

Avatar

TeenHelp.org's eZine
Volume 2, Issue 11 | May 2009



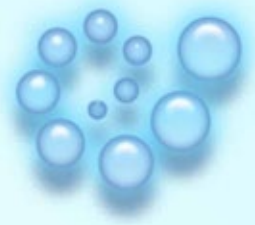


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Letter from the Editors

Hello everyone and welcome to the May 2009 issue of Avatar!

In this month's issue you will find a touching piece on the effects bullying has on students, an enlightening article on the benefits of knowing about one's own mental illness, and a helpful piece for friends and families of those living with mental illnesses.

It's May and spring is in the air! As lovely as spring is, dreaded spring cleaning will soon be upon us, so be sure to read some helpful tips on organization. This month you will also find a fun and informative article on the popular number game Sudoku, as well as a chance to try your hand at solving a Sudoku puzzle! In addition, be sure to check out the self expression section this month for two wonderful poems as well as visual art. Don't forget to read your horoscopes for May!

In other news, Avatar's first ever photo caption contest in April went amazingly and we received over twenty submissions! Check out the winning submissions from April and be sure to send us your submissions for May. Who knows, maybe yours will be featured next month!

See you in June,
The Avatar Editors.

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Katrina (Katrina)

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Sub-Editor of Mind and Body
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Sub-Editor of Lifestyle
Nat (Strider)

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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
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Bullying: a silent epidemic

By Mai (sushi_error)

April 20th, 2009, current and former students and residents of Columbine, Colorado marked the tenth anniversary of the Columbine High School shootings. For many in this small town, the Columbine massacre etched bloody wounds that may never heal. At the same time, many question the motive of both shooters, seniors Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold. Both boys had completely different personalities. Klebold was described as "hotheaded, depressive, and suicidal." While, other classmates and adults described Harris as "sweet-faced and well-spoken", even "nice". However, as law enforcement further investigated this tragic event weeks after, new information began to surface.

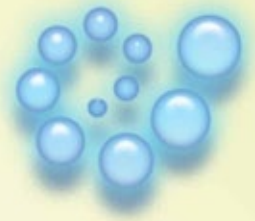
It was believed that bullying prompted Klebold and Harris to open fire on their classmates and teachers. On the other hand, journal entries from both boys would reveal a dark and even suicidal side. Regardless of various speculation, more than eighty school shootings would occur in the years following the Columbine massacre. According to a research done by the Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Education, at least two-thirds of student shooters felt "bullied, harassed." This information was gathered after studying thirty seven cases of school shootings, including Columbine. The real question is: how can educators, parents, friends bring an end to bullying, before another tragic event like Columbine occurs again?

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me" is echoed on playgrounds, in parks, and schools. However, it does not hold water and is a myth. Name-calling can be just as powerful and hurtful as throwing punches. Being called terrible names such as "fag", "whore", or even "stupid" can resonate in a child or teenager's mind for a long time. Bullying of any kind is done with the intention to instill fear and vulnerability into the victim. A black-eye heals after a few weeks, but being labeled a "faggot" damages a victim's self-identity, confidence, and self-esteem. Many victims are bullied because they "do not comply" with what society defines as 'normal' (this includes sexual orientation, religious beliefs, political affiliations, and even dress, etc).

Bullying can cause long-term emotional damage to any victim. Why? It can easily make one feel less desirable and hopeless. According to MentalHelp, the short-term effects of bullying may include anger, depression, low grades, and even suicidal thoughts. These feelings can lead to bigger and long-term problems that may carry into adulthood: a desire for revenge, insecurity, fear and avoidance of social situations.

As a society, then, how can we undo the damage caused by bullying and prevent it from continuing to occur at our schools (both at the primary, secondary, and even post-secondary levels)? For one, there needs to be clearer communication between students, teachers, and parents/guardians. Second, schools need to implement better and more effective bully prevention programs as well as creating a committee to oversee this problem and others. Lastly, there should be various programs to reach out to children or teenagers who bully and assist them in changing their violence. Programs such as Olweus' Bullying Prevention Program, GLSEN's No Name Calling Week has reached out to millions and millions of children to prevent bullying on all levels.

Bullying will continue to be a silent epidemic unless something is done. It hinders the growth of children and schools. It not only will prevent adolescents from reaching their biggest goals, but will also weaken communities worldwide.



The Pros and Cons of Understanding your Mental Disorder

By Maria (Gidig)

About 9.5% of all adults in the United States have a diagnosable mood disorder. Mental disorders include major depressive disorder, bipolar depressive disorder, schizophrenia, anxiety disorder, eating disorders, ADHD, and others. Psychiatrists, doctors, and other health professionals can give you information on these disorders but thanks to the Internet we are now capable of researching any mental disorder on our own. The question, then, is whether access to this information is helpful, harmful, or both, to those suffering with mental disorders.

The positives of understanding your mental disorder:

Many situations emerge in every day life for people living with mental disorders that may be easier to manage if they understand their disorder. For example, if you are having racing thoughts, you'll be able to slow them down in a healthy manner by knowing and acknowledging that you may be experiencing the mania phase of manic depression.

When you understand your mental disorder, you may be able to better cope with symptoms that you weren't expecting. However, for your coping mechanisms to be effective, you should have an action plan set up for various situations. For example, if you have an anxiety disorder, you need to figure out what you're going to need, and learn how to ground yourself before you experience a panic attack.

Sometimes the feelings we may be experiencing are frustrating, especially since it may not make sense as to why we're feeling them. When you understand your mental disorder, however, you may be better able to understand your feelings. In a sense it may validate your feelings and emotions; although you may already know it is okay to feel as you do, understanding the cause may offer you a sense of mind and peace.

If you know a lot about your mental disorder, you can connect with people from your area and speak about how your disorder is affecting your life, and swap ideas on how to work through difficult situations. Having support when experiencing hard times is very helpful when trying to keep on the right track through life. If you don't know about your mental disorder, it's harder to connect with people around you in order to receive the help and support you deserve.

When you have knowledge of your mental disorder it gives psychiatrists and other doctors a basic idea of how much you understand. Remember, though, that labeling a way you feel or act does not change who you are and should not alter how you live your life. You are still the same person you were before you were diagnosed.

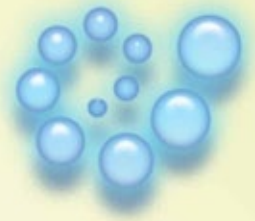
The negatives of understanding your mental disorder:

While there are multiple positives of knowing your mental disorder, there are also various negatives to it. When individuals with prior knowledge through either refuted sources or social stigmas on mental disorders are diagnosed, they may subconsciously begin to conform to this criteria. For example, if someone tells you that you have depression, you may lose your appetite and sleep a lot, even if you didn't experience these symptoms before.

Sometimes if you know your mental disorder, you tend to treat it yourself in the best way you know how. While you could do this even without the knowledge of your mental disorder, it seems people try a wider variety methods of self-help if they are aware of what they're "up against." Some people may decide that since they have ADHD they should take Ritalin, whether prescribed by the doctor or not, because you understand ADHD enough to understand that Ritalin has the possibility to help. But without the help and care of a doctor, it's not safe to get your own medication.

Occasionally people will use their mental disorder as an excuse, like "I can't come to work today because I'm dealing with depression" where really they may simply not want to go to work. They may even believe the reason is their mental disorder. While some events and feelings are a result of a mental disorder, sometimes they can not be credited to a mental disorder. But as long as you don't take advantage of some peoples understanding of mental disorders, you should not find a problem with this.

People tend to diagnose themselves before they have been diagnosed by a professional. This is called self-diagnosis. If you know a lot about any mental disorder, you may decide that you have this disorder and worry about it. Make sure you are officially diagnosed by a medical professional before worrying about a mental disorder you may not even have.



The Pros and Cons of Understanding your Mental Disorder (continued...)

By Maria (Gidig)

What should I do if I think I have a mental disorder?

If you think you may have a mental disorder, talk to your doctor, or find a psychiatrist or therapist who can help you. There is a lot of help available no matter what you may be living with with.

If you feel you or a friend is in danger, immediately call your local emergency services or go to the nearest emergency room.

Where can I find more information on my mental disorder?

There are multiple places to find information about your mental disorder if you would like to. Your general doctor, psychiatrist, or therapist should have knowledge and information about majority of mental disorders.

You can also go to your local library and see if they have any books that you would benefit from reading. Do make sure to look at the copyright date, because science and knowledge of mental disorders is constantly changing, so make sure you're reading up-to-date information. Also, websites are an amazing place to start. Make sure they are legitimate websites though, like some of the following:

<http://www.webmd.com/>
<http://psychcentral.com/>
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/>



For Friends and Family of those suffering from a Mental Illness

By Rick (LaFin)

Having a family member or friend living with mental illness can be hard at times, but there are some ways to make things easier and improve communication. It's hard to know what someone else is going through, especially in respect to mental illness, but you can try to educate yourself on the subject, be caring and understanding and at the same time help them to stand on their own two feet.

There are some things that apply to most mental illness that can make things easier.

- Your friend or family member is like any other person, so treat them as such unless they request otherwise.
- If they take medication and are prone to forgetting when to take it, give them subtle reminders.
- Research and learn about the illness your friend has. Knowledge is half the battle. Also, try to imagine yourself in his or her shoes. If you have trouble imagining what they might be going through, ask them to help you to understand.
- Accept your friend as they are, and don't try to "fix" or change them.

Sometimes specific disorders also have specific actions you can take to ease any tension on your relationship. A few common disorders are:

Please Note: This is not an extensive list of actions that may be taken. Because every individual is different, different points will apply to different people.

Bipolar Disorder

- It is very important that people with this disorder continue to take their medication, and sometimes they just need a reminder or some encouragement to continue in their pharmaceutical therapy. Don't be afraid to help someone take their medication on time and as instructed.
- Often people with Bipolar Disorder are misunderstood as "crazy" or unstable. Be supportive and break this stereotype.
- When your friend is depressed, be there for them. Let them know they are not alone, and ask them if they'd like you to get them some help. Remind them that you're only a phone call away if anything comes up.
- If, while depressed, your friend becomes suicidal, don't hesitate to take them to the hospital or call 911. Suicidal thoughts and actions are a serious risk and should be taken as such.

- If your friend is manic and you know how to reach their psychiatrist, it would be a good idea to contact them and inform them that your friend might need a slight change in their medication.
- If, while manic, your friend is taking risks that are endangering either their own or someone else's life, you should either contact their psychiatrist or call 911. If your friend is psychotic you should call 911 because they may need to be admitted to the hospital for their own protection.

Schizophrenia

- Be understanding of your friend and don't give in to stereotypes. People with schizophrenia are not more prone to violence, they don't have split personalities, etc..
- Like with Bipolar, people with Schizophrenia sometimes think that when they stop having symptoms they're recovered and stop taking their medication. It would be a good idea to check up on them if you have a feeling they may have stopped, but don't be overbearing and controlling.
- If you think your friend has stopped taking their medication or is relapsing back into their illness, let their psychiatrist know.
- People with Schizophrenia are not any less intelligent than you or I.
- Try not to encourage any delusions your friend may be having. For example, if they think that people are out to get them, don't joke around and say someone has been following them around.
- Don't be angry at your friend for firmly believing their delusions; it's not their fault.

Depression

- Don't tell your friend to cheer up, be happy, or get over it. Understand that depression is a mental illness and that someone can't simply "get over it". If your friend is suicidal, let someone know or call 911. Suicidal gestures or threats should always be taken seriously regardless of how many times they might have happened before. If your friend hasn't spoken to a professional, (a doctor, psychiatrist, or therapist), encourage them to do so. Professionals are trained to help and assess what your friend needs to be able to recover properly and quickly. Sometimes people with depression can hallucinate or have delusions. If your friend is suffering from either of these, contacting their doctor or informing a trusted adult should be considered for your friend's safety.



For Friends and Family of those suffering from a Mental Illness (continued...)

By Rick (LaFin)

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

- Don't try and force your friend to stop performing their compulsions. Instead, try and understand why they have them and how you can help.
- Understand that OCD isn't simply performing compulsions; there is also an obsession component to the disorder, as well as anxiety.
- If there are things you can do to help reduce your friend's anxiety, such as putting things in a specific place after you're done using them, try and do them.
- Lots of times people with OCD are embarrassed or ashamed of their compulsions, so try and think of things you can say to offset this attitude. It's nothing they can control after all.
- If you know your friend has a time consuming compulsion, try and plan for this so that they don't feel responsible if you're late for something.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

- It's common for people with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) to have specific triggers that will cause them to have a flashback. Try to learn what your friend's triggers are so you can avoid them, which will make life easier for both you and them.
- While your friend is having a flashback try and be comforting, don't do anything threatening, and don't try and force them to move somewhere more convenient or to hold it in. If, during flashbacks, your friend is very sensitive to being touched and prefers you don't do it, don't ask questions, just don't do it.
- PTSD is caused by traumatic experiences, and it's not uncommon for people to try and be understanding by asking what happened. If your friend doesn't feel comfortable talking about it, don't push the subject. Your friend will open up if and when they feel comfortable doing so.
- Your friend might avoid specific areas or activities because they are triggering to him or her. If your friend doesn't want to do something, don't try and push them or convince them to do it.

Anxiety Disorders

- People with Anxiety often worry and overanalyze situations, so try not to say or do anything that can cause them to worry more than they need to.
- If your friend is prone to panic attacks, learn how to recognize when they're about to have one. When you think they might be having one, try to remove whatever is causing them to panic, take them to a safe comforting place and try and talk them through

the attack.

- If your friend is only anxious about specific things and they avoid them, don't try and force them into a situation they're not comfortable with. It's true that to overcome an anxiety they'll need to face that anxiety, but you're not a doctor and you can't be sure if they're ready for this or not. Try and support your friend, not "fix" them.
- It is often easier for people with anxiety disorders to do things with a friend. If your friend asks you to go somewhere with them because it would make their anxiety more bearable, try and do so. It's not easy for them to ask, and it shows a lot of trust from them to ask you.

Borderline Personality Disorder

- Individuals with this disorder are prone to having mood swings: having their mood change from normal to depressed, angry, or anxious for very little reason. Understand that this is always a possibility, so try not to take it personally.
- People with BPD are also prone to self harm. Some do it as a means to manipulate others, while some don't. If your friend does this, don't be angry at them, scold them or tell them you're disappointed in them. This will only make things harder for both of you.
- If your friend has BPD they could be very sensitive to what's said around them. They could be hurt or enraged by something that has little or nothing to do with them, which is where the expression "walking on eggshells" comes from. Don't lie to make them feel better, but try to word things in a non-threatening manner.
- People with BPD often have split thinking; they either view someone as very good or bad, with nothing in between. Sometimes your friend could think very highly of you, and later they could see you as threatening or bad. This can happen for little or no reason, but don't try and force your friend to like you again, just try and wait it out.
- Suicide threats are common in BPD and whether or not you think your friend is being serious, you should let someone know every time your friend seems suicidal. Tell their doctor, parents, or call 911 when a situation like this arises.

Individuals with BPD are prone to having other disorders in conjunction with their BPD including but not limited to eating disorders, Bipolar Disorder, depression, anxiety disorders, and Dissociative Disorders.



For Friends and Family of those suffering from a Mental Illness (continued...)

By Rick (LaFin)

Eating Disorders

- People do not have eating disorders because they want to. You can't force them to recover; it takes therapy and the help from trained professionals. Don't try and force your friend to eat food, talk down to or scold them if they don't feel like eating, although don't be afraid to offer affirmations or words of encouragement.
- If they aren't seeing a doctor yet, try and convince them to see one. If it would make it easier, offer to go with them and help explain the situation to the doctor. If your friend refuses to go and you feel that they're risking their health with their actions, go to the doctor yourself and let them know your concerns about your friend.
- A lot of the time people don't realize they have eating disorders. If you suspect that your friend may be suffering from an ED, the best thing you can do is talk to them.
- People with eating disorders can be very sensitive to referrals to weight or food, so keep from talking too much about these with your friend. Things like "If only I was a few sizes lighter" might seem innocent, but can have a very negative effect on the mindset of a person with an ED.



The Art of Organization

By Nat (Strider)

When teens talk about organization, it either sounds like a fatal disease or a goal that is so far out of the spectrum of possibility that it will never be reached. Some teens proudly exclaim, "I am organized!" as though labeling boxes and drawers has the same significance as finishing first in a marathon. Others use the 'kick-things-in-a-pile-and-hope-they-never-need-to-find-them-again' method. No matter which category you identify with, these are the top 'dos and don'ts' to get your room in shipshape condition this spring.

Do use a cupboard, dresser, or closet to keep your clothes organized in. Make sure that there are separate drawers or compartments to keep different articles of clothing in, such as a drawer for t-shirts and another for shorts. Use your organizer for clean clothes along with a basket that you can keep for dirty clothes.

Don't pile your clothes haphazardly on your floor. If you have a system set up for putting them away, then it shouldn't take a lot of time. It will save time in the future that you could spend doing more interesting things, and face it- the piles do make it difficult to get around or even remember you have a floor sometimes.

Do have a place set aside for papers. This can be a plastic bin, shelf, or even just a cardboard box. As long as you have one place for all of your extra bits of paper lying around, you won't ever lose them. And if you want to get really fancy, you can have multiple bins for your different kinds of paper (blank, lined, coloured, scrap).

Don't just toss your papers anywhere you see a spot. They are likely to get covered in a new layer of junk and never found again. Most of us aren't archaeologists, after all.

Do have a spot for your school things (bag, books, homework). Go out and buy a pack of hooks from your nearest dollar or hardware store. That way you have a place to hang your bag, as well as anything else that might need to hang up (coats, belts, scarves). Have a spot on your desk or shelf reserved for your schoolwork and books.

Don't fling your bag in one corner, your papers on top of junk on your desk, and your books on your bed. Chances are you won't be able to find them among the rest of the mess, or you'll end up losing your homework.

And no matter what, don't make this complicated! If you have a place for your clothes, papers, and school stuff, the rest of your room will sort itself out. If you think it will help, pick up a shelf or organizer that you can use to separate your things. It's perfectly fine if you still have some junk leftover—no one is perfect! Remember that this is about making your room a little easier to navigate through, without making your life miserable.



Some tips from fellow TeenHelpers:

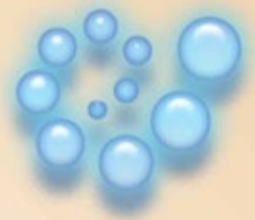
"If I can't find something a place I give it away. I have a couple junk drawers...I put all my winter clothes and other items in my basement for storage. Then I can have more room." - Kel

"I just cleaned out my bookshelf and stored 2 huge boxes of books I won't read anymore. I also cut down my wardrobe, cleaned and stored my winter clothes. Took some clothes to goodwill, and gave some to a family friend. I bought closet organizers from Ikea to manage my current wardrobe and then spent the rest of the money on shoes." - St.Vincent

"I'm definitely the most organized in my family. I have bins and boxes and labels for everything. When I'm bored, I organize." - BrittneyNicole

"For clothes I don't need, I donate them to salvation army. Why throw out a perfectly good piece of clothing when someone else can use it?" - moyshi239

"My room is my sanctuary... When I do clean it, it's very neat. Every bit of paper that I don't need goes in one or two boxes. Clothes go in the closet and drawers, organized by what they are-pants, shorts, short sleeve, no sleeve, long sleeve, etc. Books are organized by how much I like them, how often they are read, and by whether they are scholarly or for fun. Everything else is organized by color, type, what it is, or where ever I can stick it." - Casey



Sudoku

By Nat (Strider)

The name of the game is Sudoku. You've probably heard about it, or even tried this puzzle out for yourself, but how did math become so much fun? Thanks to a retired judge by the name of Wayne Gould, this number game became popular in 1997, even though it has inspiration dating back to the late 1800s. Gould was able to create a computer program that could make the puzzles quickly, making Sudoku the perfect number puzzle to be published throughout newspapers and magazines.

Although he was the creator of the program that made the puzzle, Gould was not the master of numbers who thought up this nine-squared phenomenon. It seems like retired people think alike about number games, or at least have the time to put them together, because the person who came up with the first Sudoku puzzle was actually a retired architect. Howard Garns was a freelance puzzle constructor who was likely inspired by the earlier Latin square puzzles, which are one square with a 3x3 number system. The first Sudoku, then known as 'Number Place' was published in 1979 in a magazine called 'Dell Pencil Puzzles and Word Games'.

So how did 'Number Place' become 'Sudoku'?

The name may lead one to believe that this puzzle is Japanese, but in truth the only Japanese origins are linked to the title. "Suuji wa dokushin ni kagiru" or "the numbers must be single" was the name given to the game by Kaji Maki, the president of the newspaper publisher that introduced it to Japan in 1984. 'Sudoku' is the abbreviated form of "Suuji wa dokushin ni kagiru", with 'su' meaning 'number' and 'doku' meaning 'single'.

This is one number game that you don't need to be a math genius to figure out. The only math required is counting! It is played on a 9x9 grid with 3x3 sub-grids. These sub-grids are known as 'regions'. Some of the squares will be filled in already for you, and they are what help you to figure out the rest of the numbers in the other boxes. The object of the game is to fill in each row and each column with the numbers 1 through 9. These numbers can be in any order from 1 to 9 as long as there is only one copy of the number in

each row and column. Now to make it even more tricky, the numbers 1-9 also need to be in each region. One number cannot be repeated in a region, row, or column.

If you want to play more Sudoku, there are lots of puzzles online and in books, as well as in your daily newspaper. Give them a try and see if you can beat your friends! Or if you're feeling especially pro, you might want to make up your own puzzle. It's more challenging than it seems!

Now that you know the history of the puzzle and how to play the game, it's time to try it out right here in Avatar!

Puzzle by Jessie

	9	4			5	1	6	
1			6	9				7
6			1	8				3
	3	5		4				6
	2	7	5		6	8	3	
9				3		2	4	
5				2	9			1
2				6	1			4
	1	6	4			3	9	

Self expression



Artwork by molliegym

Beautiful

By TryingToLoveMyself

I don't always see everything that I am
But when you take and hold my hand
That's when I start to see all that I can be
That's when I start to look around and see

That I am strong, I am confident
You always love me, no relent
You make me beautiful, feel beautiful
You never could let me down

You are strong, you are everything
That makes my heart beat
You are beautiful, you are beautiful
Inside and out

I wish I could be like you
You look at me, say some
Simple words that make
My heart pound so out loud

You tell me I'm beautiful
You tell me I'm confident
You tell me I'm everything
You need to survive
You tell me I'm super girl
You tell me I'm your whole world
And most importantly of all
More than anything else
You tell me you love me just the way I am

I learned to feel beautiful
Cause you told me I'm beautiful
I've learned the truth behind the words
And now I want to scream out loud
I'm beautiful

Give Up For Fight.

By x_nicola

Along the heartbreaking avenues of life we
walk,
Falling often but vehemently refusing to quit.
These treacherous roads were not made for
idle talk,
Yet, we keep trying in vain to make mismatch-
ing pieces fit.

Through these storms our view is often
blurred,
But we'll still creep our way through the confu-
sion together.

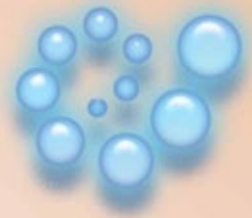
Attempting to forget the past, not one
memory is allowed to be stirred,
As we battle on through this dictating weather.

The lights in our tunnel often black out,
And we're left wondering which way it right.
Through this tunnel we run, ignoring all doubt,
'Cause what else can we do? It's give up, or
fight.



Photography by xHolyValorx

We want to quote you! Now, in addition to submitting literature, artwork, and photography, we also want to hear your quotes! These quotes, as long as they follow the TeenHelp.org rules and guidelines, are basically a free for all. So, if you have any memorable, meaningful, "sigable," or just plain hilarious quotes, please send them in by PMing an Avatar Editor or emailing avatar@teenhelp.org.



Caption This!

April's Winners!



Huh huh, coffee, coffee, where? Where? Tell me, coffee, you has coffee? Yes? Where where???????

- Lou (*ghostlyheartbeat*)

The runners up:

Beneath this soft, furry exterior lies a lion ready to POUNCE!

- *x_muse*

Please Sir, can I have some more...?

- *Ellie*

My precious!

- *Lizzie*

Wanna see my magic trick?

- *x_muse*

I'm a dinosaur in disguise. No, seriously.

- *x_nicola*

Why iz you looking at me? I iz kung foo Squirrel.

- *Marie.*

Don't MAKE me go all NINJA on you!

- *x_nicola*

May's Contest:



Photo courtesy of *Gidig*

About "Caption This!":

"Caption This!" is a photo caption contest where you, the readers, send us, the Editors, captions for the above photo. Your captions can be clever or cute, serious or not, but remember that they must follow TeenHelp.org's Terms of Service!

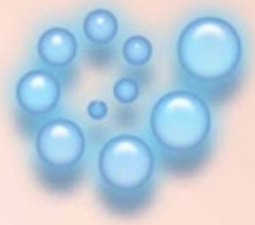
The top caption will be added directly below the photo in next month's issue, but most captions will be included! If you submit multiple captions, however, it is possible that only one will be chosen to be included.

Rules for submission:

- All captions or photos submitted for the contest must be PG-13 or lower.
- All captions or photos must be submitted by the 25th of each month.
- Everyone can submit up to 5 captions or photos per month.

How to submit your captions or photos:

Please email us your captions or photos at avatar@teenhelp.org or PM an Avatar Editor.



Here's your sign

By Katrina (Katrina)

This month's sign: Taurus (April 20 – May 20)

Taurus, this month is about you, you, and you! You're going to chill around for the most part, but in the middle of the month, you may feel a surge of sociability. When this happens, feel free to stop on by the www.TeenHelp.org chat room; we always love to see new faces! Remember not to let all those school projects pile up on you: it's simply no fun to hang ten assignments weighing on your shoulders all at one time. I can't wait to see what a fabulous month you have.

About the Taurus: Taurus, the sign of the bull, is the sign of purposeful determination and productivity. Very resourceful, perceptive and alert for good business opportunities, it maximizes profit through reliance on its own talents. It can generate great wealth. Can be very materialistic, and can be quite cruel to those who stand in its way. Taurus rules the neck

Famous Arians include: Judy Collins, Bing Crosby, Leonardo da Vinci, Salvador Dali, Ella Fitzgerald, Ulysses S. Grant, Saddam Hussein, George McGovern, Barbra Streisand, Jack Nicholson and Harry Truman.

Element: earth **Quality:** fixed **Ruling Planet:** Venus **Key phrase:** "I have"

Aries
(March 21 - April 19)

Hello, my dear Aries! This month, you may go through slight identity confusion, but fear not, you are who you always have been! It might not be a bad idea to talk to others about the questions you might be having about your identity, but if that doesn't work out so well, just look in the mirror for a multitude of advice. It looks like a past relationship may rekindle, but if you're looking for a bit of advice on how to speed up things between your most recent crush, don't hesitate to ask in the Relationships and Dating forum. As always, take care, Aries.

Gemini
(May 21 – June 20)

This month looks like one for making new friends, Gemini. Why don't you request a few more contacts on TH this month? I bet they'll accept you with open arms. It also seems like this month, more than ever, you're on the prowl to help people. If you have fifty posts, have been at TH more than thirty days, AND haven't applied for staff in the last thirty days, we want to see you on staff, so be sure to apply if you think you're interested.

Cancer
(June 21 – July 22)

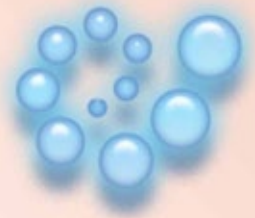
Hi, Cancer! You're just being way professional this month! Are you applying for a job? If so, and you need help, please post in the School and Careers forum. Additionally, don't forget to dress appropriately for that job interview. First impressions sometimes count the most! Finally, dear Cancer, I truly hope you plan on going on some crazy adventures sometime soon! Who's to say you won't find love there?

Leo
(July 23 – August 22)

Hello, Mr. or Ms. Leo, my favorite in-the-spotlight tiger. Lucky for you, this month you're going to get very efficient at balancing friends and your job. Remember that neither is more important than the other, so you do need to give adequate time to either (as well as family and other important pieces of your life). I have a feeling, my Leo, that your month isn't going to be too shabby, if you catch my drift!

Virgo
(August 23 - September 22)

You're a bit irritated with all the crazy stuff going on in your life right now, but have no fear, at the end of the month, everything is going to fall into place. In the meantime, you should check out Avatar's article on keeping organized during the Spring to try to help you manage all these different aspects of your life (especially keeping the house clean!)



Here's your sign (continued...)

By Katrina (Katrina)

Libra

(September 23 - October 22)

Hiya, Libra! This sounds like an amazing month for you, and I'm so glad that things are working out for you. If you want to, post about some great things going on in your life right now by posting in our Good Days! forum for all of our users to read. We always love hearing about positive things in peoples' lives, but especially yours, dear Libra.

Scorpio

(September 23 - October 22)

At the beginning of the month, maybe it's time to just take some "you time" and focus on yourself for a bit. You've been so busy focusing on other things, such as school, that you've hardly had time to breathe! So, take a Saturday NOT for the team for once so you can rejuvenate. By the end of the month, I have no doubt that you'll be back on your feet better than ever. In the mean time, just try to relax a little bit!

Sagittarius

(November 21 - December 21)

Do you need to express yourself this month, sweet Sagittarius? If so, you need to check out the TH blogs and post a few yourself this month. We all would love to hear from you and I bet a few users would even comment back. Other than that, this month will hopefully be pretty chill for you. The middle of the month should bring a day of really awesome, randomly occurring events, so that's something to look forward to!

Capricorn

(December 22 - January 19)

Looks like this is your golden month! Bask in it because you never know when another month like this is going to come around. Also, be sure not to take it for granted. I'm sure you already appreciate having good times so much, but there's always someone who wishes to be in your shoes.

Aquarius

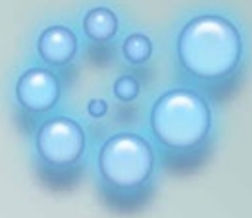
(January 20 - February 19)

This month seems like a good one for you to travel around the world, Aquarius! Or at least to the next city and do some volunteer work, right? You're hopefully going to feel very selfless this month, so please feel free to use that to your advantage. Also, take pictures and post them in our Pictures forum! It's always nice to hear about good deeds done by another THer.

Pisces

(February 20 - March 19)

Hello dear Pisces. Make a name for yourself this month. You won't have any problem getting the attention of key people, so proceed confidently. There's no telling what making connections now could amount to later, so you need to take full advantage of any opportunity that heads your way!



The wind down...

Acknowledgements

Image sources

Colored Pencils: www.everystockphoto.com

Press hat: www.usagold.com

Star signs: www.grafamania.net

Articles

Zodiac: www.astrostarcharts.com

Thanks for reading!

Thank you for taking the time to read this issue of Avatar! Any comments, questions, suggestions or criticisms can be directed towards the editorial team. You can also send us any submissions you have for Avatar, which are a really important part of keeping Avatar alive. We appreciate any submissions that are made to us. We look forward to hearing from you, and hope you enjoy the next edition of Avatar!

The Avatar Editors.

Please visit us at the Avatar page, www.avatar.teenhelp.org, or email us at avatar@teenhelp.org.