

The Grey  
Bipolar Area

Bring out  
Beethoven!

Top ten back to  
school items!

Cover photo  
by Marie.

Sept 2009

TeenHelp.org's eZine

Volume 3,  
Issue 3

# Avatar

**Cause: Operation Beautiful**  
The post-it note path to finding beauty within.





## Table of Contents

4

### TeenHelp Times

*Activist Aung San Suu Kyi is arrested in Burma and looking back at September 11, 2001.*

6

### The Grey Bipolar Area by Maria (Gidig)

*Understanding soft bipolar disorder and the mood spectrum.*

7

### Stages of Pregnancy by Kathy (drowningangel)

*You and your pregnancy: the second and third trimesters.*

9

### Cause: Operation Beautiful by Katrina

*The post-it note path to finding beauty within.*

10

### Dear Avatar

*The Editors respond to requests for advice from users like you!*

13

### Bring Out Beethoven! by Nat (Strider)

*Bringing the symphony to you: Classical Music Month.*

14

### Tweaked and Beautiful Boy by Maria (Gidig)

*Battling addiction's voice from both sides.*

15

### Fun and Games

*TeenHelp Top Tens: Back to School, fun picture games, trivia and much more!*

18

### Self Expression

*Expressing life through your fingertips: poetry, quotes, and photography.*

19

### Horoscopes by Katrina

*September's sign: Virgo. "Not always as modest as I seem!"*

### Also

- 3 **Editors' Letter**
- 3 **Contributors**
- 15 **TeenHelp Top Tens**
- 21 **The Wind Down**

### Contact

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

Avatar submission form: [www.teenhelp.org/submit](http://www.teenhelp.org/submit)  
Email: [avatar@teenhelp.org](mailto:avatar@teenhelp.org)



Letter from the Editors and acknowledgments.

## Letter from the Editors

Hello everyone! Welcome to the September 2009 issue of Avatar. For many teens, September is a busy month; the end of summer is fast upon us and a lot of TeenHelp is headed back to school! Good luck during this back-to-school season, and for those of you off to college or university, don't party too hard!

In other news, we have a lot of wonderful content for you this month, beginning with the **TeenHelp Times**, including an article on the house arrest of Burmese pro-democracy activist, Aung San Suu Kyi, as well as a piece in remembrance of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States.

In the **Mind & Body** section is an informative article on Soft Bipolar Disorder as well as the second half of "Stages of Pregnancy." In this issue, in **Lifestyle**, you'll catch an engaging piece on Classical Musical Month, and what better time than to mark the end of the dreaded band camp season? Also be sure to check out a captivating review of the books *Tweaked* and *Beautiful Boy*.

Also featured in this issue is a cause that many TeenHelper's hold near and dear to their hearts: Operation Beautiful, so be sure to read about TeenHelp's **Cause of the Month!** This month we've received three submissions for **Dear Avatar**, Avatar's very own advice column, check them out!

Don't forget **Fun & Games**, where you can try your hand at some picture puzzles and other fun things, as well as read this month's Top Tens! And last, but certainly not least, be sure to read **Self Expression** and **Horoscopes!**

See you in November!  
The Avatar Editors.

## Editors

**Editor-in-Chief**  
Mel

**Content Editor**  
Katrina

**Graphics Editor**  
Jessie

**Sub-Editor of News and Debates**  
Mai (sushi\_error)

**Sub-Editor of Mind and Body**  
Maria (Gidig)

**Sub-Editor of Lifestyle**  
Nat (Strider)

## Contributors

The Avatar Editors would like to thank the following TeenHelp users for their valuable contributions published in this month's magazine.

Contributions from readers like you are what make Avatar so unique and wonderful. Please consider submitting content, whether it be an article, poem, photograph, or anything else.

[www.teenhelp.org/submit](http://www.teenhelp.org/submit) or [avatar@teenhelp.org](mailto:avatar@teenhelp.org)

### Articles

Kathy (drowningangel)

### Images

Adam

Gina (DontGiveUpHope)

Marie (Marie.)

Naomi (N@0M!)

### Self Expression

Casey

DreamCatcher.x





## Free Burma, Free Aung San Suu Kyi

by Mai (sushi\_error)

On August 11th, 2009 a Burmese court found pro-democracy activist, Aung San Suu Kyi guilty for allowing American citizen, John Yettaw, into her home after he swam there in early May. Suu Kyi is sentenced to an additional 18 months of house arrest (she has spent 14 of the last 20 years in detention). Yettaw will spend seven years in jail as well as four years of hard labor.

On May 3rd, 2009 Yettaw swam to Aung San Suu Kyi's lakeside home, hoping to free her. A week later, Aung San Suu Kyi was taken into custody by Burmese police. She told a Burmese court that she did not know about Yettaw's visit until his arrival and gave him shelter for two nights. The political activist chose not to notify authorities because she feared Yettaw would be arrested.

**“We all need to be the voices for the Burmese people because they are being silenced every day.”**

Aung San Suu Kyi has been the symbol of Burma's struggle for freedom and democracy. In 1990, the National League for Democracy (NLD), a party led by Aung San Suu Kyi won a convincing victory in the country's first and only free election since 1960. However, the military junta refused to acknowledge the results and would not transfer power to the NLD. Since then, Burma has been ruled by a ruthless and corrupted military government.

Suu Kyi has been placed under numerous house arrests because the government does not want to see her in control. The recent sentencing of Suu Kyi has been met with anger and frustration worldwide. Around the world, thousands of individuals have been campaigning for Suu Kyi's immediate release and calling for freedom for Burma. Many people strongly believe the only reason why the sentence was carried out is because the government does not want to see Suu Kyi participate in the country's 2010 elections.

Countries like the United States, United Kingdom, and France have voiced their deep disappointment and condemnation of Suu Kyi's arrest and sentencing. The United Nations condemns the 18-month



sentence and has been putting enormous pressure on the Burmese government since. On the other hand, the European Union has chosen to stiffen sanctions against Burma; however, sanctions will not solve the problem because Burma is one of the poorest nations in the world and sanctions will not deter the government from continuing to oppress its people.

Economic sanctions will not free Aung San Suu Kyi or the Burmese people. Instead, all countries need to rally together and put more pressure on the military junta. It is extremely disheartening that Burma's main allies and trade partners, China and India, have chosen to take a back seat on this major issue. Both countries have yet to comment on this recent sentencing which clearly speaks volumes of their views on this problem. Nevertheless, we all need to be the voices for the Burmese people because they are being silenced every day. We cannot allow any type of government to rule a group of people the way the military junta has ruled the Burmese. The actions displayed by the Burmese government cannot be tolerated nor justified in any way. ■





## This Month in History: Going back to September 11, 2001

by Jessie

**September 11, 2001.** I'm twelve years old and as I walk through my school I am stunned by the eerie stillness of our never-silent halls. You can't get us this quiet with the promise of ice cream and pizza but today, a day many of us will not understand until years from now, you couldn't force us to speak.

It's 8:46 a.m. EDT. The school day has just started and things, so far, are normal. A terrible accident has happened in New York City; American Airlines Flight 11 has crashed into the World Trade Center's North Tower. But as we all know, accidents happen. It will take another seventeen minutes for the world to realize what is happening is no accident. At 9:03 a.m. a second plane, United Airlines Flight 175, hits the South Tower. A third plane, American Airlines Flight 77, crashes into the Pentagon at 9:37 a.m. and at 10:03 a.m., the fourth and final plane crashes into a field in rural Pennsylvania.



Here, in my small town, the world is hushed. School personnel walk from classroom to classroom, quietly instructing teachers to turn off the televisions. History is happening but it has no place within these walls. I guess they are hoping we are simply too young to notice. But dazed and frantic parents fill the school's main office and spill into the halls. They want their children. They want to take them into their arms, to have them in the safety of their homes, as far from the outside world and public places as they can hide them. No one knows when

or where this will end.

My family and I crowd the television, huddled together for hours. I've never been to New York City. I won't go until years later, my first trip to see the Statue of Liberty and Ground Zero, the site where the towers fell. But the New York on the television screen looks nothing like the city I have seen in the movies. People, cars, and buildings are covered in dust and the safety we felt in our schools and offices this morning is now gone; maybe forever. ■

### Contact us!



*Do you have any comments or feedback on any of our featured news articles? Would you like to see one of your articles here or do you have any suggestions on what you'd like to see in future editions of Avatar? If so, we'd love to hear from you!*

Submission form: [www.teenhelp.org/submit](http://www.teenhelp.org/submit)  
Email: [avatar@teenhelp.org](mailto:avatar@teenhelp.org)





## The Grey Bipolar Area

by Maria (Gidig)

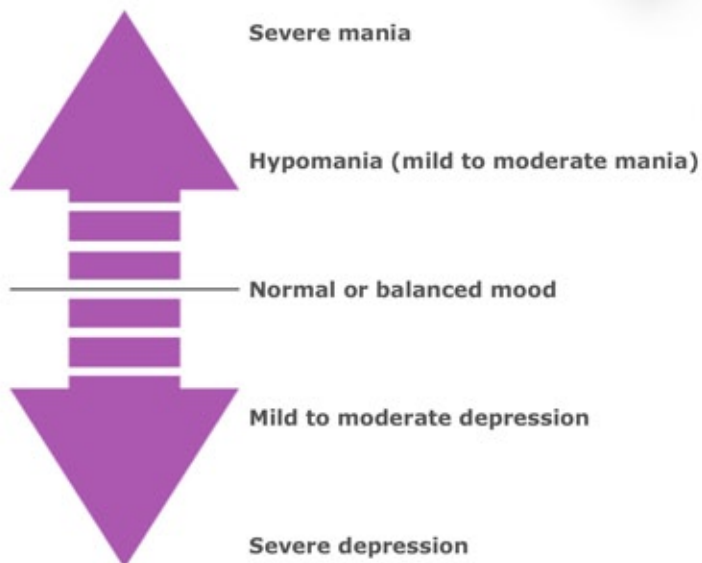
**Depression and Bipolar Disorder** are both mood disorders that can greatly affect your life. Though many see bipolar disorder as movies and television make it seem, minute by minute mood swings, this is not truly the case.

Depression is a constant low mood, lasting weeks, months, and sometimes even years at a time. While bipolar disorder includes depression, you also go into stages called "mania". When in a manic state, you have elated moods, more so than the average mood. Your ego can inflate incredibly, sometimes even to the point that you think you can fly, or are convinced that you are God.

It's very important to know these differences when dealing with a mood disorder in your life.

*What is "Soft Bipolar"?* To understand soft bipolar, you must understand the mood spectrum. People think you're either bipolar, or unipolar (depressive disorder) as though there is no in between area. But this is not the case. You can be in between, and most people are. The area in between "Bipolar Disorder" and "Depression" is like a grey area. Soft bipolar is around where it is listed 'hypomania'. This is where it gets closer to being depression, but strays far enough away to not actually have bipolar disorder.

Here's the mood spectrum:



The term soft bipolar is not yet considered an official term by the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical

manual of Mental Disorders), but it is a term that explains what you may suffer from. It is a commonly known term among psychiatrists and psychologists.

### Symptoms:

- Depression
- Lack of motivation
- Tearful
- Isolating yourself
- Self-Harm behavior
- Not enjoying things you used to
- Suicidal thoughts
- Excessive sleeping
- Lack of appetite
- Weight gain/Loss
- Lack of energy
- Signs of mania or hypomania (explained in more detail later)
- Excessive weight gain
- Elated mood
- Racing thoughts
- Fast speech
- High libido
- Spending money in large amounts
- Excessive gambling
- Psychosis
- Depression hits, gets better, comes back, gets better and so forth
- If you take an anti-depressant and become manic

*What is Hypomania?* There are two main differences between mania and hypomania. One, is it only has to last for 4 days for hypomania to be considered 'official'. Though who is to judge if our emotions are official or not, they have to have some sort of guidelines. Mania has to last a week before declared official. Hypomania is also not severe enough to cause impairment in social functioning. Though keep in mind, the depression that comes with soft bipolar can impair social functioning. Otherwise, they have the same symptoms; just hypomania is considered to be on a lesser scale. Many can take it to just be the average mood, so it's a lot less commonly found.

*Mixed States.* It is possible to have mania and depression symptoms at the simultaneously! This is a very severe and dangerous state for one to be in. For example, mania causes racing thoughts, depression causes negativity. A mixed state may give you negative racing thoughts. Many people get extremely suicidal when in this state, so if you feel you or a friend is in danger; call your local emergency services immediately.

(continued on page 7)





*Do I have 'Soft Bipolar'?* If you think you may have a type of 'softer bipolar', look at the symptoms listed earlier. See if they sound like you. Also think about if you've taken anti-depressants before, and if so, did they make you experience symptoms of mania?

Also ask someone around you what they think. They can see you through a different pair of eyes and usually see changes more easily than we can ourselves. Sometimes, you just may not realize that you show certain symptoms.

Look and see if there is anyone in your family with bipolar disorder or depression. If so, while this doesn't mean you have it, the chance is more likely. So be sure to bring that up to a doctor if you intend to speak to one.

*What now?* If you feel you're at risk for any mood disorder, it's time to see a professional. Find some way to speak to a psychiatrist to get properly diagnosed. Sometimes it's best to see a general doctor first, but always best to get diagnosed by someone who specializes in depression and bipolar disorder. Make sure they have the proper education and qualifications to diagnose mood disorders. The best combination with the best success rates would be seeing a therapist and taking medication. So look at doing both of those things. (Be sure to take only medication prescribed to you, and taken as per the instructions on the bottle or from your doctor) Though medication is not for everyone, so be sure to do your research.

Mood stabilizers, such as lithium, are most commonly used for bipolar disorders. If you show any symptoms of mania or hypomania, do not take anti-depressants! They will only magnify symptoms of mania.

Also be sure to thoroughly research your medications, how they're best to be taken, what's in them, side effects and so forth. And ask your doctor questions. That's what they're there for, and they shouldn't mind at all. ■

## Pregnancy: Second and Third Trimesters

by Kathy (drowningangel)

**By the second trimester**, your embryo has developed into a fetus about an ounce in weight. Throughout the second trimester (13-28 weeks), the fetus will develop facial characteristics, have cartilage change into hard bone, and begin to add baby fat to its form. By the end of the sixth month, your child will be around one and a half pounds in weight and at least ten inches in length. While some of the symptoms from the first trimester may have subsided (morning sickness and cravings), you'll have a few new ones to add to the list.

*Abdominal and Low Back Pain.* As your uterus and abdomen stretch and your weight increases, you're likely to experience more back pain. In addition, the loosening joints in your hips can cause some abdominal and pelvic pain. Applying heat, taking warm baths, or lying on your left side may help with these symptoms. If they continue, talk to your caregiver.

*Difficulty Sleeping.* Many women find that they're having more trouble getting or staying asleep. It's not unusual to have vivid dreams as well.

**“To help yourself sleep, exercise. Don't overdo it, but physically tiring yourself during the day can help your body to relax more at night.”**

To help yourself sleep, exercise. Don't overdo it, but physically tiring yourself during the day can help your body to relax more at night. Keep your bedroom comfortable. Make sure your room is a comfortable temperature, your mattress is firm, and you have back/hip support with body pillows. Have a bedtime routine. Many find that having a routine (reading for an hour, yoga, a warm bath) can help them settle down and relax for a good sleep. Limit fluids. If you find that you're waking up often to urinate, try to limit your fluids after 6-7 PM.

(continued on page 8)



Something for the heart and soul.



**Bleeding of Nose and Gums.** As hormones increase, the mucous membranes in your nose, on your gums, and even in your rectum can be affected. These hormones also increase blood flow to these areas, bringing a prime environment for bleeds. Notify your provider of any of these changes or if you have bleeds that you cannot stem or stop. Do not use nasal sprays or medications unless indicated by your caregiver.

**Tingling and Itching.** During the second trimester, it's not unusual for tissues throughout the body to swell. Tingling and numbness are often signs of lessened blood flow to the area and pressure on the nerves due to swelling. Some women develop carpal tunnel syndrome from the pressure on their nerves. Itching on your abdomen is common as the skin stretches. These symptoms should go away after delivery.

**Fetal Movement.** This is an exciting new development for mothers, and typically this "quickenings" happens around the fifth month of pregnancy. It is more of a flutter than a kicking; actual fetal kicking is usually not felt until around the seventh month.

**You're in the "home stretch"** at this point. The third trimester lasts from month 7-9 (or delivery). The fetus will do a lot of growing at this point from doubling its weight in the seventh month to filling out and developing its lungs in the eighth month. Most babies are born around nineteen inches in length and weigh seven and a half pounds.



It is around the beginning of the third trimester that most mothers begin taking child-birthing classes and breastfeeding courses, if they so choose. As the first and second, some additional symptoms and concerns will present in the third trimester, too.

**Increased Temperature.** As the fetus grows, it shares body heat with you, which increases your own temperature. It's not odd for mothers to sweat more, especially at night.

To stay cool dress lightly. Wear breathable fabrics such as cotton. Stay out of the sun. Try to stay out of the direct heat of the day, if possible. Take a cool shower or bath to cool your core body temperature. Drink fluids. Although you will urinate even more, try to drink lots of fluids so you don't become dehydrated. Avoid alcohol and caffeinated drinks, as they dehydrate you even further.

**Swelling/Toxemia.** It's not abnormal to continue to experience swelling in the limbs in the third trimester. The concern comes when you have a sudden, rapid increase in swelling or weight and should be reported to your caregiver immediately, as this could be a sign of toxemia or preeclampsia (high blood pressure that can restrict blood flow to the placenta). This condition is more likely to be present during first pregnancies and past the 20th week of pregnancy.

To reduce swelling avoid standing for long periods of time. Keep your feet elevated when sitting if possible. Avoid knee highs or restricted pantyhose. Drink plenty of water to flush toxins out of your system.

**Colostrum.** You may begin to notice additional tenderness in and discharge from the breast during the third trimester. This fluid, known as colostrum, is used to nourish your baby through breast feeding and protect them from infections. Disposable nursing pads can be placed inside a maternity/support bra to absorb extra fluid.

**False Labor.** Contractions may begin to occur after the 20th week of pregnancy to help prepare your body for delivery. They are known as Braxton-Hicks Contractions, and are normal for most mothers. To be safe, report any contractions to your caregiver to make sure you're not going into early labor.

We obviously cannot go through pregnancy and labor for you, but hopefully knowing some of the information this article provided can make the experience easier and more enjoyable for you. ■





## TeenHelp's Cause of the Month: Operation Beautiful

by Katrina

This cause of the month, Operation Beautiful, has become close to the hearts of many TeenHelpers since it became popular around the forums over the past few weeks.

Operation Beautiful began when a twenty-five year old blogger, Caitlin, became fed up with what is referred to as "Fat Talk." Fat Talk is basically when women say or think negative things about their bodies. Fat Talk, and the underlying issues behind it, can lead to skipping school or work or not going to the doctor because one may feel as though their body is not worthy of those around them. Statistically speaking, though, the majority of the women the media presents us with (models, TV stars, etc) are slimmer than ninety-eight percent of the every day woman. In fact, if mannequins were made to be real-life women, they would actually be too thin to bear children; their body size is simply unrealistic. Before we relate this back to Operation Beautiful, let's give a few quick tips on eliminating "Fat Talk." Focus on a few things: appreciating yourself, turning negative thoughts into positive ones, not saying negative things aloud in front of others, and not comparing yourself to others.

So, what does this have to do with Operation Beautiful? In the words of Caitlin:

***"Operation Beautiful is simple: all you need is a pen and a piece of paper."***

Basically, those who'd like to participate can leave post-it notes or sticky notes on public restroom stalls or mirrors, in the gym, in the grocery store, or wherever they think people might benefit from



Photograph by Maria (Gidig)

reading them. These notes can say anything positive that would make a person smile, such as "Smile! You're beautiful today," or "You're amazing just the way you are," and then ending the note with the URL to the website so that others can participate as well.

Though this is a new movement, the impact it is having on many is very apparent. The Operation Beautiful blog, which can be found at [www.operationbeautiful.com](http://www.operationbeautiful.com), has gotten tons of submissions with stories by those either leaving notes around town or those having found a note around town. In a nutshell,

***"The mission of Operation Beautiful is to post anonymous notes in public places for other women to find. The point is that WE ARE ALL BEAUTIFUL. You are enough... just the way you are!"***

If nothing else, always remember that no matter who you are or what you look like or how you feel about yourself, you are a gorgeous person with a heart to match. ■



Photograph by Naomi (N@OM!)





*A unique way of seeking help.*

**I was going through my mom's open email and found some emails she was writing. I found out she was emailing my dad! I feel I have the right to meet him; I want to know his side of the story, but I fear that my mom is protecting me.**

Hey there,

Well, as you know, you probably shouldn't have been going through your mother's email. I realize that it was open and that it was very tempting to do so, but what's on her email is her business. However, I don't know - perhaps this is a blessing in disguise? I suppose we're just going to have to wait and see how this all plays out.

I, personally, believe that you should confront your mother about this. Ask her why she's been keeping his name from you all these years and tell her that now that you're twenty-one, you really feel as though you're able to handle the truth, and you would much prefer it to being lied to. If you don't feel able to talk to her in person, there's always the whole note-writing path that you could take, but I do think talking to her face-to-face would be the most effective.

I don't think you'll know whether or not you should contact him until you talk to your mom, so first thing is first! I hope that everything works out for you, though, and that this man will end up being a great father figure for you. Take care and be blessed.

- Katrina

Hey,

I'm not going to say much about looking through your mother's e-mail, since I'm sure you know that might not have been the best decision. But I think you should speak to your mother about this. Who your father is plays a big part in your life if you want it to. I mean, he was the one who allowed you to be born! That's kind of a big deal.

I'd sit your mother down and tell her that you noticed in some of her e-mails that she was talking to a guy, and you noticed he might be your father. She may or may not just focus on the fact that you were going through her e-mail, so wait a minute for her to calm down. Explain you didn't read through everything, you were just curious.

Then explain to her how important it is to you to meet your father, or at least know more about him

Now's the time where she'll explain she's protecting you if she is. Make sure to use "I feel" statements, especially since I'm sure you're upset that she hasn't told you the entire truth regarding your father. You don't want to get into an argument over it. But say things such as "I feel I have a right to meet my father" instead of, "You need to let me meet him". It sounds less attacking, whether that was your intention or not.

Try not to be disappointed at your mother's first reaction. She may say you can't meet him or something of that sort. But if she does, just try talking to her later and explaining yourself again until she understands how important this is to you.

- Maria (Gidig)

**I started my period today. Not only does it really suck and hurt, but my mom has basically told the whole world! Any advice?**

Hey there!

While it is exciting and a step into growing older to get your period, unfortunately it's not all glory. It usually is just a pain.

What's the part that's hardest for you right now? Cramps? Menstrual cramps is what gets me each month. Ibuprofen can work miracles for some people! Putting a heating pad or hot water bottle where the most pain is can help eliminate some cramps too. Make sure to drink lots of water, and try to stay away from caffeine. If you're missing school or work due to cramps, and can't find anything to help, consider going to your doctor. Birth control is commonly prescribed to help with cramps.

You also have to find out what works better for you, tampons or pads. Try them both. Tampons are better if you do sports, go swimming, and other activities like that. But pads are better if you're really not comfortable using a tampon. From personal experience though, I'd definitely try and see if you can get tampons to work for you. Play around with what absorbencies work for you. Taking out a dry tampon hurts!

As for your mom, talk to her about how you're not comfortable with her telling people this. While it's exciting to see her daughter grow up, it's not acceptable for her to share something so personal about you when you're not okay with it. Sit down and have a serious discussion about it, tell her how it makes you feel. Explain you know she's excited, but you want her to take your feelings into account.

- Maria (Gidig)





*A unique way of seeking help.*

Hey there,

Oh my goodness, I remember when I started my period. I was on a field trip of sorts (though the only people there with me were five or so of my best friends), and we stopped at a restaurant and I went to the restroom, and I saw. I was so happy (though I have no idea why). It's so funny - before one gets her period, it's practically all she can understand because she doesn't realize how very much not fun it is, and then once she does get it, she dreads it coming each month. How ironic, right?

As far as your mom telling everyone goes, don't worry - you're NOT alone. Your mom's just freaking out because her little girl has become a little lady! It's embarrassing, but it's not like anyone is going to call you out on it or anything (hopefully). I think many mothers will do this simply because it's such a big, I don't know, mile stone or something in one's life?

See, that weekend I got mine that I was talking about, the week after it was swim camp. So, I had to quickly learn how to use tampons, but boy am I glad I did, because I know some girls my age (I'm eighteen) that are still frightened of tampons. To me, they're SO much more comfortable and convenient, so if you're comfortable with the idea, I'd try to go ahead and get used to them if I were you. Start with the slender kind so that you don't get overwhelmed. And if you aren't able to properly place the tampon on the first try, don't get discouraged - it often takes a few different tries to get right the first time.

Other than that, just hang in there. Buy yourself some chocolate; you deserve it. I hope that this week will pass quickly for you. Also, don't get freaked out if you don't start out by having your period every single month on the exact same day. Many times, periods will be irregular for the first couple of years before they'll finally start to become regular. Good luck!

- Katrina

Hey there,

I can definitely relate to what you are going through! Of all the people to tell I started my period, my mom told my brother! She was so excited (I thought she would throw a party in my honor) but to me it was no big deal, and I wanted her to treat it like it was no big deal. It was awful, to me, that she told people, but I got through it. It really helped me when I would remember that I wasn't the only one of my friends that had a period, and it also helped to remind myself that having a period is a normal part of growing up for girls.

Try to understand where your mom is coming from and to not be TOO mad at her. She really is just excited for you. After all, from her perspective, this means her "little girl" is growing up and becoming a woman. It might feel silly to you, right now, but I would bet that if you have a daughter in the future, you will be excited for her, too.

Getting your period really is a sort of "rite of passage" for girls. It feels awful—cramps, bloating, and just menstruating in general is never really fun. But once you have a regular period things will start to ease up a bit. You will actually, probably, get into the swing of having a period to the point where you will freak out if you DON'T have it one month. I've done that plenty of times, myself. If you continue to have bad pains from your period, maybe you should ask your mom to take you to the doctor.

Otherwise, maybe it would help you to talk to your mom about this. She seems open enough to talk about periods (since she has been telling people) so maybe you could talk to her about it some more. Let her know that it makes you uncomfortable that she is telling people, and you would rather keep it quiet. Hopefully she'll understand and will be a little more calm about it, in the future.

- Jessie

**I presume everyone has felt emotional numbness? I'm just wondering, how do you get out of it? I know it's different for everyone, but how did you do it?**

Hey,

Yes, everyone has felt emotional numbness at one point in their lives and in every situation tends to be different. Personally, I have struggled with emotional numbness for one reason or another and at times, it can be very difficult. Nevertheless, there are solutions for this problem.

Do you have a certain activity you enjoy doing? Perhaps, keeping yourself busy will help you focus your attention and energy into something. It will probably help soothe your emotions and relax you. Have you also considered talking to an adult you trust and/or seeing a therapist? Therapists and other professionals can give you advice and techniques on how to manage these kinds of feelings.

Lastly, everyone manages their emotions in different ways. Personally, I try to focus on things that make me happy and do activities to keep my mind busy. You could consider breathing techniques and/or meditation if you are ever feeling really stressed.

- Mai (sushi\_error)





*A unique way of seeking help.*

Hey there,

You're absolutely right; I think that, to some extent, everyone has felt this emotional numbness that you describe. Personally, I've never felt it to such an extent that others have, but there have been times in my life where I've struggled with so many factors at once that it just becomes somewhat overwhelming.

Have you ever tried, or even considered, therapy? Therapy isn't going to work for everyone, but there are so many different professionals out there who focus on different types of therapy, so different things do actually work for different people. I recommend that you try to possibly look into trying this out. If it doesn't work, though, don't give up! As I said, there are different forms of therapy out there that work for different people.

The path to recovery is very difficult for everyone, but very different for each person. For some, it takes longer than others. For some, it is much more stress-inducing than it is for others. No matter what the case for you is, you just have to try to keep pushing through this. We all fall down; the important thing is that we try to pick ourselves back up, brush ourselves off, and keep moving forward. If you have any support from anyone in your life (be it family, friends, teachers, or whoever), reach out to them! They want to help you.

I wish you the best of luck in everything, and I hope that things shape up for you soon.

- Katrina

Hello,

I've certainly felt emotional numbness before, and I have to agree that it can be a frightening thing! It's important to remember that it doesn't last forever and that it is something you can cope with, though. Personally, I do believe that everyone experiences a numbness like this, or similar, at some point in their lives, but they are never alone!

The way I have coped with this numbness is by talking to people, such as my friends and family. I find that it really helps me to talk and to feel supported by the people I care about. Even if you don't feel like talking about the numbness, it does also help to talk about other things on your mind, or even everyday things that you enjoy. It could also help you to get your mind off of the numbness and the feelings that caused it.

Try keeping yourself busy and surrounding yourself with the people you like spending time with, and you'll find that the numbness will ease itself away. You never need to feel afraid to talk about these things, so do your best to be confident.

- Nat (Strider)

## Ask us for advice!

*If you would like to submit a question for us to answer we would love to hear from you!*

**[www.teenhelp.org/submit](http://www.teenhelp.org/submit)**  
**or**  
**[avatar@teenhelp.org](mailto:avatar@teenhelp.org)**



Kicking off your month with pizzazz.



## Bring Out The Beethoven!

by Nat (Strider)

**There is no better time** to listen to a concerto, go to an opera, or decide to pick up the violin than September! Classical Music Month is a time that everyone can enjoy, even if your favourite instrument is the electric guitar.

Classical music is most often played by a symphony orchestra, which can contain over twenty six types of instruments. The instruments fall under the sections of strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion. In an opera production, voices are also used. Most of the instruments used in an orchestra were invented in the 18th and 19th centuries and are still used to this day.

Some instruments you may be familiar with are:

**Violin:** This instrument is the smallest and highest-pitched of the violin family, which also contains the larger viola, cello, and double base. It has four strings and it is played by drawing a bow across them. The violin is extremely important in an orchestra because of its tone, and it often plays the melody line in a piece. Despite being portrayed as a 'classical' instrument, the violin is also used in popular and jazz music.



Photograph by Kim

**Clarinet:** The clarinet has the largest pitch range of any common woodwind instrument and is played with a single reed. It is a member of the largest woodwind family, but unfortunately many of its relatives are no longer commonly used, as they are considered obsolete. In most orchestral pieces, a clarinetist uses two clarinets, the A and B flat with which they can easily switch the mouthpieces.

**Tuba:** This is one of the more recent additions to the symphony orchestra, but also one of the most recognizable of the brass section. It has the lowest pitch out of all of the brass instruments and it takes the role of the 'bass'. Often, an orchestra only uses one tuba, but sometimes it will use two. 'Tuba' means 'trumpet' or 'horn' in Latin—sure makes you wonder what 'trumpet' means!

*Despite being portrayed as a 'classical' instrument, the violin is also used in popular and jazz music.*

**Cymbals:** In an orchestra, cymbals are used at dynamic moments to emphasize a feeling of shock or excitement in a piece. 'Crash cymbals' are the most common in classical music. These are the ones a musician will hold in their hands and clash together, which has also given them the name 'clash cymbals'. Cymbals are often teamed up with a bass drum playing the same part, as one uses a high frequency and the other uses a low one. Contrary to popular belief, cymbals can also be played softly, or at 'pianissimo'.

When you think 'classical music', you'll probably picture Beethoven or Mozart, as you should since they are two of the most influential composers of all time, but there are also many famous modern classical composers as well. Think back to the last time you watched a movie and try to remember some of the music playing in one of the key scenes. Often the musical score for a movie is made up of classical music, and that music is made up of the same instruments used in orchestras hundreds of years ago.

So, for the month of September try picking up an instrument! Whether you decide to play 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star' or 'Ode to Joy', just remember to have fun. Who knows? You could be the next Mozart! ■

### Contact us!

*Do you have any comments or feedback on this month's Lifestyle articles? Would you like to see your article or idea here, in the future? If so, we'd love to hear from you!*

Submission form: [www.teenhelp.org/submit](http://www.teenhelp.org/submit)  
Email: [avatar@teenhelp.org](mailto:avatar@teenhelp.org)



Kicking off your month with pizzazz.



## Book Reviews: *Tweaked* and *Beautiful Boy*

by Maria (Gidig)



Photograph by Maria (Gidig)

Methamphetamine, you've probably heard the word, it's an awful, addictive drug. One young man unfortunately got addicted to it, and the books *Tweaked: Growing Up on Methamphetamines* by Nic Sheff and *Beautiful Boy: A Father's Journey Through His Son's Addiction* by David Sheff, explain the whole story.

David Sheff is the father who watches his son waddle through the struggles of life. Unfortunately, once the drugs start, there is no way to stop them. Time and time again Nic comes home high until eventually, Nic simply doesn't come home. His father has to continue on with his life, taking care of his two younger children and Nic's step mother. This was no easy task.

David Sheff wrote his tragic and heartbreaking memoir after being forced to make decision after decision in what to do with his son. He goes through the "I promise I'll stop this time" over and over as many people who know an addict can recall. Then David even begins to blame himself for the path Nic has taken. Reading this memoir is bound to help anyone struggling with a close friend or relative who is an addict. The feelings of being on that side of the drug world are described so flawlessly, truth stuffed in to every word; you can't help but try to connect with David's voice.

After "just" trying marijuana, and "just" smoking this and that, eventually Nic is hooked, and he can't stop himself. At times, he wants to stop. He goes as far as going to rehab to get help for his addiction.

But as any addict can tell you, at some point there is no stopping them. Nic is on a roll with his drug life, and even thought at times that things were perfect for him. As the reader, you cringe wondering how he can possibly believe this about his life.

He worries about various aspects of the new life he's living, but that final high pulls him back each time. Falling through a shower door doesn't even phase this addict. Sex is like candy. He forgets to remember his own well being. We even learn that not mentioned too much in *Beautiful Boy*, Nic also uses heroin, cocaine, or whatever he can come across.

Nic Sheff wrote this eye-opening memoir that is bound to bring out the caring side of you. It almost makes you want to go and help him, even after getting sober. He's had relapses here and there, but as of June 4, 2009 on a showing of Oprah, he has kept himself clean.

**“The feelings of being on that side of the drug world are described so flawlessly, truth stuffed in to every word; you can't help but try to connect with David's voice.”**

Both of these books grabbed my attention faster than a book has done before. Hearing the voices of both the addict and his father is invaluable. They both follow the same story line, which helps their credibility. If you want to know more about drugs, what it's like to live on drugs, or even just enjoy memoirs, these are the books for you! ■

**Have you read a good book lately?  
Send us your review!**

[www.teenhelp.org/submit](http://www.teenhelp.org/submit)

or

[avatar@teenhelp.org](mailto:avatar@teenhelp.org)





*It's all fun and games until you fail math.*

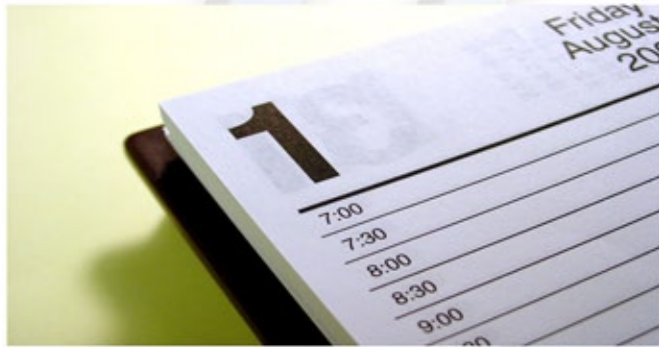
## TeenHelp's Top Ten Back to School Items!

by Jessie and Mel

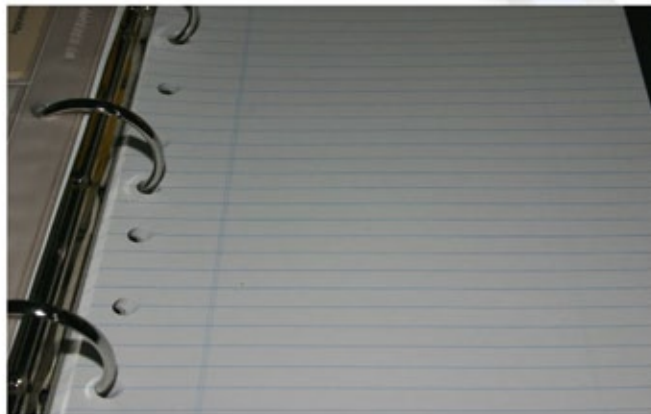
**September is here again**, which means a new school year is just about to start! In honor of the upcoming school year, we've compiled a list of our editor's best back to school supply picks to get you started.

In no particular order, here they are!

One: **Organize.** A day planner.



Two: **In-class.** Binders, folders, dividers, paper.



Three: **Study.** Sticky notes and index cards.

Four: **Pencil case.** Pens, pencils, highlighters, pencil sharpener.



Five: **Miscellaneous supplies.** Erasers, ruler, glue, paper clips.

Six: **Write it right!** Dictionary, thesaurus.



Seven: **Locker essentials.** Mirror, magnets, lock, and other locker supplies.



Eight: **Technology.** Calculator, cell phone, laptop or computer, printer.

Nine: **Stay charged.** A lunch box or lunch money.



Ten: **Carry it all!** A backpack or other bag.

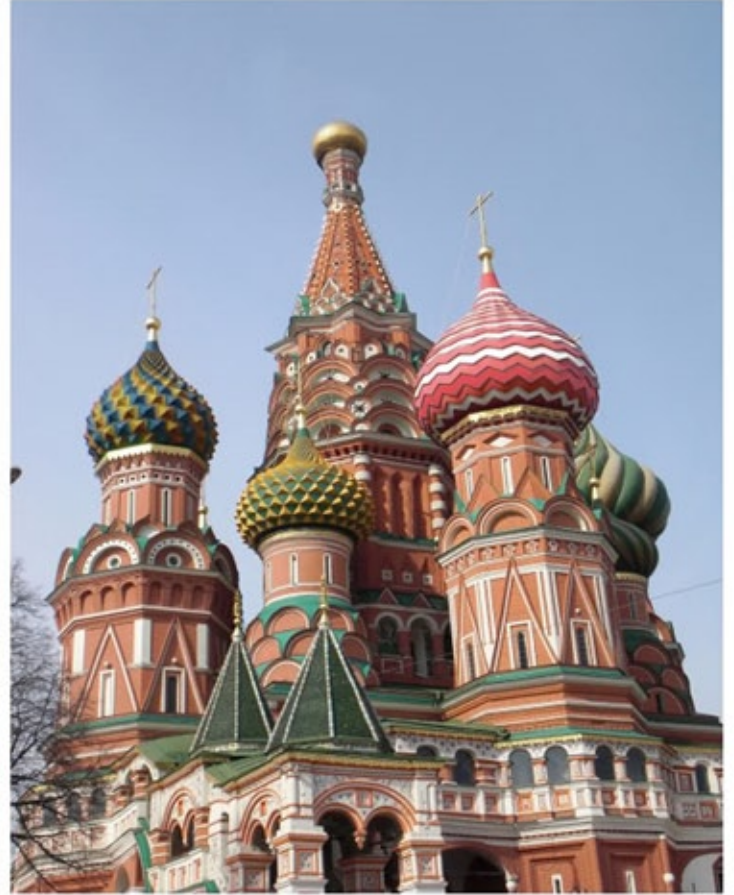
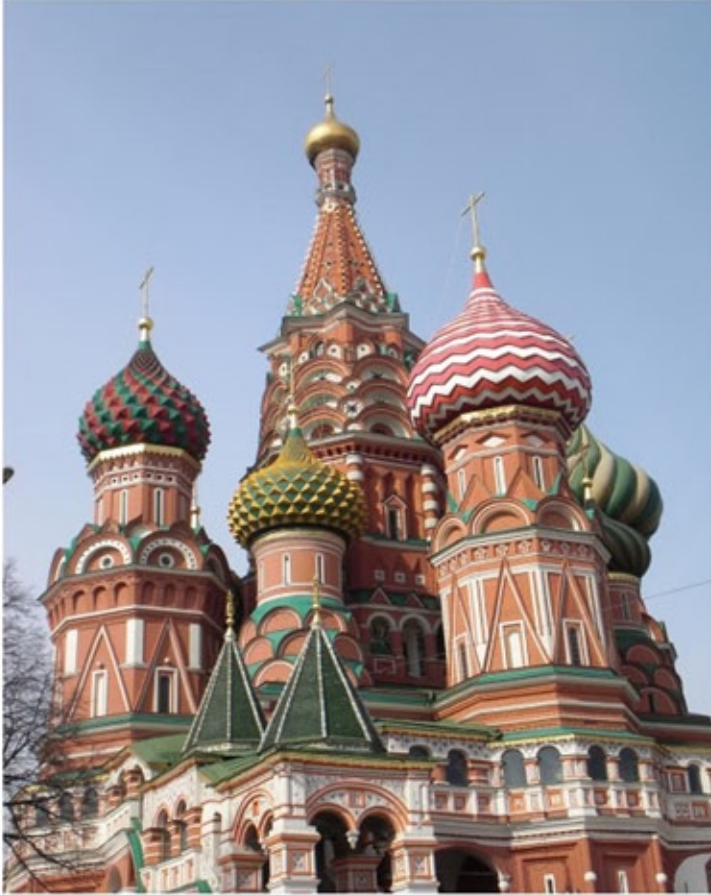




*When life gives you lemons, play games!*

## What's the Difference?

There are ten differences between the following two images. Can you find them all?



*(Solution on page 17)*

### Did you know?

You share your birthday with about nine million other people in the world.

### Word of the Month

Sternutation - the act of sneezing.

### How do you say that?

Love [English]. Amour [French]. 愛 [Japanese].  
Dragoste [Romanian]. Sayang [Indonesian].  
Amore [Italian]. Szeretet [Hungarian].

### Name that tune!

"I'd like to make myself believe that planet earth turns slowly.  
It's hard to say that I'd rather stay awake when I'm asleep,  
'cause everything is never as it seems."

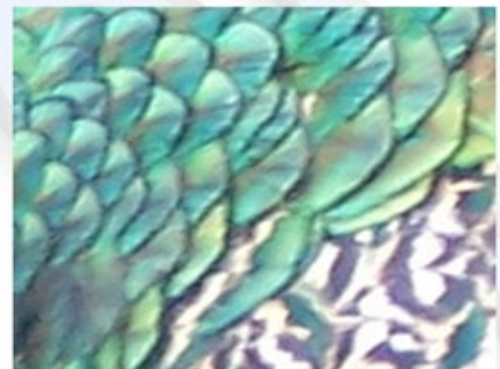
*(Answer on page 17)*

### TeenHelp Trivia

In what year was TeenHelp created?

*(Answer on page 17)*

### What's that?



*(Answer on page 17)*





*When life gives you lemons, play games!*

## Name that Tune!

These lyrics are from the song *Fireflies* by Owl City.

## TeenHelp Trivia

TeenHelp was created in 1998.

## Contact us!

*Do you have any comments or feedback on Fun & Games? Do you know any riddles, like to make puzzles, or have anything else to contribute? We'd love to hear from you!*

[www.teenhelp.org/submit](http://www.teenhelp.org/submit)  
or  
Email: [avatar@teenhelp.org](mailto:avatar@teenhelp.org)

## What's that?

Part of a peacock!

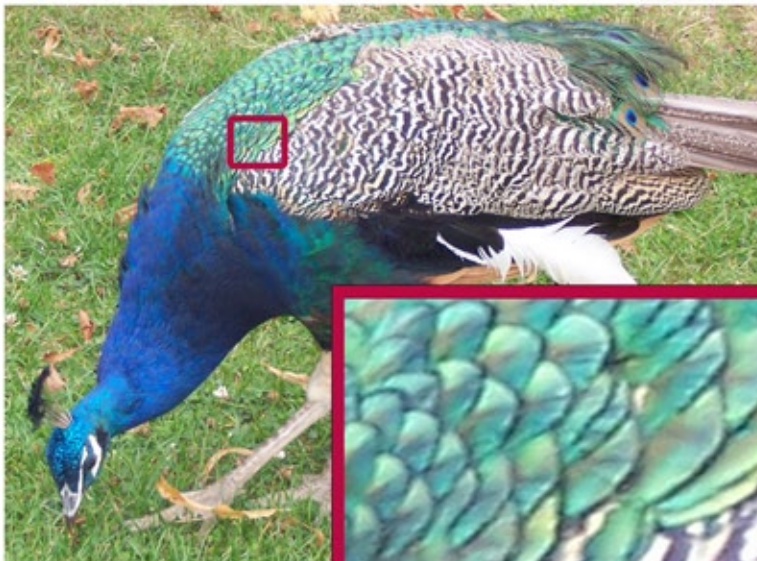
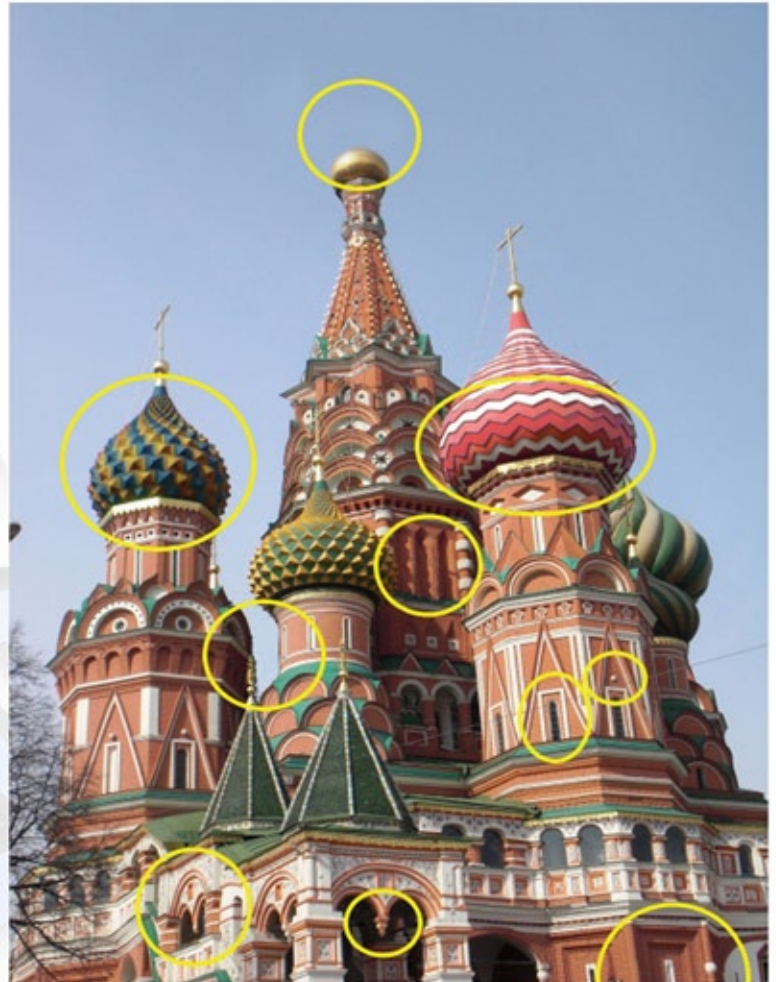


Photo by Nat (Strider)

## What's the Difference?

*Solution*



## More Games and Top Tens?

*Want to read more Top Tens?*

### Top Ten Summer Recipes

July 2009; Volume 3, Issue 1; page 15

### Top Ten World Roller Coasters

August 2009; Volume 3, Issue 2; page 13

*Want to play more games?*

### TeenHelp Word Search

July 2009, Volume 3, Issue 1; page 17

### Shikaku/Rectangles

August 2009; Volume 3, Issue 2; page 15



Expressing life through your fingertips.



**Shoe Strings**  
Casey

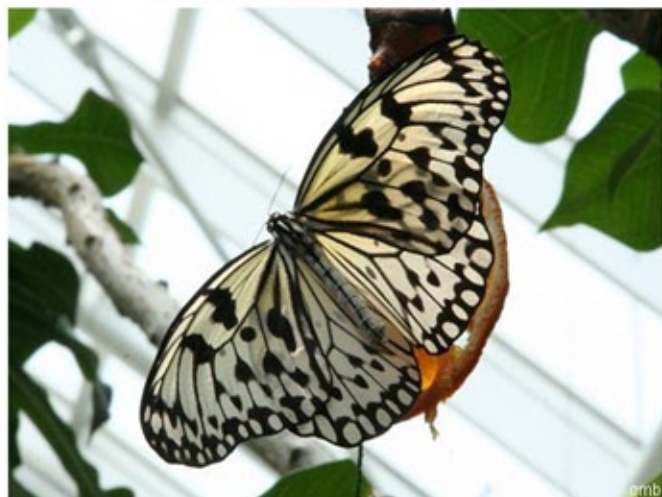
Tied together  
in a small knot  
coming loose  
flying free  
loop-ta-loop  
over and over  
just ordinary  
little shoe strings

**Wind Chime**  
by Adam



**Untitled**

By Gina (DontGiveUpHope)



**Are you creative?**

Would you like to see your artwork or poetry in Avatar? If so, we'd love to hear from you!

Submission form: [www.teenhelp.org/submit](http://www.teenhelp.org/submit)  
Email: [avatar@teenhelp.org](mailto:avatar@teenhelp.org)

**Untitled**  
DreamCatcher.x

I've lived in a few places.  
Seen many things, many people.  
Still trying to find my place in the world.  
Don't ever make promises you cannot keep.  
Don't cover up the truth with lies.

Be whoever you want to be.  
Don't let anyone stop you.  
Be different, stand out.  
Don't try and fit in with all the rest.

People may say your not trying your best.

But only you know that.  
If you know your trying your best,  
don't listen to anyone else.

Why cheat, why lie and waste your life?

Break hearts, hurt others.  
When you could be so much more than that?

Don't search for love.  
For love will find you.  
Don't sell yourself.  
Because you'll feel disgusting and used.

Don't focus on whats on the outside.  
Focus whats on the inside.

Don't ever do what I did.  
And keep everything inside.  
Lock people out.  
Never stand up for yourself, never speak out.

For you will regret it.  
Like I have.  
Waste your life on it.  
Like I have.  
I still do it now.  
But I want to save the rest of you from it.





*Not always as modest as I seem!*

by Katrina

**This month's sign:** Virgo (August 23 - September 22)

Hiya, Virgo. Happy birthday to you! Love wise, it looks like you may be stirring up an old flame or two with someone you haven't seen in quite a while! Try not to have too high of expectations of this person, though, or it's not going to work out.

**Strength:** You keep things in great order and have a crazy obsession with hygiene and keeping clean. Thus, it's very rare for you, dear Virgo, to get too sick.

**Possible Weakness:** It's very hard for you to trust and put confidence in those around you.

**Famous Virgos:** Elvis Costello, Mother Teresa, Pee Wee Herman, Michael Jackson, Ivan the Terrible, Buddy Holiday, Agatha Christie, Upton Sinclair, Stephen King.

## Libra

(September 23 - October 22)

Career wise, it looks like you've got some sort of promotion heading your way. Remember that in order to take this promotion gracefully, you need to keep doing your homework and always treating everyone with utmost respect. Doing this will give you the kind of recognition you've been desiring for a while.

## Scorpio

(October 23 - November 20)

Congratulations, Scorpio. This month, you are one of the few signs who will probably not have issues with your relationship, which is fabulous news. You always remember that communication is the key to any relationship, which is so important whilst with your partner.

## Sagittarius

(November 21 - December 21)

This month, we'll talk a bit about your physical and mental health. Unfortunately, I am sensing that something causing you a bit of stress might cross your path mid-month. It's important for you to always keep in mind that overdoing things will hurt you much more than it will help you.

## Capricorn

(December 22 - January 19)

Capricorn, do I have good news for you? I absolutely do. If you haven't found that perfect "someone" yet, this month is the time to go for it! While you're feeling, looking, and acting your best, you're going to be a new ray of sunshine to someone's life. I hope that it all works out for the best. Strut your stuff this month!

## Aquarius

(January 20 - February 19)

This month, we'll briefly discuss your work and career. It looks like you're not going to have too much to do this month, which is great, because it means you're not going to get too stressed out! Take the extra time to really focus on yourself and do some physical and mental self-improvement. Be confident about yourself; you're beautiful inside and out!



*Not always as modest as I seem!*



by Katrina

## **Pisces**

(February 20 – March 19)

This month, people are really going to notice you, both romantically and otherwise. Really try to see past people's outward appearances and look into their hearts; only some of these people are going to have good intentions with you. Also, remember that you don't have to "pick" anyone right now; a little shameless dating won't do anyone any harm!

## **Taurus**

(April 20 – May 20)

Taurus, there will be obstacles in your path in terms of your career or school situation this month, but you will be able to overcome them if you really stick it to your own morals and push through everything you run into. Try not to get discouraged; you can do this!

## **Gemini**

(May 21 – June 20)

Good news, Gemini. This month you're going to have a lot of extra energy to be spent in different areas of your life. If you aren't careful, I can sense a possible reckless accident, but if you are always careful and watching your back, I think that you're going to be golden!

## **Cancer**

(June 21 -  
July 22)

It seems like September will be a good month financially for you, Cancer. However, you need to be frugal about it! Earn your keep, and don't spend everything as soon as you get it. You need to learn now to invest this money wisely so that later, when you're making even larger sums of money, you'll really understand what to do.

## **Aries**

(March 20 - April 19)

Wow, it looks like you're really going to be the party animal this month. One thing to be aware of is the cleanliness of these social occasions.

With all of these illnesses going around, you need to take a hint from Virgo and always be aware of the hygiene of others. Remember to wash your hands a lot!

## **Leo**

(July 23  
– August 22)

Leo, this month you have so much on your plate that you're having trouble keeping up with it all! Don't fret, though, because by the middle of the month, everything is going to chill out, and you'll have a free moment to drink a smoothie (figuratively, of course)! Try to be organized with everything this month so that you can keep up!





## Acknowledgements

### Image sources

Free Aung San Suu Kyi, Free Burma: [www.photos.state.gov](http://www.photos.state.gov)  
Stages of Pregnancy: [www.everystockphoto.com](http://www.everystockphoto.com)  
Star signs: [www.grafamania.net](http://www.grafamania.net)  
The Grey Bipolar Area: *Jessie*  
This Month in History: Going back to September 11, 2001: [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)  
Top Ten Back to School Items: [www.everystockphoto.com](http://www.everystockphoto.com); [www.freedigitalphotos.net](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net);  
What's that? *Nat (Strider)*  
What's the Difference? [www.freedigitalphotos.net](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net)

### Articles

Cause of the Month: Operation Beautiful: [www.operationbeautiful.com](http://www.operationbeautiful.com)  
Stages of Pregnancy: [www.Pregnancytoday.com](http://www.Pregnancytoday.com); [www.pregnancy-info.net](http://www.pregnancy-info.net)

## 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](http://www.avatar.teenhelp.org), or email us at [avatar@teenhelp.org](mailto:avatar@teenhelp.org).