

TEEN TALK (an original column from The Daily Record)

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Your letters are great! Keep 'em coming! And remember to put "TeenTalk" in the subject line of your emails! Write us a note right now (teentalk@the-daily-record-com). We're listening!

Dear Teen Talk,

I get so totally stressed out from school, I don't know how to cope. Why does this happen? What can I do? Sometimes I'm so stressed that I feel sick, and then I feel really stupid. I mean I'm not *really* sick, but I feel sick, and I can't help it. HELP!

- Anonymous

Dear Anonymous,

EVERYBODY gets stressed--so don't think it's just you! Stress is the body's way of letting you know that something is going on that you've got to deal with. A little stress is a good thing, actually. Stress insures that you study for that test or learn your lines for the school play. Stress can push you to do your best and help you adapt to changes. But too much stress can drive you crazy and even make you feel sick. (You're *not* stupid and you really *are* sick. Many very real illnesses are triggered by stress.) The trick is to know how to cope with everyday stress and use it to your advantage so that it doesn't get out of hand. If you're so stressed that it's interfering with your life—if you're missing a lot of school because of it or you're so discouraged you don't want to get up in the morning—you need to talk to a professional. Start with one of your parents if you can—if not, another adult you trust. Even if you don't feel you need a professional counselor, talking with *someone* is always a good way to cope with stress. It also helps to think about what's causing your stress. Is it homework? A certain teacher? Dating issues? Make a list, and be as specific as you can. Then work your way through the list and try to problem solve. Ask yourself if each item is something you can change or something you have to live with. Try to come up with a plan for the things you can change, and let the rest go. The trick is to *listen* to what the stress is telling you. Also, make time for at least *one thing* that you love to do several times a week, whether it's shooting baskets or reading a novel. Getting enough exercise and sleep helps, too.

Dear Teen Talk,

There is this guy that I've known since 3rd grade, and there's a dance coming up and I want to ask him to it. (The girls ask the guys.) But I'm afraid I'll sound stupid or desperate, even though all of my friends say he will probably say yes. One friend suggested that I just write on his notebook, "Will you go to the dance with me?" because we always write on his notebook. Thanks for your help!

- Anonymous

Dear Anonymous,

It sounds like you and your friend may have already figured this one out—go for it! Asking someone to go to a dance will not make you sound stupid or desperate. You'll sound like you *like* him--and you do! It takes a lot of guts for anyone, guy or a girl, to ask someone

out, and we think you've got what it takes! Since writing on the notebook is something you've been doing, that's a clever way to ask him. Just be sure you ask him clearly so he knows it's *you* (and not your friend!) who's doing the asking! Anytime you take a chance and ask someone out, there's always the possibility that the person will say no. If that happens, you should be proud of yourself for having the courage to ask. Remember, too, that a no doesn't necessarily mean that he doesn't like you—he may have reasons that have nothing to do with you, like strict parents or...well, who knows? Let us know what happens!