompted when he had heard our story.

"I don't know."

"You know, your parents will be worried."

"I know." I swallowed hard to get rid of the is and

lump in my throat.

"Did you want to call them? There's a phone in the kitchen."

"Dad said he'd call your mother," I told Lee when I came back. Somehow I felt calmer, more composed.

"So what now?" Uncle Bob asked.

"I'll take the first bus home tomorrow. That is, if you'll lend me the money. I'll have to face the consequences, and it's better now than later."

Uncle Bob stood up, and shook my hand warmly. "That's a very mature decision," he said. "A man's worth may not be measured with a yardstick, but in my estimation, you just grew two feet." A man's worth may not be measured with

a yardstick.



By Mary Rahn Photos provided by the author

INTERVIEW WITH

Jenessa Alexis

hen Jenessa Alexis's uncle Mike was deployed to Iraq in March 2003, she wanted to do something in his honor. Since the color yellow represents having a loved one overseas. Jenessa made a vellow bracelet to wear in her uncle's honor. Interest in the yellow bracelets quickly built among her classmates and community members, so Jenessa set up a Web site, www.harmsway4kids.com, through which people could order bracelets. She has since been a guest on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno, has won the support of California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, and has traveled across the country spreading the word about her cause. Now she and 30,000 volunteers have made more than a quarter-million bracelets that are being worn all around the world as a symbol of gratitude for the sacrifices of soldiers for freedom.

Listen: What lessons have you learned through your experiences?

Jenessa: Love and compassion make this world go round. People so often underestimate the power of one. I think if each young adult could just grasp that concept, our world could really be a better place. Along with the intention of showing appreciation to the troops, my goal is to get other students involved in projects and out making a difference in their community. And I'm

had just lost his hand. He arrived at the hospital the same day I visited him. At first he didn't want to talk, or accept the gift of the bracelet I brought him. But after I thanked him for his service and told him a little bit about my project, he started crying. He talked about how afraid he was to go on with life having only one hand. He said, however, that the bracelet gave him a new

hope, and gave him reason to push on.

Listen: Do you have any advice for other young people reaching for their dreams?

Jenessa:
NEVER give up.
So many times
I thought I
couldn't go on
any further, but
each time I
received a letter
or e-mail from
a soldier who
told me how
the bracelets
made the distance that separated him

from his family become a little less, I promised myself to continue, because the blessings have far outweighed the sacrifices. Every time a student e-mails me that he or she became involved in a project after hearing me speak, I know that I am making a difference. The youth of America need to realize the power that we have to make a difference in our hometowns, our states, our country, and our world.



not saying that making a difference is easy. When a project such as this is started, there is always the possibility of failure, but isn't never starting the journey, never taking risks, a failure in itself? I hope that kids open their eyes and look around to see what they can do. They just have to be ready and willing to try.

Listen: How have the bracelets inspired people?

Jenessa: I met a soldier named Victor while I was at Walter Reed Army Hospital. When I met him, he C'mon, read this. We dare you!

By Kent and Kyle Healy

ome on, man! Everybody's doing it. If you don't, you're a loser."

How often does someone actually say that? Not very often. They save those lines for Hollywood movies. But this doesn't mean that peer pressure doesn't exist. What it means is that pressure is just a little more cunning than that. We know this from experience.

We've attended five high schools in all. Each school was completely different from the next—some were even in different countries. But every time we changed schools, moved to a different city, or experienced a new culture, we received a welcoming gift: peer pressure. Thanks a lot!

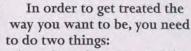
Peer pressure is something nobody wants, but everybody gets. Just about every time it's mentioned, people roll their eyes and say, "Ha! That doesn't affect me!" But it does. We all know it exists, and believe it or not, everyone is affected by it.

Peer pressure exists because we all have a strong—but often unconscious—need to "fit in" and become part of the group. Peer pressure may not be in your face and easy to identify. It can come from within you.

Now you might be wondering, "So how can I prepare for this?" Good question.

The best way to defeat peer pressure is to build (and then rely on) your own self-confidence. You've probably heard this before, but have you really acted on it? Does your everyday personality shout confidence to others? Most of us think so. However, the way we perceive ourselves is often different from the way other people perceive us. You need to pay extra attention to the way you carry yourself. Because after all:

You determine how others treat you.



1. Give others the respect you'd like to have from them.

2. Be happy and comfortable with who you are—your values, beliefs, and actions.

Our confidence determines our level of protection, and it originates from our personal belief system. It all goes back to what you believe is true about yourself. We also found that in certain situations there was no time to analyze things—we had to make split-second decisions. This is what we found:

Getting confidence is more of a decision than a discovery.

You can show your confidence through strong body language, eye contact, and a firm tone of voice, but you have to make a decision to do this initially. If you come across as insecure, others will notice it right away. People will try to pressure you if they think you will give in. It's sad but true. You're far less likely to be a victim of peer pressure if you're confident about yourself, your beliefs, and your values. So offer a firm handshake, look people in the eye, and stand up for yourself. After all, it is your life.

Check us out online at:

www.coolstuffmedia.com. If you have any questions about this month's topic, contact us at: KentandKyle@coolstuff media.com.

Listen 31

