

TEEN TALK (an original column from The Daily Record)

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Spring has sprung, and we want to know what's on your mind! It's probably *not* gardening...so put "Teentalk" in the subject and email us: teentalk@the-daily-record.com

YOU: I'm always nervous about everything...meeting people, going places, going to a new class. How can I overcome this?

TEENTALK: Being nervous or anxious is really common, so you're not alone! There are definitely ways to cope, though. First, don't be afraid to admit to being nervous—you may be amazed at the response! For example, if you tell a group of friends, "I'm kinda nervous about Intro to Acting tomorrow," we bet that *at least* a couple other kids will chime in with "Me, too!" You can also try finding comfort in past experiences. For example, if you're nervous about going on a field trip with kids from another school, try to think of another time when you did something similar and it ended up going well. Another little trick is to imagine that the situation that's making you nervous is already over. Say you're nervous about interviewing someone for the school paper. Before the interview, imagine that it is later in the day and the interview is all over. You have your notes, you have the *experience* inside you...and it was great! Also, remember that you can often calm yourself by taking a few slow deep breaths. Concentrate on breathing *out* the nervousness and breathing *in* a sense of calm and well-being. Taking care of your physical well-being will help, too: Get enough sleep and eat healthy foods. Avoid too much caffeine and sugar, especially—they'll wreak havoc on your blood sugar and make you feel much worse. Finally, try talking it out with a trusted adult. And if *nothing* seems to help, check with your doctor to be sure there isn't some physical cause underlying your symptoms. Here's to a cool, calm, collected YOU!

YOU: What do you do when your friends peer pressure you into smoking, using drugs, and alcohol?

TEENTALK: The obvious answer? GET NEW FRIENDS! *Seriously*—that may be exactly what you need to do. Why hang out with people who don't respect you and your choices? Why be pressured into something you don't want to do? Peer pressure can be tough, but it's up to you to set your personal standards, not your friends. Of course, situations like this *can* take you by surprise. For those times, it really helps to have some answers ready: "I'm a dancer—I don't want to mess up my lungs." "No way—I know someone who died of an overdose." "I almost forgot, I have a church group meeting—I've got to go." Think it through ahead of time so you'll be ready, and remember to say no as though you mean it. Have an "exit plan," too, just in case the pressure continues. There should be someone you can call for a ride—anyplace, anytime—with no questions asked. If you don't already have an arrangement like this with a parent, relative, or adult friend, set it up—*now*. Finally, do your best not to end up in situations where you're likely to be pressured. If someone's parents are away for the weekend, don't go to a party at their house. Use your own parents as an excuse, even if they didn't say "no." "Sorry, my mom would kill me—and I was really hoping to make it to my next birthday." (A little humor never hurts.) In short, do your best to avoid a peer pressure sitch, but be ready with a comeback and an exit plan, just in case. Above all, congratulate yourself for making such great choices!