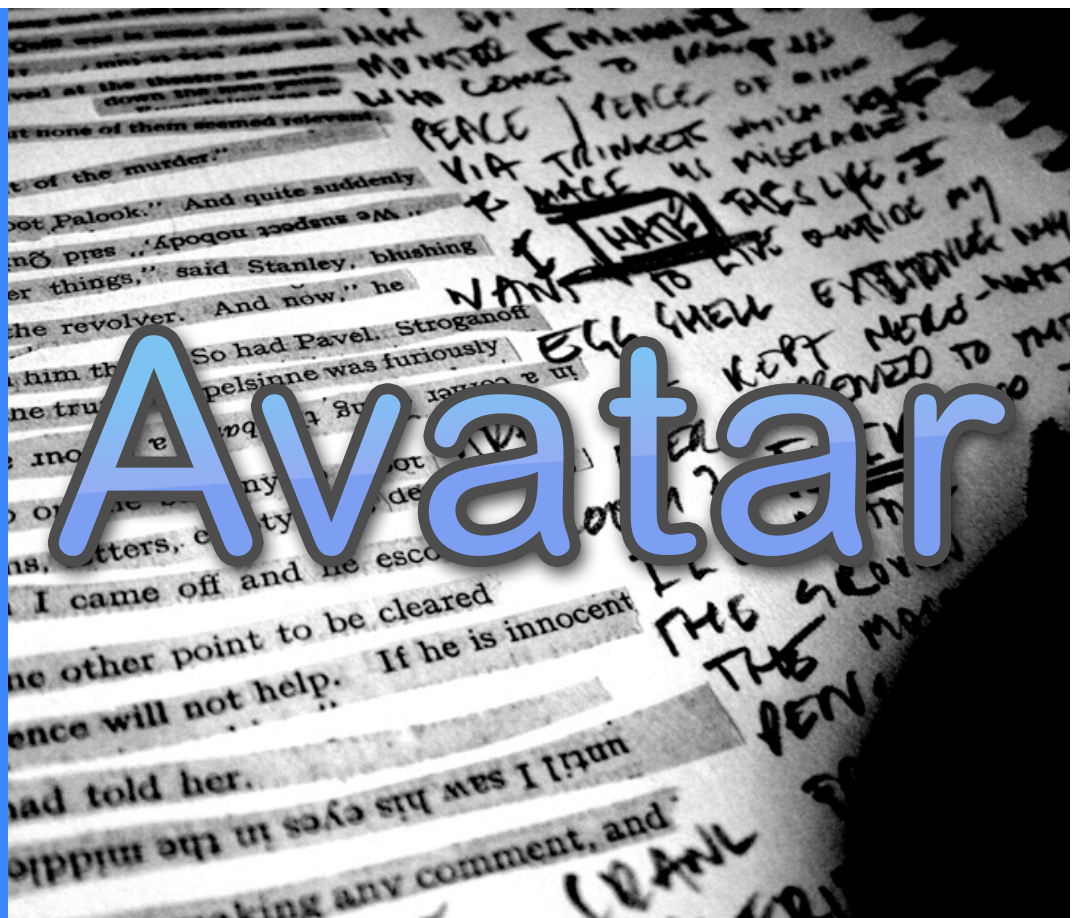


1 October 2007



Hello everybody, and welcome to the fifth edition of Avatar!

Unlike our last two editions which had dedicated subjects, this edition of Avatar has a range of content that we hope you will enjoy. With content ranging from articles about bullying and sexually transmitted infections, to the regular section dedicated to poetry, there is something for everyone.

If you have any ideas about what kind of article you would like to see in our next edition, we encourage you to take initiative and create them yourself. Remember, Avatar is based on content created by TeenHelp's users - we cannot continue without submissions by people like you. We encourage our readers to continue sending it lots of content for future editions!

Thank you for reading.

The Editors

p.s. The design of Avatar was done by **fluffyhelen** because she fired all of the other creative editors. You may thank her by donating to teenhelp.org. =)

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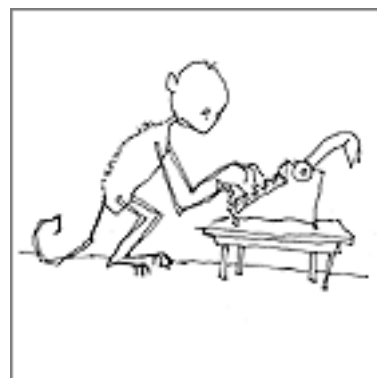
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My Struggle

by Amore

An ongoing look into the life of a TeenHelp member struggling with an eating disorder and depression.

This is the hell that I've put myself in.

There are days where I feel like I can be the princess that I dreamed of being. The sky seems to open up to me, swallowing me into the deep endless blue. It's more than euphoric. I forget about myself for just a moment.

At the end of the day, it comes back to me. The midnight hours keep me up, as I struggle to gain a sense of what I have become. It is overwhelming. The fear and guilt claw back at me, as I try to suppress the emptiness inside of me. The walls close in, and my mind screams:

"You are alone."

I am afraid of going to school. Everyone seems to point and stare, giggling with their friends, laughing at what a fool I am. I cannot find any other reason why they would be acting in such a manner. Am I a mistake?

This is not the way things are supposed to be. Have I been too bad of a person? To deserve this? I do not feel content with

myself. I do not see myself as pretty. Certainly not as pretty as the girls who say that they envy me. I do not feel as thin as them. I feel beastly. I cannot control my intake anymore.

Mother is getting on my back about eating. She tells me to eat more at dinnertime and at breakfast, because both she and I know that I dare not eat lunch. How much am I supposed to eat, exactly? What will be enough to please you?

Nothing. Simply nothing.

They are trying to strip me away of the only thing that keeps me alive - helping. To help is to love, but where is the love, when I cannot help? Helping is my therapy. It is what makes me alright, and what keeps me together in times such as these! They will not know how much it means to me, nor will they understand - ever.

Will I last the few more years, till I am free of their grip?

What will happen to myself then?



Helpful Links

Eating Disorders Association
www.eatingdisorders.org

ED - UK
www.edauk.com

Teas are herbal drinks, and because of that they can do much more than quench your thirst. They can calm you after a long day. Herbal teas are true natural resources. They have no additives, preservatives or dyes. They aren't sweetened with sugar or sugar substitutes and they are not mixed with other ingredients that could compromise the herb's effects or give you something you don't want or need. They are also available in caffeine free varieties.

Below is a list of teas for different occasions in which you might want to relax. Some teas are easier to find than others.

Teas for:

Depression: Ginseng, Lavender, Lemon Balm, Mild Thistle, Oatstraw, Rose Hips, St. John's Wort, Vervain

Head aches: Feverfew, Ginkgo, Lavender, Milk Thistle, Parsley, Peppermint, Rosemary, Wood Betony

Insomnia: Catnip, Chamomile, Hops, Lemon Balm, Licorice, Passion Flower, Valerian

Mood swings: Dandelion, Lavender, Nettle

Nervous Tension: Damiana, Hops, Lavender, Motherwort, Passion



We had a kettle;
we let it leak:
Our not repairing
made it worse.
We haven't had
any tea for a
week...
The bottom is out
of the Universe.
~Rudyard Kipling

Flower, Peppermint, Rose Hips, Rosemary, Saw Palmetto, Skullcap, St. John's Wort

Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS): Catnip, Chaste Berry, Dong Quai, Hops, Motherwort, Raspberry

Stress: Catnip, Ginseng, Kava Kava, Licorice, Peppermint, Vervain, Yerba Mate

Try your herbal tea unsweetened at first. Wait to see how it feels in your system. If you aren't comfortable with the plain taste, add a teaspoon of honey to sweeten it.

Try to avoid refined sugar and artificial sweeteners. They diminish your potential for healing if you are taking the herbal teas as healing remedies. One of bacteria's favorite environments is sugar. While honey contains natural sugar, it has antibacterial values of its own and many healthful properties to add to the tea.

Other garnishes for tea may include mint, lemon, lime, orange, a cinnamon stick, or natural vanilla.



Relaxing The Natural Way

by Socalmooongal

Sexually Transmitted Infections

by drowningangel

Warning: The following article contains PG-13 rated information.

Several times a week, the TeenHelp staff gets questions regarding sexually transmitted diseases and infections: what they are, how to prevent them, and the symptoms you may have if you do contract one. This month, we are addressing what is becoming a commonplace issue for teenagers around the world - STDs and STIs.

Differences

The language regarding sexually transmitted diseases and infections are regularly used interchangeably, but there are subtle differences between the two. The term sexually transmitted disease is generally used to describe a sexually transmitted infection that has progressed into a disease without being treated or naturally cleared from the body. Also, some countries have chosen to make one term the legal standard. Both are able to be passed on to others through a variety of situations including sexual contact, dirty needles, and breast-feeding.

For the purpose of this article sexually transmitted infection will be the standard of language, as it is the more inclusive term.

STIs

Below is a list of some common STIs, along with slang names (if any), common symptoms and their type of testing, treatment and STI. Note that not all STIs show symptoms.

There are four types of STIs: bacterial (B), viral (V), parasitical (PA), and protozoan (PR). They will

be noted in parentheses beside the name of the STI.

Chlamydia (B):

About 75% of women and 50% of men show no symptoms. Women that do may have abnormal vaginal bleeding, pain in the lower abdomen, pain during urination and/or pain during and after sexual intercourse. Men showing symptoms may have pain during urination, pain in the testicles, tingling inside the penis, and/or watery or cloudy discharge from the penis.

Testing is done by vaginal or urethral swab, but for men there is usually the option of a urine test instead. Treatment consists of taking antibiotics for several days. Untreated, chlamydia can lead to infertility in both sexes. In women, it can develop into PID (Pelvic Inflammatory Disease) and can cause ectopic pregnancies.

Chancroid (B):

This infection begins with small bumps on the genitals or anus approximately 5 days after contact with an infected person. These bumps eventually burst and ooze discharge. They may also bleed. Testing is done by taking a sample from an open ulcer, and treatment consists of antibiotics. Untreated in men, the ulcer can grow so large that the only solution is amputation of the penis.

Gonorrhea (B):

AKA the clap, the drip, and the/a dose. Symptoms are not present in every case, and can appear and disappear. Symptoms are similar to those of chlamydia, but unlike chlamydia, discharge is generally yellowish/green instead of cloudy or white. If infected in the throat the only symptom is a sore throat, but most people never develop this symptom. If infected in the anus, symptoms can include anal discharge, itching,

and bowel disorders, but again most people never present symptoms. Testing may include vaginal, anal, oral and/or urethral swabs. Treatment is composed of antibiotics.

Syphilis (B):

Syphilis has three stages, with different symptoms in each. In the first stage, (a) small painless sore(s) develop on the mouth, anus, or genitals. In the second stage, symptoms are flu-like and include fever and fatigue. A rash on the hands, feet, and/or all over the body is another common symptom. In the third stage, syphilis may cause heart disease, brain damage, or death.

Testing is usually done through a blood test, and the treatment is one or more penicillin injections.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus, or HIV (V):

HIV is the virus that progresses into Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). HIV attacks the body's immune system making it more susceptible to other illnesses. HIV and AIDS do not kill, what causes death are the illnesses contracted because of a lowered immune system.

There are no symptoms unique to HIV - flu like symptoms are common soon after infection, but testing will usually not be accurate at that time. People infected with HIV may look and feel healthy for years after being infected. Testing for HIV is usually done by a blood test, but an oral swab test may also be available. It's important to note that HIV has a three to six month long window period. That is, HIV antibodies may not show up on tests until six months after being infected.

While HIV cannot be cured, it can be treated - this is done both by taking "cocktails" of anti-virals and by treating illnesses contracted due to the lowered immune system.

Herpes Simplex, or HSV (V):

There are two types of herpes - herpes simplex-1 (HSV-1) and herpes simplex-2 (HSV-2). HSV-1 causes cold sores, and HSV-2 causes blisters on the genitals and/or anus. It is possible to pass HSV-1 to the genitals/anus, however, or HSV-2 to the mouth. The main symptoms of HSV is an outbreak of sores on your skin, often preceded by itching or a burning sensation. However, some people never have an outbreak. It is possible to be contagious without any sores present.

Testing can only be done for HSV if sores are present. It is done by taking a sample of cells from an open sore. There is no cure for HSV. Treatment is focused on keeping outbreaks to a minimum by taking medication, and making them as painless as possible by keeping the area affected clean and dry.

Human Papillomavirus, or HPV (V):

AKA genital warts

HPV is actually a family of viruses. Some strains cause common skin warts, some cause genital warts, and some are associated with cervical cancer. The symptoms of genital warts are clusters of warts on the genitals and/or anus. They can be painful or itchy, and they can be large or so small you cannot see them with your bare eyes. As far as testing goes, if you have visible warts, the doctor will likely be able to make a visual diagnosis. If warts are suspected, the doctor may rub a solution on the area that turns the warts white. HPV is also often discovered during a female's biannual PAP smear. HPV cannot

be cured. Treatment focuses on wart removal, through a variety of possible methods. Also, a vaccine that prevents four common strains of HPV is available in many countries for girls aged 9 to 26, but if you already have HPV it does not do anything.

Crabs (PA)

AKA Pubic Lice

Crabs are tiny insects similar to head lice, that live in body hair, especially around the genitals. The insects are grayish brown and about the size of a pencil dot, while the eggs (or 'nits') look like tiny white dots. Symptoms include itching in the genital area, skin irritation or inflammation, and small blue spots where bites have occurred.

Scabies (PA):

Scabies are tiny mites that burrow under the skin in the genital area and elsewhere to lay their eggs. They are invisible to the naked eye. Symptoms may consist of intense itching (especially at night), rashes in streaks that are red or grayish, and lesions in the genital area/wrists/arm-pits/other skin folds.

Both crabs and scabies can be treated with medicated lotions or shampoos that can be obtained without prescription.

Trichomoniasis (PR):

AKA trich

The most common symptom of trichomoniasis in women is a foul-smelling discharge. It may be yellowish-green, white, or foamy. It often causes irritation in the

vulva. Pain during sexual intercourse is another common symptom. In men, symptoms are usually not present, but when they are, an itching sensation may be felt at the tip of the penis.

Testing is done by a vaginal or urethral swab, depending on gender. Treatment consists of antibiotics.

Prevention and Testing

The most effective prevention of STDs and STIs is to use a male latex condom. They are not 100% effective, but they offer the most protection against both pregnancy and disease than any other alternative.

It is extremely important to get tested regularly for STDs and STIs. It is the most effective way of catching them as early as possible. The earlier one is caught, the earlier the treatment and better the prognosis. However, if at any time, you or someone you know suspects you may have an STD or STI, visit a physician as soon as possible.



Recovery Story

by little_broken_one

I grew up in a home where both my parents were absent a lot. They were split up, and we lived with my mom, who was in the hospital with my dying brother. I was 10 when he died, and it was around then that I started developing problems with my eating.

When I was about 12 or 13, I started self-harming. Life was too much for me, and I didn't know how to cope with everything on my plate. It continued until I was 15, but my major turning point was when I was 14. I tried to kill myself, quite unsuccessfully I am now happy to say. I spent some time in the psych ward, and as a result of the new tranquil environment I experienced, I ended up moving in with my dad because I couldn't live with my mom.

Slowly I started to realize what I was doing to myself, and I realized i had to stop. It didn't happen over night, and it wasn't that easy. but it was definitely doable, and definitely something worth doing.

Now, 2+ years self-harm free, happy, and loving it, I'm a whole new person. Sure, I still have some problems with other things, and I do still struggle with life sometimes. But self-harm is no longer a part of my life. Depression is no longer there. I'm happy, and I'm free from it. I can't tell you how ecstatic that makes me. There were times that I didn't even think I'd make it. I'm so glad I did, because there was a happy, fun life awaiting me with all sorts of things to experience. And I'm glad I'm here for it. Experiencing life and living it up. You have it in you too.

I wish everyone all the best in your recovery, no matter what stage you are in. Good luck!

- Lee



Helpful Links

SAFE

www.selfinjury.com

Psyke

www.psyke.org

We also have an active Self Harm forum on teenhelp.org.

Poetry for October

City Lights

dedicated to Jason

by SerendipitousBeauty

I look into your eyes;
 I try to shut out the blaring city lights.
 You tug on my hand, pulling me closer;
 I snuggle deeper into your embrace.
 I can hear the rhythm of your heart beat;
 it's feverishly pounding into my soul.
 You lean towards me,
 and I feel your warm breath on my skin.
 You speak my name,
 and I can hear the lust in your voice.
 I have never wanted anything more.
 You gently caress my face,
 whispering sweet nothings into my ear.
 you tilt my chin up, and lean in close;
 I feel the hot pressure of your lips on
 mine,
 this is what I've been waiting for, I swear
 I'm in heaven.
 I am hurled into a world of certainty;
 the convicting feeling that you are mine,
 and that I am yours.
 All my thoughts fade away, as my world
 comes to a halt;
 I am stuck in that split second in time,
 when your lips met mine.
 Then time snaps back, and I can feel myself
 again;
 I'm melting into your arms, and into your
 heart.
 I suddenly know the feeling, I am sure;
 I am lost in love, you are my one and only.

I Promise

by Beautifullybroken*

If you're lost and need a friend
 I promise I will show you the way
 If you feel like giving up
 I promise I'll help you through the day
 If you find yourself losing hope
 I promise I will restore it
 If you simply need a friend
 I promise not to ignore it
 If you feel that you're not loved
 I promise I will always care
 If you feel like you're alone
 I promise I will always be there
 If you have tears in your eyes
 I promise I'll have a shoulder to give
 If you find yourself wanting to die
 I promise I'll give you a reason to live

Beautiful

by ShinGen

Beautiful – She looks down
To an “angel” she has found
I sit – with broken wings
Stained with blood – but then she sings

She says

It doesn't matter what you've done
You will always be the one
And you can turn to me for help
When you lose faith in yourself

I look to her - from blue eyes
Was never strong enough to cry
So graceful – she curves her lips
Into a smile as she sits
Next to me – about to speak
But first her hand touches my cheek

“You know someone did this for me once”
“Now what is it that you fear so much?”

Fire's gonna' rain
The sky is gonna' tear
And hell is gonna' take me
Because heaven doesn't care

And I don't wanna' live in fire
But I can't take the cold
So I pray that hell will take me soon
Before I go there on my own

She says

It doesn't matter what you've done
You will always be the one
And you can turn to me for help
When you're slipping into hell

For the first time in sweet memory
The tears begin to shine

As I look back to the cemetery
Of the things locked in my mind
The blood on my wings began to float
Away into the sky
As the fire started to disappear
And I look into her eyes

She says

You know someone did this for me once
He was an angel – when I was lost
He lifted me up when I fell
So let me lift you from your hell

As my wings began to crumble
And my wounds began to heal
I looked up to this goddess
Love was all that I could feel

So I spoke these words
As she pressed her lips against my skin
“Baby I was never an angel”
“And if I was – I was fallen”

Fire's gonna' rain
The sky is gonna' tear
And hell is gonna' take me
Because heaven doesn't care

And I don't wanna' live in fire
But I can't take the cold
And so my guardian beauty saved
This angel with no soul.



September Horoscopes

by argxpirate

Virgo (August 23rd-September 22nd)

You will find love this month in an unexpected place. Maybe a friend will start looking better to you or maybe you'll find that perfect pair of shoes on sale. Take advantage of this, and try new things. With school starting, change is apparent, so embrace and welcome it! Alternately, don't go overboard with the change. Make sure you avoid dentists and people wielding hammers (your mouth will thank you later).

Most visited forum(s): General Health (is it possible to sleep for three days straight?)

Famous births: Twiggy, and our very own Jasmine ([Xamed](#))

Libra (September 23rd-October 23rd)

Sadly, this is not the best month for you. Perhaps you are over stressing yourself or trying to complete an impossible task by yourself or with the help of only one other person (Rob and Sissa). Either way, the middle of the month holds a possible breakdown for you (someone alert Ben and Jerry!) and that will knock you down for a bit. But rejoice! Because this emotional journey will show you who your true friends are, and when you bounce back (with a spiffy new haircut, too) things will start to look up.

Most visited forum(s): Arrivals and Departures (Thought you were going to leave, wait never mind, hold on, maybe you will, actually... no. Who'd want to leave TeenHelp?) and Depression and Suicide (it gets better, don't worry.)

Famous births: Ghandi, John Lennon (wait, what?), and Jimmy Carter

