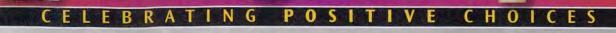
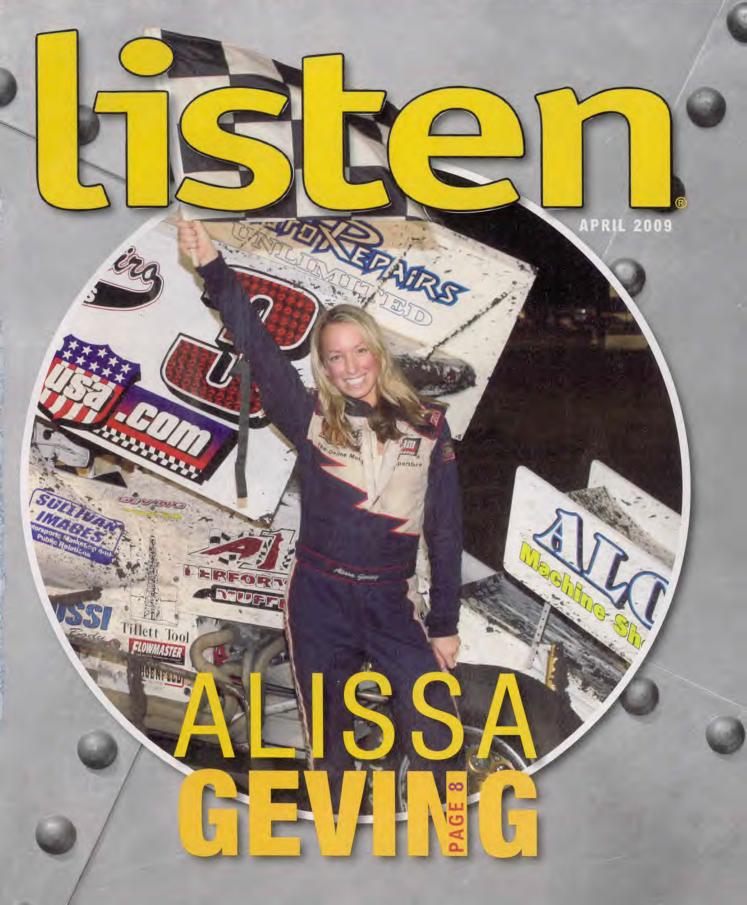




Luck of the Draw

Sign Language





# CONTENTS

## Features

#### Camp Daybreak 4

From the minute Daddy's banged-up pickup drove away, I knew his camp idea was a bad one.

#### Extreme Ecstasy: No Love Lost 6

A combination of ecstasy and meth, called extreme ecstasy, is especially dangerous.

#### Racing Toward the Future: Alissa Geving 8

The teen sprint car driver talks about her proudest moment, what it takes to find peace and joy, and how to rock the house.

#### Luck of the Draw 12

What do drugs and gambling have in common? We bet you'll be surprised.

#### Times Are Changing Quiz 15

Change happens. How you deal with it is the important thing. Rate your coping skills.

#### Windermere Blogosphere 16

Will Marcos dump his date for a chance to go to the spring banquet with his crush?

#### **Heroin Hurdles 18**

Heroin is so addictive that it can destroy your life. We'll tell you how to avoid its hurdles.

#### Patchwork Poison 20

It may seem like an easy way to get a quick buzz, but you don't know where that pain patch has been, or what's in it.

#### Sign Language Singers 22

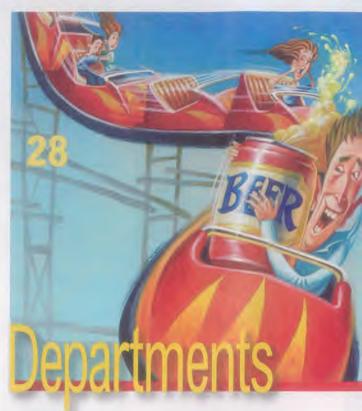
The Sign Language Singers use American Sign Language (ASL) during the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade to make the songs understandable to the hearing-impaired.

#### ASL: Speak Out! 24

Need to take a foreign language, but not sure which to choose? Try American Sign Language. You'll make new friends, and enter a world you didn't even know existed.

#### The Roller-coaster Ride 28

Last year was the worst year of my life. It seemed as if Mom and Dad had been fighting forever.



#### Editorial: My Happy Place 3

In which I gush about something that has me all "Jazzed" up.

#### Good for You 11

Grow a green thumb and dig these neat facts about gardening.

#### I'm Listening 14

"As graduation approaches I'm tempted to tell this girl, Jessica, what I really think of her. Would it be petty to pour out my feelings?"

#### What's Up With That? 27

"My friend said smoking a hookah is less harmful than smoking cigarettes. Is he right?"

#### Spotlight 30

Mackenzie Bart combines her love for singing with American Sign Language to help others benefit from, and appreciate, sign language.

#### Cool Stuff With Kent and Kyle 31

Body language. What's yours saying behind your back?

### listen

Volume 62, Number 8

#### Editor

Céleste Perrino-Walker

Bill Kirstein

Heather Quintana

Richard Tooley

Nick Bejarano

#### EDITORIAL CONSULTANTS

Hans Diehl, Dr.H.Sc., M.P.H. Winston Ferris, M.A., Ph.D. Allan Handysides, M.B., B.Ch. Gary Hopkins Peter N. Landless, M.B., B.Ch. Stoy Proctor, M.P.H. Francis A. Soper, Litt.D. DeWitt Williams, Ph.D.



## Fight I'm Just Saying ...

altor

Do you have a place—a place you've been to once, or a place you can go to all the time—that makes you happy just thinking about it? It doesn't have to be a location such as a park, a beach, or a mountaintop. It could be a spot in front of an easel, your seat in band, or your spot on a team. It could be even more vague than that: a certain smell that makes you feel happy and secure, a person you like to hang out with who accepts you for who you are, or a song or poem that gives you courage when you are afraid. Do you have a place like that? Do you have a happy place?

I have a couple happy places (listening to Christmas music, playing music with friends, the ocean), but my favorite is with my horse, All That Jazz. I don't even have to be riding Jazz. I just like rubbing his soft nose, getting



horse hugs, and smelling him. He just smells so horsey . . . it's better than any perfume in the world. I like to hang out down at the barn, brush him after a ride, watch him chew hay, and feed him apples and carrots. There's nothing better after a hard day of writing and editing than to spend some time with my horse.

It's important to have happy places for the times things aren't quite so . . . how shall we say it? Happy. When I've got a deadline, or the washing machine eats my favorite shirt, or people are rude, I can think about that place that makes me

happy, and just holding on to it in my mind makes it easier to get through whatever nastiness is going on.

If your happy place doesn't immediately come to mind, spend a few minutes thinking about it. What makes you the happiest? Write it down. Or maybe your happy place is an actual place. If you could be transported, in the blink of an eye, to one place on earth, where would it be? Then the next time you have a bad day, think about your happy place, and see if that doesn't make you just a bit happier.

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



Céleste Perrino-Walker Editor

LISTEN (ISSN 0024-435X) April 2009, Volume 62, Number 8. Published monthly (EXCEPT JUNE, JULY, AND AUGUST) and copyrighted © 2009 by The Health Connection 5. 55 West Oak Ridge Dr., Hagerstown, MD 21740. One year \$35.00 (U.S.). Outside U.S. \$42.00 (U.S.). PERIODICALS postage paid at Hagerstown, MD POSTMASTER: Send address changes to LISTEN, P.O. Box 859, Hagerstown, MD 21741. U.S.A. and Canada, call toll free 1-877-474-6247. Outside U.S. and Canada, 1-301-393-3280. This publication is available in microfilm from Xerox University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106, 1-313-761-4700. Printed in U.S.A. Unless otherwise credited, all pictures © 2009 Jupiterimages Corporation; spot images from Art Explosion Image Library.

By Laurie Chance Smith Illustrations by Anita DuFalla

When Daddy had encouraged me to sign on for Camp Daybreak, he'd said, "Dawn, you'll meet new friends."

> inded from the long hike to Paradise Cabin, I drop my backpack on the floor and flop on my cot. Erin glares at me, hands on her hips. "That's my bed," she says.

> "Really," I say, raising my eyebrows. "I didn't realize."

"Britney, Robin, Lexi, and I want to sleep next to each other. You move over there." Erin points to the cot beside a girl wearing a cowboy hat

that seems bigger than her whole body.

I swing my legs off the cot, grab my bag, and stalk to the other side of the

room, already steamed.

From the minute Daddy's

banged-up pickup drove away, I knew his camp idea was a bad one.

Moving to a new school had been rough last year. It had been even tougher to make friends, because Samantha had picked me as her new bullying target. The end-of-school-electricjam had been torture. Samantha had stood behind me in the gymnasium seats, jabbing me in the back, until I'd told Mrs. Wilkins I was sick and needed to call my dad.

When Daddy had encouraged me to sign on for Camp Daybreak, he'd said, "Dawn, you'll meet new friends. Besides, the fresh scenery will do you good." Now that I'm here, I see that camp is going to be a total waste. Erin's vastness makes Samantha look like a pixie, and why should I make friends at Camp Daybreak when I'll never see any of these girls again?

"Which bed do you want?" asks the cowboy-hat girl.

"It doesn't matter," I say, collapsing on a cot.

"You've got quite an accent," she says, goggling. "I'm Neda. What's your name?"

I glare at her. "Dawn. You sound like you're from up north."

"Maine." Neda smiles nervously, then stammers, "Your Texas twang is cool. I've always been fascinated by cowboys. I've been bugging my mom for three years to let me come to a summer camp in Texas."

I sigh as I sink back on the pillows and ask, "So what's with the hat?"

"I thought everyone would be wearing one," says Neda, puzzled. I laugh out loud, almost rolling off the cot.

Neda grins good-naturedly, and begins sifting through her backpack. Smiling dreamily, she says, "I would like to see a real cowboy."

The next morning, when Neda and I return from a mile-long hike with Miss Melyn, Erin and her friends are sitting under the oak trees, giggling behind their hands, and pointing at Neda. I have to admit, I really wish Neda wouldn't wear her cowboy hat everywhere.

But as I stare at Erin and her gaggle of gal-pals, every jeer I endured from Samantha starts ringing through my head. Patting Neda on the shoulder, I say, "Your hat makes you fit in with the scenery." I sweep my hand through the air, taking in the cedar trees and prickly pears.

By Wednesday morning I wake up really missing my dad. Lying on my cot with my hands laced behind my head, I remember him saying, "McAfee Ranch backs up to the grounds of Camp Daybreak. Keep your eyes peeled for a fence line while you're out hiking—that'll be the ranch."

I lace up my hiking boots as Neda wakes up. "Let's head out early," I say. "Miss Melyn says we have two hours of free time this morning."

As I lead Neda along Primrose Trail, she says, "Dawn, this is supposed to be the longest hike. We only have two hours."

"We're only going halfway. I think I figured out—well, I want to show you something."

When we spot the fence line, Neda says, "Where are we?"

"This is McAfee Ranch."

Neda's eyes light up like a firefly as we hear horse's hooves thunder in the distance. Then a cowboy tops the emerald hill. Neda watches, mesmerized, as the cowboy throws his lasso in the air, and ropes a calf squarely around the ankles.

"How did he do that?" Neda asks.

"No idea," I answer, laughing. "It must take lots of practice." We watch the cowboy gather the calf in his arms, set him on his feet, and tie the rope around his neck. Then he leads the calf back over the hill, I guess in the direction of the barn or the calf's mother.

"Thanks, Dawn." Neda looks at me with awe. "This was my dream come true."

"No problem," I say, embarrassed at how easy it is to make a friend happy. "Neda, do you think we'll stay friends after we leave camp?"

"Sure—we can write to each other."

I lean over the fence post. "We'll call our letters the Camp Daybreak News and meet back here each summer."

Neda waves her cowboy hat in the air, and yells, "Yee-haw!" And I feel like the luckiest friend in the world.





By Shirley Anne Ramaley

ften called the love drug, there's nothing loving about the illegal drug ecstasy. Also referred to as "hugs" or "charity," neither of these terms describes ecstasy either. Not unless you like your love, hugs, and charity with a hefty side order of dry mouth, cramps, blurred vision, sweating, stomachaches, and chills. Nothing lovely about that.

Many ecstasy users become very depressed, anxious, and confused. Some studies indicate these effects on the brain might become permanent.

#### Why Use Ecstasy?

So why would anyone want to use such a dangerous drug? Some

publications and Web sites claim that this is a safe drug. They are wrong! There is nothing safe about ecstasy.

Long-term use may cause dehydration, kidney failure, and even heart failure. Why not just try it once, or use it once in a while? That's hard to do, because ecstasy can become addicting. It works by changing a chemical called serotonin in the brain. Serotonin is a "messenger" that transmits signals between nerve cells. After the transmission, serotonin is pulled back into the original cell by a serotonin transporter. Ecstasy stops the transporter from working. This gives users the "rush" they feel.

#### Not So Easy to Quit

Ecstasy is usually used in clubs and underground raves, where Jeff started using. Jeff went to parties with older friends when he was 17. A girl he met talked him into trying ecstasy. Jeff figured that everyone else seemed to be doing it, so why not? Soon he was hooked on ecstasy.

Jeff and his friends often went to clubs and raves. They heard about police raids, but that didn't stop them. The parties were "fun," for a while. After two years, when Jeff's younger brother asked to come along, Jeff knew he had to quit.

Seeing younger and younger "ravers" get totally incapacitated at parties, Jeff knew he didn't want his brother to get involved. Jeff soon learned quitting wasn't easy. Finally he checked himself into a drug rehab center, where he is still undergoing treatment. He says ecstasy nearly ruined his life. He didn't want it to do the same to his brother.

#### A Counselor's Advice

Frank Macias counsels preteens, teens, and young adults who have gotten into trouble because of drugs. Mr. Macias says people come from all backgrounds, and peer pressure is what often leads people to start using drugs. He also knows that ecstasy "can be hard to get off." According to Mr. Macias, "ecstasy is addicting, no matter what people say."

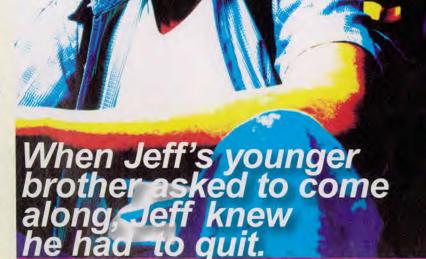
A teen might start with just one pill, but after a while that one pill isn't enough. What if the teen suddenly decides to stop using ecstasy? Often when people try to stop, they can go into severe depression.

#### An Extreme Drug

While ecstasy itself is a danger, it is now being mixed with "meth" (methamphetamine.) Both drugs have toxic effects on the brain. Combined, they can lead to sharp increases in body temperature, which can then lead to kidney and heart failure, and death.

This combination of ecstasy and meth, called extreme ecstasy, is especially dangerous. Since illegal drugmakers can put a variety of chemicals in their products, it is impossible to know exactly what is in that little pill.

One recent year, more than 55 percent of seized ecstasy contained methamphetamine. Drugmakers like to use this combination because meth is cheaper to produce, and increases their profits. All the drugmakers care about is profit. They do



not care about the harmful effects it has on young people.

#### No Problem Solver Here

Unfortunately, the number of people using ecstasy is rising. In 2006, one third of new users were under age 18 when they started using ecstasy. Many preteens do not understand the risk of using this illegal drug.

Ecstasy, combined with meth or not, is a dangerous drug. If you haven't tried it, don't. If you hang out with others who do use, find a group of friends that doesn't. Most people do not use illegal drugs, in spite of what friends might tell you.

Some teens think drugs will help them become more popular. Others want to fit in. Teens also use drugs because they are depressed, and think this will help them solve problems. A drug like ecstasy doesn't solve problems. It only makes them worse. When the drug wears off, the feelings and problems are still there.

#### Protect Yourself and Your Friends

If you are using ecstasy, seek help from a trusted adult: a parent, teacher, counselor, or school nurse. Don't try to solve this alone. There are treatments available and people who want to help you.

Mr. Macias has seen many preteens and teens get off ecstasy. If you know someone who is using, help your friend get the attention he or she needs. You might be saving a life.





HE ANIMAL ROAR OF THE ENGINES. THE ACRID SMELL OF FUEL AND HOT TIRES. ADRENALINE. SPEED. WHY GO TO THE MALL WHEN YOU CAN RACE INSTEAD? ALISSA GEVING MAY LOOK LIKE A TYPICAL TEEN MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY, BUT ON WEEKENDS SHE'S AT THE TRACK, GEARING UP FOR BATTLE ON THE DIRT TRACK AT THE PETALUMA SPEEDWAY IN PETALUMA, CALIFORNIA.

#### Born to Race

While most kids don't get behind the wheel until they are 15 or 16, Alissa began driving much earlier. "I got started racing when I was about 12," she says. Both Alissa's father and grandfather were championship drivers, and she spent many childhood hours at the track. "It wasn't a shock to my family that I wanted to pursue racing as a way of life, since I would be following in such amazing footsteps!" Not only is Alissa's dad her racing mentor, helping her improve her style and skills—he builds her cars, including the engines. "My family is the core of what I do. My mom tapes my races, cleans my helmet, and even helps clean the car! They're awesome!" Such support helps Alissa stay focused, and when you're muscling 1,600 pounds of steel going 150 miles per hour through a muddy hairpin turn, you need all the focus you can get.

### SPRINTCAR

#### At the Track

While Alissa races at her local track for points, she also competes in the California Civil War Series, which takes her all around the state. "My favorite part about competition is getting that rush of adrenaline when you just passed a competitor . . . or it could be that ice-cold feeling in my veins right while I'm waiting to start the race!" Typically, when she gets to the track around 2:00 in the afternoon, Alissa greets friends and teammates before gearing up for practice laps. "The competition and I tend to be very close. I get along with most of the racers, and I get to know their driving styles pretty fast. For example, if I'm behind someone who always runs a low line on the track, I will race them on the top to strategize a way around them. Knowing weaknesses is always the key to being safe, and getting around people."

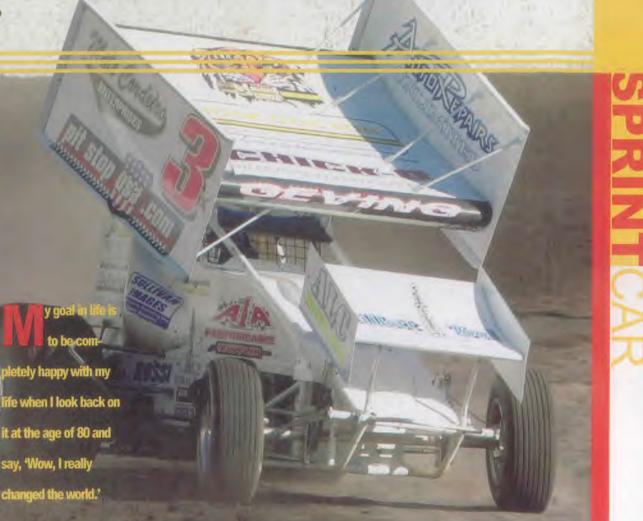
Before getting into the car, she puts on a fire suit, head sock, ear plugs, gloves, and neck protection. To qualify, she drives two laps around the track, vying for the fastest lap time, which determines her starting spot for the rest of the night. "We then have heat races, typically involving eight to 10 cars that run for about 10 laps. After this, the main event rolls around. This is a 25-lap race and usually includes 20 to 25!" When asked about being female in



the male-dominated world of racing, Alissa jokes, "Being a female just means I have to worry about messing up my hair in my helmet. Other than that, I forget about all that stuff on the track, and I believe most of my competitors do too."

Her positive mind-set is a powerful asset. To be a champion driver, you need "determination, consistency, aggression, finesse, and a good attitude," she says. "Sometimes people just have raw talent. It takes awhile for someone to become proficient, and to fine-tune their technique, but I believe racing is a passion, and if you want it that bad, anyone can rock the house!" Clearly Alissa's attitude gives her an edge, because she recently won the 2008 All-Pro Points Series championship at Petaluma Speedway—the youngest ever to win





it, and the only girl in the track's approximately 75-year history. Bill Sullivan, the Media Relations contact for Chicko Motorsports, wrote, "It is believed that at the age of only 16 she becomes the youngest woman racer ever to win a championship title in a winged 360 powered sprint car." She's also been Petaluma's Rookie of the Year, and took second in points at the track in Antioch, California.

While others say her driving style can be aggressive and a little crazy at times, she tries to keep it contained. She can't contain her love of the sport, though. When people say racing is good only for the crashing, her zeal is evident: "A devoted race fan will tell you any day of the week that seeing his or her favorite driver crash can be just as depressing as watching

your favorite football team lose by one point in the Super Bowl. Fans don't go to the races to see crashing. Anyone who claims this . . . might as well go to a baseball game simply to eat peanuts."

#### Off the Track

When asked about her proudest moment, Alissa is thoughtful. "I'm most proud of my balance between school, family, friends, racing, and my own self-respect. Without all of these things, I wouldn't be the person I am today." In addition to loving the challenge of school, she enjoys exercise and healthy eating. "I eat a raw vegan diet, run a few miles a week, and do a little bit of weight training. I find joy and peace within myself if I stay healthy, which is why

I stay away from doing drugs and all that bad stuff. I never party so I stay on top of my game all the time."

#### Racing Toward the Future

What role will racing play in Alissa Geving's future? Many people have used sprint car racing as a stepping-stone to NASCAR, and Alissa's considering that path. "I eventually want to venture into the world of asphalt racing," she says. But her goals are broader: "I would say that my goal in life is to be completely happy with my life when I look back on it at the age of 80 and say, 'Wow, I really changed the world.' If I can do this by racing, involving charity and service, and just having the time of my life, count me in!"



Is school leaving you too tired to exercise? Can't get up the gumption to hit the gym? Does running around a track bore you to tears? Then try gardening! You'll get a great workout, have fun doing it, and get to eat what you grow (unless you're growing roses, of course). Gardening may be the perfect exercise routine. Dig these neat facts, and I'll bet your green thumb starts itching.



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

### Dig It!

Gardening provides aerobic exercise, builds muscle, increases flexibility, and strengthens joints. It also gets you out into the fresh air, which is something we all need to do more.

The garden is nature's gym. All the major muscle groups are given a workout when you garden strenuously. Pushing a lawn mower for an hour makes the treadmill look like child's play. Who needs a rowing machine when you can pull a hoe? And why mess with weights when you can build a fence?

As with any good exercise program it's important to be consistent. Plan a daily routine, and vary your activities to make sure all the major muscle groups get a workout.

Minutes count when it comes to exercise. We all need at least 30 minutes per day, but recent research has shown that breaking exercise up into smaller chunks throughout the day is better for you then doing it all at once. So weed 10 minutes in the morning, chop wood for another 10 minutes in the afternoon, and take a brisk 10-minute walk around the lawn behind a mower in the evening.

Trying to lose weight? Gardening can burn 250-600 calories per hour, depending on how hard you work. And growing your own vegetables and fruit will encourage you to include more of them in your diet instead of highcalorie snacks.

Gardening's health benefits go way beyond physical exercise. Some studies have indicated that gardening will lower blood pressure, and decrease your risk of heart disease, diabetes, and even cancer.

Fresh fruits and vegetables are high in cancer-preventative antioxidants, and also fiber, which is important for good digestive health.

Feeling blue? Go get dirty. Time spent playing in the garden is great for reducing stress. Plant flowers with soothing colors and pleasant aromas. A walk through the garden will soothe your mind after a long day hitting the books.

The great thing about gardening is you can do it anywhere. Even if you're stuck in a concrete jungle, you can grow tomatoes on your windowsill. Terrariums can be great stress relievers. Or you could volunteer to help keep up a local park or playground.

If strolling on a treadmill makes you feel like a hamster on a wheel and lifting weights just leaves you sore and bored, then chuck the gym and go dig in the dirt. You'll get a great workout, feel those creative juices flowing, and unload a ton of stress. Besides, a home-grown tomato tastes better than anything you've ever had in your life! Trust me!

#### THE DANGERS OF TEEN GAMBLING

## LUCK OF THE DRAW

By Amy Hammond Hagberg

n the way to see a movie with his buddies, 19-year-old Greg Hogan, Jr., asked to stop at a bank so he could cash a check. Once inside, he walked up to the teller and handed her a note that said he had a gun and wanted money. With \$2,871 in his pocket, the Lehigh University sophomore, class president, chaplain's assistant, and son of a Baptist minister became a bank robber. Why? Hogan had racked up nearly \$5,000 in gambling debts playing online poker and needed to find a way out. What he found was a 10-year prison term.

#### Try it, You'll Like It

Compulsive gambling is ruining lives, and destroying the futures of literally thousands. According to Keith Whyte, executive director at the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG), young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 have the highest rates of gambling participation and problems of any age group.

But it actually starts much earlier than that. Whyte shares that in a 1998 study, "30 percent of kids between the ages of 12 and 17 had

bought a lottery ticket, 30 percent had gambled on sports, 30 percent had gambled on noncasino card games, and 30 percent had gambled on personal games of skill." More important, he believes that 3-5 percent of those teens can be classified as problem gamblers.

Gambling has become very big business; in 2005 legal gambling in the U.S. generated more than \$84 billion in revenue. It's not just casinos we're talking about here; legalized gambling is a primary source of revenue for 48 of the 50 states. "The state's generating an enormous amount of revenue, so they want people to gamble-it takes care of their shortfalls in funding education and building highways," says Mike Faragher, director of training and development at the University of Denver Problem Gambling Treatment and Research Center.

One of the biggest moneymakers of all is the lottery, a game very accessible to kids. Some states even sell tickets at vending machines in places like airports and grocery stores.

Now gambling has become a media darling. There are numerous top-rated gambling shows, many featuring well-known celebrities. One of the biggest problems with TV poker is that it makes it look like winning occurs much more frequently than it actually does.

#### **Risky Business**

For those who are vulnerable, repeated exposure to addictive substances early on can actually change the brain. "We see this very clearly with substance abuse, but we also think it happens in gambling," Whyte says.

Many experts agree that gambling can be even more serious than substance abuse. "A gambling addiction isn't like a lot of others," reports Faragher. "With a gambling addict, when they're finally ready to quit they may be \$250,000 in debt. The long-term implications of a gambling addiction can be devastating; the suicide rate for problem gamblers is higher than for any other addicts." It all may start innocently enough: a sports bet here, a poker game there. But before long some teens are consumed by their addiction, and think about gambling every waking minute. They lose their friends, fight with their families, and no longer participate in their usual activities. They beg, borrow, and steal because they think as long as they're in the game they're just one bet away from winning it all back.

But the odds are definitely not

#### HOW TO AVOID BECOMING A GAMBLING STATISTIC:

- Know the law. Most forms of gambling are illegal for those under 18.
- Know the consequences. If you make a decision to gamble, know what can happen.
- Know the warning signs of addiction.
- Know where to get help if you have a problem. Start with the National Council on Problem Gambling hotline: 800-522-4700. It's confidential, and it's free.

in their favor. Keith Whyte provides a great analogy. Picture 200 semitrailers parked nose to tail. Each trailer contains hundreds of cases of soda, each case has 10 layers, and each layer has 80 cans. It's your job to find the one cold can among the 5.7 million cans of warm soda. That's what your odds are of winning the jackpot: 1 in 5.7 million.



By Greg Woodburn

Dear Scramble,

Dear Greg.

For longer than I can remember, my older brother has been a soccer star forward, midfielder, no matter what position Jeff plays he always dominates. I'm thinking of trying out for the soccer team, but since it is Jeff's "thing," I'm afraid I'll be overshadowed, or burdened with expectations based on my last name. What should I do?

-Sibling Soccer Scramble

#### shot and have never looked back; I've taken art classes all four years in high school, and along with meeting amazing people and making lifelong friends, I now plan to get a minor degree in painting in college. Remember, you know best what matters to you, whether it's soccer or trying out for the school play. Good luck!

While it's true that having Jeff as your brother might cause others

to have false or unfair expectations, you should not let other people's

baseless judgments make this decision for you. If you enjoy playing

soccer and are excited for the chance to be a part of the team, then

back or divert you from a sport you love. If soccer doesn't work out,

involved with. Art wasn't my focus before high school, but I gave it a

know that there are many, many other options and activities to get

give it a shot! I'm sure your brother wouldn't want his skill to hold you

#### Dear Write?

While it is tempting to vent and tell Jessica off, it is not a classy or mature choice to burn bridges, even with someone you will likely never see again. Revenge is a hollow type of triumph; tearing someone down doesn't bring joy or satisfaction to the critic or the judged. You are better off taking the high road, and walking away from your negative experience with Jessica with your head held high.

#### Dear Greg,

As graduation approaches and my senioritis gets worse, this girl in my class is getting on my nerves more and more. I've always gotten a bad vibe from Jessica, even from the first time I met her, and she always seems to avoid speaking to me. I really want to write Jessica a nasty letter telling her how she bothers me now that high school is coming to a close and I will never have to see her again. Would it be petty of me to pour out my feelings?

-To Write or Not to Write?



#### Dear Greg,

My annoying lab partner, Heather, has a very different view of our "friendship" than I do—she keeps inviting me to hang out, and I feel bad making up excuses time after time. Still, I don't enjoy spending time with her. How can I get out of this debacle without hurting her feelings and making physics class awkward?

-"Friend" Crisis

#### **Should Crisis:**

- a. Tell Heather that she doesn't view their friendship the same way?
- b. Keep making up excuses, hoping that Heather will get the picture?
- c. Try hanging out with Heather a few times?

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

#### TIMES ARE CHANGING

Change is inevitable, but how you deal with it is the most important thing. How well do you cope? Take the quiz below to find out if you're chillin', a frantic-frenzy, or super-stressed when it comes to change.

- 1. Your parents sit you down to tell you about the new job your father has landed-in another state. You:
  - a. Scream, yell, and tear the house apart, telling them, "I'm not going: I'll live with my grandparents!"
  - b. Worry you'll never have any friends or fit in at a new school.
  - c. Think-cool new friends.
- 2. Your best friend will be spending a month at summer camp, and you won't be able to hang out with each other. You:
  - a. Find you can't eat or sleep.
  - b. Talk to your parents about sending you to the same camp.
  - c. Aren't worried-you'll find someone to hang with until your best friend returns.
- 3. Your friends are granted a later curfew than you. You:
  - a. Lay awake all night afraid they'll ditch you.
  - b. Think of ways to earn a later curfew.
  - c. Enjoy hanging with your buds until it's time for you to go home.
- 4. Friends have started going to parties where drugs and alcohol will be present. They're trying to use peer pressure to get you to join them. You:
  - a. Start getting a lot of headaches.
  - b. Consider giving in to the pressure.
  - c. Leave 'em behind; you don't want drugs or alcohol in your life. Besides, you know you'll make new friends.
- 5. You were the captain of the football/cheerleading team, now you're being replaced. You:
  - a. Become overwhelmed to the point that it's affecting your school work.
  - b. Consider guitting. Who needs the team if you're not captain?
  - c. Step aside. It's time for someone else to enjoy the role of captain.

fighting the tear of change. But you're pretty levelheaded. A lot of stuff has been bothering you lately, and you're Mostly b's-Frantic-Frenzied

eating healthy, and exercising.

BY TH

you. Great ways to relieve stress are writing down your fears, sleep, not eating, and getting headaches are unhealthy for ble, making you act in ways that are out of character. Losing take a deep breath. The stress is making you tense and irrita-Wow, your stress level is off the Richter scale. Time to

passang-rading-s.e Ansola

healthy.

things. This positive laid-back attitude will keep you safe and life stress you out too much. You look for the brighter side of can't run away from it, so you roll with the changes. You don't let You realize that change is inevitable. You accept that you

Mostly c's-Chillin'

you like it!

There's always a reason for change. Who knows, you might find for growth. Focus on what's ahead, not what's being left behind. Feeling trazzled is normal. Ity viewing the change as an avenue

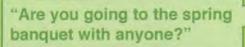
## WINDERMERE BLOGOSPHE

Written by Dallas Woodburn / Illustration by Jeremy Shire

"This week it is Marcos' turn to write our class blog. As you know, the assignment is to blog about a personal experience in the past year that has affected you. I want everyone to read it and comment by Monday."

> I didn't have anyone to go to the spring banquet with, so when this girl Lisa asked me, I said I would go with her. But then, two days before the banquet, my crush, Becka, approached me after class ...

> > "Hey, Marcos!"



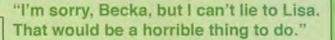
"Uh . . . yeah, actually, I am. Lisa asked me."

"Hi, Becka.

"Too bad, 'cuz I was reeeeaaaally hoping you'd go with me. My date bailed at the last minute, and now I have no one to go with."

"Are you sure you can't, you know, get out of going with Lisa?"

For a moment I considered lying to Lisa, and saying that something had come up and that I couldn't go with her, and then sneaking off to the banquet with Becka. But then I thought about the kind of person I wanted to be, and I knew what that person would do.



"Fine, then—I'll just find someone else. There are plenty of guys who would die for the opportunity to take me to the banquet!"

"That stinks."

MARCOS: My crush on Becka ended that day. And Lisa and I had a wonderful time at the banquet—I'm so glad I went with her.

MARIA: That's great, Marcos. I think you two make a cute couple. ;)

NADINE: I like what you said about doing what the person you want to be would do. That's wonderful advice for making tough decisions!



ulie\* started shooting up heroin after her best friend's baby passed away. It affected her in a way she'd never thought would happen. "I've never been able to get the look in her eyes out of my mind ....The father of the baby gave me some Valium to calm me down," she said. "I loved the way I felt that night, even through the stress and pain; the next day I went out looking for a bag of gear [heroin]." Heroin is processed from morphine, a substance that is extracted from the seedpod of the Asian poppy plant. Some street names for heroin besides "gear" are "smack" and "H." Usually the drug is a white or brown powder.

The short-term effects of heroin abuse often begin with a feeling of euphoria upon first injection, and then the user becomes what many call "on the nod," which means that they get very sleepy. Then their mental abilities decline.

Chronic (or long-term) users of heroin experience even more severe effects. They can have infections in their heart valves and lining, liver disease, and such other complica-

#### NO ONE WANTS TO RUIN THEIR LIVES BY GETTING INVOLVED WITH THIS DRUG.

tions as pneumonia, because heroin affects a user's respiratory system. Heroin is also illegal, so there are major risks to your safety, especially if you become a drug dealer, as Julie did.

Heroin is also very dangerous because the abuser has to use more heroin to get the effect they want. This is called tolerance. As more of the drug is used, the abuser becomes addicted. Heroin is so addictive that it can destroy your life. Some people drop out of school; others neglect the most important people in their lives, their families; and some even lose their jobs.

Some people take heroin to feel better. Anna started shooting up after a friend told her that it would help lessen her headaches and pain from the epileptic seizures she'd suffered since she was a teenager.

"I had a friend who sold it," she said. "He said, 'Anna I have something that will take the pain away.' That was my first time; I'd say he wasn't much of a friend."

Anna's husband had also been a heroin addict for years. Even though she knew what he struggled with, she still continued to use heroin. When she and her husband got paid, they always saw it as a good day, because they could go and buy more drugs. Even though those days seemed great at first, Anna and her husband began to fight. The fact that they were addicted made them start distrusting each other. Anna didn't want to send him out with money for drugs, because she was afraid that he would take more than his fair share.

Heroin is the most widely used and the most addictive of all opiates. According to the 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, approximately 3.8 million Americans aged 12 and older reported trying heroin at least once during their lifetime. This represents 1.5 percent of the population aged 12 or older.

Students were surveyed as part of the 2007 Monitoring the Future Study, and 1.3 percent of eighth graders and 1.5 percent of tenth and twelfth graders reported a lifetime use of heroin. Perhaps what's most alarming is that 12.6 percent of eighth graders, 17.3 percent of tenth graders and 29.7 percent of twelfth graders surveyed in 2007 reported that heroin was "fairly easy" or "very easy" to obtain.

You may wonder where the U.S. gets its heroin supply. It comes from foreign sources in South America, Southeast Asia, Mexico, and Southwest Asia. Interestingly enough, Afghanistan produced more than 90 percent of the world's largest opium poppy. Mexico is definitely not far behind, though.

It is possible to overcome your heroin addiction if you have one. Once the user goes through "withdrawal" they can be well on the road to recovery. Withdrawal produces such symptoms as insomnia, diarrhea and vomiting, and cold flashes. Most of the symptoms happen two to three days after the last

#### HEROIN IS SO ADDICTIVE THAT IT CAN DESTROY YOUR LIFE.

#### IT'S IMPORTANT TO JUST SAY NO

dose, and stop after about a week. Sudden withdrawal can sometimes be fatal.

Julie overcame her heroin addiction through rehab. Her rehab included meetings, parenting groups, exercise, and lots of oneon-one work with key workers. She fell into a successful routine, and it made her examine why she'd made her choices in the first place.

Anna also recovered from her heroin addiction. She at first tried to quit "cold turkey," but she had shakes, and began to lose muscle control. After realizing the potentially deadly effects of this, Anna decided to try methadone, a type of drug that blocks the effects of heroin, and eliminates withdrawal symptoms. Anna also joined a family counseling program, Focus on Families, with her husband. She's been off heroin for two years, and is now looking to get off methadone.

Heroin is a very dangerous drug, and as evident from these stories, no one wants to ruin their lives by getting involved with this drug. It's important to just say no, and to help those involved with the drug get the help they need to take back control of their lives.

\* Names have been changed.

#### V DRUG ALERT

## Where did the patch come from?

You never know where it's been!



By Mark N. Lardas

T SEEMS LIKE AN EASY WAY TO GET A QUICK BUZZ. Find or buy a used or unused pain patch and take it for the high. Many people believe that since it is a prescription drug, it's safe, even if they buy it off the street. It is not like buying heroin, is it?

Actually, it might be just as risky as buying street heroin. The most commonly abused patch goes by the name of Duragesic. It contains a time-released 72-hour dose of fentanyl, a powerful narcotic.

Fentanyl is an opiate. In plain English, it belongs to the same family of drugs as heroin, morphine, and methadone. The biggest difference is that fentanyl has 80 times the potency of morphine. If a dose of morphine is like getting kicked by a horse, a similar dose of fentanyl is like getting run over by a herd of horses.

How do opiates work? They work on the receptors, called neurons, in your brain. Opiates alter the messages neurons get about pain, masking them.

That is great if you are in pain. But large doses of opiates act differently when you are not in pain. First they give you a rush as they flood the neurons. You feel like Superman or Superwoman. Then opiates start telling your brain to turn things off. If you were nervous and frantic, you stop worrying. Those neurons have stopped sending their messages.

But after working on the conscious parts of your brain, they begin interfering with the parts of your brain that keep your body running. Your breathing and heart rate slow down. You may go into a coma. Or simply die. Take enough of any opiate, and your brain forgets to tell your lungs to breathe. Enough minutes of not breathing, and nothing else matters to you—ever again. You become another statistic.

Used properly, fentanyl allows someone in chronic pain to rejoin life. The medicine is released slowly, blunting the sharp edge of pain that keeps a patient from resting. Yet even used as prescribed, fentanyl pain patches carry risk. Patients have died because they forgot to remove their old patch before attaching a new one. One woman attached a patch to her skin, and then rested on a

## POIS&M POIS&M POIS&M POIS&M

heating pad. The heated patch released too much fentanyl too quickly. It killed the woman.

When you abuse a patch, taking it to get a rush, it is hard to control how much fentanyl gets into your system. You really do not know exactly how much is in there to begin with. Depending upon how you prepare the patch, you can get too little to matter, or a great big fatal rush.

Fentanyl also interacts with other drugs. Taking it while drinking makes the effects of the two depressants (alcohol is a depressant) cumulative (meaning worse). Combined they may prove fatal even if each drug, used individually, would not have been. You are dead. Do not pass Go.

A few years back, people encountered the same problem with another time-released pain killer, OxyContin. OxyContin also had a powerful opiate in it. People abused it the same way that fentanyl is now being abused, by getting it in one big rush. A lot of users died. Once folks realized how dangerous it was, they stopped playing with it.

Guess what? People are dying from fentanyl abuse now. A University of Florida study showed that 115 people in Florida died tripping on fentanyl in 2004. If that rate is the same throughout the country, thousands of people die from fentanyl abuse annually in the United States.

Here's something else to consider. Where does the patch come from? You never know where it has been. Not all the patches used illegally are new. According to some studies, up to 60 percent of patches sold on the street had previous owners. Dumpster diving dealers get them out of waste containers at hospitals and health-care centers.

You not only bet that the drug

will not harm you—you bet that you will not get whatever the original user had. Fentanyl patches are most often used to control pain from non contagious illnesses, such as cancer or arthritis. But they are also prescribed to control the pain of some truly nasty diseases. Chew one of these patches, and you, too, may share that pain.

There are safer highs than those you get from fentanyl. The best ones do not cost anything. They are the natural highs you get when you do something you enjoy: winning a game of one-on-one with a buddy, cycling with good friends, reading a book you really like, mastering a musical instrument, not for school, but because you want to.

Dreams are fine and fun only when they are natural dreams. Chemically induced dreams often become nightmares.



By J. Michael Krivyanski

housands of people every year watch the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade held in New York City. The marching bands, floats, huge balloons, dancers, and many other things make it an enjoyable experience. The hearingimpaired have always been able to take pleasure in watching the parade, yet understanding the songs being sung during such an event has always been a challenge. A group out of Butler, Pennsylvania, called the Sign Language Singers provides hearingimpaired people a new way to experience the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade as they lip sync and use American Sign Language (ASL) to make the songs understandable to them.

The idea of having children lipsync to music while signing for deaf persons was an idea that started in the 1990s by a group in Baltimore called World of Children. Cathy Wagner was one of the cofounders of that group. When she moved to Butler, Pennsylvania, in 1997, she brought all of her experience with her and decided to form a new group called the Sign Language Singers. Her twin daughters, Meghan and Laura, were new to the Butler area, and Cathy felt it might be a nice way for their family to get acquainted with other people in the area.

"They [the twins] were in sixth grade at the time and going through the things all 12-year-olds do. I knew they wanted to fit in at their new school, and have friends, so I started it [the Sign Language Singers] in my home with 13 kids in 1997."

Today the group has 40 children involved, and also has a waiting list

# The Sign Language Singers

of others who want to join. It includes both boys and girls, with the ages ranging from 5 to 19. They've performed at a variety of venues, including the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York, local parades, nursing homes, private shows, festivals, and rodeos, and have even signed to the national anthem before the start of a Pittsburgh Pirates baseball game.

Betheny Lutz is 15 years old, and has been a part of the Sign Language Singers since she was 4. Her parents responded to an advertisement in the paper, and she's been performing with the group ever since.

"It's a lot of fun. I've met so many people. You have a chance to really make someone's day just because they're able to understand you."

It's a special program where everyone is accepted, and no one is required to try out for anything. You aren't even required to know sign language when you enter the program. All the children are taught at a pace that is comfortable for them. Being in the program has been a huge source of confidence in the lives of many children. It offers opportunities to travel, perform, meet new people, and have interesting experiences.

"I've seen the self-esteem of many children just grow and grow. One student cried and struggled because she was in special classes. After being in the program the girl was able to one day speak in front of thousands of people. Another boy from a poor family was just overwhelmed by visiting New York City. He just kept saying how he had never seen so many big buildings. It was an experience he might not have had if he'd not been a member of the Sign Language Singers," said Wagner.

It's not just during their performance that the children in the program are able to use their sign language skills. Some are able to use it during their normal day.

"I've been able to talk to deaf people using sign language," said Lutz. "There was a man at a store, and he was using sign language. I was able to The Sign Language Singers provides hearing-impaired people a new way to experience the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.



hold a conversation with him using sign language, and he gave us pointers on how to do it."

For Cathy Wagner the program has brought a lot of special experiences for her daughters, who are now 22 years old, and had a positive impact on them. One of the more revealing moments of how the Sign Language Singers impact the hearing-impaired came during one of their trips to New York City. "When we went back to our bus after [being in] the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, a bus driver told us that a little boy who was deaf said our performers were his favorite part of the entire parade because he could understand what we were doing." By Terry Lee Wilde

American Sig

MJU

American Sign Language is the fourth most commonly used language in America.

> hen Jaygen Reynolds needed two foreign languages at her high school in Waco, Texas she enrolled in Spanish, but didn't want to take French, the other language listed. American Sign Language (ASL) could be substituted for one of

the foreign language requirements, but the high school didn't offer it. Jaygen enrolled at the local community college, and received dual credit for high school and college classes.

And this is what she learned: during her first class, her teacher signed the complete introduction. Silence. No one understood. Welcome to the world of the deaf.

In ASL, hand gestures, facial expressions, and body language are used to convey the message. Most often Americans will raise the pitch of their voice to ask a question. Because the deaf can't use tone to signal this, they'll widen their eyes and raise their eyebrows. Some also lean forward to show they've asked a question. Jaygen says that she has to be careful to sign correctly, because gestures can be similar but say something completely different.

During the first semester Jaygen learned to sign. And every month she and others like her go to the shopping mall, to churches, a local coffee shop, and other places where the deaf congregate to socialize from all over Texas. They are very enthusiastic about socializing, and so it's a fun experience for all who participate.

ASL is the fourth most commonly used language in America. Every city has its own deaf community—just like a family. When a deaf person, or an interpreter, dies, the news



quickly spreads throughout the community.

For deaf children an interpreter stays with a student for the whole day while they're attending school, to interpret the teacher's lessons. Jaygen will soon be doing this, as she has now taken three years of ASL. She has also volunteered to assist in teaching homeschoolers to speak sign language.

Her teacher was born into a deaf family, and she constantly updates herself with learning new signing techniques. Every state has its own "accents." In fact, every community has its own special language. No universal language exists around the world. Even learning British Sign Language is completely different from American Sign Language, although both are English-speaking countries.

A Frenchman, Laurent Clerc, was a deaf teacher at the first school for deaf individuals in Hartford, Connecticut, and was one of the first to introduce signing in the U.S. Because of this, many of the vocabulary terms are from the Old French Sign Language (OFSL), and it makes American sign language more similar to the French.

In the deaf world Jaygen went through a kind of rite of passage when an old deaf woman signed with her very slowly, talking to her for several hours. She gave Jaygen a special sign name. Often, Jaygen says, the deaf are blunt. The woman told her she had a humongous smile and What Jaygen hates most is the way nondeaf people make fun of her for wanting to communicate with those who are deaf.

signed a J to the side of the smile. And Jaygen knew then that she had been accepted into the woman's silent world. Now when Jaygen introduces herself to new people, she signs her real name and also her sign name, which makes her feel much more connected to their world.

In the beginning Jaygen was scared and apprehensive. What if she made a mistake? said the wrong thing? offended someone terribly? Often deaf people signed so quickly that Jaygen at first felt frustrated. Some signs are just one word, while others are many. She compared the experience to learning a dictionary with your eyes. But most deaf people are patient with beginners, and wanted to connect with her to become a friend.

What Jaygen hates most is the way nondeaf people make fun of her

for wanting to communicate with those who are deaf. But she's found a world of friends she would never have befriended if she hadn't taken up ASL as her second foreign language.

Because of her interest and diligence, her teacher has invited her to be her assistant at the Houston Signing Conference, all fees and expenses waived. Jaygen plans to work with children with disabilities someday and hopes to use her ASL in this endeavor as well.

How can you get involved in learning about American Sign Language? Books and DVDs teach it. But in a classroom setting, the teacher shows the student the language, and then gives them times and places where the student must practice speaking with deaf people in the community. The facial and body gestures can't be taught in a book, nor can the local nuances of the technique. Every community has different "accents." This has to be shown in person.

Your local high school counselor can probably advise you where the courses are available. Often community colleges will have them. In a big enough city there are special schools that can teach nondeaf students. A Google search for the local area for ASL can also give locations the course is taught. Learn a new skill, earn foreign language credit, and make new friends by enrolling in American Sign Language classes today!



My friend Ashley's mom told her that if she ever drinks at a party, she should call her mom for a ride home, and her mom won't criticize or punish her for doing it. Doesn't that just send my

friend the message that it's OK to drink? —Erin, age 16

This is definitely a tricky message for a parent to give, Erin. If Ashley knew she would get punished, she wouldn't want to call her mom. However, I'm guessing that Drinking drivers are much more likely to get into car accidents than those who haven't been

Ashley's mom knows that drinking drivers are much more likely to get into car accidents than those who haven't been drinking, and she feels that her daughter's life is more valuable than a lecture or punishment. Hopefully she also told Ashley that she doesn't approve of drinking, and has talked with her about the dangers of starting to drink. That way Ashley knows that while her mom doesn't approve of drinking, she loves her enough to want to make sure she's safe.

I went to visit a friend in college, and he asked me if I wanted to smoke a hookah. He said it was less harmful than smoking cigarettes. Is he right? —Candace, age 17

Good question, Candace. Some people may not know what a hookah is, so here are the basics. A hookah (also known as a hubble bubble, nargile, shisha, or goza) is a long-necked waterpipe used to smoke sweetened, flavored tobacco called maassel. The tobacco is heated in a bowl, and the smoke filters through the water, where it is inhaled through a tube that is often shared by a group. As you've discovered, this Middle Eastern-inspired activity is becoming popular on many college campuses, with some surveys estimating that 15-20 percent of college freshmen have used a hookah in the past month. While most people who smoke waterpipes believe the water filters out the harmful chemicals, that just isn't true. A typical one-hour session of hookah smoking exposes the smoker to 100 to 200 times the amount of smoke inhaled from only one cigarette. Even after the smoke passes through water, it still has high levels of poisonous materials, including nicotine, carbon monxide, heavy metals, and cancer-causing chemicals.

Tell your friend that no matter how you smoke it, tobacco can still kill you in the long run.

How come NASCAR drivers don't have to get drug tests before they drive in their car races? It seems like this sport would be pretty smart to test, since they drive so fast. —Allen, age 15

We agree, Allen—it drives us crazy to see such a dangerous sport treat drug testing so casually. Recently an up-and-coming driver named Aaron Fike admitted that he was addicted to painkillers, and sometimes injected heroin at the track on the same day he raced. Although every other major sport has random drug testing, NASCAR has resisted, saying they test drivers when they have "reasonable suspicion" of drug use. But this is a sport where even a slight mistake can kill people. That means NASCAR's drug policy should be the toughest in sports. The funny thing is, many drivers say they want to be tested—now NASCAR officials just have to catch up with their drivers.

Rachel Bishop Curt VanderWaal VASCAR's drug pol



## The ROLLER-COASTER RIDE

ast year was the worst year of my life. I was 1 S years old, and it seemed as if Mom and Dad had been fighting forever. He was always working, and never had time for us. Didn't he care?

Dad lost his job, but he still didn't put us first. He occasionally searched for new employment during the day, but he always stopped off for a beer at night.

"Do you want us to lose our home?" Mom hollered one evening minutes after Dad walked in. My 13-year-old sister, Janie, and I were watching television in the living room. I glanced at her. She was crying. I felt sick, but stayed strong for Janie. The atmosphere eventually calmed down. How long would it stay that way?

"I'm going to get a second job," Mom told Janie and me the next morning as she dropped us off at school.

I got out of the car. "Mom, you work so hard."

She smiled. "Jeremiah, we'll be fine as long as we stick together."

I wondered if Dad was included in that we. The only thing he seemed to stick to was himself.

"I got a waitressing job," she said proudly that evening. "I start tomorrow."

After that, Janie and I helped too. When we arrived home from school, Janie cooked simple dinBy Diane E. Robertson Illustration by Balph Burler

ners like toasted cheese sandwiches and canned chili. I tore lettuce, and chopped tomatoes for a salad. Together Janie and I did the laundry. Dad rarely helped, and seemed light-years from our lives.

"What will happen, Jeremiah?" Janic asked whenever the yelling began.

"I don't know."

One night when I was in bed, Mom shook me awake. "Jeremiah, come on, honey. We're going to Grandpa's."

The glare from my bedside lamp blinded me for a few seconds, "Right now?" Mom yanked the covers back, and when my eyes adjusted to the light, I saw her throwing some of my clothes into my backpack.

my backpack. "Go wait in the kitchen while I get Janie," she told me.

Dad was nowhere in sight as I walked into the kitchen. It felt too quiet. I sat at the table and thought about how red Mom's eyes were. I knew she had been crying about Dad's partying, and the bills that weren't being paid.

As we three drove to Grandpa's house in a nearby town, I wondered if I'd ever see Dad again.

dered if I'd ever see Dad again. The next morning Janie and 1 went to a new school. "Jeremiah, this is Ms. Hayward," Mom said. "You'll be in her class."

"Hello, Jeremiah." Ms. Hayward

smiled, and held out her hand to shake mine. I took it. It felt cool, strong, and soft. I began to relax. The next minute I felt confused. Would I be in her class permanently?

"Why don't you take off your coat?" Ms. Hayward asked me, I knew she was trying to be kind, but my stomach felt tight, like I was breathing only when I remembered to let go. I looked down at my denim jacket, and shook my head no. Maybe we'd be leaving to go home soon.

"Here's your desk," Ms, Hayward said. "If you change your mind, you can hang your coat on the back of your chair."

Dad showed up later that day with red roses for Mom. They went to dinner while Janie and I watched television with Grandpa. I couldn't concentrate, even though it was a cool penguin show on Animal Planet.

When Mom and Dad returned from dinner, Dad hugged me and whispered, "Pack your stuff, kid. We're going home."

Part of me felt good. Yet I didn't believe that roses and dinner could beal my parents' relationship. The next day I returned to my old school, and life again became routine. Then what felt like a rollercoaster ride began again, and we were back with Grandpa. This went on through the spring. It was awful. Janie couldn't eat for a while, and my grades

dropped. "Oh, no," I told Janie when I got my report card in June. "What's wrong?"

"I have to repeat sophomore year in the fall."

Mom looked up at me with tears in her eyes after reading the news. "It's time for me to make a decision. I want you and Janie to go to the mall tomorrow afternoon while your dad and I talk things

They talked things out, all right. Dad moved to an apartment, and they might get a divorce. It hurts. I don't know if they'll ever get back together.

The worst year of my life is over now, and this one's off to a better beginning. Janie got her appetite back, and I raised my grades. I finally feel as though Dad cares about us, because he makes time to see us every week. He said he doesn't stop at the bar anymore, and I believe him. I'm not sure what the future will bring, but I



By Mary Rahn Photos provided by the author

ers. So she developed a program called Seeing Voices that combines her love for singing with her knowledge of American Sign Language to help others benefit from, and appreciate, sign language.

Listen: What was the process of bringing to life your great idea for Seeing Voices into an official nonprofit organization?

> Mackenzie: | started learning sign language from a speech sign language therapist, and gradually expanded my repertoire of songs from simpler ones, such as "America the Beautiful." to more difficult sonas. such as "The Star-Spangled Banner." My principal encouraged me to get other students involved, so I started a sign language club at my school. I have now provided more than 65 sign language programs to individuals of all ages.

#### Listen: How does Seeing Voices benefit society?

Mackenzie: I think society needs to get back to the basics in everyday communication. Even though technology is a wonderful thing, we have gotten away from communicating one-on-one and looking into each other's eyes.

Text-messaging, e-mails, and similar modes of communication interfere with people responding personally to each other. Sign language is beneficial in bringing us closer. I would like to challenge others to learn a few basic signs to show those who are hearing-impaired kindness and compassion. And besides, sign language is lots of fun and easy to learn! Listen: What is your favorite part about volunteering to help others?

Mackenzie: Teens have so many pressures: pressures from school. from parents, from peers. One thing that helps me is the encouragement and support I find from believing in myself. Building self-confidence comes from within. I find self-confidence through volunteering, which helps me make new friends from all walks of life. Volunteering has taught me to surround myself with good people. I try to take one good thing from every person I meet. In this way I am developing myself into a good person whom I can be proud of and whom others can look up to. By helping others through my volunteering, I have found it goes full circle-l am helping myself!

#### Listen: What inspires you?

Mackenzie: My family inspires me. My parents are hard workers, and they passed this ethic on to me.

#### Listen: What lessons have you learned through your experiences?

Mackenzie: I have been raised in a family that teaches respect and honor for others. Being nice to someone really makes me happy. In return, I am appreciative of how people have treated me. There is an old saying: "Good things happen to good people." I feel this is true, and if you are kind to someone else, it will come back to you!

Mackenzie Bart was only 8 years old when she began learning sign language. Her youngest sister was diagnosed with a rare disease that caused speech delays.

IFW W

TFRV

Mackenzie recognized the potential that sign language has to help those with disabilities gain greater control over language, and thus be able to communicate better with oth-



### The Silent Language

#### **BODY LANGUAGE SPEAKS VOLUMES!**

It actually speaks to your audience before you even get a chance to open your mouth. Therefore, the way you carry yourself does the initial talking. Do you like what your body language is saying about you? Here is one concept we must understand:

#### Our communication skills, and the way we present ourselves, will determine how others treat us.

Most of what others see depends on the way we carry ourselves. If you stand like you're lacking confidence or certainty, you are sending that message loud and clear to everyone who looks at you. As a result, they'll treat you accordingly. (Remember this from what we said about peer pressure?)

You may not even get the chance to know a person, because he or she has already branded you as insecure, anxious, or nervous. But don't worry. Once you habitually use positive body language, you create the opportunity to impress others even before you meet them.

#### HERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU SHOULD AVOID (unless you're trying to give the wrong impression):

- · Crossing your arms. (This is not an approachable stance. People may think you're angry, closeminded, or downright unfriendly.
- Rolling your shoulders forward and looking down. (Do we need to explain?)
- Keeping your hands in your pockets.
- Popping your knuckles. (To a lot of people, this is very irritating.)
- Dragging your feet.

#### HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR GETTING OFF TO THE RIGHT START:

- Keep your shoulders back.
- · Open up your stance (but not too much). (This will show that you are approachable and have nothing to hide.)
- Keep your head up.
- · Look people directly in the eye. (Wandering eyes can make you look insecure.)
- Smile. (Yes, it's part of good body language.)

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



K&K: There are many ways to do this, but here is one way that we have found to be the most successful. First, we recommend that you get your friends involved. Just like breaking any habit, it helps to have other people who can make you aware of unknown behavior. In this case, ask your friends to give you a friendly reminder (such as a soft tap on the upper back) when they see you slouching. When you notice, and correct your behavior often enough, you will develop a new habit of good posture.



To get some practice in positive body language, check out The Next Step online at www.listenmagazine.org.

## Subscribe NOW DON'T MISS THE GOOD STUFF!

#### LIKE WHAT YOU SEE?

Get one year of Listen for US\$35.00 (nine issues). Choose one of the following options and subscribe today.

- 1. Online at www.listenmagazine.org
- 2. Toll-free at 1-877-474-6247
- 3. Send in the information below.

Name

#### Address

City

State

Zip

Enclose check or money order and mail to: LISTEN, P.O. Box 859, Hagerstown, MD 21741. Please add US\$7.00 for addresses outside the U.S.A.

### Nine issues US\$35.00

As part of the community, I choose to be a part of the solution rather than the problem. I believe every-

one 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 <u>MY</u> PLEDGE.

Name

Date

Jordán Hasay