

TEEN TALK (an original column from The Daily Record)

November 28, 2004

We're back! Keep your great letters coming in and remember--you can ask about anything! Teen Talk is all about whatever *you* want to talk about!

Dear Teen Talk,

My parents are both musicians, and they totally love music. They've always tried to make me love music, too. I started violin lessons when I was 5. Now I'm 13 and I hate it! I get so upset that sometimes when I try to play, my fingers just lock up. I feel like a total failure. There's no way they'll let me quit lessons. My mom doesn't understand how I can hate "something so beautiful." I don't want to hurt my parents, but this is driving me crazy. Help!

- Violin Guy

Dear Violin Guy,

You've definitely got a problem, but it doesn't sound hopeless. It may just be a matter of approaching your parents the right way. Make sure you tell them that you love music and that you appreciate and value what an incredible part it plays in your lives. (You listen to CD's, right? And if music is key to your parents' jobs, it puts food on your table, too.) Then explain to them *calmly and rationally* that you no longer enjoy violin. Tell them what you told us—that you get too upset to play, and that it makes you feel like a failure. Let them know you're glad to have had so many years of music lessons, but that as you've gotten older, you've realized that the violin just isn't for you. You might even suggest another instrument you'd like to try, or perhaps singing lessons. As long as you discuss it maturely with your folks, odds are good they'll consider your plea.

Dear Teen Talk,

My parents are divorced, and I spend weekends with my dad. He used to be such a cool guy but lately things have changed. I don't really know what happened because he doesn't talk to me much. But I do know that he used to have a girlfriend (I didn't like her and she didn't like me), but she's never around any more. I'm afraid he's been drinking, too. Last week when he picked me up at a friend's house, he was acting weird and I didn't like the way he was driving—it scared me. I didn't say anything to him, though, and I can't tell my mom--I'm afraid she'll freak out and call the police or something. I'm starting to hate these visits. I *don't* want to ride with him again, but I don't have much choice. What can I do?

- Worried about Dad

Dear Worried about Dad,

You're in a tough situation, all right. Unfortunately, you'll *have* to talk with either your mom or your dad about this (sorry...). Try your dad first. Choose a time when you're calm, not angry. Don't accuse him and don't talk *at* him—what you're aiming for here is some honest give-and-take. Start by letting him know that you care about him and that it bothers you that you don't really know anything about his life and vice versa. Then tell him that you

were scared and worried about him that night because it seemed like he'd been drinking and was in no shape to drive. Let him know that you love him, but that you won't ride with him if it happens again. Then follow through! (If you can't call your mom for a ride, enlist the help of an adult you trust.) You *must* stand your ground on this one--your life could be at stake. Hopefully your conversation will shake your dad up enough to get help. If it doesn't, you may need to stop spending time with him until he can get it together. That may sound harsh, but keeping yourself safe is your first responsibility.