

## TEEN TALK (an original column from The Daily Record)

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Keep on writing--we love your letters! Email us with "teentalk" in the subject: teentalk@the-daily-record.com

**YOU:** A lot of my friends are doing drugs and the worst thing is, my *brother* is even doing them. They ask me to do drugs with them, too. I don't want to, but I don't know what to say to get them to really *get* that I think it's stupid and I won't do it. And I want them to stop! What can I do?

**TEENTALK:** Yes! You're heading the right direction by *not* joining in with your friends. We know it can be especially hard to say "no way" to a sibling, so good for you! Unfortunately, you may have to learn to live with the fact that your friends might never *get* you and your refusal to join them. Ultimately, you've got no control over anybody but yourself. Just say, "*No way. I don't want to do something that's illegal and bad for me. Thanks, but no thanks.*" Don't lecture them—it won't work. (No one wants to be told that what they're doing is stupid, even when it is.) Then walk away. *Don't hang out with them while they are doing drugs.* Why? Because doing so might increase the pressure you feel to join them, and it would also give them the message that you're not really all that bothered by what they're doing. Most important, you could get busted just for being in the same room with them and their drugs. It's just not worth it. Now, about your brother: You're not going to like this, but you already know what you have to do. You have to tell your parents. He's doing something that could seriously hurt him or possibly even kill him, and it's illegal. You can ask them not to let on that you're the one who spilled the beans, but you owe it to your brother and your family to do what's right. It's a tough road for you, but you can do it. Be strong.

**YOU:** I've always loved dancing, but after 10 years of lessons, I'm about ready to quit. The problem is my teachers. My friends and I *never* get compliments, just lots of criticism. I try hard to fix whatever's wrong, but I never hear, "That looks better!" So after all these years of hard work, I'm starting to feel that I'm just not graceful. I'm afraid to talk to the teachers myself, but if my parents said something, I'm afraid I'd get treated even *worse* in class. I know I have to work hard at this to be good, but shouldn't it be *fun*, too? Should I quit? I can't stand this anymore!

**TEENTALK:** You're absolutely right—good teaching should be a combination of constructive criticism and positive feedback! Otherwise, students end up exactly where you are, confused and ready to quit. It would be sad if you gave up 10 years of hard work just because of this issue, but we understand why you might want to. So what to do? First, you have to assume that the teachers won't know about this problem unless you (or somebody) tells them. (Ugh. Sorry.) We understand that it can be really intimidating to talk about something like this, and since you're already reluctant, you might want to try writing a letter. If other students are having the same problem, you could ask them to sign the letter, too. You could also cut out this column and put it on a bulletin board or near the teacher's bag, if you want to remain totally anonymous. If you're really afraid that the teacher will retaliate by treating you badly, you may want to give a copy to the head of your dance studio. The main thing is that if you do quit, it should be because you don't want to dance anymore, not because you're confused about your progress. Good luck!