

TEEN TALK (an original column from The Daily Record)

March 13, 2005

Quick, your mom's coming—look busy! If you're writing to Teen Talk, you probably won't have to take out the trash! Put "Teentalk" in the subject and email us: teentalk@the-daily-record.com

YOU: Some of the kids I know at school are cutting themselves. I went to somebody's house on the weekend, and they were all doing it and wanted me to try it. I can't even stand it when I get a paper cut, so how am I going to take a razor and cut my arm on purpose? One guy cut a girl's initials into his arm and all the girls were like "That's so cool!" It makes me want to puke. I don't think I want to try it, but what am I supposed to do?

TEENTALK: We're glad you asked about this. We've heard some kids call it "blading," as if cutting yourself was a sport or something, but it's every bit as serious as doing drugs or drinking. Anything you do to hurt *you* is always a really bad choice. So why do kids do it? Well, there's the "coolness factor," for one thing. There always seem to be things that are considered cool, even though (or more likely, *because*) they're dangerous, and right now, blading is in. And as weird as it sounds, there are a lot of reasons someone would want to draw their own blood—to get attention, to escape from a less-than-perfect life, or just to try to fit in, to name a few. It can also be a sign of other serious problems, like major depression. The best advice we can give you is to go with your gut instinct and SAY NO. We're going to repeat that: SAY NO. And *don't hang with anyone who does it*. If you're up for it, tell them that you think it's uncool and you don't want to be around them if they're going to cut themselves. Most important, find some new buds who think like you do. Cutting yourself is *so* dangerous. Believe it or not, it can be addictive, too—for some people, every bit as addictive as drugs. Some kids have to be hospitalized because they can't stop themselves. Plus there's a very real danger of infection—*serious* infection—and of course there are the scars—both physical and emotional. There are so many better ways to be cool or to deal with your problems than this. We just wish we could get all the kids who are cutting themselves to stop it RIGHT NOW.

***If you're doing or are tempted to try blading—WRITE TO US. We mean it. Do it now.

YOU: Some of my really good friends gossip a lot, but I don't want to be a part of it. I don't know how to say in a "nice" way that it's not good and to leave me out. I don't know how to tell them to stop!

TEENTALK: It's certainly a worthy goal to get your friends to stop gossiping, but you might do well to keep in mind that age-old truth: You can't control anyone's behavior but your own. We can definitely see why you'd want to try, though—gossiping so often comes back to haunt you, plus it wastes so much time! So what should you do? It *is* possible to find a way to say what you want to say nicely. The next time your friends start, try something like: "Hey, you guys are the greatest, but it really bothers me when we start gossiping. Let's talk about something else instead!" Or this: "I don't want to gossip about *her*, I really think we should gossip about _____!" (Fill in the blank with the name of one of your own friends!) Or you could jump up and down and make bird noises every time they start—or do something else ridiculous, just to get their attention. (Until you point it out, they may have no idea how often they end up gossiping.) If all else fails, just walk away every time they start. Good luck and kudos to you for wanting to *stop the gossip!*