

# Teen Files:

## Issues that Matter

A HOT TOPICS NEWSPAPER SUPPLEMENT FROM

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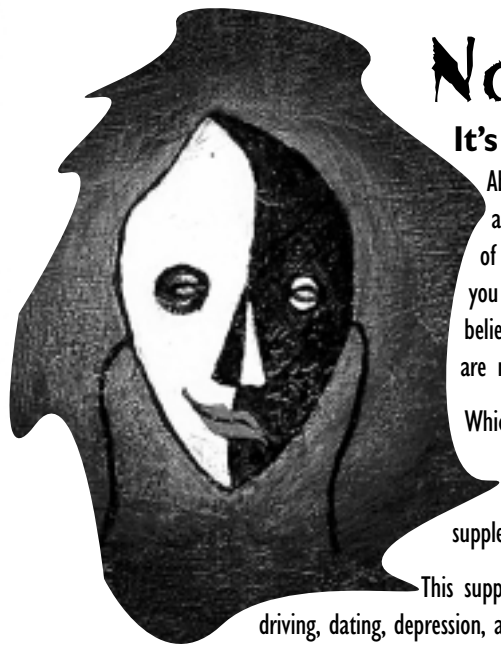
# Teen Problems

## People have problems.

Whether you are 16 or 60, you'll have to deal with major issues. Teenagers sometimes feel that their problems are not taken seriously by adults. The truth is that the problems of teenagers are every bit as intense as the problems of adults, maybe even more so because teens don't have the years of experience dealing with their problems that adults have.

Teen problems — peer pressure, wanting to fit in, wanting to make good grades, wanting to be liked, decisions about substances, earning money, getting into college, worrying about what's happening in the world and the environment, concern about body image — are not easily solved. You have to keep a balance between home, maybe a part-time job, and school. Some of you have serious problems at home. Divorces, fights, just all sorts of problems to deal with. You have to make smart choices about sex, drugs, alcohol, and money. Life can be fabulous but it can also be overwhelming.

Some of the issues are out of your control. But there are skills that you can develop to help you. You need patience and self-reliance, you've got to maintain a sense of humor, cope with stress, and prioritize everything. It helps if you can separate what is important and right for you from what is not. You have to be willing to get help when you need it and to understand that asking for help is a strength, not a weakness. It's a big job, surviving the teen years happily, but you have the power to do it.



## No Laughing Matter

### It's serious.

About 37,000 young people die each year — 30% in car accidents, and half of those linked to alcohol. Almost 10,000 are murdered, commit suicide, or die of complications of AIDS. Two-thirds of these deaths are preventable. So why do you do it? Why would you put yourself into situations you know could kill you? Are you searching for excitement and happiness? Is it because you don't really believe that these situations will kill you? Is it because you think you are in control, even when others are not? These are questions only you can answer.

Which forces really determine your choices about life? If you can understand what drives you, maybe you can really take control of your life. Is it possible for you to have fun without taking your life so close to the edge? As you read the facts and information in this special supplement, think about what you would do in similar circumstances.

This supplement will look at some of the important issues that teens face — peer pressure, drugs, sex, alcohol, driving, dating, depression, and more. We'll give you just the facts — no preaching, no moralizing. We hope that along with the facts will come the power you need to make the choices that are right for you. We'll also look at the real-world connection to what we're discussing. Under the headings "Real World Connection," you'll find a learning activity that you can do with your local newspaper.



## Real World Connection

1. Find a problem in a story in today's newspaper. Write a summary of the problem and a possible solution. Rate the problem on a 1-to-5 scale of seriousness, with 5 being the most serious. Then rate what you see as the most serious problem in your life. Which is worse? Would you take on the newspaper problem in exchange for getting rid of yours?
2. Can you find a story about teens in today's newspaper? What is it about? Talk with your class about the way teens are represented in the news media.

Skills: summarizing, investigating important issues

# Dealing With Peer Pressure

Most kids worry about being cool and popular. Recent news is that many kids are more influenced by their peers' opinions, by peer pressure, than by their parents' opinions! Eventually you realize that the opinions of your peers are unimportant when it comes to what really matters, which is your opinion of yourself. The fact is that your peers — the kids



around you — may know next to nothing about the real world. Just like you, they probably depend on the adults around them. They aren't independent thinkers. They are no better judges of what is cool than you are.

If you choose your friends wisely and ignore "negative peers," peer pressure can be a good thing. Peers and friends can support you when you need it and help you to grow. If you belong to a clique, it should be one that knows what it is doing and is willing to let in others who want to learn.

## Find Your Own Way

Find adults who will talk to you. Form friendships or relationships with these adults and with teachers. Ask them questions. Maybe you can find a successful adult who will be your mentor — a person who takes the time to teach you things about life. With help you can find your own way instead of searching for the approval of others. You can spend your time finding what makes you happy. Be yourself and be with yourself, and see what you learn.

Think about this: There are more than five billion people on this planet. At your school, you are dealing with a tiny percentage of the total population. Does it make sense to base your actions on the opinions of so few people?

Get involved in activities you like — in or out of school. Sports, clubs, hobbies. You'll meet people with whom you have things in common. You'll share interests and you'll bond.



## Real World Connection

Fashion is one thing that is influenced by peer pressure. Look at some of the outfits pictured in today's newspaper. Find one outfit that no one in school could wear happily. Do people in your school get ostracized for their clothes? In what ways? Can you find an outfit pictured in the newspaper that would be accepted at school? Write a detailed description of both outfits and explain why one would work and the other would not.

Why do you think clothes are so important to acceptance by your peers?

Skills: comparing and contrasting, writing fluently

# Sex

## Having sex is a decision you will face.

Sex is all around us, and the pressure to participate can be overwhelming. Sex is used to sell everything — cars, clothes, movies, music, magazines. You name it, and sex has been used to promote it. The messages you get from your surroundings are conflicting. Sex is made to look good, but your school and parents may tell you it's a bad thing to do. You will hear a great deal about the pros and cons of having sex. But when you deal with all those messages, keep this in mind — sex does have consequences. That message may be the most important of all. You can choose to abstain — to not have sex. Some teens choose this because of religious beliefs. Some choose abstinence because it is right for them. They know the people they are dating like them for who they are and not just for what they can get from them.

If you choose to go ahead and have sex, however, there are a few things to keep in mind.



## Having Sex

Unprotected sex, sex without a condom, can result in pregnancy, disease, and even death. You know this, but you should also know that using a condom will not fully protect you from any of those. Good thinking, logic, tells you that having sex may not be the best idea you ever had. The consequences of having sex are serious. However, no one ever said that teenagers having sex use logic to make that decision. You may be letting your body, not your brain, make this decision for you.

Teens account for more than 1 million unintended pregnancies and 3 million sexually transmitted diseases each year. Half of the 40,000 new HIV infections that happen each year occur in people under age 25.

# Not having Sex

These facts are scary, so maybe you are thinking about not having sex.

How can you do it? How can you withstand the pressure to give in? For starters, make this decision alone. Don't let anyone else have the power over your body. Once you've made your decision, there are ways to help yourself stick with it. Avoid putting yourself in situations that may bring you trouble. Getting high or drunk definitely reduces your ability to hold on to your power to choose. Should you find yourself in a sexual situation that is getting out of hand, you can say no at any time. There is no such thing as having gone too far to turn back. The power is always yours to decide. It doesn't matter if you are a boy or a girl. The power of that decision — to go on or to stop — belongs to you.



Sometimes a situation that gets out of control results in what's known as date rape. Date rape is when a rape occurs between two people who know each other. They may be involved with one another in a romantic relationship. Sex becomes date rape when one partner says no but the other partner continues.

Here are some facts about date rape:

- In study of college students, 27.5% of the women surveyed said that they had suffered rape or attempted rape at least once since age 14. Only 5% of those experiences were reported to the police.
- More than half of a sample of more than 1,000 female students at a large urban university had experienced some form of unwanted sex, 43% of those by steady dating partners.
- Nearly half of the 500,000 rapes and sexual assaults reported to the police by women of all ages were committed by friends or acquaintances.

## Closeness Counts

If what you really want from sex is the intimate connection with another person, work for that. That kind of connection takes time, not necessarily sex. Good relationships need time to develop. They need respect. Relationships have a better chance of working if both people honestly share their feelings. You can get close and even have physical intimacy without actually having sex. Decide what you want from your relationship with another person and act accordingly.

When you do get involved with someone in a romantic relationship, remember that the other relationships in your life also matter. Don't let your love relationship take you totally away from your friends and your family. Someday, that romance may be over and you will want to still have the life you had before. It's not healthy for you to get so wrapped up in your romance that you ignore the other parts of your life. It's important to keep balanced.

Try not to stay in relationships that no longer work for you. If your partner cheats on you or lies to you or no longer makes you happy, get out. Tell the person how you are feeling but be clear and firm. It's scary to be alone but it's better than staying in a bad situation. When you break up, you'll be glad you kept your friends and family ties. Look back at your relationship and see what you can learn for the future.



## Real World Connection

Can you find news stories about people with healthy relationships? Find one and talk about what makes the relationship a good one. Then find an example of a poor relationship. Compare the two.

You may want to check the comic strips, too.

- Do you see any ads where sex or sex appeal are being used to make a sale? What percentage of the ads use sex appeal? Rework one using a non-sexual approach.

Skills: reflecting on the human experience, understanding effective interpersonal skills, understanding percent



# Depression

## More Than Sadness

Lately, your friend doesn't really seem like herself. She used to do well in school and defend your school's lacrosse goal like magic. She always stopped to talk to friends in the hall but still got to class on time. But she's quieter now. She doesn't look sick, but she says she has no energy and can't think straight. When you call her, she's sleeping. If this sounds like you or someone you know, that person may actually have a disorder that's known as depression. It affects millions of people each year, regardless of their color, race, economic status, or age. A teen can become depressed, just as an older person can.

Depression is not the same as just being sad. Any teen dealing with the stresses of life might have a reason to feel sad every once in a while. But when a depressive mood continues for weeks, months, or even longer, then it becomes a serious condition because it starts to affect a person's ability to function.

No one can prove why certain people get depressed. Research suggests that in some cases it may be hereditary: Someone with a family member who has (or had) depression may be more prone to having depression. But a person's environment can also play a big part. A difficult loss, like the death of a family member or friend, can sometimes lead to depression. An unhappy family atmosphere can lead to depression as well. Even learning disabilities, hormonal changes, or physical illness can cause depression. Substance abuse can also contribute.

We do know that depression starts in the brain — specifically, with chemicals called neurotransmitters that send messages between nerve cells and serve as mood regulators in the brain. When there is a decrease in certain kinds of neurotransmitter activity, the result is depression.

### **Here are some of the symptoms of major depression:**

Sadness most of the time • Lack of energy, feeling tired all the time • Inability to enjoy things that used to bring pleasure • Withdrawal from friends and family  
• Irritability, anger, or anxiety • Inability to concentrate • Significant change in weight  
• Inability to fall asleep, stay asleep, or get up in the morning, or sleeping constantly  
• Feelings of guilt or worthlessness • Unexplained aches and pains  
• Not caring about anything • Thoughts of suicide or self-mutilation

### **Teens may also show other warning signs.**

They may wear only black clothes, write poetry with morbid themes, or watch TV all night and then have difficulty getting up for school. They may have problems at school and express feelings of anger or indifference and start drinking heavily or taking drugs. A depressed teen may feel isolated, scared, hopeless, or very unhappy, yet have no idea what's wrong. He or she may even consider suicide, or may hurt himself or herself.

# People Who Get Help, Get Better

**Fortunately, there are professionals who can help.**

In fact, about 80% of people who get help for their depression function better and enjoy themselves in a way that they weren't able to before. Treatment for depression can include counseling, medication, or a combination of the two.

Therapy or counseling involves talking with a mental-health professional, a doctor who has years of training in diagnosing and treating depression and other emotional problems. Therapy sessions usually involve talking about where the depression comes from and how to feel better.

If you are depressed (or have a friend who you think may be depressed), don't wait and hope that it will go away on its own. Talk to an adult you trust about how you feel. This is a serious problem. The suicide rate for adolescents has increased more than 200% over the last 10 years. Recent studies have shown that more than 20% of adolescents have emotional problems and one-third of adolescents attending psychiatric clinics suffer from depression. If you are thinking about hurting yourself or thinking about suicide, don't wait to get help. This is a very real medical emergency, and an adult must be notified. The most important thing you can do is to get help immediately. Most teens who get help for their depression go on to have fulfilling, happy teen and adult years — and to enjoy life and feel better about themselves.



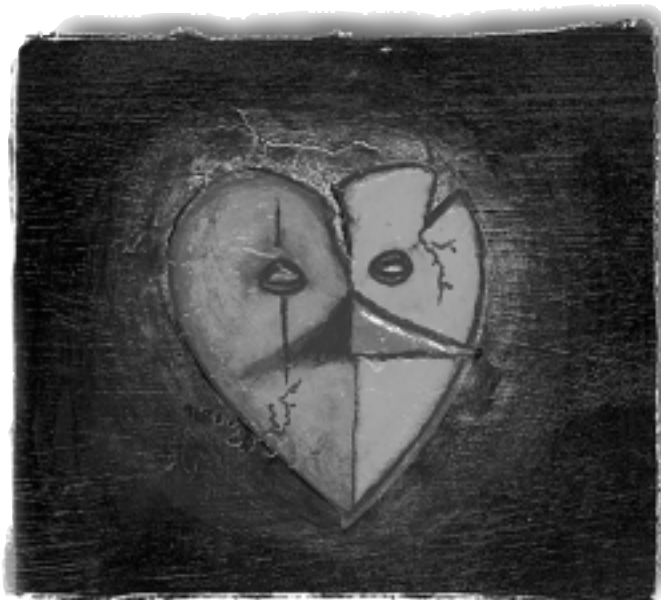
## Real World Connection

Getting help when you need it is a true showing of strength. Find someone in today's newspaper who needs help. Write him or her a letter of encouragement. Sometimes getting help is hard, so think about how you could coach someone to do it.

Can you find someone in today's newspaper who is winning a battle? Find someone who seems to be succeeding in overcoming an obstacle. What qualities do you think it takes to succeed in spite of difficulties? Do you have any of those qualities? When do you show the most strength?

Skills: writing letters, exploring conflict

# Substance Abuse



## *Sad Story*

On a Friday afternoon in February 1999, five teenage girls in a town near Philadelphia were out shopping for prom dresses. They were best friends who had just finished their midterms and headed out to shop. Before the afternoon turned into evening, all five were dead. Their car had spun out of control and crashed. When the story first broke, it seemed that the driver had been driving too fast and lost control. But after some investigation, the medical conclusion was that the driver had been inhaling computer cleaner and, once high, lost control of the car.

The story is sad, but it is true. It makes some people wonder. Why did they need to get high? Shopping for prom dresses with your best friends should be so much fun. Why does that experience need chemical enhancement? What do you think?

You may think that you know a lot about drugs and alcohol. You've probably had lots of substance abuse education in school.

1. You can't die from taking cocaine once.

T

F

2. You can't get addicted to drugs or alcohol if you party only on weekends.

T

F

3. Alcohol makes you feel high or happy, so it's not a depressant. It's not a drug.

T

F

4. Steroids can give you acne.

T

F

5. The effects of smoking pot wears off in a few hours.

T

F

6. Driving while high on alcohol is more dangerous than driving while high on pot.

T

F

7. Coffee is not a drug.

T

F

8. Substance abuse among teens is going down.

T

F

9. Drinking coffee does not help to get you sober.

T

F

10. Inhalants (used for "huffing") are legal and are not as dangerous as illegal drugs.

T

F

11. High school students who watch lots of TV are more likely than others to start drinking.

T

F



## ANSWERS

- 1. False.** Coke can kill you because it can stop your heart, even if you use it only once. Some people are especially sensitive to this drug and it's impossible to predict who will react this way. Teens are more likely to have severe reactions than adults.
- 2. False.** Weekend partying can be habit-forming. If you can't wait until Friday night to get high, you may already be addicted.
- 3. False.** Alcohol may loosen you up and make you laugh but it is really a depressant drug. It slows down your body functions, causes confusion, decreased alertness, poor coordination, blurred vision and drowsiness. Worst of all, too much alcohol, taken quickly, can result in alcohol poisoning and death.
- 4. True.** Using anabolic steroids can cause many unpleasant side effects, including severe acne, premature baldness, bloating, growth of body hair for females, and breast enlargement for males. Regular steroid use can cause more dangerous problems such as high cholesterol, liver and kidney damage, skin tumors, and cancer.
- 5. False.** The feeling of being high from marijuana may last only a few hours, but your ability to think may be affected for as long as 24 hours.
- 6. False.** Driving while under the influence of any drug is extremely dangerous. All drugs have a negative effect on your reaction time, coordination, and perception, making the risk of a crash extremely high. Even worse, kids who drive high or drunk may think they're driving safely because alcohol and other drugs affect the part of the brain responsible for judgment.
- 7. False.** A drug is any substance that changes how the body works. Drugs can be inhaled, smoked, injected, or drunk. All get into the bloodstream and affect you. Coffee contains caffeine, a stimulant. It can raise your blood pressure and increase irregular heartbeats.
- 8. False.** Recent surveys show that drug use has nearly doubled since 1992. About 40% of high school seniors say that they had used illegal drugs the previous year. And 72% said they had used alcohol, with 51% of those saying they got drunk.
- 9. True.** Coffee may wake you up, but all that does is make you awake and high.
- 10. False.** Inhalants can leave you depressed and can cause permanent brain damage.
- 11. True.** Believe it or not, a study at Stanford University showed that teens who watch a great deal of TV and music videos were more likely to start drinking than those who rented movies or played video games. It's not surprising when you realize that alcohol is the most popular beverage shown on television.

**Discuss each of the questions and answers.**

**What conclusions can you draw about the reasons teens drink and do drugs?**



## Real World Connection

**1. Look through the newspaper to find some explanation for why people want to escape reality by getting drunk or high. Write a reason for each of your choices.**

**2. Which stories in today's newspaper have a drug connection? Write a five-W summary "who, what, when, where, and why" of one of those stories.**

Skills: identifying health issues and problems, synthesizing information

# Smoking STINKS

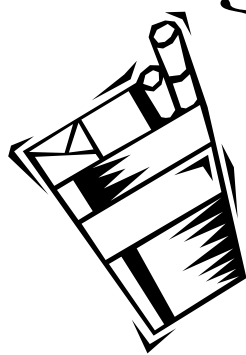
Each day, about 6,000 young people try a cigarette. More than 3,000 become regular smokers. Of all people in the United States who are now younger than 18, more than 5 million will die from a smoking-related disease.

But, they probably won't die right away, and that could be what keeps them from seeing the problem. Teens tend to be short-term thinkers. It's easy to be scared of something that may hurt you today, but it's harder to feel afraid of something that may be dangerous with the result of the danger so many years in the future.

Of course, there are things about smoking that will hurt you right now. Teenage smokers get addicted more easily than adults. They suffer from shortness of breath almost three times as often as teens who don't smoke. That means that if you are a smoker, it's harder for you to breathe, especially when you are active. You also probably have bad breath a lot of the time and your clothes smell, your hands smell, and your hair stinks.

If you are trying to attract someone, smelling bad is probably not the best way to do it. More important, your lungs may already be damaged and smaller than normal. Your heart could be weaker than it should be. You get sick and miss school more often.

And teen smoking can be an early warning sign of future problems. Teens who smoke are three times as likely as nonsmokers to use alcohol, eight times as likely to use marijuana, and 22 times as likely to use cocaine. Smoking is also associated with numerous other risky behaviors, including fighting and having unprotected sex.



## Teens and Tobacco

## Quitters Win!

Teens think they can smoke and then quit easily, but almost 75% of people who were daily smokers in high school and who planned to stop smoking were still smoking five or six years later. It's hard to quit, even if you've smoked for only a short time, because tobacco, much like heroin, cocaine, and alcohol, is addictive. Your body will develop the need for it as you use it. That makes it hard to stop using it.

And it's not just about smoking. Data from recent surveys show that about one in every five male students in 9th through 12th grades uses smokeless (spit) tobacco. Spit tobacco can cause gum disease and several cancers. It increases the risk of heart disease and stroke. Using spit tobacco can cause cracked lips, bleeding gums, and sores of the mouth that never heal. It can stain your teeth and give you bad breath. Like cigarettes, smokeless tobacco contains nicotine. One "dip" of smokeless tobacco can deliver as much nicotine as several cigarettes.

But within just two days of quitting tobacco use, your sense of taste and smell can be greatly improved. The levels of carbon monoxide and nicotine in your body go down. Your heart and lungs will begin to repair the damage done by smoking. You'll breathe easier. Your smoker's cough will begin to disappear. You'll notice a boost in your energy.

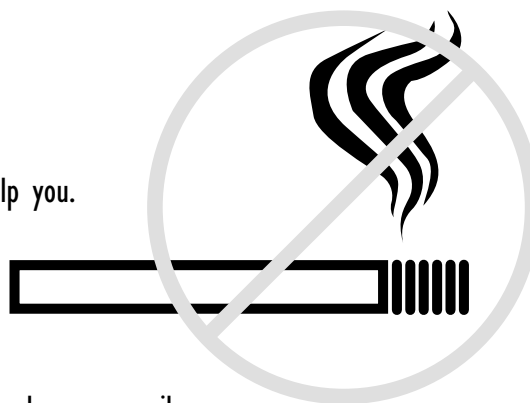


# You Can Quit Successfully

## How To Quit:

*This information is from the National Cancer Institute.*

- Don't think about how difficult it might be, just quit. Pick a target date to quit and do it. List the reasons you want to quit. Read your list when you are tempted to smoke.
- Exercise and drink lots of water or juice, but avoid drinks with caffeine.
- Know that withdrawal symptoms will only last 1 to 2 weeks.
- Know that the first week is the hardest.
- If you can't quit on your first try, try again.
- Bet a friend you can quit, and ask a friend to quit with you.
- Tell your family and friends that you're quitting and when. They will help you.
- Switch to a brand you don't like before your target date.
- Don't think of never smoking again. Take it one day at a time.
- Make a list of things you'd like to buy with the money you'll save. At the end of the first week, buy something for yourself.
- If you miss having a cigarette in your hand, play with something else, such as a pencil.
- If you miss having something in your mouth, try toothpicks or sugarless gum, apples, or carrots.
- Light incense or a candle instead of a cigarette.
- Never allow yourself to think that "one won't hurt." It will.
- Pay attention to your appearance.

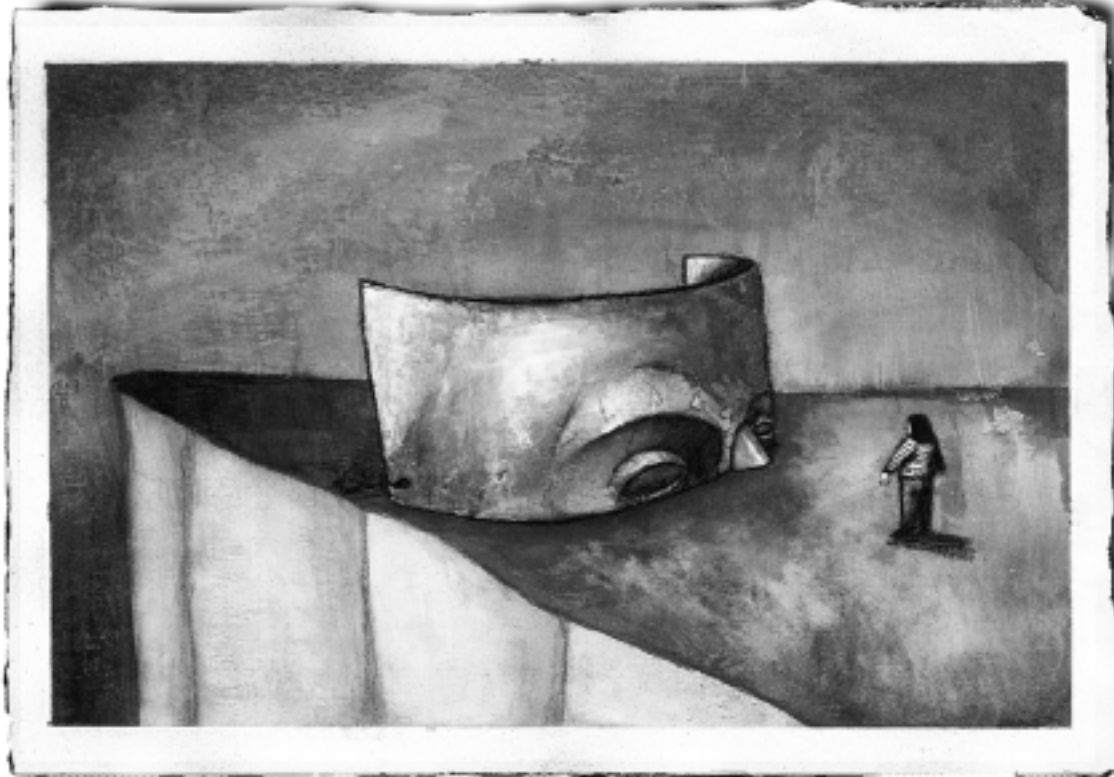


## Real World Connection

Tobacco ads are not permitted on television but they do appear in some newspapers. Do you think this banning of those ads is a good thing? Are there any ads in today's newspaper that you think should be banned? Write an opinion letter to the editor telling which ads those are and why you think they should be dropped.

Skills: writing editorials, understanding health risks

# Body Beautiful Looking Good, Feeling Fine



Around the time you're in middle school, you might start feeling insecure when it comes to the way you look. Our society shows us the typical idea of beauty — we see it again and again in magazines, on TV, and in the movies —and if we don't look exactly the way we think we should, we worry about it. And friends aren't always helpful. Often they say things that really hurt, even when they're not intending to cause pain.

The truth is, though, that the way your body looks is important. You know it's important to feel good about the way you look, but, more than that, it's important to feel good about the way you feel. Body image counts, but what counts even more is making sure you do what you can to keep your body feeling good as well as looking okay.

The fact is that while bodies come in all shapes and sizes, some teens really are overweight and should do something about it. Some teens think they are fat, but they're not. Some teens, boys especially, think they are too small and want to build bulk and muscles even though they are fine the way they are.

  
**Are  
You  
in  
Shape?**

So, how can you tell which type you are? Are you okay? Do you weigh too much and need to get in shape? Do you weigh too little and need to bulk up? Looking into a mirror is not the way to tell because teens just aren't seeing clearly when they look at their reflections. Talk to your parents, maybe your doctor, seek an objective opinion, and trust in what they tell you.

The fact is that nearly one in three kids is overweight (more about that later), but that means that two out of three are not. You could easily be among them. Once you've determined that you need to shape up, take it seriously. It's difficult to be an overweight teen. You get teased and harassed, maybe even by your parents and friends. The more you're told what you should eat and what you should do, the more you want to do the opposite. Social lives of teens often revolve around food, so trying to watch what you eat can make you a social outcast.

As to healthy eating, you should be doing that regardless of what your body looks like. There's a lot more to being healthy than being thin. In our country of plentiful food, only 1% of children meet all USDA guidelines for a healthy diet.

What are teens eating? Surveys show that teenage boys drink 34 ounces of soda per day and that if they eat one vegetable a day, which most do, that vegetable is likely to be a potato, usually French fries or potato chips. You can see why some teens are so unhealthy.

## Get Healthy

So, if you've decided to get healthy, what should you do? The easiest way to start is to get more exercise and add some fruits and vegetables to your diet each day. Pay attention to the food mania all around you. If you are aware of how you are subconsciously tempted to eat something that's not good for you, you may be less likely to eat it so easily. Check out the ads you see when you watch TV. How many of them are for food and, of those, how many of those are for foods that would be considered healthy? When you go to a fast food restaurant, do the salads cost more than the fries? When you stop at a gas station, can you buy donuts? Can you buy fruit there? And, speaking of TV, turn it off more often. Thirty years ago, most kids had gym class in school every day. Do you? Chances are you don't because over the years, as school budgets got tighter, gym classes were among the first things to go. Even if you play organized sports, you may spend more time on the bench than actually playing. So, when you are watching TV after school and at night, you are doing nothing physical when you could be.

# Eating Disorders

The flip side of all these issues about eating healthy is that there are some teens who have serious eating disorders. Those disorders include anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and compulsive overeating — extreme expressions of weight and food issues. All are serious emotional problems that can have life-threatening consequences.

The features of Anorexia Nervosa are an intense fear of body fat and weight gain, a determination to become thinner, and a misperception of body weight and shape to the extent that the person may feel or see "fat" even when extreme thinness is obvious to others. Food, calories, weight, and weight management rule the person's life.

Bulimia Nervosa is characterized by cycles of binge eating and purging. During a "binge," the person eats a large amount of food and then "purges" the food eaten, usually by some combination of forced vomiting, excessive exercising, and taking laxatives. Eating disorders come from a combination of conditions. Feelings of inadequacy, depression, anxiety, and loneliness, as well as troubled family and personal relationships, may contribute to the development of an eating disorder. Our society's obsession with thinness and the perfect body also leads to these problems. These are emotional problems that require professional help, so if you see yourself described here, talk to an adult you trust.



## Real World Connection

Beauty is subjective, meaning that it depends on opinion, not fact. Find something in the newspaper that you think is beautiful. Share your choice with your class, comparing the choices. Lots of products claim to help you get healthy. Find several of those in today's newspaper and tell whether you think each is making a reliable claim. Are there any products you would use?

How do you maintain good health?

Skills: practicing health enhancing behaviors, reasoning



# Driving The NO. 1 Killer of Teens

**THE NUMBER-ONE CAUSE OF DEATH AMONG TEENAGERS IS CAR ACCIDENTS, ACCORDING TO THE AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA .**

The typical wreck involving 16- and 17-year-olds happens after school, between 3 and 4 p.m., and usually does not involve drugs or alcohol. Instead, the problem is often driver error, like driving on the wrong side of the road and speeding. Usually, no one is wearing a seat belt. And 16-year-olds are far worse drivers than 17-, 18- or 19- year-old drivers. Teen drivers are about 4 to 5 times more likely to get into an accident than adult drivers.

Those are the facts.



The only way to change these facts is to educate drivers, especially new drivers, about safety and driving responsibly. Teenagers need to drive cautiously, never feel overconfident, use a seat belt, drive at slower speeds, and, obviously, never drink and drive. They need to monitor how many people are in the car.

Those are the simple ways to save lives. It's important that teen drivers understand "The Fatal Five" — the five mistakes teens most often make leading to accidents and/or death. Those are: failing to yield, not adjusting to bad weather and darkness, tailgating, losing self-control, and driving under the influence. Keep these in mind when you drive. Your life may depend on how well you remember them.



## Real World Connection

**Safe driving could someday get you a job. Check the help-wanted ads to find a job requiring a safe driver. List all the ways in which driving safely would help you get and keep the job.**

Skills: evaluating employment opportunities

## Teen Ethics

# Lying, Cheating, Stealing

Most teens admit that they have lied and cheated. Nearly half admit that they have stolen something, according to recent polls. But, even as they say this, almost all agree that it's important to be a person with "good character."

But what does being a person of "good character" mean? And, if it's so important, why are so many kids lying and cheating? Many kids agree that you are a good person if you don't hurt other people. They see crimes like cheating in school and shoplifting as "victimless," meaning that these actions don't really hurt anybody.

What do you think? Who gets hurt if you have the answers to the chemistry test inside the lid of your calculator? Is this a victimless crime or does someone pay the price? And how do you decide whether or not to cheat?

Experts agree that parents usually are the ones to teach kids about values, ethics, and morals. Do you agree? What determines how you make your choices about right and wrong? Do you think your parents would approve of the choices you've made? What about your friends? Do they trust you? Can you trust them? If you cheat on a test, does that mean you are the kind of person who will cheat on a lover? You may have heard the expression, "Let your conscience be your guide." Do you?



### Real World Connection

**If you had only today's newspaper as a source, what conclusions would you draw about our society? Are people basically good and honest, or not? Write a column giving your opinion and use details and references from today's newspaper to support your conclusion.**

Skills: Drawing conclusions, editorializing

### Dealing With Parents → Parental Guidance

Lots of the coping strategies discussed in this supplement involve talking with parents or adults you trust. Sometimes that's easier said than done. Here are some guidelines for dealing with your parents. (Share it with them. They'll love it!)

1. Keep an open mind. Don't be disturbed by their questions. They're not prying into your business. They ask because they care. Share what you can.
2. Use current events or news stories as an opener for sensitive subjects. Listen to their opinions on the event and then share yours. This is a good way to let your parents know how you feel about your world and your place in it without talking about yourself.
3. Start the dialogue. Your parents may be afraid to approach a sensitive topic with you.
4. Talk often. No parent gets tired of hearing about what's really important to you. The more you talk, the better they'll understand you.
5. Ask honest questions, but don't pry. Respect your parents' privacy. You don't want them to know how you spend every minute of your life and you don't have a right to their complete story either.
6. Tell them something about your day — every day. Ask about their day. This is a great way to get the conversation going.
7. Ask their opinions. Let them know that you may not always do what they say, but you do want to hear about it. They may surprise you with some good advice.
8. Explain that you need space. It doesn't make you a weirdo. Teens need lots of time to think and to work out issues. Sometimes you have to remind your parents of this.
9. Hug them. It will mean so much and it'll probably feel good to you, too.
10. Pick your battles. Don't fight over small things. Show them you are reasonable enough to compromise.
11. If they are embarrassing you, say so. Sometimes parents confuse being funny with being way over the line. Let them know you are sensitive about this and you take it personally.
12. Make an honesty pact. Be honest with them in exchange for their honesty with you.
13. Remember that respect is a two-way street. You'll be treated the way you treat them.
14. Give them some credit. They've been around longer than you have. They've dealt with some of the same issues. It's possible you can benefit from their experience.
15. Love is the bottom line. Remember, when things are going badly between you and them, they love you. Sometimes you have to repeat it like a mantra, "They love me," "They love me."



### Real World Connection

**Some teens think they have nothing in common with their parents. Find something interesting in today's newspaper that you think your parents would also find fascinating. Tell them about it. Write about the dialogue you had.**

Skills: Writing dialogue, making judgments



# Resources



Here are some resources that may help you learn more: (Some website addresses may have changed. Check a search engine to find more updated addresses.)

## **National Depressive and Manic Depressive Association**

(800) 826-3632  
<http://www.ndmda.org>



## **National Mental Health Association**

(800) 969-NMHA  
<http://www.nmha.org>

## **D/ART (DEPRESSION/Awareness, Recognition, and Treatment)**

(800) 421-4211  
<http://webtest.nimh.nih.gov/newdart/darthome.htm>

These sites provide information about the symptoms and treatment of depression as well as links to other sites and lists of support groups.

## **Suicide Hotline**

Many communities provide this service for people in need; check your local phone book or call 911.

A good website with links to other great sites for teens is:

## **HYPERLINK**

<http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/reference/teens.htm>

If you are trying to understand yourself and the world around you as a teenager, one of the best things you can do is read. You can learn a tremendous amount from the lives, experiences and advice of others.

## **Books about Relationships**

How could you do that?! The Abdication of Character, Courage, and Conscience by Dr. Laura Schlessinger

Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus by John Gray

Living, Loving and Learning by Leo F. Buscaglia

## **Biographies**

Dave's Way by R. David Thomas

All Creatures Great and Small by James Herriot

The Road Ahead by Bill Gates

The Agony and the Ecstasy by Irving Stone

## **Books to read when having tough times or when looking for inspiration:**

When Bad Things Happen to Good People by Harold S. Kushner  
Into The Wild by Jon Krakauer

Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul: 101 Stories of Life, Love and Learning by Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, Kimberly Kirberger

Life Happens by Kathy McCoy and Charles Wibblesman

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens by Sean Covey

## **For Fun:**

Watership Down by Richard Adams

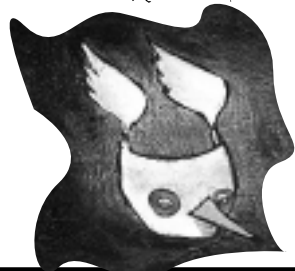
High Fidelity by Nick Hornby

Holes by Louis Sachar

The Catcher in the Rye by J.D. Salinger

The Fountainhead by Ayn Rand

## **Credits:**



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