

TEEN TALK (an original column from The Daily Record)

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Is *your* question here today? Not if you haven't written it yet! Write to us with "Teentalk" in the subject line. Do it today!

YOU: Lately there has been a whole lot going on in after-school activities. I'm not getting home until after 4:30, and homework can take me until 10:00. Then I take a shower and don't get to bed till 11:00. Then, I have to wake up at 5:30 to get ready for school, so I am tired all day. What can I do to not be so tired? It's starting to affect my grades. HELP!

TEENTALK: Zzzzzzzz....you're making us sleepy just talking about your schedule! It sounds like something has to give, and we'd rather it wasn't your sanity, your health, *or* your grades! It's good that you recognize that there's a problem. Lots of kids just assume that you *have* to always be tired in order to get good grades and do extra-curricular activities too. There are three things to consider: 1) Your after-school activities; 2) How much homework you have; and 3) How you're using your time at home. If you're doing more than one after-school activity, list them in order of how much they mean to you, and let the last one go. (That may not be what you want to hear, but the truth is, you just can't do *everything*.) Next, what about all that homework? Are you getting as much as you can done at school? Watch yourself for a day or two to see if you're really making the most of your time in class and study hall. Are you writing notes or just staring off into space (or sleeping!)? Finally, look at your time at home. If you get home at 4:30, you've got 5 1/2 hours until 10:00. Get rid of *all* distractions, like the TV or IM, and see if you can't finish sooner by really focusing. You might even consider taking an hour nap when you first get home—it could be that what you lose in time, you'll make up in efficiency, because you won't be dozing off between math problems!

YOU: How can I help my dad to quit smoking?

TEENTALK: We think it's awesome that you want to help! Keep in mind that nicotine is *physically* as well as psychologically addicting, so your dad has a tough job ahead of him. No matter how badly he *wants* to quit, his body will be screaming for *more cigarettes*! So let him know that *you* know how tough it is for him and how much it means to you that he's quitting. Then, come right out and *ask* him what you can do to help. Hopefully, he'll have some definite ideas for you, but at the very least, he'll appreciate your love and support. Knowing that you love him and want him to stay healthy may motivate him more than anything else!