

TEEN TALK (an original column from The Daily Record)

January 2, 2005

Welcome to the new year! Teen Talk is *your* place to be—we'll talk about *anything* that's on your mind. This is the place for airing views, sharing news, getting the low-down on what's up and checking up on what's going down...so grab the laptop and send us your questions!

Dear Teen Talk,

I'm 15 and I have a good friend, "Laurie." We've been friends since pre-school. My problem isn't actually Laurie—it's Laurie's mom. She still treats us like we're little kids and tries to make our plans for us. She'll call my mom and want to plan stuff just like they did when we for young. When my mom tries to tell her that it's up to me, she gets mad. Laurie seems to be okay with having her mom run her life, but I don't like it and my mom agrees that I'm old enough to plan stuff myself. It's starting to make it hard to spend time with Laurie. This is really driving me crazy. What can I do?

- Old Enough

Dear Old Enough,

How *annoying!* At 15 you are definitely old enough to make plans yourself (with parental unit approval, of course!). However (and this is a big "however"), you can't change Laurie or her mom. If Laurie likes letting her mom run the show, odds are good she's not going to change overnight. That pretty much means doing just what you're doing—that is, asking your mom to not make plans for you (no matter how much Laurie's mom pushes), and continuing to deal with Laurie directly rather than going through her mom. The down side to this is that Laurie's mom might start making plans with girls whose moms are willing to let her run the show, but maybe that's what it will take for Laurie to understand that she needs to be able to run her own life. Finally, you can (and should) talk to Laurie. Being careful not to insult her mom, tell her what you told us. Maybe it's secretly driving Laurie crazy too! If so, offer to help her try to change the situation. It sounds like you two are lifelong friends, and that's worth holding onto!

Dear Teen Talk,

I'm feeling really weird and I'm afraid to tell anyone. It's so hard to get up in the morning, and the thought of going to school just makes me want to puke. The only reason I *do* get up and go to school is that if I didn't, I'd have to tell my parents why. I try to act like nothing's wrong, and I don't think my mom or dad have any clue about this. Really, though, *everything* is wrong. I don't have any friends—I don't have a *life*. Everyone else has a girlfriend, but not me. Every day just seems to be another ordeal to get through. I can't find anything that makes me happy. I don't even know why I'm writing to you, because I don't think anyone can help me.

- Need a Life

Dear Need a Life,

Even if you don't know *why* you wrote to us, we're really glad you did. What you're feeling isn't all that unusual, and definitely isn't weird. It sounds like you're depressed. We don't mean like "the movie I wanted to see tonight is sold out" depressed—we mean depressed as in an illness, like having pneumonia. The good news is that you *can* get better, and once you start treatment, it won't take that long to see an improvement. But—here comes the hard part—in order to get better, you're going to have to tell someone how you feel. (You already knew that, deep inside, didn't you?) You can talk to your mom or dad, or your school counselor or a teacher you trust—whomever you feel most comfortable with. If he or she tries to dismiss your feelings with a "buck up and get back to business" kind of speech, explain your situation again and make it clear that you really don't feel you can get over this on your own. (If you can't seem to get your point across, try sharing this column.) Most likely, you'll need to see a doctor to determine whether or not you should be on medication, and/or a therapist or counselor to help you sort out your feelings. Although you may feel strange at first, the therapist should be someone you feel comfortable enough with to share everything you've told us and more. Remember, it's important to be honest about your feelings—otherwise, the therapist won't know how best to help you. (Just think how hard it would be for a doctor to diagnose pneumonia if you didn't tell her your symptoms.) You *will* find reasons to be happy again, we promise. So talk to your parents or school counselor right away—right now, if possible—and get yourself on the road to feeling better. And, please—write back to let us know how it's going.