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CELEBRATING POSITIVE CHOICES

# listen

## CAN YOU TRUST A GUY IN A TIE?

Here's one you can.  
Meet our guy Scot  
Cressman on page 16.

Not for Keeps • Buzz on Caffeine • Can It Be so Bad? • Paddle Radical



# NOT FOR KEEPS

By Margaret L. Tauber

I'd always been smart and sure of myself. No one could intimidate me. I was the guy my friends came to with their problems. I had it made. I didn't smoke, drink, or do drugs. I knew all about drugs; I'd seen what they could do. They turned you into a wimp, begging for the next fix. Well, that was not for me. I respected my body, but most of all my mind.

Yes, I did go to rave dances, and it seemed that everyone was having more fun than I was. I began to think that everyone but me was on ecstasy. Some of my friends used it, and nothing bad happened to them. They said it was a kid's thing; it just enhanced your fun. All it did was make you able to move faster.

Now, I'm the world's worst dancer. I knew that because every girl I ever danced with said I moved like a scarecrow. When I saw a friend who was a worse mover than me start moving like Michael Jackson after taking ecstasy, I said, "OK, bring it on."

It was just one tiny pill that looked like a baby aspirin: no needles, no sniffing, no smoking—so not a drug, right? Wrong!

I put that first pill in my mouth and swallowed. *Boy, what a downer*, I thought when I felt nothing. The next two parties that I went to, I took a tiny little ecstasy pill again. It did help me move faster, but I felt depressed when it wore off. I had decided I wasn't going to take it again. One night I sat at the party watching everyone having a good time, and I was still as a rock. So I decided to try one more time, and if I felt depressed again when it wore off, I was done with it.

So I swallowed the little pill and was ready to show off my smooth dancing when everything began to get really quiet. I remember wondering how come everyone was still dancing when there was no music. I felt warm. No, I felt hot, real hot, boiling hot! Then I heard the music. It was so loud it hurt my ears. My buddies were bending over me and saying something. I was still sitting, but couldn't move, even though I tried. There was a confusing sound of voices.

It was as if I could see the words they were saying. I wanted to reach out and touch the words that were floating in the air. Sound crazy? The room was

spinning around and around. There was a force pulling at my head. It felt as though my skull was opening, and I could see colors all mixed up. They weren't real colors; it was like blood, thick blood. I felt as though it was being forced into my skull. And the spinning was getting faster and faster.

I fought for control. *Stop*, I kept telling myself. *Stop!* But the spinning just got faster. I had the taste of blood in my mouth, and I could hear voices screaming, "Stop!" Maybe it was me screaming. And the smell, that awful smell. Maybe that was me too. I really don't remember anything till I found myself walking up and down in a room that was actually more like a cage. There were other guys in the room, some maybe my age, some younger. Some were walking up and down like me. Some were yelling and waving their arms around, but others were just sitting on the floor muttering to themselves.

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***I fought for control. Stop. I kept telling myself. Stop! But the spinning just got faster.***

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I tried to focus my mind, but then the spinning would start. I felt so hot, and I could taste blood. I could see guys in green coming toward me, maybe two or three of them. They looked hideous, all misshapen. They would jab me with needles. When I awoke, I was strapped onto a bed. A guy sitting on the other bed had on regular clothes, and he was watching me. I remember thinking, *Thank God he looks normal.*

When he saw that I was awake, he smiled and came over to me. He was carrying a case. Sitting on the floor by my bed, he opened the case and took out a teddy bear, a little brown teddy bear. He put it by my head, and smiling, he said, "Not for keeps." He took out colors, the kind kids use, and started to draw a picture, but he kept smiling at me. Then he took back the teddy bear and put the picture in its place. He was to be my roommate for the next two years. I don't remember how many doctors I saw. I couldn't seem to focus on what they were asking. My mind was always spinning. I was given all kinds of therapy, all kinds of medicines, but nothing worked.

Then two years ago I was put on the medicine I'm on now. The doctor said I'll be on it the rest of my life—or until I build up an immunity to it. Then

I will go back into that hot spinning world of hell, until they can find another medicine to help me.

How could a tiny pill no bigger than a baby aspirin do this to me? The doctor's answer was that the brain reacts differently in each person. In some it just shuts down little by little. In my case the ecstasy pill I took may have been mixed with PCP, methamphetamine, and acid.

Ecstasy is often created in illegal labs, or even mixed with an over-the-counter cough suppressant—anything that gives the dealer a bigger profit. In my case ecstasy caused my body temperature to rise so high that it caused an imbalance in my brain, causing hemorrhaging, and then the whole structure of my mind was incapable of clear thought.

Clear thought, something I always took for granted. I was smart. I was going to do so much with my life. Now I live each day just trying to stay focused on each thing I do. The doctor said I was lucky not to be a vegetable. My roommate, whom I call Teddy Bear, was not so lucky. He had been an art student—a good one. But he took ecstasy one too many times, and for him it was too late. I go to see him once a month, and sometimes he doesn't know who I am. I guess I really go more for myself, such as when I'm feeling down.

I force myself to look at him and see what I might have become. He draws me pictures, and we walk around the grounds. He holds on to my hand, and sometimes he even lets me hold his teddy bear, but he always tells me "not for keeps." Every time he says that it makes me remember how I always thought my clear mind would be mine forever. Now I know that part of my life is gone. It was not mine, "not for keeps" anyway. 🎧

## FACTS ATTACK

- \* Did you know that performance-enhancing drugs and doping cause concern to athletes and physicians? To name a few adverse health effects: irregular heartbeat; liver problems and cancers; stomach cramps and nausea; seizures. Noted are severe mood swings, anxiety, and violence. These Web sites have additional information: [www.healthycompetition.org](http://www.healthycompetition.org) and [www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/1319](http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/1319).
- \* Sports teach us about honest effort, persistence, and playing fair—moral conduct that we can use in all walks of life. See [www.sports-drugs.com](http://www.sports-drugs.com).

# Caffeine as a Stimulant

**My friend uses over-the-counter pills containing caffeine to stay awake when studying or just for fun. I've tried to convince him that they are unhealthy, but he disagrees. Who's right?**

**Jacque**

You are. Taking any kind of stimulant, such as caffeine, is potentially hazardous and definitely unhealthy. Just because something is legal and sold in stores does not necessarily mean it is safe. Depending on stimulants to keep awake or for fun is not a good practice. Let your friend know that you are concerned for his welfare and care about what he is doing to himself. Hopefully he will heed your words and stop this dangerous practice.

**My dad keeps threatening to send me to drug rehab if I don't quit smoking weed. Can he really do this against my will? I'm 15.**

**Mason**

Every state has different laws pertaining to teens and drug and alcohol treatment. Most

allow a parent to place someone your age into a residential treatment center against their will. Many places are what is called "secure" and are nearly impossible to walk away from until the program is completed. Even though it may sound unfair, forcing someone who has a drug problem into rehab may save their life in the long run. Especially someone who is too toxic with alcohol and other drugs to make rational decisions. Do yourself a favor and give up the weed. It will save you from worrying about rehab.

**I know someone who swears that she is a weekend heroin user and not addicted. Does this make it safe?**

**Nicholas**

No, it doesn't. Using any type of illicit drug is on a par with playing with fire. It's inevitable that they will get burned, but it's unpredictable when. People who consume drugs on certain days of the week are only fooling themselves. They're often under the illusion that they're in control and won't ever

develop a drug problem. This could not be further from the truth. Most addicts and alcoholics will tell you that they thought they had their substance use under control too. That is, until their world began to fall apart.

**Please settle an argument between me and my uncle. Is marijuana safer than alcohol?**

**Karissa**

I believe that neither marijuana nor alcohol should be considered safe. If you look at the dangerous effects of both of these drugs, you'll understand why. Different drugs affect different people in different ways. What may be less problematic for one person may be devastating to another. Alcohol and marijuana have harmed many people's lives all around the world. They should both be viewed with extreme caution. 🍃

**G**o ahead, ask Gary his advice on some of those big questions. Gary Somdahl is a dad who puts his skills as a licensed youth chemical dependency counselor to the real-world test all the time. His latest book is *Drugs and Kids*.



Send your questions to:

**ASK GARY**

*Listen* magazine  
55 West Oak Ridge Drive  
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740.

**Y**ou may not think of caffeine as a drug, as it is a substance that is present in three of the most popular drinks in the world—coffee, tea, and cola. It is in chocolate and in two favorite South American drinks—yerba mate and guarana. Could anything that widely available be a mind-altering chemical? You bet.

To chemists, caffeine is a methylxanthine. It comes from a combination of xanthine, a molecule used as a building block in DNA, and methyl, a combination of a carbon atom and three hydrogen atoms that are basic building blocks in molecules. Caffeine has three methyl molecules attached to a xanthine.

That chemical structure is part of the reason caffeine keeps you awake. It mimics another chemical produced by your brain called adenosine. Adenosine is produced when the cells are at work. The harder you work, the more adenosine is produced. The brain has adenosine receptors, which signal your brain to slow down, and you begin to get sleepy. The harder you work, the sleepier you get. The sleepier you get, the less you work, and your body eventually recharges its energy.

Enter caffeine. Caffeine fits these receptors better than adenosine but is shaped differently than adenosine. Caffeine does not trigger the signal that makes you sleepy. Displacing adenosine slows the fatigue process. Caffeine does not wake you up so much as keep you from falling asleep. It lets the brain's natural stimulants do their jobs without adenosine interference.

Caffeine has other effects as well. It causes the airways in your lungs and your blood vessels to increase in size. As the body breaks down caffeine it changes to theophylline—a medicine used to treat asthma. That is why a cup of tea seems to help when you have a stuffy chest cold. It dilates your airways, allowing you to breathe more, and dilates your blood vessels, allowing more oxygen to get to your body.

Caffeine is also a diuretic and a laxative. It relaxes smooth muscles. This includes your colon. Your colon and kidneys also have adenosine receptors, but caffeine not only settles into these receptors, it also triggers them. Drink a cup of strong coffee and you may suddenly have to go.

Caffeine also affects the absorption of other drugs. Many painkillers are 50 percent more effective when combined with caffeine. Some over-the-counter pain medicines contain a combination of caffeine with acetaminophen or aspirin.

While pure caffeine is toxic, it is almost impossible to overdose on caffeine. You would need to take

about 5,000 milligrams by mouth to get a fatal dose of caffeine. That is the equivalent to drinking 100 12-ounce cans of cola or 40 cups of strong coffee within a half hour.

Yet caffeine has significant side effects.

Caffeine reduces fine motor skills. Caffeine can cause the shakes. While that may not make a difference

# The BUZZ on Caffeine

banging keys on a computer, it makes a difference if you are doing extremely delicate work with your hands. Brain surgeons avoid caffeine before operating.

If you easily get a sugar high—getting excitable and hyperactive after consuming sugar—caffeine can make it worse. It blocks the signals that slow down the brain. Drinking a couple of cans of decaffeinated soda can make you lively enough to irritate those around you. Drink two cans of caffeinated soda, and you are vibrating like a hummingbird.

Caffeine may make it difficult to sleep, even when you want to. Your body is exhausted, but the sleep receptors in your brain are filled with caffeine and stubbornly insist that they're not ready to rest. So you toss and turn in bed and awaken the next morning as tired as when you went to bed. Then, to wake yourself up for a busy day at school, you drink a cup or two of coffee for breakfast and a can of cola at every break during the school day. By bedtime you still have so much caffeine in your system that you cannot sleep—again.

Caffeine dehydrates you. It makes you urinate, so you have to drink more fluid to keep a proper balance. If the fluid you drink is a cola, you get more caffeine. This makes you urinate more, which makes you need more fluid.

The laxative effect of caffeine can also be a nuisance, especially when you're busy. If you're really sensitive to caffeine, it can cause diarrhea.

Caffeine is also habit-forming, if not addictive. The body compensates for caffeine's effects by producing

more adenosine receptors in the brain. Skip your daily caffeine dose, and you suddenly feel tired, because the receptors more quickly get filled with adenosine. Similarly, you may feel irritable until you get your caffeine level up to what you are used to. The constriction of your blood vessels to normal reduces oxygen levels, leaving you feeling cranky.

going. Pretty soon most of your calories are coming from soda. You do not feel full, so you drink more soda and gain weight anyway.

Substituting an “energy drink” for a meal does not work. Most energy drinks are concentrations of caffeine and sugar. Read the ingredients. You might as well boil down cola into syrup and drink that.



Joel D. Springer

By Mark N. Lardas

Caffeine’s effects are also complicated because they are frequently used in combination with other chemicals. Alcohol, tobacco, prescription drugs, over-the-counter medicines, even sugar, affect caffeine’s absorption. Some, like alcohol, slow the breakdown of caffeine. Others, like nicotine—in cigarettes—speed it up. Health problems, gender, and age—even your ancestry—can change the rate at which caffeine is processed in your body. Because people are so different, predicting caffeine’s effects is difficult. A dose that leaves one individual alert may make another individual jittery and leave a third person apparently unaffected.

There are better alternatives to caffeine. A brisk walk can raise your energy level without caffeine. So can avoiding fatty foods and alcohol. Simple, healthy meals will leave you more alert during the day.

A good night’s sleep helps too. A heavy caffeine user, especially a teen, will find this difficult, as caffeine stays in the body longer if they’re young, interfering with sleep. Teens tend to get their caffeine through soda—whether colas or the caffeinated heavy citrus drinks such as Surge or Mountain Dew. Because these are high in calories but low in nutrition, heavy consumption makes it impossible to eat a nutritionally balanced diet without gaining weight.

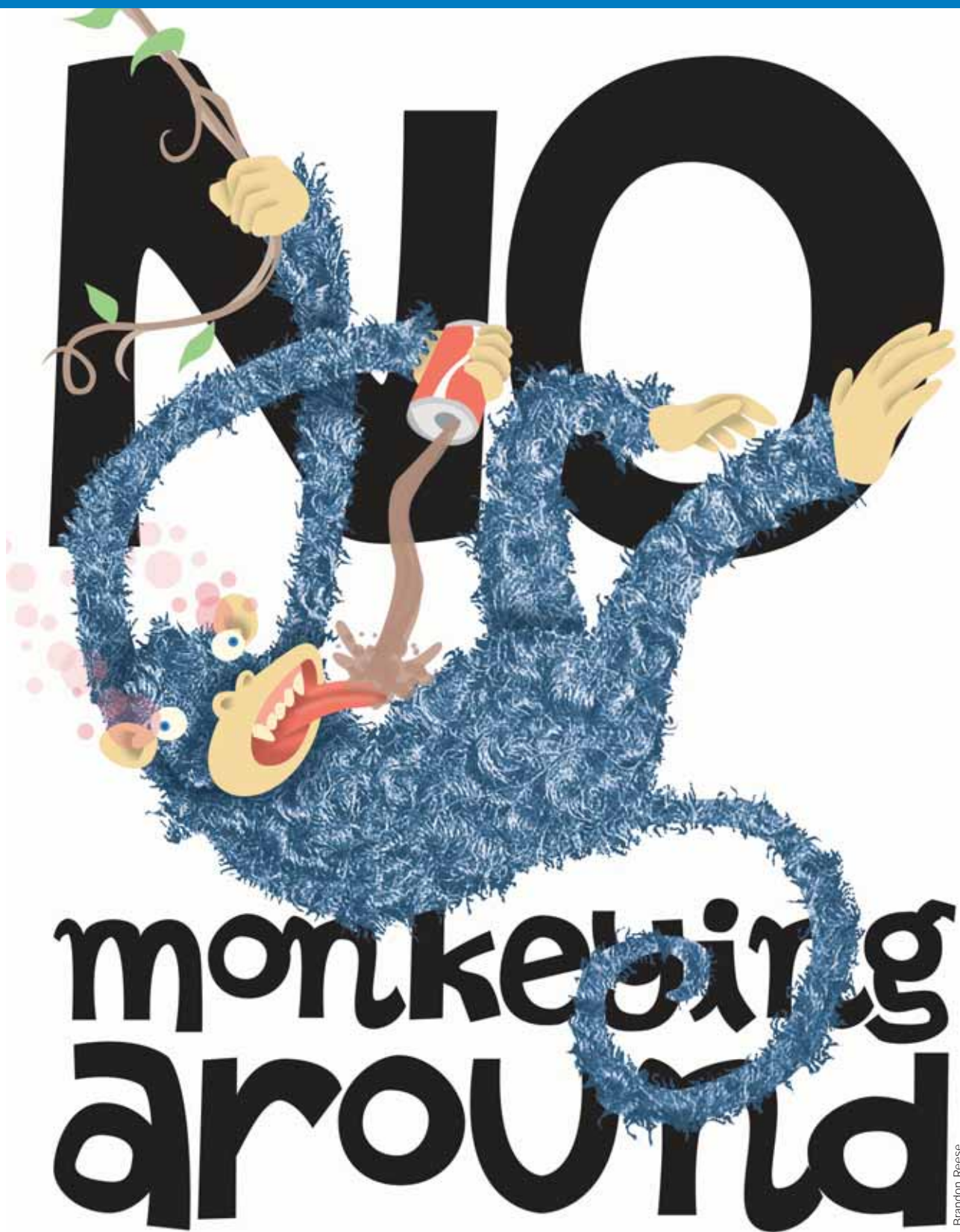
If you skip a meal to slug down a soda, it becomes increasingly harder to maintain your level of energy. You have just substituted caffeine and sugar for vitamins and nutrients. Then you drink another soda to get that sugar rush and caffeine lift just to keep you

Caffeine is sneaky. It creates a need for you to take more. You end up curing a caffeine-induced headache by taking pain pills containing caffeine. You drink more coffee to keep you awake after a sleepless night caused by a caffeine overdose. You drink more cola to cure thirst caused by caffeine’s diuretic effects. Money you could be spending on clothes, movies, or music goes toward feeding a habit that you may not even realize you have.

So rather than reach for that cup of coffee or cola drink to jump-start your day, eat a healthy breakfast of fruits and grains and milk. Then a brisk walk to the bus stop will have you feeling on top of the world. Try it and see if you don’t have more energy during the day and sleep better at night—just like a baby! ☞

## FACTS ATTACK

- \* Can you guess what the most widely used addiction is? You can call it 1,3,7-trimethylxanthine, alias caffeine. <http://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/caff.html>.
- \* Want to experience a natural high? Go for a picnic in the rain, splash your face with cold water, make snow angels, have a good belly laugh, watch a sunrise, take a nap, sing in the shower, bathe with lavender oil, make a blanket tent with your little brother or sister, hold a newborn baby.



Brandon Reese



**M**onkeys are smart little creatures. They can do many things as well as humans can. They can pick up their food with their hands. They can walk on their back feet instead of all fours as many other animals do. They can learn the alphabet and even learn how to spell. And monkeys love to monkey around. Sometimes monkeys are smarter than some people, because with some things they just don't monkey around.

During the Boer War in South Africa, spies warned the British soldiers that the enemy was trying to poison the British food supply. They didn't have time to test their food supplies before each meal and still fight the war, so they "hired" monkeys to do the testing for them.

Before the cook prepared each meal he would hold a piece of the food he was about to use up to a hungry monkey's lower jaw. If the food was poisoned, the monkey would grab it and throw it away. If the food was OK, the animal would eat it. Pretty smart, huh? For a monkey at least.

Upon hearing the story, a scientist decided to find out if baboons had the same instincts. The scientist gave a slice of apple to a hungry baboon. The first baboon gobbled it down.

The scientist filled a hypodermic needle with strong coffee and injected it into the next apple slice. He handed the coffee-injected apple slice to the second baboon. The animal lifted the coffee-injected apple slice to his mouth, let out an angry screeching sound, and then violently attacked the scientist.

Anxious to pacify the second baboon, the scientist threw a good apple slice at him. The creature sniffed the good slice suspiciously, picked it up, and rushed off to a corner of his cage to eat it.

Monkeys don't monkey around with poisons such as caffeine. No one ever told monkeys that caffeine can cause birth defects or irregular heartbeats, or wreak havoc on one's blood pressure. No one told baboons that caffeine has been linked to heart disease and pancreas and bladder cancer. These cute and furry creatures just sense that caffeine is a poison and will harm them. Pretty smart primates, huh?

**What else do monkeys and their cousins not know about the dangers of putting caffeine into their bodies? What do you know? Take the following quiz and find out.**

## QUESTIONS:

- 1. T F** Caffeine is highly addictive.
- 2. T F** Regular coffee contains caffeine.
- 3. T F** Sodas such as Mountain Dew, Coke, and Dr. Pepper contain high doses of caffeine.
- 4. T F** Coffee contains vitamins C and E.
- 5. T F** Chocolate contains caffeine.
- 6. T F** People began using caffeine about 1820.
- 7. T F** A coffee addict will not experience withdrawal from caffeine for at least a week.
- 8. T F** Caffeine can't make you depressed.
- 9. T F** Professional athletes can fail a mandatory drug test with too much caffeine in their systems.
- 10. T F** American youth have more of a caffeine problem than children in other places in the world.

- 1. True.** Quitting caffeine can cause withdrawal symptoms such as headaches, sleepiness, and irritability.
- 2. True.** So do tea and many cold and pain medicines.
- 3. True.** Children are half the weight of adults and are three times as sensitive to caffeine. And that doesn't count the excessive amount of sugar and sodium in a can of soda.
- 4. False.** Coffee contains no food value.
- 5. True.**
- 6. False.** About 1820 scientists isolated the drug in coffee and tea. People began using caffeine products much earlier.
- 7. False.** Caffeine withdrawal symptoms can start in less than two hours for the addict.
- 8. False.** While it may soup up your system when first used, sooner or later your system will have to come down off the artificial high. And then depression follows.
- 9. True.** A serious athlete will avoid caffeine at all times.
- 10. False.** Caffeine addiction in children and youth is a worldwide problem. The early consumption of high doses of caffeine in children may lead to caffeine addiction and personality disorders.

## ANSWERS:

For more information on caffeine, read "Caffeine Addiction," an article from FreedomYou Addiction Center at [www.freedomyou.com/addiction/caffeine%20addiction.htm](http://www.freedomyou.com/addiction/caffeine%20addiction.htm).



Getty Images

# CAN IT BE SO BAD IF IT FEELS SO GOOD?

By Richard Maffeo

**W**hen Michelle first started using the club drug ecstasy, it made her feel as though she didn't have a problem in the world. Even the name—ecstasy—sounded inviting.<sup>1</sup>

Doniel took his first hit of ecstasy at an all-night rave party. He remembers thinking, *Everybody's having fun. Everybody's dancing. It seems as though everything's all right.*<sup>2</sup>

Sixteen-year-old Denise said, "I absolutely loved it . . . I started doing it almost every weekend, or whenever I could get my hands on it. I really didn't think anything [bad] could happen to me. I'd seen smart people take it, so I thought, *Hey . . .*"<sup>3</sup>

Many users report that ecstasy (also known as "X," "essence," "Adam," and "clarity") gives them a sense of increased energy, as well as tactile, auditory, and visual hallucinations. Users commonly give each other passionate body massages and claim instant social ease and affection. Others become overwhelmed with a euphoric sense of "huggability." It's not surprising then that teens ask, "What can be so bad about something that feels so good?"

The answer is: Plenty. Michelle's "plenty" suddenly came crashing around her, and she ended up in a detox program, desperate to get her life back together. "Feeling wonderful meant I had to lie, cheat, and steal," she said. "It gave me an illusion that everything was good."<sup>4</sup>

Doniel said that he learned about the dark side of ecstasy when he could no longer control his body.

"My legs started shaking. I couldn't stop shaking for about three days."<sup>5</sup>

Denise's experience was the scariest of her life. "I couldn't breathe at all . . . my eyes wouldn't stay open, and I would fall every once in a while and wouldn't even know . . . I thought I was going to die."<sup>6</sup>

Ecstasy (the scientific abbreviation is MDMA, short for methylenedioxyamphetamine) is not a new drug. A German pharmaceutical company patented MDMA in 1914. However, its use remained dormant until the 1970s, when a few psychotherapists prescribed it for their patients, believing that it enhanced communication during therapy sessions. However, scientific evidence soon convinced the medical community that the drug caused serious side effects. In 1985 the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration classified MDMA as a dangerous drug without an accepted medical use.

Once swallowed, MDMA is absorbed into the bloodstream and travels to the brain, where it speeds the release of large amounts of serotonin, a vital brain chemical. Serotonin regulates mood, sleep, memory, perception, emotion, and appetite. Ecstasy also interferes with the brain's ability to produce more of these chemicals. Once they are used up, the body's "tank" runs on near-empty for long periods of time. As little as one dose of MDMA can decrease serotonin levels for up to two weeks. When used at moderate to high doses, the depletion may last



several years. Recent evidence suggests it may last a lifetime.<sup>7</sup>

Brain-imaging scans confirm that MDMA destroys serotonin-producing cells in the brain, and scientists believe the damage is dose-related, meaning the more MDMA a person uses, the greater the injury. Unfortunately, repeated use of the drug is not uncommon, because ecstasy is a “reinforcing” drug. Like cocaine, heroin, and other narcotics, ecstasy creates—or reinforces—such strong pleasurable sensations that some users become addicted, taking it again and again, often in increasingly higher doses.

But that’s not all: ecstasy can cause dangerous increases in heart rate and blood pressure, putting users at risk of sudden death from stroke and heart attack. The drug can also disable the body’s ability to regulate its own temperature. At raves, where users dance vigorously for extended periods, the

inability to regulate body temperature can lead to deadly hyperthermia (increased body heat), dehydration, and heart or kidney failure.

The longer a person uses ecstasy, the more likely they will experience a number of mental disorders such as confusion, clinical depression, sleep problems, persistent anxiety, memory loss, and an inability to concentrate.<sup>8</sup>

Pregnant women shoulder an additional risk. Researchers believe that ecstasy damages not only the mother’s brain, but the developing brain of the fetus as well. That damage can result in long-term memory and intellectual problems for the child.<sup>9</sup>

So what can be bad about something that makes you feel so good? Considering the evidence, you’d think the answer would be obvious. Euphoria comes with a high price: mental and emotional instability, heart and kidney failure, and other serious health problems that can lead to a stainless-steel table in a hospital morgue.

Yet despite the overwhelming evidence, ecstasy use among eighth graders increased 82 percent between 1999 and 2000. Use among twelfth graders between 1999 and 2000 rose from 40 percent to

more than 51 percent and represented the largest single increase for this age group in 26 years.

Admissions to the emergency room for ecstasy-related reactions among all users skyrocketed from 250 admissions in 1994 to more than 4,000 in 2001.<sup>10</sup>

Seventeen-year-old Megan said, “I never thought it would be me. I never thought that I would be addicted to ‘E.’ I never thought I’d end up how I am today, on the verge of manic depression, a disease which changes the way you live forever. My parents never knew and they still don’t. . . . I’ve lost so much weight and have major kidney problems. I was in the hospital for days. . . . Drugs may take away the pain you feel inside, but they leave devastation in your body that will haunt you for life. . . . I wish I would have known before I dove headfirst into a concrete pool.”<sup>11</sup>

Danya also thought ecstasy was a harmless drug. At one time she was taking as many as 12 tablets a week. But now she understands. “Ecstasy took me down a deadly, destructive path I could never have imagined.”<sup>12</sup>

Everyone makes decisions that can influence their future health and happiness. Doing drugs is one of those decisions. Michelle, Danya, Megan, and thousands of other teens will tell you that drugs such as ecstasy can make you feel good, but in the long run they are nothing less than agony waiting to happen. They will tell you: “Make the right decision.”

<sup>1</sup>“Ecstasy (II): Teens Speak Out,” *Prevention Alert*, April 20, 2001.

<sup>2</sup>“Ecstasy’s Deep Abyss: Dangerous ‘Love Drug’ Creeps Into the Suburbs,” August 7, 2001, at [http://abcnews.go.com/sections/GMA/GoodMorningAmerica/GMA010807\\_ecstasy.html](http://abcnews.go.com/sections/GMA/GoodMorningAmerica/GMA010807_ecstasy.html).

<sup>3</sup>“Teens From Across the Country Talk About Their Experiences With, and Attitudes Toward, Club Drugs,” (no date). At [www.pbs.org/inthemix/shows/show\\_ecstasy2.html](http://www.pbs.org/inthemix/shows/show_ecstasy2.html).

<sup>4</sup>“Ecstasy (II): Teens Speak Out.”

<sup>5</sup>“Ecstasy’s Deep Abyss.”

<sup>6</sup>“Teens From Across the Country Talk About Their Experiences With, and Attitudes Toward, Club Drugs.”

<sup>7</sup>Robert Mathias, “‘Ecstasy’ Damages the Brain and Impairs Memory in Humans,” *NIDA Notes*, November 1999, at [www.drugabuse.gov/NIDA\\_Notes/NNVol14N4/Ecstasy.html](http://www.drugabuse.gov/NIDA_Notes/NNVol14N4/Ecstasy.html).

<sup>8</sup>Alan I. Leshner, Hearing Before the Senate Subcommittee on Governmental Affairs—“Ecstasy Abuse and Control,” July 30, 2001, at [www.drugabuse.gov/Testimony/7-30-01Testimony.html](http://www.drugabuse.gov/Testimony/7-30-01Testimony.html).

<sup>9</sup>H. W. Broening, L. L. Moford, S. L. Inman-Wood, M. Fukumura, C. V. Vorhees, “3,4-Methylenedioxy Methamphetamine (Ecstasy) Induced Learning and Memory Impairments in Adult Offspring Depend on the Age of Exposure During Early Development,” *Journal of Neuroscience* 21: 3228-3235.

<sup>10</sup>Jeff Levine, “Kids Seeking Ecstasy Find Drug Leads to Despair,” *Web MD Medical News*, at [www.my.webmd.com/content/article/33/1728\\_85104](http://www.my.webmd.com/content/article/33/1728_85104).

<sup>11</sup>“Teens From Across the Country Talk About Their Experiences With, and Attitudes Toward, Club Drugs.”

<sup>12</sup>“Ecstasy’s Deep Abyss.”



## POSITIVE CHOICES/ SUCCESSFUL GOALS

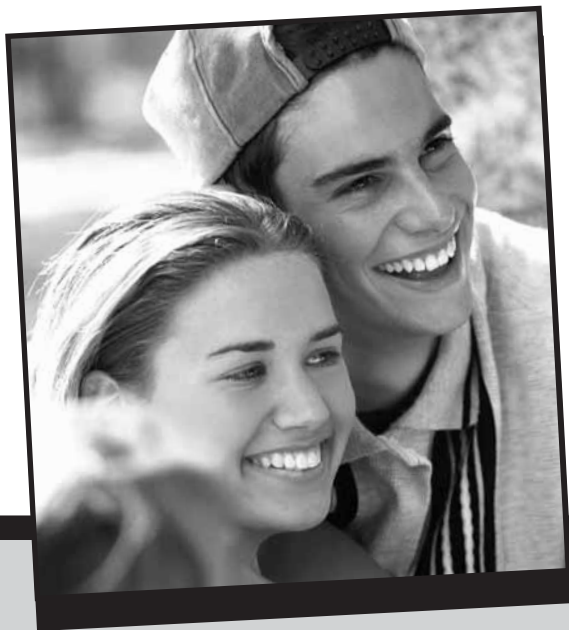
**T**he future of your life—your direction and purpose—lies in your hands. It's all about the choices you make today and understanding the consequences of those choices. Parents and other adults may choose to believe that they control the choices you make—but at best, the most they can do is to encourage you to make good ones.

Truth be known, most of the time parents and other adults are not around when you're making some of your most difficult choices, one of which regards purity. Living a pure life, even after you have fallen, is always obtainable. Purity allows you another breakthrough to your ultimate freedom. And chastity is your freedom.

It takes more courage and strength to make a decision of virtue than it does to give in to being a part of the crowd. What this country needs today is youth who will stand up for what is right, even if it means standing alone. Even if you have made mistakes, purpose in your hearts to learn from them and move on through the walls that sometimes hold you back.

If you keep making consistent “right” choices, you will reach your goals of success and purpose.

**Think about this...**



### **A Real Man**

- Can control his body and doesn't let his body control him
- Respects himself and others around him
- Lives with dignity
- Is unselfish and generous
- Is honest and trustworthy
- Is honorable and dependable
- Is kind and forgiving
- Is unafraid to be himself
- Practices self-discipline
- Stands up for what he believes
- Seeks the good of others first
- Is happy and at peace

### **A Real Woman**

- Controls her passions and desires and emotions, and doesn't let them control her
- Lives with dignity
- Likes being a woman
- Cherishes her femininity
- Knows that she is special
- Is unselfish and thoughtful and kind
- Is honest, faithful, and trustworthy
- Is understanding, humble, and secure
- Is modest, pure, and chaste
- Is compassionate, caring, and giving
- Nurtures her family
- Knows right from wrong

Take the challenge and choose today—right now—to become a real man or a real woman. Stand up for what is right—today!

Let me know what you think by visiting me at [www.powerofchoice.org](http://www.powerofchoice.org) or e-mail me at [powerofchoice1@aol.com](mailto:powerofchoice1@aol.com). Your input and feedback would be greatly appreciated.

Remember, it's not about what you can't do; it's about who you can *be* that matters! 📧

# ARE YOU AT A CROSSROAD?

By Sue Cummings-Karr

Ashley wanted to experience everything before deciding how to live her life.

"Why shouldn't I try drugs and alcohol and see whatever movies I choose?" she questioned her parents. "You just don't want me to have any fun."

During their most recent battle, Ashley's father refused to allow her to see the latest movie. Her friend Brittany's father had taken her, and even though Brittany hadn't liked the movie, Ashley felt left out.

The next day at school the teacher announced that 16 hours of community service was required as the class project. Ashley looked at the list. She crossed off weeding the town square, feeding the homeless, and picking up freeway trash.

"What community service did you choose?" she asked Brittany the next day.

"I guess the homeless shelter."

"What'll you do there?" Ashley asked.

"Hang out while somebody preaches, then fill plates," Brittany said.

"Sounds painless. I'll sign up too."

They wore their oldest clothes that first night. There were 20 people in the shelter meeting hall. A clean-shaved man approached one of the guests.

"Hey, Jake, thought you gave up the bottle."

"How'd you know I didn't, Larry?" Jake asked.

Larry took a deep breath and said, "You can do it, Jake."

"Easy for you to say," Jake replied.

"It isn't easy, but if I can, you can."

The girls listened as Larry told Jake about the time a priest visited Larry's father, and the next day he died of lung cancer. Larry and his 11 brothers and sisters often came home to a street full of cars, locked doors, and laughter. They learned to amuse themselves while their mother tried to escape her pain.

"Nobody told me not to drink or use drugs, but my mom kicked me out after I got hooked," Larry

said. "Later I lost my job and ended up here."

By now the hall had filled up, and the scent of dinner and unwashed people filled the room.

"You from the high school?" Larry asked when he noticed the girls. They nodded.

He introduced Ashley and Brittany to the kitchen staff, and an hour later they opened the line to begin serving.

"Can I have more bread? The meat's hard to chew," a toothless woman asked Ashley.

"Thanks. I haven't had much to eat for three days," a man told Brittany.

Larry approached the girls after everyone had received their food and encouraged them to eat. He led them to a table.

"Haven't seen you before," said Lonnie, one of the guests. She wore two coats and had a backpack.

Larry introduced the girls.

"You coming back?" Lonnie asked.

"Yeah. Seven more weeks," Ashley said.

The next day Ashley's mom asked, "Are you in outer space or just planning your next mall trip?"

"Can't get that homeless shelter out of my mind. Mom, did you ever drink or take drugs?"

"Why do you ask?" Mom hedged.

"Well, you're so against it. Didn't you want to try it?" Ashley asked.

"I did once. Your grandma and I lived alone. I worked, saved, and bought an old car. One day I drove my friends downtown. Someone had brought a bottle. It wasn't my idea to drink and drive. I missed a turn, flipped the car, and never drank again," Mom said.

The next week Brittany and Ashley stayed in the hall during the meeting while Larry spoke.

"I stood at a crossroad and didn't know it. By the time I was 15 I'd been drinking and using pot for seven years. A friend of my mom's took me to a youth retreat. I almost walked away from drugs," he said, hanging his head.

"Ten years later the judge offered me a choice: jail or rehab. After rehab I landed here. I'd quit using for awhile—and start again, but these guys never gave up on me," Larry said. "Whether you know it or not, today you face a crossroad."

Larry finished, and Brittany and Ashley ran to their places in the serving line. When the girls sat down to eat, Lonnie joined them.

"I'm gonna do it," she said.

"What?" Brittany asked.

"Quit. If I wasn't hung over, the dry cleaners might take me back. If I had a job, I could rent a room, maybe even get my kids back, or at least see them. I'm gonna cross over," Lonnie said.

The next day at school Brittany caught Ashley staring into space.

"Anybody home?" she asked Ashley.

"I never thought about choices before."

"Yeah, I'm glad Lonnie's quitting," Brittany said.

"Me too, and I think I'm looking forward to going to the shelter now."

The next week they watched Larry welcome guests. "If I can quit, you can too," he said.

A couple of weeks later they were talking to Larry, and he said he'd just learned some sad news. "I wish they'd never started. Most parents set limits, but kids don't like to listen and like me choose to learn the hard way.

"Lonnie was one of those people. The police just found her. DOA. Overdose," he said.

"But she'd quit," Ashley said in shock.

"She'd just learned that she had cirrhosis of the liver and snapped," Larry said quietly.

The weeks went past, and guests at the shelter made promises. Sometimes they kept them.

When Brittany and Ashley's eighth week came, it hit them that they wouldn't have to come again.

"May I say a few words tonight?" Ashley asked Larry. "Maybe for 10 minutes after the meeting?"

"You sure?" Larry

questioned, and she nodded.

"Whether you know it or not, you're at a crossroad," Larry said in closing, then motioned to Ashley to come up front.

"This is the last night I serve here," she began. "I probably wouldn't have come, except it was a school requirement. If I hadn't come, I wouldn't have met you, and I wouldn't trade that for anything.

"I don't know what you're going through. I've never tried alcohol or drugs, but I was considering it about eight weeks ago," Ashley confessed. I wanted to try everything, and I thought my parents and teachers just didn't want me to have fun.

"I faced a crossroad," she said, her voice cracking. "I know a lot of you want to quit. I've watched you struggle. You've helped me to decide to never try alcohol and drugs. Larry's right. You stand at a crossroad. You can choose to walk away or get help."

Ashley glanced at Larry and the other rehab staff before looking back at the guests. She smiled through her tears. "Thanks for helping me cross over."

A roar broke out in the hall, and guest after guest said, "I'm crossing over."

The next week Mom watched Ashley as she concentrated on homework. She'd not lashed out at her parents for weeks.

"Honey, there's a new movie out. I hear it's not too bad. Would you like to go?"

"No thanks, Mom. But I'd like to go to the shelter and hang out. Somebody might be at a crossroad, and I want to be there." 🎧



Joel D. Springer



**POWER**  
**OF CHOICE**



# EMPOWERMENT

## Is Not Fear— It's Freedom.

By Michele Deppe

Adults seem to want to control young people with fear," says Scot Cressman, with a note of dissatisfaction. These are unlikely words from a man who is an intimidating six-foot-five-inch 305-pound mass of muscle. But this gentle giant has a soft spot for kids. He says, "The message teens always get is 'Don't do this, and don't do that'—in other words, be scared of everything, but don't dare ask anyone why."

Scot's positive philosophy causes him to approach young people differently. Instead of trying to bully teens with the don't-ask-why agenda, he says, "I think it's better to empower people with knowledge, since they'll make their own choices. Adults would like to think they're making those choices for you, but they're not really."

Scot Cressman epitomizes empowerment. A former college football star and National Football League free agent, Scot is now a four-year member of the Power Team, which travels all across the country, thrilling audiences with feats of strength. Scot and his buddies curve bars of steel with their teeth, bust up concrete blocks with their bare hands, and snap baseball bats as if they were toothpicks. They've hit the news on ESPN and all the major networks and have been featured on *Entertainment Tonight* and *Walker, Texas Ranger*. The guys even had their own show called *The Power Connection*. Endorsed by President Bush and more than 100 senators, governors, and other civic leaders, the Power Team is number one when it comes to promoting healthy lifestyles for young people.

In Scot's philosophy, knowledge is the catalyst to empowerment, and he's got that area covered too. In fact, his appropriate title is doctor, reflecting his licensed status and Ph.D. in coun-



Photo supplied by Scot Cressman

selling. Scot also proved to be a sharp businessman when he successfully ran a chain of toy stores. Plus he has learned civic duty skills by serving with the International Fellowship of Chaplains, which allows him to reach out to the community in the wake of disasters, such as the September 11 terrorist attack on our country.

Even though Scot's personal accomplishments are even more impressive than those he performs on stage with the Power Team, it's surprising to discover that he often lacked encouragement at home. "When I was growing up, I didn't have the opportunity to do everything I would have liked, and my family didn't support me in school activities," says Scot. "I was the kid whose parents didn't come to any of his games."

"My dad grew up in a home for boys, and he didn't really know how to be a good father,

because he'd never had one. But my parents did make me go to church. That was great for me, because people who cared about me surrounded me, and I had good friends in the youth group."



Scot Cressman bends steel.

PHOTO COURTESY MORNING JOURNAL

His disadvantages have actually proved to be helpful. "Since my parents really didn't take much of an interest in what I wanted to do, I learned to be very independent," Scot says. "I understood at an early age that I had to make things happen for myself. If I was interested in playing a sport or participating in something, I couldn't wait for my parents to take the lead and help me get signed up or whatever. Learning how to make decisions about what I wanted and how to respond to opportunities taught me how to think for myself. Growing up that way prepared me to keep pushing myself, and I achieved a lot in sports and education as a result."

Teens can follow their dreams, as Scot did, even if no one is there to applaud them. "Whether your parents and teachers are paying attention to you, or even if they are not, it's not what you *can't* do that matters . . . but who you *can* become that makes the difference," Scot says. "So what do you want to become?"

Scot's background in psychology has taught him that each individual chooses what they want from life. He says, "I respect young people. And I acknowledge that they are the ones making choices for themselves. Yes, you can do drugs . . . you can sleep around. The choice is up to you—not your parents or your friends. But you may change your mind about what you want when you get the facts about how 'doing whatever you feel like doing' can mess up your life. Then you may realize, 'Why would I want to do that stuff?'"

Scot says, "I smoked some cigarettes from a pack that I found on the ground, and they made me sick for about three days. I tasted alcohol once. So I did sort of try some things. But it proved one thing to me:

people who smoke, drink, and do drugs are only doing it to fill a void in their life or to be accepted by their friends . . . because all of that stuff is disgusting! No one who tastes beer can honestly say that it tastes good. And if you take a drag from a cigarette, it's awful and makes you cough and hack. So you know people just do it to try to fit in, and then they get hooked."

Scot believes those teens who lean against the props of drinking, drugs, or sleeping around are condemning their present and limiting their future without even realizing it. Amazingly, lots of teens do bad things because "everyone else is," then later they're surprised to learn that no one else really wanted to "use and abuse" either, but no one knew what else to do instead. Scot says that you do things in high school to impress people, but the sad stats are that you probably won't even hang out with 98 percent of those people two years after graduation. So why run your life according to what they tell you is cool? Don't just follow—find out. Learning good information will empower you.

One source of good information is a book Scot has written called *Breaking Through to Freedom*. It's loaded with the scoop on hot topics, such as how you can't really have "safe sex" by using condoms; facts about partying, such as the truth about the alcohol content in beer; and Scot's thoughts about using steroids to bulk-up. The book also has dozens of captivating, real-life stories from teens in their own words. Scot's book has been so well received that he is already busy writing a second one.

You can be the person to show your friends how to have a real life. You can be the person who knows "what else to do" instead of being self-destructive. Get past the fear, and make decisions that lead to freedom. 📖

## HOT LINKS

\*Check out the Power Team at [www.thepowerteam.com](http://www.thepowerteam.com).

\*For information about Scot Cressman's book, *Breaking Through to Freedom*, visit [www.bronzebowpublishing.com](http://www.bronzebowpublishing.com).

FEEDBACK  
FROM OUR  
READERS

# Listening

## A Positive Choice

Sometimes it's hard to make a positive choice, because I have friends and friends' friends who tell me to make a choice that in my gut I feel is wrong. What should I do? For me, I go with my gut feeling, which leads the right way.

Sometimes when I've been stuck on a situation and didn't know where to go with it, the stories in *Listen* magazine have helped me decide. They are stories that can be realistic and bring a positive attitude to me. When I think of drugs and alcohol, the stories in the magazine make me think of what could happen to me if I tried them. It's hard sometimes, because people around me smoke and drink, but I try to stay focused and plan to stay on the path that I'm on right now.

So thank you, *Listen*, for helping me through those times that I didn't know what to do.

If there is one thing that I could tell other teens that I've learned, it is to follow your gut feeling. It will help you make the right choice.

**Katie Johnson, 14**  
**Indianapolis, Indiana**

(Thank you, Katie, for sharing with us how reading *Listen* has helped you make good choices. Keep it up.)

## Worries

As I lie and think upon my bed,  
many thoughts enter and leave  
my head.

Thoughts of my life and how it  
will go,

I wish the suspense would stop,  
and I'd just know.

Will I be rich or will I be poor?

Will I be satisfied, or will I want  
more?

Will I strive to be the best,

Or will I slack off and be like all  
the rest?

Will I be happy?

Let me know, and please make it  
snappy.

The answer to these questions will  
someday come,

And then I'll know what my life  
will become.

**Matt Mayben, 16**  
**Hebron, Nebraska**

## Friends

A friend is someone we turn to  
when our spirits need a lift.

A friend is someone we treasure,  
for their friendship is a gift.

A friend is also someone who fills  
our life with beauty, joy, and  
grace,

And makes the world we live in  
a better and happier place.

**Jaclyn Rodriguez, 13**  
**Rockford, Michigan**

## Opening Day on Wigwam Bay

Cold wind on my cheek;

Hard wooden benches;

Windswept rain;

Angelic flights of swans;

The whistling of the reeds;

Popping of guns in the distance;

The shimmer of the lake—

My dad and I awaiting the sun to  
rise on another opening day.

**Benjamin Tyler, 13**  
**Midland, Michigan**

## HAPPINESS

I walk softly through the shadows  
of my mind.

Thinking only thoughts  
of the happy kind.

Life for me is such a gift,  
And the world around  
gives my soul a lift.

So open your eyes,  
look all around,

And fill your heart  
with the wonders that abound.

**Thao Cao, 16**  
**Carrollton, Texas**

## The Mist of a Lifetime

Oh, I long to feel that mist again.  
The light sprinkle of water on my  
young face.

To be so in tune with my emotions  
As though there is no other person  
in the world.

No cares.

So alive and innocent.

None of the world's burdens yet lay  
on my shoulders.

I dance in the water with no fear of  
who's watching.

Sing loud, and no embarrassment for  
the sound.

I touch the stars in only one jump.  
Oh, to be so full of life once again.

Throughout your journey,  
Never forget the mist that summer  
day.

Never give in to the world's  
pressures.

For when you do, you stray farther  
away

From the lessons you learned so  
long ago.

The mist showed you how to stay  
young,

And taught you to live life to the  
fullest.

**Lauren M. Swann, 14**  
**Carrollton, Texas**



I thought Ascanio was going to skin me alive.

"A gang!" he yelled. "Get serious, Dominca! I can't believe you're telling me this. There's no way!"

Ascanio may be six years older, but when he acts as though he thinks he's Dad, he drives me nuts.

"Ascanio, it's OK. Maybe 'gang' is the wrong word."

He calmed down a little then. "Wrong word? You've got that right, little sis. Say 'gang' too loud, and you'll have the whole neighborhood on your case."

Gangs have been a hot topic lately. Things heated up a couple months earlier when a group of kids hanging out in Mac's Milk parking lot pushed a man through a plate-glass window. Since then anyone above the age of 13 seems to be under suspicion.

"It's really a club that Damien and Delilah started a month ago. Membership is open to kids in this neighborhood who are at least 12 and sponsored by a member."

"Sounds like a gang to me."

"No!" I protested. "The whole idea is to show people that all teens aren't juvies and gangbangers. The motto is 'Instruct by Example.'"

"Sounds impressive, but what does it mean?" he asked.

"We'll show people by our actions that we're honest and trustworthy. And we'll show them that a few bad kids might get in fights or

steal and do drugs, but most of us are harmless," I explained.

Ascanio laughed. "Harmless? I wouldn't exactly call

Damien harmless. You've watched him on the football field!"

I smiled. He had a point. A star linebacker and 17, Damien's built like a junior Schwarzenegger.

"That's why he got the idea," I said. "Adults find him threatening because he's so big. He wanted to do something to prove that kids can be trusted."

Ascanio nodded. "Makes sense. Tell me more."

"There are seven members. Besides Damien and Delilah, there's Johnny and May Nguyen, Scotty Polaski, Juniper White, and Rachel Goncalves.

"So far they've arranged to cut old Mrs. Vendretti's grass once a week, and until Mr. Franco's broken leg heals they'll taking turns walking Luigi, his German shepherd. Once they get organized, they'll drive old folk shopping or to bingo, but the big plan is to look after little kids over the weekend."

"Baby-sitting?" Ascanio asked.

"Better than that. Fun things such as taking them to Science World or the planetarium. Educational stuff that's not boring."

"You'll be heroes with their parents if you do that," he said. "So what's your first good deed?"

I hesitated. It wasn't quite that easy. "I'm not a member yet," I stated. "Scotty's sponsoring me, but no one will sponsor Bora."

"Bora?" Ascanio's voice went supersonic. "Dominica Gibaldi, I warned you about hanging around with him."

"He's my friend," I yelled back. "I don't care what you say."

"I'm not surprised that no one will sponsor him. Bora's a sneaky little weasel."

"You don't know anything," I shouted. "I'm not going to hang around listening to you dis my best friend." Before he could start one of his lectures, I scrambled. As I bladed down the block I got madder and madder. Everyone was down on Bora. It wasn't fair.

Bora is a year older than I am, but we're in the same grade. We'd been best friends for a month—since around the time he'd had a fight with Johnny.

To hear Johnny tell the story, you'd think that Bora had committed a major crime. All he did was boost a Mars bar and an Oh Henry! from the 7-Eleven. He told me he did it on a dare. When I said, "Shoplifting? That's stealing!" Bora laughed at me.

"Chill," he'd said. "The next time I was in the store I paid for them. I put the money on the counter when I left." He shrugged. "No harm done. Right?"

"I guess," I'd said.

Four blocks later I almost plowed into Damien. He was backing his mom's car out of their driveway. Barreling down the walk, I nearly broadsided it. Damien rolled down the driver's window and leaned out. "Hey, Dom. Better try to stay in one piece till tonight. There's a club meeting. Seven o'clock. Be there or be square."

"Bora too?" I asked.

His grin faded. "You know Bora

# BORA BOOSTS

hasn't been sponsored. This is for our friends. Bora's not tight with us. He's not the type we want in the club."

"Just because he boosted some bars?" I demanded. "It was a joke. Besides, he paid for them later."

"That's what he says. But there are other things . . ."

"Like what?"

"He lies," Damien said quietly.

"He's never lied to me. If Bora can't join, then count me out."

"Well, you gotta do what you gotta do, but I think you should give it some serious thought. You'd be an excellent member. Hope you change your mind." He smiled. "We could use help with Mr. Franco's dog. He doesn't seem to understand anything but Italian."

That evening I was watching TV when Ascanio came in and collapsed onto the couch.

"I thought there was a club meeting tonight," he said, helping himself to my chips.

"Says who?"

"I saw May this afternoon."

"Yeah, well, I'm not going." I pretended to concentrate on the TV program.

"You were hot to join."

"Not anymore." Then because I knew he'd keep razzing me, I turned off the TV and told him everything. Surprise! For once he didn't try to lecture me.

"That's a tough one," he said sympathetically. "Loyalty to a friend is totally admirable, but are you sure Bora's worth it?"

"Of course," I said quickly.

Ascanio nodded. "And what about Johnny? You two have been best buds since you were little. Do you trust him?"

"Sure," I said. "Johnny's one of

the most honest people I know."

"But he doesn't trust Bora.

What does that tell you?"

"Johnny goes overboard sometimes. If it was up to him Bora'd be on the FBI's Most Wanted list."

"Dominica, let me tell you, if a person's dishonest about little things, there's a good chance that they're not straight about bigger things. Does Bora zoom you about little things?"

I didn't have an answer.

After dinner I bladed over to Bora's house, but he said that he was meeting his dad, and they were going bowling. Somehow I didn't really believe him.

I went home, but didn't feel like watching TV. Ordinarily I would have gone to Johnny's or Rachel's, but they were at the club meeting. Instead I helped Mrs. Vendretti harvest tomatoes from her garden. The whole time I was trying not to think about what Ascanio had said.

It was hard to admit to myself that I'd been wrong. It also hurt to think that someone I'd considered a friend had betrayed my trust. It worried me that Bora was on his way to being dishonest, big-time.

I knew what I had to do.

The next morning I went over to Bora's. It was getting hot, but he came out wearing a leather jacket.

"Cool jacket!" I said. "When'd you get that?"

He rubbed his shaved head and grinned. "Last night."

"Did your dad buy it for you?" I asked, testing him.

"Yeah."

I took a long, steady look at him. "Where'd you really get it?"

He shrugged. "From a kid."

"Why?"

"Dunno," he said, laughing.

"Guess he liked me."

"You ripped it off. You stole it from him, didn't you?"

"So? His old man's probably loaded. He can afford to buy him a dozen more jackets."

I had a lump in my throat, and I felt sick to my stomach.

"Dom? Where are you going?"

I didn't turn around.

"Hey, don't be so serious. Cut me some slack. Come back. I can get you one too."

I just kept on walking.

The next two days I stayed pretty close to home. I didn't feel like seeing anyone.

Friday morning I was shooting hoops in the driveway when someone shouted at me. It was Scotty trying to pull Luigi up the driveway. But the dog was more interested in the cat on Mrs. Vendretti's porch.

"Give me a hand, Dom."

I laughed. In Italian I told Luigi to behave. He perked up his ears and gave me a friendly woof.

"Hey, he understands you!"

I told Luigi to lie down, and he did. I was as amazed as Scotty.

"There's a meeting tonight," Scotty said. "Hope you can come."

We didn't mention Bora.

"I'll be there," I said.

Scotty grinned. "Great! You can start by helping me take this beast back home."

Luigi trotted obediently in front of me, and Scotty and I chatted as we walked down the drive. But I couldn't concentrate on what Scotty was saying. My thoughts were on Ascanio and his advice. He can be a total pain in the neck, but I have to admit that there are times when he knows what he's talking about. I think I might even tell him that—someday! 🐾

# SPEAK UP

## Without Talking Back

By Kelly Seward

What should you do when you're sick and tired of your parents' rules? How should you act when you disagree with them? Whining, yelling, or blatantly disobeying tend not only to be ineffective, but can often lead to being grounded and losing your parents' trust. There *are* ways to confront your parents without being confrontational.

### Timing Is Everything

It is probably not a good idea to demand your own phone line at the exact moment that you realize your brother has been listening in on your conversation. If you ask for something while you're freaking out about it, your parents will assume you're just being impulsive, and they may not take your request seriously. Wait a while to regain your composure so you can speak calmly. You want to be in a state of mind in which you can rationally explain how you feel.

The same idea goes for your parents. Don't complain about all the health food in the house while your dad is bringing in the groceries. He just went shopping, spent money, and is now carrying in the food. Wait to speak to him about adding chips and salsa to the household menu while you're both watching TV or reading magazines. He'll probably be more open-minded if you talk to him while he's relaxed and calm.

### Be All That You Can Be

It's about time you were filled in on a little secret. Most parents are not trying to control you by establishing rules; they just want to see how well you can handle responsibility. Think of the rules as a video game. If you follow them, you pass and get to move on to the next level. Each level is slightly harder

because it involves more responsibility. The payoff? More privileges. If you stick to the rules, your parents will have more trust in you and may become more willing to alter the rules. Before you ask for a later curfew or an increase in your allowance, you need to prove that you're capable of getting home on time or know how to spend money wisely. Once they see that you can handle the responsibility of the original set of rules, they may be willing to add more rewards.

The best way to show your parents that you deserve more privileges is by proving that you currently have everything under control. What does this mean for you? Doing well in school, staying away from drugs and alcohol, waiting to have sex, and being helpful and respectful all play a part in illustrating that you know how to make good choices and are ready to accept the responsibility that comes with more privileges. Making healthy decisions based on your current set of rules will increase your chances of gaining new rules with more perks.

If you're having difficulty making good decisions, you may not be ready for more responsibility at this time. Don't give up. Keep working on whatever you and your parents feel needs improvement. Once you've conquered whatever is giving you trouble, you'll feel great and be ready to take on more responsibility.

### State Your Case

When you and your parents are relaxed and have time to talk, you should be prepared to state your case. You'll want to begin by asking (not demanding) your parents for whatever it is you want. Make sure that your request is reasonable. If your curfew is currently 10:30, don't ask for a midnight bump. Try for 11:00 or 11:30. Your parents will probably be more



Corbis

open-minded if you ask for smaller changes.

Give your parents the reasons they should grant your request. A “curfew conversation” could go something like this: “Mom, when I go out with my friends I don’t do drugs, drink alcohol, or smoke cigarettes. I’m not involved in anything that could get me into trouble. All we do is talk, watch TV, or play games. I’d like to be allowed to do those things a little bit later. How do you feel about that?”

If you give your parents reasons to trust you, they may be willing to change the rules for you. However, if you were caught breaking your current curfew, they may not feel that you deserve more privileges. Listen to your parents, think about what they say, and reply respectfully.

If they agree that you should have more privileges—good for you. Mission accomplished! If they feel that you need to prove yourself more, read Plan B.

### **Plan B—Let’s Make a Deal**

What if your parents listen to your request and then remind you of the D you had in English last marking period, or how they can’t remember the last time you cleaned your room?

See if you can compromise. Some valid replies might include:

“If I stay after school for extra help and bring the D up to a C by the end of this marking period, would you reconsider?”

“If I clean my room once a week for a month, will you consider my request?”

Be willing to give them what they want, and they may be more willing to give you what you want. But remember: “Actions speak louder than words.” Make sure you follow through with your end of the agreement. If you put in the effort, you should reap the rewards.

### **Stay Cool**

Whatever your parents decide, you need to stay cool and respond in a mature manner. If they decide to give you what you want, don’t jump up and down and yell “Yes, I got my way” and skip out of the room. Thank your parents for listening to you. Tell them you appreciate their trust and give them a hug.

If they turn down your request, you still need to stay cool. Don’t cry, or yell, or throw a fit and stomp out of the room. Thank them for listening to you, tell them you listened to them, and even though you may not feel like it, give them a hug. They will see you for the poised, mature, young adult that you are (which may come in handy the next time you ask for something). If they explained to you why the answer was no, think about what they said. What can you learn from it?

When it comes to rules, just keep in mind that the better you follow them, the better off you are. Your adherence to the rules proves how responsible you are. With responsibility come privileges. Try using these techniques to communicate with your parents, and good luck! 🍀



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# PADDLE RADICAL

By Michele Deppe

**E**ver wonder if kayaking could be your newest verb of action? Surprisingly, it takes only about 10 minutes to learn the basics, and one quick ride will probably convert you for life.

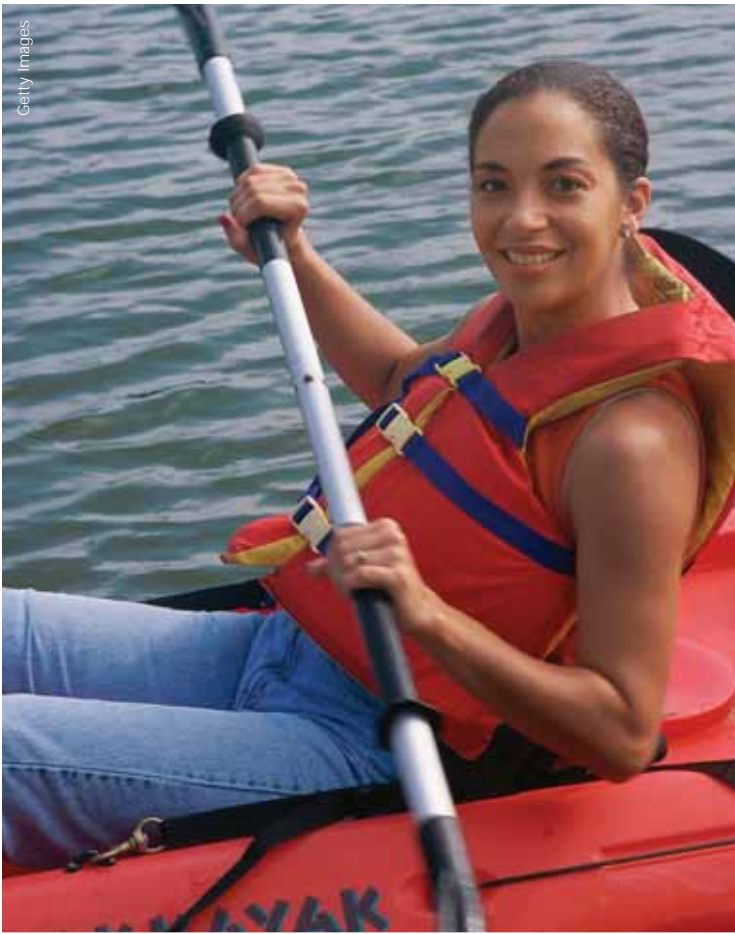
Your first step is to find a place that rents kayaks or a class offered in your area. So check the phone book or go online. When you get there, the pros will ask you a few questions and pair you with a boat that is just right for your size and experience. A few minutes of simple instructions will cover the essentials of getting seated, using your paddle, and being able to swivel yourself upright in case you manage to turn your kayak over. (Don't worry, though; most kayaks are not as "tippy" as people think, but it's an important rule to know.) Then you're on your way!

Kayaking offers a variety of scenarios. Imagine that you can sluice your stress away as you glide across a placid shimmering lake that reflects a brilliant blue sky. Or you paddle along a quiet creek and anchor in a sunny spot to do some birding or hiking. If kicking back in the great out-

doors sounds appealing to you, then flat water kayaking in a general-purpose, sit-on-top boat with good stability is perfect for you. You don't have to go alone, as kayaks come with up to four "cockpits," so you can take your buddies along with you.

Maybe extreme sports are more your speed? Go ahead, strap on your crash helmet and get psyched for a thrill, 'cause whitewater kayaking down a raging river will definitely get your pulse racing. Your mind races with the rapids, challenging your ability to stay focused and steer clear of dastardly boulders, just in time to white-knuckle it over a waterfall. You'll learn to ride "holes," which means working yourself free from a frothy pressurized swirl in the river where water is sucked backward. As your kayaking skills improve, you'll be ready to "rodeo." A whitewater rodeo features a series of competitions (thus the comparison to the cowboy type). These competitions include freestyle (hole riding), down-river racing, and performing tricks, such as cartwheels and spins. Whitewater kayaks are a





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little shorter, built for quick maneuvering, have contoured sidewalls (better for bouncing off rocks), and are available in specific designs for different types of water play.

Not a tree hugger or rushing rapids fanatic? No problem. There are as many kayaking options as there are paddling personalities.

Sea kayaks, also called touring kayaks, are faster because of their longer length and are usually built tough enough to take on ocean waves. You can “go coastal” by launching right into the surf and cruising around the ocean. You can even do some snorkeling while you’re out there. Or you can zip across a mile-wide bay, train for paddle competitions, and dream of taking your kayak to the next Summer Olympics.

Touring kayaks contain storage compartments that allow you to stow enough gear for an overnight camping trip. Stuff in your sleeping bag, a few munchies, and don’t forget your camera. Plan to stay up late, because midnight paddling with a trusty flashlight can be loads of fun.

Have a fascination with watching survival

shows? Imagine yourself back in the olden days when rivers were the only trade routes available. While it’s nice to drift downstream, lots of folks who needed supplies found it necessary to paddle upstream. Analyzing the path you want to take, and then being able to get your boat to go where you want it to go, is fun and challenging.

Now, if you want to add a real challenge to kayaking, start a time clock, add some obstacles that will make the water seem like the course you have to maneuver for your driver’s license test, and you’ve got slalom racing.

Slalom racing is also included in the Olympics and is just about as popular as kayaking down the rapids. If you think paddling the rapids is a workout, wait until you learn to accelerate, sweep your paddle to make a turn, pivot, lunge, and “dive” in your boat. Let’s just say that after working through a slalom course, you’re definitely going to get a good night’s sleep!

And even if you don’t consider yourself a very competitive person, you’ll love challenging yourself in slalom races. The course is made up of



about two dozen gates that you'll be required to pass through in a certain order and direction. Each contestant goes through the course one at a time. Careful! The judges will be watching to make sure you don't touch the gates with your boat, body, or paddle. If you do, they'll tack on a nasty time penalty. You'll learn to gain time by assessing the current and paddling in the best possible path, and when to "eddy in" or "eddy out" (go into the current or out of the current). Mastering the maneuvers helps you work through the course.

Here's a little of the current jargon: an *eddy turn* is a U-turn on a moving current, *peeling-out* is a motion used to exit the eddy, and *ferrying* is going laterally across the current. Add variations of these moves, and you can slip through the obstacle poles without touching, then change direction, and go through a gate backward and even go through an obstacle that is behind a suctioning hole. The racer who completes the course in the best time and with the fewest penalties is the winner.

Are you a history buff? Inuits who built the first kayaks thousands of years ago out of caribou skins used their boats for hunting and fishing. While you probably

shouldn't run down a whale in your kayak as the native Inuit did, you will find that kayaks are stellar for reeling in an impressive catch. Kayak fishermen will spend entire days in their boats, so they are finicky about the little luxuries, such as superpadded backrests. Serious fishermen add on rigging, fishing rod holders, as well as an anchor to keep them from drifting from their chosen fishing spot.

After you discover that the practice runs at the local kayak rental leave you totally hooked on paddling, there are a few basics you'll want to know before you buy your own boat. Always buy a kayak made out of the strongest and safest material available, which is linear polyethylene. To transport your kayak to the water you'll need a roof rack for your car and a storage area in your garage. This is a must to protect it from the changes of weather. The paddle you choose matches your needs: some are more durable, to slice through rough turf, while others are lightweight for speed. It's nice to have a bilge pump, to remove excess water from your kayak in case you get some serious spray or waves. Dry suits or wet suits (clothing that offers water repellency, wind protection, or warmth)

can keep you comfy and extend your boating season. A spray skirt that is used around your hips and covers the opening helps to keep water out, especially if you roll. It also protects your lower body from the sun and will keep you toasty warm in cooler weather.

A word about safety: never venture out without a good-fitting personal flotation device (PFD). Make sure you're able to recover from a capsize, using the correct method for the type of kayak that you're piloting. Kayak with friends whenever possible, and always tell someone where you're boating and what time you expect to return. If you paddle offshore or in the ocean, invest in a strobe light, a signaling device, and a whistle. Experienced kayakers recommend getting paddle leashes to keep your paddle from floating away during a mishap.

Kayaking is a cool way to get a great workout, and it is an awesome way to get outside and enjoy the fresh air.

Give yourself 10 minutes in a kayak, and you're sure to be snagged! 🎣

## HOT LINKS

[www.paddling.net](http://www.paddling.net)  
[www.canoekayak.com](http://www.canoekayak.com)

# JOB HUNTING Do's & Don'ts

By Melissa Apohen

**F**inding a job can be a difficult task, especially if you're a young newcomer on the market. With little if any experience, a first-time job seeker must be determined and focused on making a good first impression. Therefore, knowing what prospective employers are looking for and what common pitfalls to avoid can increase your chances for success dramatically. Here are a few do's and don'ts to help you get some calls back.

- **DO:** Ask when is the best time to turn in your application when picking one up. Many places of business have a designated time when a manager is on duty and available to accept applications and do interviews.
- **DO:** Carefully check over your application for any spelling or grammatical errors. As a former manager of a large restaurant chain, I saw dozens of applications put in the trash before they were even given a chance, simply because of a spelling mistake. Remember that your application represents you, and even a minor spelling or grammatical error shows carelessness on your part.
- **DO:** Dress professionally. No matter what the establishment is—a conservative professional office or a laid-back beachside restaurant, dressing appropriately, both when picking up an application or turning one in, is a must.
- **DO:** Ask to speak to a manager when turning in an application. Introduce yourself; state your employment intentions and what you have to offer the company. This confident, forward approach will automatically set you apart from most other applicants, who just turned their applications in to the first person they saw behind the front desk. Almost always this first introduction will get you a quick, informal interview on the spot and a call back.
- **DO:** Be persistent! Once you've turned in an application, allow two to three days to pass, and if you haven't heard anything by then, call back and ask to speak to the manager. Chances are they'll remember you and let you know what's going on. Also, if they need more time, this follow-up call shows interest and diligence—qualities that all employers look for when selecting an employee. So keep calling!

- **DON'T:** Use rainbow colors to fill out your application—stick to either black or blue. Applications filled out in other colors are a quick sign of inexperience and immaturity.
- **DON'T:** Turn in your application to the first person you see or just anyone behind the desk. Always ask to speak to a manager—this will ensure that your application doesn't end up stuffed underneath a stack of other dust-collecting papers or be blotched by dirty, careless hands.
- **DON'T:** Worry about taking a little time to think before answering a question in an interview. Any person in charge will most surely prefer a well-thought-out answer over a quicker nervous response. And remember, the company is as eager to hire a good employee as you are to have a job, so just relax and be yourself.



# MAKING A SPLASH FOR SELF- ESTEEM

By Anne Renaud

**I**n middle school Deidra Brown wore a jacket—always. Regardless of how warm it was outside, the jacket was always on, zipped all the way up. By hiding her body Deidra hoped to ward off the damaging words of her fellow schoolmates—words such as “water buffalo” and “Big D.” At five feet 10 inches and 265 pounds, Deidra was bigger than many of her peers, and their constant taunting would leave her hurt and depressed.

Though this scenario is unfortunate, it is not uncommon and is played out all too often in schools across the country. What is remarkable, however, is how Deidra has drawn from this negative experience and is now delivering an uplifting message of self-

worth that she hopes will inspire, move, and encourage girls everywhere to be more accepting of their bodies.

As an active member of Girls Inc. and their media-based project “Snapshots,” which teaches behind-the-scenes production work to young girls between the ages of 6 and 18, Deidra decided to enter the organization’s essay-writing contest. She drew her inspiration from this passage of the Girls Inc. Bill of Rights. It states, “Girls have a right to accept and enjoy the bodies they were born with and not feel pressured to compromise their health in order to satisfy the dictates of an ‘ideal’ physical image.”



Deidra Brown

Photo supplied by Girls, Inc.

Though recounting her story is a topic close to Deidra's heart, she did not consider the essay to be her finest work. "I really didn't think I had a chance of winning and sort of forgot about it." A few months later, when a Girls Inc. representative called to ask her if she was ready to go, Deidra was puzzled. "Where am I supposed to be going?" she asked. It was then that Deidra found out that of the contest's 25 winning essays, the top three would be turned into a 30-second public service announcement—one of which was hers. So Deidra was on her way to the Girls Inc. Production Camp in Los Angeles to participate in a weeklong television production workshop alongside Hollywood executives!

She was alone at her home in Birmingham, Alabama, when she received the call stating that she

**Deidra's public service announcement has been viewed by more than 85 million people nationwide.**

was one of the winners. And Deidra had no one around with whom to share her news. "I just had to tell someone, so I called my mother at work. When my mom heard I was being flown to Los Angeles, she just started screaming. That evening my parents called all 60 of our relatives to tell them I had won. You could see they were proud."

A lot of "firsts" soon followed for Deidra. Her first time on an airplane. Her first time outside of Alabama, and her first time away without her mom. But given her love for media production work, Deidra was up for the challenge. Soon after arriving in Los Angeles Deidra was shown the storyboard for her public service announcement. The last two boards showed a girl in a swimsuit jumping into a pool. "When I asked who was going to do that, they said, 'You are, Deidra.' All along I'd assumed I'd be doing the behind-the-scenes work, such as a camera-person. Boy, was I wrong!"

It did take a few days to convince herself, but when the time came, Deidra was ready. "The production crew was great. The producer, the executive

producer, and the stunt coordinator all kept asking me if I was sure I wanted to do this. At that point I was more nervous about jumping into a pool of water than of being seen in a bathing suit. I can't swim, and just being around water sort of makes me nervous. But they arranged for me to jump in only three feet of water so it wouldn't be over my head." After Deidra took a few practice jumps into the pool, the cameras rolled and taping began.

Since it first aired in April 2001 Deidra's public service announcement has been viewed by more than 85 million people nationwide. It can be seen on a number of cable networks, including Nickelodeon, Fox Family, Disney, Cartoon, BET, and Lifetime. It has also won her a *CosmoGIRL!* of the Year award. In the magazine's December/January 2002 issue, readers can find Deidra wearing only her bathing suit and a great big smile. At the bottom of the photograph reads the fitting caption "The Goddess."

When asked if her life has changed in anyway since winning the essay contest, Deidra says that she is more optimistic now. "I have more confidence and courage, because not only did I allow millions of people to see me in my bathing suit, but I also had to overcome my fear of water, at least for a little while!

"What I've learned is that there's nothing wrong with being different. Who you are is more important than how you look."

Now, *that's* a positive message! 📺

**For more information on Deidra or to view her Girls Inc. public service announcement, you can visit the Girls Inc. Web site at [www.girlsinc.org](http://www.girlsinc.org).**

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## FEELING PRESSURED?

If you happen to live in an area of the country where the leaves have turned from green to vivid shades of red, orange, and yellow, you are truly blessed. Nature has done its best to paint a beautiful world of bright and glowing colors that at times can make you catch your breath.

My older son and his family live on the side of a hill in northern Maine. This time of year they have a panoramic view of colorful mountains. It's the kind of scenery that makes you glad to be alive. The day may begin with a touch of frost covering the ground, the squirrels will be busy gathering their winter supply of nuts and storing them away, and it's time to think about clearing the garden and putting away the toys in the yard.

The winter weather predictors have been out checking the woolly worms to see whether it will be a mild winter or a bitter cold one. This is what is called planning ahead! If you believe the woolly worms you'll be "prepared" for whatever cold weather winter brings.

Just as people benefit from planning ahead for winter, *Listen* readers can plan ahead to how they'll respond to pressure put on them by their peers. Pressure to cave when called names because you don't want to smoke ("No thanks; I don't care to smell like a chimney") or to drink alcohol just to be socialable with your buds ("I prefer to know that I'm having fun, not drunk out of my skull") or to try ecstasy or some other mind-altering drug ("It's my mind; I only have one, and I want to take good care of it").

If you want to live on the edge, try something that will get you out of the house and really moving. Something such as kayaking or bicycling or a walk in the rain or rock climbing or \_\_\_\_\_ (you fill in the blank). The World Wide Web is full of ideas to help you choose something healthy and fun to do.

In the meantime, sit back and read this month's issue of *Listen*. We hope it will challenge you to plan ahead with the best ways to handle situations in which you might be pressured into doing something that you did not want to do. For if you know how you'll respond, you'll be the one in control of the situation.

And you'll be the person you were meant to be.



Anita Jacobs

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# contents

LISTEN MAGAZINE • VOLUME 57 • NUMBER 2

## FEATURES

- 2 • **NOT FOR KEEPS**  
Just one more time was one time too many for him.
- 6 • **THE BUZZ ON CAFFEINE**  
Can something as popular as caffeine be mind-altering? "You bet."
- 10 • **CAN IT BE SO BAD IF IT FEELS SO GOOD?**  
Is ecstasy a problem solver, or is it just the beginning of your troubles?
- 14 • **ARE YOU AT A CROSSROAD?**  
It turned out to be the most valuable class assignment she'd ever had.
- 16 • **EMPOWERMENT IS NOT FEAR—IT'S FREEDOM**  
Scot Cressman's positive philosophy: don't just follow . . . find out.
- 20 • **BORA BOOSTS A MARS BAR**  
If a person is dishonest about little things, there's a good chance they're not straight about bigger things.
- 22 • **SPEAK UP WITHOUT TALKING BACK**  
How to confront your parents without being confrontational.
- 24 • **PADDLE RADICAL**  
Getting into kayaking is super easy.



## DEPARTMENTS

- 5 • **ASK GARY**  
Caffeine as a Stimulant
- 8 • **CHOICES**  
No Monkeying Around
- 13 • **THE POWER OF CHOICE**  
Positive Choices/Successful Goals
- 19 • **LISTENING**  
A Positive Choice
- 27 • **PRIME TIMES**  
The Do's and Don'ts of Job Hunting
- 28 • **PRIME TIMES**  
Making a Splash for Self-esteem
- 30 • **JUST BETWEEN US**  
Feeling Pressured?
- 1 • **COVER PHOTO**  
Andrew Vracin

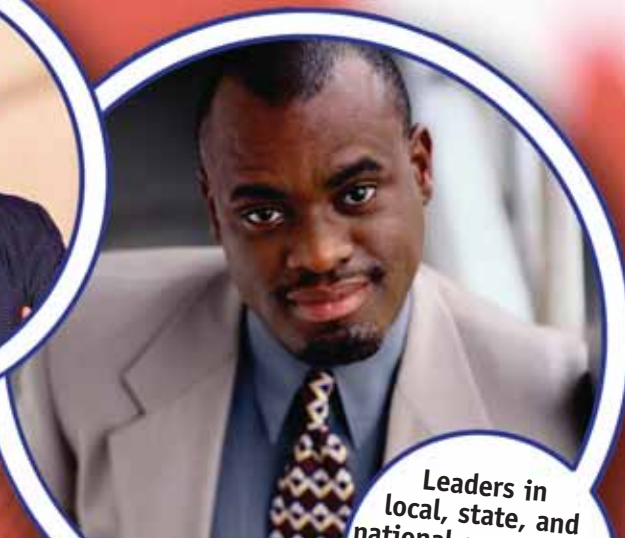


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