

Avatar

TeenHelp.org's eZine
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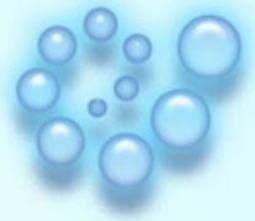


Table of Contents



- 3 **February in Review**, by Jessie
- 4 **Understanding Generalized Anxiety Disorder**,
by Lizzie
- 5 **Healthy Relationships**, by Jer
- 7 **Testing Times: Coping with Exams**, by Shaz
- 10 **Recipes**
- 11 **Self expression**
- 12 **Horoscopes**
- 15 **The wind down**

Letter from the Editors

Hello everybody and welcome to the March issue of Avatar, the fourth and final "Winter Edition" installment of TeenHelp's monthly eZine!

In this edition you will find "February in Review," a brief timeline of major news events from February, as well as articles on generalize anxiety disorder, healthy relationships, and tips for coping with exam stress. This month you can also find winter recipes and, as always, we invite you to read the creative writing in the self expression section! Horoscopes have returned this month, as well, and we hope you enjoy them!

We'll see you in April,
The Avatar Editors.

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Contact

Your valuable contributions are what make Avatar what it is. Please submit us your content, whether it be an article, poem, joke, game, photo, drawing or anything else you have to share!

Email us at
avatar@teenhelp.org

The TeenHelp Times

February 2009



By Jes (Jessie)

February 1

- The Pittsburgh Steelers defeat the Arizona Cardinals 27-23 to win Super Bowl XLIII.

February 2

- Japan's Mount Asama erupts.
- Wildcat strikes spread across the UK.

February 3

- Israel announces restrictions on Al Jazeera broadcasts. The Palestinian National Authority demands an investigation into alleged war crimes committed in the Gaza Strip.
- California's government goes bankrupt.

February 4

- Approximately 15,000 students in Dublin, Ireland, protest the suggested reintroduction of university fees.

February 5

- China declares a national emergency due to severe droughts.
- The Bank of England reduces the base rate of interest to 1%, a new historic low.
- Americans applying for first-time unemployment benefits reaches its highest level since October 1982.

February 7

- Madagascar police kill at least 23 protesters during anti-government demonstrations.

February 9

- Japan's Nissan Motors cuts 20,000 jobs.
- France's government announces a €6.5-billion bailout for the auto industry.
- Bushfires in Victoria, Australia, have killed at least 130 people and destroyed at least 750 homes.

February 10

- US automaker GM announces it will cut 10,000 jobs and the pay of remaining employees.
- Swiss financial services will cut 15,000 jobs throughout 2009.
- The US Senate approves the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

February 13

- The US Congress approves the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.
- Australia's Senate approves a \$42-billion stimulus package.

February 14

- An oil spill occurs in the Celtic Sea near Ireland.

February 15

- Colombia's Galeras volcano erupts.

February 17

- US President Barack Obama authorizes the deployment of 12,000 additional soldiers into the Afghanistan War.

February 19

- HIV/AIDS was the country's leading cause of death from infectious disease in 2008, China's Ministry of Health reports.

February 21

- Nearly 120,000 people march in Dublin, Ireland, to protest the government's handling of the country's economic and banking crises.

February 22

- Australia holds a national day of mourning for the 209 confirmed victims of bushfires.
- A hepatitis B outbreak in India kills at least 38 people.
- The European Council meets in Berlin, Germany, to discuss the economic crisis.

February 23

- India approves a £1.7-billion plan to launch its first astronauts into outer space by 2015.

February 24

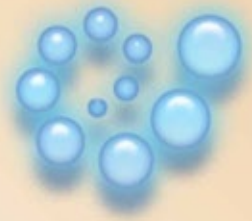
- The Taliban announces a ceasefire in its war in Pakistan's Swat Valley.
- Ireland's Stock Exchange falls to its lowest level since 1995.

February 26

- President of the US Barack Obama tells Congressional leaders that he will withdraw all US combat troops from Iraq by August 2010.
- Hamas and Fatah begin peace deliberations.

February 28

- A gene linked to a genetic motor neuron disease is discovered.



Understanding Generalized Anxiety Disorder

By Lizzie (Lizzie)

Visualize for a moment a time when your muscles tensed, your heart started beating faster, your breath quickened and you felt an overwhelming sense of dread. This could be a memory of a time when your car skidded in the rain, when a professor announced a pop quiz that you are not prepared for, a partner wants to have "the talk," or when you first realize someone caught you in a lie. This sensation that comes over you is termed anxiety.

Though everyday experiences of anxiety such as the examples above, are not pleasant, they are necessary. They prepare us for action when danger threatens. They may lead us to drive more cautiously in the rain, read your school assignments, be more sensitive to a partner, or double think before telling a lie.

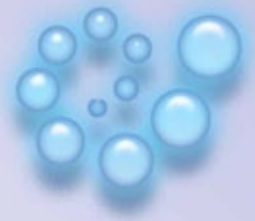
Unfortunately some people can not shake this disabling fear and anxiety, and cannot live their day to day life without being overcome by these emotions. People who feel anxious for more than six months at a time are often diagnosed as having Generalized Anxiety Disorder. Other symptoms of this disorder are difficulty controlling worry, significant distress or impairment, and having at least three of the following other symptoms: restlessness, easy fatigue, irritability, muscle tension or sleep disturbance, as outlined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

While there are several different theories on why people have this disorder, there is no known reason. Some theorists believe that Generalized Anxiety Disorder is caused by unresolved anxiety from when the person was a young child. Others believe it is from living in dangerous and stressful areas, such as a gang neighborhood. Some theorists believe it is entirely biological and has to do with chemicals in the brain and others believe it could be a combination of some of all of these factors.

Because the cause of Generalized Anxiety Disorder remains unknown, psychologists have no set form of treatment. Some therapists use anti-anxiety medication; the most popular are Xanax and Valium. Others believe that relaxation trainings can teach a person how to calm themselves in times of anxiety. And some therapists believe that just talking about one's childhood and life can help relieve underlying stress which could lead to this disorder.

Most of the explanations and treatments of this disorder have received only limited research support but we are gaining more knowledge everyday. If you know of anyone who feels like this, you should encourage them to see a medical professional. If you have these feelings, ask your medical professional about forms of therapy. If you are on anti-anxiety drugs and you feel they are not helping, let them know, there are many different theories on how to treat this disorder. If you have Generalized Anxiety Disorder and would feel comfortable sharing your story, you could post it in either the Mental Health Forum or the Recovery Stories Forum for others to read and learn about users who are living with this disorder.

I hope through knowledge of different disorders we can all be closer to one another and understand one other a little more. Through knowledge comes understanding, and understanding is what will make us a better community as a whole on TeenHelp.



Healthy Relationships: The Fundamentals

By Jer (Jer)

Relationships sure are awesome! You meet someone--at a party or school event--and start talking, get to know them a little, and pretty soon you're thinking, "Wow, this person is really cool. I think I want to spend more time with them." So you end up going on a couple of dates, or just hanging out for a while. One thing leads to another, and suddenly you're "together." Excellent! Congratulations.

However, from the first moment you set foot on the U.S.S. Relationship, you immediately realize: "What on Earth am I doing here? I don't know how to have a good relationship!" But don't panic! Once upon a time, newcomers to relationships had it hard because there was no manual written on what makes a healthy relationship. But those days are over! Sit back and relax as we take you through the fundamental concepts behind a good, happy, and healthy relationship.

Trust

Any sort of relationship--friendship, association (ie: between a teacher and a student) or even a business relationship--will be in serious trouble without trust. This also holds true for romantic relationships. Trust is important because you are, in essence, giving someone something very important: your heart. Sometimes it's not easy to put yourself in a situation where you're exposing yourself like that. But if your partner is a good person and worth being with, he or she will be trustworthy, and you, in turn, should remain faithful.

Communication

Consistent and frequent communication is also a vital aspect of a relationship. This covers not only doing things together (see below) but also discussing your feelings, thoughts, intentions and desires. The more you let your partner know about what goes on in your head, the better he or she will be able to integrate your thoughts into what he or she does, ultimately leading to a much more enjoyable and healthy experience.

Spending time together

An aspect similar to communication is spending time together and doing things you both like. This also means making time for your significant other, and expecting that person to make time for you. Just be sure to not spend TOO much time together. Allowing your partner to take up too much of your life creates a whole new set of problems.

Commitment

Entering a relationship is essentially making a promise to your partner--the promise that you will be with them. Although couples break up all the time, nobody truly wants to break up with his or her significant other. Remaining true to this promise of

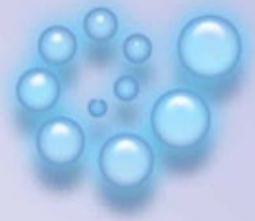
You expect follow through from a new relationship--being on time to dates, calling when promised--and when your partner holds up their end of the bargain, you begin to develop trust in them.

Understanding Expectations

When you have a good relationship, something between you and your partner will form: expectations. For example, relationships develop strength in agreements. You expect follow through from a new relationship--being on time to dates, calling when promised--and when your partner holds up their end of the bargain, you begin to

develop trust in them. You later expect they will not break that trust, and will develop deeper, more intimate levels of trust in them. You then expect them not to break that trust. It's a circle, but not a vicious one.

Sometimes you won't "live up" to your partner's expectations, but that doesn't mean the relationship is over! If a time comes when you don't do or say what your partner expect you to, or vice-versa, it is time to talk, that's all. Expectations are normal, so admitting to having them is okay. When you know what is expected of you, and your partner knows, too, you are doing a great job of communicating!



Healthy Relationships: The Fundamentals (continued...)

By Jer (Jer)

Patience, Compromise, and Respect

All couples will disagree at some point in the relationship. For example, perhaps you like hanging out at the beach after school, whereas he or she prefers the library. Whatever the issue, it is crucial to discuss it with your partner and work things out between the two of you.

The Golden Rule of relationships: Never do anything you are not comfortable with.

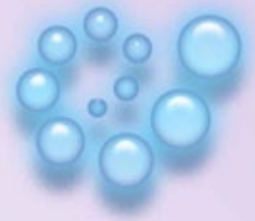
No partner should ever have the sort of leverage that allows them to control his or her partner's actions. This situation is unhealthy because it allows for the controlling partner to take advantage of the other and use them for his or her own personal gain.

Sex

Sex is another area of relationships that requires patience and respect.

Some people believe in sex before marriage, whereas some do not. If you are in a relationship with somebody who is not comfortable with having sex, your best option is to respect that and be patient. Respecting your partner's boundaries shows that you care for them and that you don't wish to infringe on their decision-making process. Furthermore, it also makes sexual relations much more fulfilling and exhilarating experience when the time does come. One final note is that compromises on sex are NOT okay if they breach the Golden Rule in any way.

You are now armed with a few basic facts on maintaining a healthy relationship. No matter what happens, believe in yourself and in the bond you have with your partner. If you follow your heart and act honorably, you are certainly capable of a happy and healthy relationship.



Testing Times: Coping With Exams

By Shaz (Shaz)

Exam time has arrived, the sun is shining outside, but you are stuck inside hitting the books. You may be feeling too much pressure to focus. For students in the process of taking exams, it isn't fun. Exams, regardless of whether for school, university/college or for professional qualifications, can all be stressful. There is often a lot of pressure on young people to do well before and on exams, causing what is called "exam stress". All the work that you've undergone approaching this exam can make you feel worried, stressed or even depressed. Studying you need to do might seem impossible, but there are things you can do to make it a bit easier on yourself.

If you are worried about anything, talk to your school teacher or parents about how you feel. Don't be ashamed to ask for help; it's normal to be a little worried about exams. Remember, exams are important, but they are not the only key to a successful future.

Effects of exams on you

Exam Stress

People use the term "stress" to describe the feeling they have when they are overloaded and don't feel that they are able to meet all the demands placed upon them. Stress is natural and part of being human. Your body is responding to changes in the world around you. Stress changes how your body works and puts your mind into different moods.

Getting a bit stressed about an exam just means that you really care about your results. However, a bit of the inevitable pressure that you will face is good for you! Hopefully it will push you to work hard and aim for a high score. How could we motivate ourselves through 100 pages of The Russian Revolution or anything quite so boring if we aren't remotely bothered? We do it because we know that we have to do well in the exam. So, although being too worried will not help matters, you will get out of the exam what you put into the exam.

How do I know if I'm stressed?

Learning to recognise when you're under stress is one of the first steps of dealing with it. When exams start to cause too much pressure, the physical and emotional signs may become obvious.

Some signs of exam stress are:

- Difficulty getting to sleep overwaking up in the morning
- Constant tiredness/loss of concentration
- Forgetfulness
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Poor appetite
- Increased anxiety and irritability
- Increased heart rate
- Migraines/headaches
- Blurred vision
- Dizziness

If you've noticed three or more of the above symptoms and you've experienced them for a few weeks you may need to take action and work on your stress levels. Perhaps speak to a school counsellor or doctor. Sometimes even simply talking to a friend helps. Write out your concerns and worries to get them off your chest.

Organization, approaching exams and exam tips

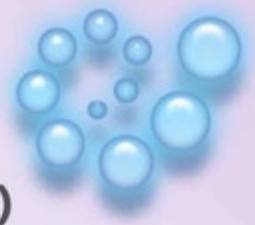
Many people are able to learn and integrate information well while studying. However, when it comes to the actual test or exam, they suffer from exam stress and do not perform to the best of their potential.

It isn't just the anxiety or 'nerves' at the time of the exam, though. People often feel stressed about an exam months ahead of the day of the actual examination. It's natural to feel at least somewhat anxious about something that could have such a big impact on your future, especially if it's something that you've been working towards for months or years. Learning to organize yourself and manage exam stress can change the outcome of how well you perform on exams.

Organization

Being organised

If you find out exactly what you're facing, you can work out a plan for dealing with it. Get your hands on the right information from the start. Make sure you understand as much information as you can



Testing Times: Coping With Exams (continued...)

By Shaz (Shaz)

regarding the exam. Also, get a copy of the syllabus and catch up with anything you've missed.

Find out about the resources available to help you. School, college and university teachers are expert resources, but they may not have a lot of time to give you. There are also many good revision guides, TV revision programmes and a wide range of internet sites to use which can help you during the exam time period.

Plan a timetable

Try to start your studies in plenty of time. Take time to plan a revision timetable that's realistic and linked to your exam timetable so you revise subjects in the right order. Give yourself clear priorities and try to balance your studies with other time commitments. Identify what time you feel most focused and willing to study.

Everyone needs time off, and it's a bad idea to abandon your social life and other hobbies that you like to take part in. For a period near the examinations, however, you may need to cut down. Balancing "work" and "play" will hopefully result in higher exam scores.

Approaching exams

Revision/Studying

Revision is more than just reading through the notes you made in class--it also means knowing how to answer the appropriate questions when you're sitting in the exam. Revising works best when you practise questions that are most likely to appear in the exam. By concentrating on key facts and writing them down as exam answers, it's easier to remember what you learned in class. In the exam be expected to answer questions on the subjects you studied in class, which means you'll need a full set of notes to revise from.

There's no 'right' way to revise, it's more a matter of what suits you and the particular exam you're taking best. Methods might include making notes from text books, writing quick summaries of topics and putting them in places where you'll have easy access to see them, reciting facts out loud, learning dates, formulae or vocabulary by heart, and reading revision books or watching revision programmes. Also, switching between methods helps to hold your interest and absorb

information better and for longer. If it's hard to get started, begin with something easy and work from there.

Try not to cram in learning everything at once. Not only will this likely stress you out, but it will also make it extremely difficult for you to retain the information. Take breaks between your revision sessions, and then relax and reward yourself at the end of a successful session.

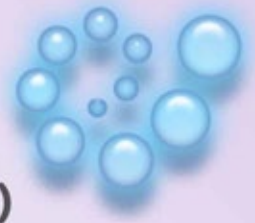
It's not always possible to find a comfortable, quiet place to prepare for exams, so try to arrange a set time and space where you can work without being disturbed. If you can't find this at home, look to a school, college, or local library. If you study in the same room you eat or sleep in, try to keep the work area separate, so it's not always distracting you when you're not studying.

Practising timed exam questions can give you some idea of how to spend your time between questions on the exam you are being tested on. Practice questions are never the same as the questions in the exam, they're similar enough to be useful.

Avoiding stress before an exam

You may be feeling a weight of expectation from your family, school, university or workplace to succeed. You may be afraid you're not good enough, or haven't worked hard enough. You may be scared of letting yourself down, or that you'll miss out on a job, university place or career move. Because of what's at stake, exams, inevitably, are stressful.

Your pre-exam nerves may seem more intense if you are taking exams for the first time, after a long period of time, or have any learning differences. Having high stress levels for too long can be harmful to both you and your chances. Everyone reacts differently to stress, so a situation that is too much for one person to tolerate may be stimulating to another. Controlled at the right level, however, stress can work to your advantage by helping you perform your peak performance.



Testing Times: Coping With Exams (continued...)

By Shaz (Shaz)

Exam tips

General exam tips:

Believe in yourself.

You are capable of passing the exam. You wouldn't have been given a place in the class if you didn't have the ability to do it.

Taking action.

If you don't understand some of your course material, getting stressed out won't help. Instead, take action by seeing your course tutor or asking a classmate to help you understand the problem.

Talking about it.

Confiding in someone you trust and who will listen and be supportive is a great way of reducing stress and worry.

Pressure: Do's and Don'ts.

Aim to do your best but recognise that if you think that "anything less than A+ means I've failed" then you are creating unnecessary stress for yourself.

Tips for the Revision Period:

Plan your time.

Boost your confidence and reduce any pre-exam stress by avoiding last minute cramming. Leaving plenty of time to revise means you know you have prepared well.

Taking a break.

As soon as you notice you are losing concentration, take a short break: go for a walk, talk to a friend or just listen to some music. Return back to the revision feeling refreshed and able to concentrate again.

Another cuppa? Don't think so.

Don't drink too much coffee, tea or fizzy drinks; the caffeine will make you feel 'keyed-up' and make your thinking less clear. After the exam period is over, you can go back to being a coffee addict.

Eat some 'superfoods'.

Eat healthily and regularly; your brain will benefit from the nutrients. Replace sweets and sugar with 'superfoods' such as berries, bananas, oily fish, nuts and broccoli. They might not be the most interesting, tastiest foods out there, but 'superfoods' can help boost your concentration, energy and mood.

A change is as good as a rest.

Experiment with several alternative revision techniques so that revision is more fun and your motivation to study is high.

Tips for keeping calm during the exam:

Try to avoid panic

It's natural to feel some exam nerves prior to starting the exam; it can be a positive and motivating feeling. However, getting excessively nervous can become a problem as it hinders your ability to think clearly.

Take deep breaths

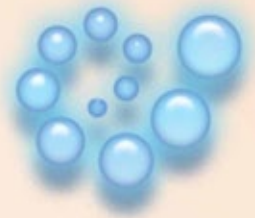
The quickest and most effective way of eliminating feelings of stress and panic is to close your eyes and take several long, slow deep breaths, which will calm your nervous system.

Drawing a blank?

If your mind goes blank during the exam, don't panic. Instead, focus on slow, deep breathing for about one minute. If you still can't remember the information then move on to another question in the exam paper and return to this question later if you have time.

Final Note

I hope that this guide to coping with exams has been somewhat useful to you. For a lot of people, going through exams can be very stressful. Exams bring out the best in some people, and the worst in others. At the end of it you can only do your best. Good luck!



Recipes

Snow Cream--Great Grandma's Recipe Courtesy Amanda Kate (udontno)

| Ingredients: | Quantity: |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Egg | 2 |
| Sugar | 1 cup |
| Milk | 2 cups |
| Flour | 1 tablespoon |

Cooking instructions:

Cook together until thickened to a custard. Cool completely. Add clean, fluffy snow to right consistency.

Mexican Hot Chocolate (drink) Courtesy Jessie (Jessie)

| Ingredients: | Quantity: |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| Milk | 4 cups |
| Semi-Sweet Chocolate | 5 one ounce squares |
| Cinnamon Sticks | 3 plus 1 per cup |
| Vanilla | 1 teaspoon |

Cooking instructions:

Combine milk, semi-sweet chocolate, and 3 cinnamon sticks in a saucepan. Cook and stir just until chocolate melts. Remove from heat; remove cinnamon and stir in 1 teaspoon vanilla. Beat with rotary beater until frothy. Serve in warmed mugs with cinnamon stick stirrers.

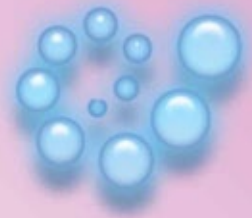
Snickerdoodles (cookies) Courtesy Jessie (Jessie)

| Ingredients: | Quantity: |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Flour | 2-2/3 cups |
| Butter | 1 cup, softened |
| Cream of Tartar | 2 teaspoons |
| Baking Powder | 1 teaspoon |
| Salt | 1 teaspoon |
| Vanilla | 1/2 teaspoon |
| Egg | 2 |
| Sugar | |
| Cinnamon | 2 teaspoons |

Cooking instructions:

In large bowl measure first 7 ingredients and 1-1/4 cups sugar. With mixer at low speed, beat ingredients until well blended. Shape dough into a ball, wrap with plastic wrap. Refrigerate dough 2 hours or until easy to handle.

Preheat oven to 400 f. In a small bowl, mix cinnamon with 2 tablespoons sugar. With hands shape dough into 1-1/2 inch balls. Roll dough in cinnamon mixture to coat lightly. Place dough balls, about 2 inches apart, on ungreased large cookie sheet. With dull edge of knife, mark each cookie several times. Bake cookies 10 to 12 minutes until lightly browned.



Self expression

from **When You Were Young**
By *star_crossd*

You were finally taught that the mysterious symbols in which your parents communicated were called "letters" and "words" and really, they were just your voice put on thin paper that easily ripped (especially if you erased too hard). Cleaning the chalkboard wasn't a chore; pounding felt lined erasers created fluffy clouds like the ones you saw in the sky that you wished you could feel.

Cafeteria food was okay; obviously from a can, obviously not Mom's cooking. But it was okay and the real novelty lay in being surrounded by more people than you ever have in your life. You quickly made friends: back then it didn't matter what clothes you wore or music you listened to. You were all together in the same grade, sharing the same adventures and that's all that mattered. Besides, its safe to say your fashion style was comfort all the way (and whether or not your denims could withstand the power of mud and grass).

Recess: from the first day you learned it was a golden word, one that you and everyone else waited all day for, suffered through arithmetic (so many numbers!) for, and looked to the clock trying to decipher the many lines for. From the moment you laid eyes on the blue and green monkey bars, endless pit of sand, row upon row of shining new swings and bright yellow slides, you knew you'd found heaven.



Stretching Boy
Drawing by Jessie

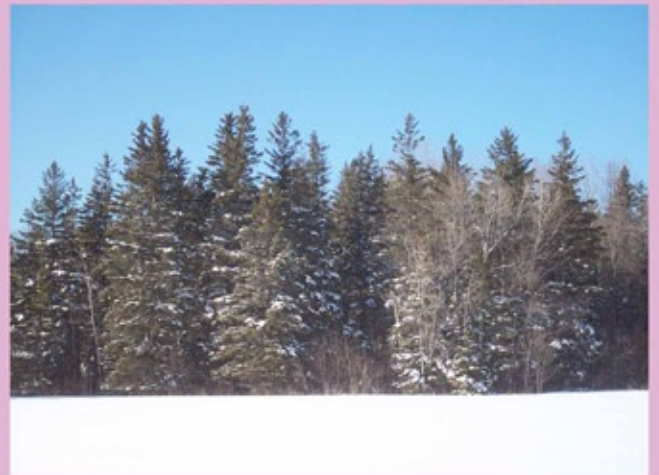
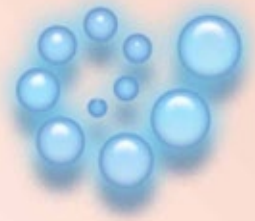


Photo by Mel



As always, to contribute to the Self expression section of Avatar, or Avatar in general, email us at avatar@teenhelp.org



Here's your sign

This month's sign: Pisces (February 20 – March 19)

March is a strong month for reassessing your finances and making a budget, dear Pisces, but it's not a favorable time for making important purchases. If you do make a big outlay, you are likely to regret it next month, so hold off if you can for the time being. It's better to hold on to your money now. From the 8th forward, you're getting a lot of attention. A partner has your wants and needs in mind, and work matters are favored. Your responsibilities to a special someone are hard to ignore around the Full Moon on the 10th.

About the Pisces: Pisces, the fishes, the twelfth and last sign of the zodiac, seeks to understand and identify with the whole of creation and find ultimate redemption. It wishes to be part of all, but not to enclose itself. It seeks escape from the limits of form and this gives it the capacity to shirk responsibility and deceive itself and others. Pisces rules the feet.

Famous Pisceans include: Billy Crystal, Daniel Moynihan, Elizabeth Taylor, Ralph Nader, George Harrison, Frederic Chopin, Rex Harrison, L. Ron Hubbard, Ted Kennedy, George Washington, Albert Einstein, and William Jennings Bryan.

Element: water

Quality: mutable

Ruling Planets: Neptune and Jupiter

Key phrase: "I believe"

Aries

(March 21 – April 19)

Venus entered your sign in February, augmenting your overall charm and perhaps bringing gifts, money, and favors your way. This month, Venus moves "backwards", and it's time for introspection. This is particularly true after the 15th, when Mars enters Pisces, the sign just behind yours. It's time to revise your plans and put off new initiatives until you have more confidence in them. Others may not be getting you--perhaps misunderstanding your intentions--for the time being. A partner may be distant. A New Moon on the 26th brings new discoveries and a feeling of newness to your life. Still, take your time before moving forward. The Full Moon on the 10th brings some chaos on the job front, but nothing you can't handle.

Taurus

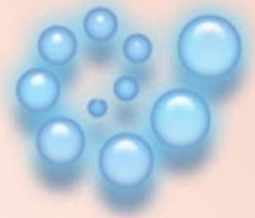
(April 20 – May 20)

Venus, your ruler, turns retrograde this month, signaling a period of reflection. You are likely to pull back a little, as you take the time to revise and perhaps question your plans. Matters from the past creep up and demand your attention. This is a good month in which to solve old problems and finally lay them to rest. Nevertheless, your public or professional life is quite busy, particularly in the first week of March. Friends are supportive. Despite your inclination towards retreat and rest, your social agenda is hectic. There is bound to be some drama in your romantic life, particularly around the 10th. A lover (and in some cases, a child) needs some attention, and it's time to sort that out. A surprise surrounding a friend or family member is likely on the 12-13.

Gemini

(May 21 – June 20)

Some complications surrounding friends and lovers are quite possible this month, and you're likely to find these people in your life dredging up old issues. Give others space. There's a lot of activity on the career front in March. While you begin the month in an adventurous mood, you quickly realize that there are a lot of responsibilities to take care of. Family matters grab your attention as well, around the 10th, and then on the 12-13, surprising events and communications occur through your work. The 1-2 brings excitement surrounding a travel opportunity. Strong days of opportunity occur on the 2-5 and then the 10. Watch for pressure build-up on the 18.



Here's your sign (continued...)

Cancer

(June 21 – July 22)

There are some wonderful and perhaps surprising opportunities that have to do with legal affairs, travel, or education this month, particularly around the 12-13 and 21-23. Nevertheless, complications and setbacks are likely, but are only temporary. Career matters could be causing you some concern, but try not to fret over details. Instead, come up with a better game plan. April will bring opportunities to begin anew. A relationship is reaching new depths of intimacy in March, and there's quite a bit of talk and activity that stimulate changes in how you approach each other, particularly in the first week of the month.

Leo

(July 23 – August 22)

Your close personal relationships continue to take center stage in your life this month, dear Leo. A close partner could seem a little mysterious or even elusive, but this only serves to intrigue you more. It's a good month for deepening a connection, but do prepare yourself for some communication snafus. Travel, legal, or educational plans may not be moving forward at the speed you'd like them to be. The 10th brings some financial matters to light, demanding your attention. Likely, money shared, borrowed, or loaned will be big topics on the table now. In fact, some surprising events surrounding shared possessions and funds, as well as intimate matters, are likely around the 12-13 and 21-23. The 12-13 also brings an exciting connection with a lover.

Virgo

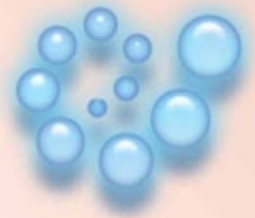
(August 23 - September 22)

The month begins with a strong focus on your health and work routines, dear Virgo. You could be digging up interesting information now, and there is likely to be quite a fuss over it in the first week of the month. The focus turns to a close partnership or friendship towards mid-month, when a special someone could be putting his/her cards on the table. While it's not a time to sweep matters under the rug, some care should be taken in all love matters this month, particularly those surrounding shared finances and intimacy. It's a good month for redesigning your budget, but it's not strong for making big purchases. You could easily regret your purchases next month, so take the time to think about it before you leap forward. The 10th brings a surprising revelation.

Libra

(September 23 - October 22)

March brings a more serious tone than February, dear Libra, although the first week is likely still about "fun and games". Work matters become increasingly into focus, and you are feeling more introspective. It's not that you lack confidence, but you tend to recognize the need to look within for answers. Questioning your plans is likely, and in fact quite necessary. A close partner may be distant or hard to read this month as well. Some disconnects in the love department are likely. These will clear up mid-April. For now, try not to push matters (or others). Give them space, and give yourself space as well. Surprises on the job or regarding health are likely on the 12-13 and 21-23. The 11-12 also brings some fabulous news and highly motivating conversations.



Here's your sign (continued...)

Scorpio

(September 23 – October 22)

You're moving towards a more playful and fun frame of mind in March, dear Scorpio. Romantic surprises are likely around the 12-13 and 21-23. There could also be surprising turns of events surrounding creative projects, children, and family matters during these periods. Invitations to go out and have some fun should be grabbed. While love matters do pick up pace, some care is necessary when it comes to a close partnership. You might find that a partner is a little distant or hard to reach this month. These matters will clear up mid-April, and simply require you to be patient and understanding. The 10th brings your obligations to friends or groups to light. Going over past errors or problems is likely on the job.

Capricorn

(December 22 – January 19)

The month begins with continued attention to your personal finances, dear Capricorn. You have big ideas about how to increase your income. While you will continue to brainstorm about money-making endeavors in March, your attention also turns to learning, communicating, and networking. A surprise communication is likely on the 12-13, and work brings unanticipated events on the 21-23. If a lover seems distant or a love affair appears to stall this month, it just means that it's time to reassess matters. You could also find that you experience creative blocks this month, which will clear up mid-April.

Sagittarius

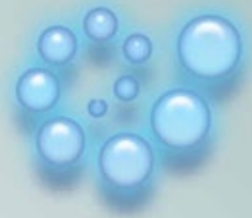
(November 21 – December 21)

Your social calendar is busy this month, dear Sagittarius. Romance is private and may involve making some personal sacrifices, although your charm skyrockets after the 18th, when the planet of love, Venus, enters your sign. It's a time when job offers come to you and friends find you. Friends tend to have your best interests at heart. A romantic revelation occurs around the time of the Full Moon on the 14th. Stability in career, money, and other practical matters continues this month. The 26-27 boosts vitality and personal charisma.

Aquarius

(January 20 – February 19)

The first week of March is very busy for you, dear Aquarius. You are getting a lot of attention, and others are turning to you for advice. Money matters become a big focus from the 8th forward, and unanticipated events surrounding your personal finances are likely, particularly on the 12-13 and 21-23. Responsibilities to others, particularly on a financial level, become hard to ignore around the 10th. The 12-13 is also a strong period for enhancing or attracting a close partnership. Creative projects could bring financial reward this month.



The wind down...

Acknowledgements

Image sources

Colored Pencils: www.everystockphoto.com

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Articles

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The Avatar Editors.

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