

TEEN TALK (an original column from The Daily Record)

February 27, 2005

What issue is driving *you* crazy? Write to us about it! Put "Teentalk" in the subject and email us: teentalk@the-daily-record.com

YOU: How do you talk to someone who has just found out that they have AIDS?

TEENTALK: Wow—that's a tough question, and a good one. So many times when someone is in difficult circumstances, friends sort of abandon them because they don't know what to do or say. The sad thing is that when times are tough, we need our friends most! So here's what to do: *Listen* to your heart. Don't search for some slick comment to make things right—there isn't one. Just share what's in your heart and on your mind. If you want to say *something*, but just don't know what, then say *that!* "I just don't know what to say to help. I can't seem to find the right words, but I do want you to know that I care and I'm thinking about you all the time." Also, let the person know that you are there for them if they need help. Making specific offers is good. People often say, "Let me know if I can help with anything," but the person who is sick may be reluctant to ask when the offer is vague. Put yourself in their shoes. What would you need or want from friends? If you're still feeling uncertain, don't just withdraw. Ask questions: "I'd like to know more about what your diagnosis means. Do you mind talking about it?" If they don't want to talk, just let it go. If they do, be the most understanding listener you can be. Most of all, just continue being a great friend. That's what all of us need most—and it's especially true when we're sick.

YOU: Some kids at school think I'm weird because I'm not allowed to date yet, and when I am allowed, I think it's proper for the boy to ask me out, not the other way around. What should I do?

TEENTALK: So often, kids get into thinking that their way is the *only* way. Not only is that not true, it isn't a very mature way to think about the world. So you're not allowed to date yet, and it sounds like you're okay with that. Dating can be a great experience, but it opens up a whole new world of concerns and worries, so there's nothing wrong with waiting until you're totally ready. You can't change what other kids think, but the more comfortable you are with yourself and your choices, the less ammunition they'll have for bothering you about it. The same goes for who should ask whom out! Lots of people feel that it's just fine for either the girl or boy to do the asking, but if you prefer that the boy ask you, that's cool, too. Just don't ever put someone down for having a different opinion! Remember, you can't change what other kids think, so just be comfortable in knowing that what you believe is right for you. We think it's great that you're so clear about it!