

Stand up
for Autism

Locks of Love

Choosing a
Short Haircut

Cover photo
by Halcyon

April 2010
TeenHelp.org's eZine
Volume 3,
Issue 10

Avatar

Cause: Ten Points of Light
A special feature on behalf of the Take Back the Night Foundation.



Table of Contents

4

TeenHelp Times

Shaking it up with earthquakes and March 2010 in review.

6

Stand up for Autism

by Marie (Rie)

Be a part of World Autism Awareness Day!

7

Self Care

by Maria (Gidig)

Ways to take care of yourself, and the importance of self care.

9

Cause of the Month: Locks of Love

by Katrina

Giving the gift of confidence to children in need.

9

Cause of the Month: 10 Points of Light

by Katrina

A special feature on behalf of Take Back the Night Foundation.

10

Dear Avatar

Avatar's Agony Aunt respond to requests for advice from users like you!

12

Choosing a Short Haircut

by Cheyenne (Desert)

Is it really time for a change?

13

Oscar Overview

by Brittany (.Brittany.)

Who won what at the Oscars?

15

Fun and Games

by Amy (Amy.)

Answer trivia and pick your favorite April Fools' Day prank!

16

Self Expression

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

Also

- 3 Editors' Letter
- 3 Contributors
- 18 Horoscopes
- 20 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!

Submission form: www.teenhelp.org/avatar/submit
Email: avatar@teenhelp.org



Letter from the Editors

Hello everyone, and welcome to the April 2010 issue of Avatar!

We hope April is off to a wonderful start for you! This month is full of change, and here at Avatar we're digging the warming weather in the Northern Hemisphere just as much as we're digging recent changes to the editorial team. Drum roll, please, as we take a moment to welcome five new Avatar Editors! Introducing **Shaz**, content suitability extraordinaire, as our new Deputy Content Editor. A huge welcome to **Rie**, a fantastic mind and wonderful addition to our Mind and Body crew. Big cheers to **Naomi** as she bravely steps into the shoes of Agony Aunt, taking over Dear Avatar. And last, but certainly not least, a big welcome to **Brittany** and **Cheyenne** as they kick our days off with style as our new Lifestyle team. We're really excited to have them with us!

This month we're going to shake things off in **TeenHelp Times** with an informational article on the recent earthquakes that have taken place, what might be still to come, and what you can do if you are caught in one. We also have a review of the events that took place in March 2010 that matter to you, in addition to our **Cause of the Month**, Locks of Love, and our special feature, 10 Points of Light.

Moving on to **Mind and Body**, we have an article on autism and World Autism Awareness Day. We also have a piece on self care and what you can do to take care of yourself, which outlines a few activities you can do to unwind and enjoy yourself. Be sure to check it out! While you're at it, don't forget to check out our advice in **Dear Avatar**!

In **Lifestyle** this month we have some fun lined up for you, starting off with an article that has a few tips on what you should do when deciding on a hair cut, and an Oscar summary. We also have some **Fun and Games**, which include some April Fools' tricks you can play and trivia. Last, but not least, don't forget to check out this month's **Self Expression** and **Horoscopes**!

We hope you have a fabulous and safe month,
The Avatar Editors.

Editors

Editor-in-Chief

Mel

Content Editor

Katrina

Graphics Editor

Jessie (Asylum)

Deputy Content Editor

Shaz

Deputy Graphics Editor

Stephanie
(Konstantine)

Sub-Editor of News and Debates

Cas* (Casey)

Sub-Editors of Mind and Body

Maria (Gidig)
Marie (Rie)

Sub-Editor of Dear Avatar

Naomi (Naomi.)

Sub-Editor of Lifestyle

Brittany (.Brittany.)
Cheyenne (Desert)

Sub-Editor of Fun and Games

Amy (Amy.)

Contributors

The Avatar Editors would like to thank the following TeenHelp users for their valuable contributions.

Contributions from readers like you are what make Avatar so unique and wonderful. Please consider submitting content to a future issue!

**www.teenhelp.org/avatar/submit or
avatar@teenhelp.org**

Images

Adam [2]
Arbiter
Halcyon
Shish

Self Expression

(Insert Name Here)
Boxy
juliet
snappydog



Earthquakes

by Casey (Cas*)

Earthquake!

Wait, what? March was a month full of earthquakes, and now you're telling me that April will be too? Not necessarily, even though the world was shaken up after Haiti, this past month, it still hasn't gotten the chance to settle down.

It started in Chile. The first earthquake, 8.8 magnitude, hit February 27th. It was a massive earthquake, that caused Tsunamis to hit Hawaii and that headed toward Japan. That first Earthquake shifted the city of Concepcion ten feet, and the capital of Chile, Santiago, eleven inches. Sounds bad, right? That's not all. It also shifted the Earth's Axis, more than a normal quake would. It shortened the day by 1.26 microseconds. Now, that doesn't sound too life shattering, but in two years, two months and a few days, the earth could be off by a whole second, which is pretty scary. Also, the shift in the Earth's axis wouldn't be so bad if the Earth had time to recover. Unfortunately, it doesn't.

There are Earthquakes every single day, and these quakes aren't minor. Any quake shifts the Earth's crust, but with the amount we are having, the damage done to the Earth is massive. Most of the Earthquakes are above 5.0 magnitude. Chile is hit almost daily by earthquakes, as are other parts of the world, like Indonesia, Turkey, and China. The world is still focused on Haiti, where there is still great need, but other parts of the globe are in danger as well. Although Chile is better off than Haiti, they are still hurting greatly



due to these quakes.

It is almost a guarantee that there will be earthquakes in April, although hopefully they will be the minor, daily earthquakes that we have come to expect in places like California, and not the massive earthquakes that have recently devastated our world. What should you do in case of an Earthquake? Well, get under a sturdy piece of furniture, or stand in a strong doorway. Do not stand anywhere near or under anything that can fall, and if you are inside, stay inside until the shaking has stopped, at least for several minutes after it has stopped.

How can you help? Consider donating money, or even canned food, to local organizations that are helping with Earthquake relief. ■



News that Affects You: March 2010 in Review

by Jessie (Asylum)

Missed March? Just downright dislike sifting through news reports you could care less about? Want the lowdown? Here's a glimpse of what people were talking about in March 2010!

Human Rights

Totally right. On March 22nd, 2010 Internet giant Google stopped censoring search results in China and redirected users to Google Hong Kong. China cried foul play the following day, calling Google's actions "totally wrong".

"Don't Ask" downgrade. New rules which make it more difficult to expel gay service members of the United States Armed Forces were announced on March 25th, 2010 by U.S. defense secretary Robert Gates. Activists hope that "don't ask, don't tell" is soon to be a thing of the past, but opposition still remains.

Mental Health

Trigger take down. On March 12th, 2010 it was reported that doctors are urging websites to remove material which promote or romanticize self harm. According to the Centre for Suicide Research at Oxford University, one in ten 11-25 year-olds self harm, and hospital visits due to self harm by people under age 25 rose 50% between 2004/2005 and 2008/2009.



Health

Severe epidemic. In the ongoing battle against HIV/AIDS, a March 6th, 2010 announcement reveals Washington, D.C. is to be the first American city to hand out free female condoms in all locations which offer free male condoms. In 2009 it was reported that approximately 3% of Washington, D.C. residents were living with HIV/AIDS.

Historic health care. In Washington, D.C. on March 22nd, 2010, the United States House of Representatives passed the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010. The bill was signed into law the following day by United States President Barack Obama.

Environment

Conquering carbon emissions. The Natural Resource Defense Council (NRDC) and the Garrison Institute's Climate Mind Behavior Project release a study on March 12th, 2010 that found lifestyle changes could reduce carbon emissions in the United States up to 15% by 2020. ■

Even if you hate the news, it's important to stay informed! If you feel like we're missing out on a topic that is important to young people (or should be), send us your ideas and links!



Stand Up for Autism!

by Marie (Rie)

What do you imagine when you hear the word autism? How do you personally picture a person with autism? Do you see the child repeating words over and over again? The teenager who has still never uttered a word? Do you picture the adult curled around rocking back and forth in a fetal position? Can you imagine visiting a country when you neither speak nor understand a word of their language? You try to communicate but nobody understands and you cannot figure out why. Would you get frustrated? How would you react to uncomfortable clothing, lighting, sound, and smell when irritations and distractions can be found in every single thing?

The 2nd of April marks **World Autism Awareness Day (WAAD)**, which was first observed in 2008. World Autism Awareness Day aims to increase awareness of autism, and those living with autism, especially those in need of extra support to live a full life. WAAD also gives voice to the undiagnosed individuals worldwide, encouraging early diagnosis. All too often autism is not properly understood and the needs of people with autism are not recognised. World Autism Awareness Day shines light on autism and portrays it as a growing global health crisis. Additionally, WAAD celebrates the talents and skills of people with autism, and is a day when individuals with autism are welcomed to participate in events across the world. World Autism Awareness Day takes action to ensure that individuals with autism are not unfairly discriminated against. Action is taken to remove barriers built because of sensory and communication needs by raising public awareness of special needs, as well as improving research funds to increase understanding. The numbers of people with autism are counted to ensure adequate support and services are provided. Resources are produced to help those living with autism and ensure training is received by anybody working around people with autism.

"By bringing together autism organizations all around the world, we will give a voice to the millions of individuals worldwide who are undiagnosed, misunderstood and looking for help."
www.worldautismawarenessday.org

There are **three types of Autism spectrum disorders**; autistic disorder, Asperger syndrome and pervasive developmental disorder – not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS). Autistic disorder is what most people think of when hearing about autism. People

with autistic disorder may have trouble looking at you when they talk, or they may say nothing because they do not know what to say. They may find it difficult to concentrate on a task, and may become upset when asked to finish a task. People with autistic disorder usually have delayed speech and understanding of language, social difficulties, and unusual behaviours and interests. Autistic disorder is diagnosed early in development, usually by the age of three. Asperger syndrome is milder than autistic disorder. People with Asperger's usually have similar traits to people with autistic disorder, however they don't usually have difficulties with communication skills. People with PDD-NOS meet some of the criteria for autistic disorder and Asperger syndrome, but usually have milder symptoms than those with autistic disorder. We're all different, we all have our individual difficulties and we all react differently to various situations. There is a difference between a person with autism and autism itself; the person should always come first.



One of the common descriptions of babies that may be autistic is that they are passive and quiet, however a small minority are the opposite. These signs are usually very apparent in toddlers with autism, whereas Asperger's is usually diagnosed at the age of six or older. Some characteristics of autism spectrum disorders include little interest or difficulty in making friends, short attention spans, little to no eye contact, and inflexibility with routines. Others include sensitivity to certain sounds, smells, textures, and fixations on certain objects, as well as loss of language skills, poor language skills, little to no response when called by name, and difficulty understanding feelings and facial expressions of others.

(Continued on page 7)



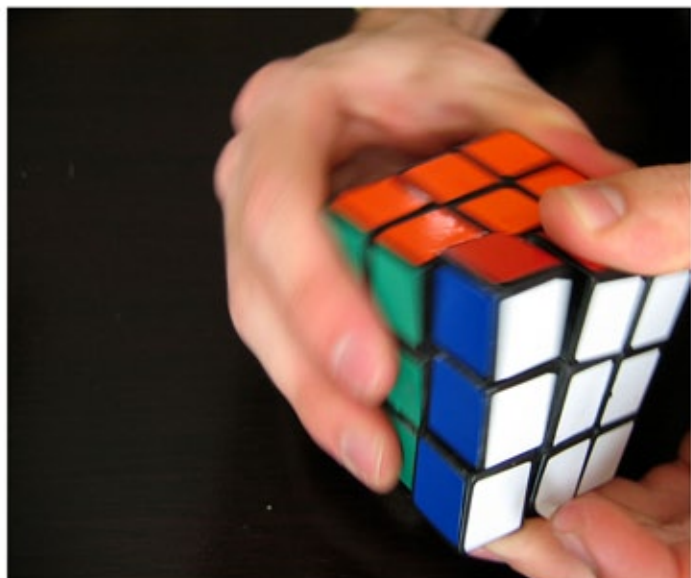
There is **no single cause of autism**. It is generally accepted that it is caused by abnormalities in the brain. No gene has been identified as causing autism, although in many families there seems to be a pattern of autism or related illnesses. Researchers are looking into genetics and what may trigger autism to develop.

Currently there is no cure for autism, no effective ways of preventing it, and no completely effective methods of treating it. The earlier the diagnosis, the earlier intervention can begin. Speech, behavioural, occupational and educational therapies can make a difference. There are also medications, and special diets that can help.

Did you know?

- 1 in 166 people are affected by autism, that's as many as 1 in 100 in the UK alone.
- Boys are four times more likely than girls to be diagnosed with autism.
- Autism affects people of all racial, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.
- Autism is a life-long brain disorder that is normally diagnosed in early childhood.

So what can you do for World Autism Awareness Day, or in general? You could go to an event, or even organise one. Whether you do a walk to raise money, or go to a talk on autism, it all helps. People all over the world are organising events to celebrate World Autism Awareness Day and raise awareness. As part of WAAD we want everybody to stand up for autism by raising awareness, whether through changing your Facebook status to 'I am Standing up for Autism' or taking it a step further. Will YOU stand up for autism? ■



Self Care

by Maria (Gidig)

Many of us have heard something about "self care" at least once. While it may seem like we already do a significant amount of self care by sleeping, eating, and even breathing, many people do not take enough time for themselves. Without self care, stress levels are much higher, relationships can be compromised, and depression creeps up. You can even physically feel better when you practice better self care. Why is self care so important, and how do you begin finally taking care of yourself the way you need?

Why does self care help? If you've ever heard of the fight or flight response, self care creates the opposite. This is called the relaxation response. Your body begins to slow down and rejuvenate itself. Meditation creates a similar response, which is why it can be so helpful. As your body begins to slow down, it gets a break so to speak, and will be able to function better when you need it again!

Mentally and emotionally is the main way self care helps people. First, it overall just gives you a break from running around and having so much you need to do at once. It's not healthy for your mind and body when you don't stop and take a breath. Self care is the time you can stop and just worry about yourself without being worried about, for example, that soccer practice you need to run to, or how you need to practice your clarinet.

Sometimes, during alone time, people can problem solve, come to conclusions, and take a better grip emotionally on their lives. Having the input of others constantly can be draining, so taking a minute to figure out what YOU think and how YOU feel is important.

If you take time to take a bubble bath, go for a walk, or practice another form of self care, you feel better about yourself. People who practice more self care tend to have a higher self-esteem. It's important to realize that you're an important person who needs to be looked after as well.

What can I do for self care? Everyone's form of self care is different. Some people find relaxation in bubble baths. Other people feel better after going for a jog, or doing a puzzle. It's easy to figure out what your best options are – just figure out what you enjoy doing and do it!

(Continued on page 8)



Something for the heart and soul.

Bubble baths tend to be the first thing thought of when thinking of self care. They are extremely beneficial. The great thing about baths is that you can go as far out as you want to. Facial masks, nail painting, and other fun activities that can make you feel better go right along with a bubble bath.

Grab some bubbles, soap, a facial mask, nail polish, rubber ducks and other bath toys and have fun! When you take a bubble bath you can feel as though you're a child again. Play with toys, and splash around! Or if you're feeling more mature, grab a book and soak up the water.

Candles are great for baths as well; just make sure to be safe and not light anything on fire! Relaxing scents can always help with the relaxation process.

Manicures and pedicures are a fun way to take care of yourself as well, and you even end up with beautiful nails afterwards. You can go into a nail salon and pay for a professional nail job, or go buy your favorite color nail polish and do it yourself. Both are great ways to relax and essentially feel better.

It might be fun to save up a bit of money and then go buy some of the manicure and pedicure tools that many stores carry. Things such as emery boards, nail clippers, cuticle removers, and other utensils are fun to have. There are also many nail treatments available to harden and strengthen nails, make them shiny, or probably do just about anything you're looking for.

Reading can take you into an entirely different world. Grab a book, some hot chocolate or another beverage you enjoy and sit and read a book. There are multiple types of books and it may take a while to figure out what kinds of books you enjoy, but eventually you will find a genre that catches your interest!

Make sure not to get a book that is too hard to read, or it will take away the relaxing part of reading books. It's not relaxing to sit down with a book, a dictionary, and a translator just to read one story.

Ask friends if they have books they recommend and would let you borrow. You can also get books at used book stores fairly cheap, and sometimes you can find great deals online! Or you can go to always go to the library! Reading is a good, cheap, effective self care method.

Taking a walk is really helpful because it gives you a break mentally, but gives your body a moment to move. Movement for some people can be extremely relaxing. Especially when you run for a long time, you get an endorphin rush which is an amazing stress reliever.

This can be cheap as well! You can walk around your neighborhood easily. If your neighborhood is unsafe you can walk around another neighborhood, or even just walk around the track at school. Gyms usually have tracks you can walk or run around as well.

Sports are similar to taking a walk. Your body enjoys moving, and exercise is good physically and as self care. If you've ever considered a sport, give it a try! The only problem with sports is some people reach what many athletes refer to as "burnout," but usually doesn't happen for many years into the activity for most, and others still will never experience burnout. If you do reach this point, however, and you're feeling stressed out from sports, then it obviously doesn't count as self care.

You can join a team, or even just get some friends to walk to the park and shoot some hoops. This is another thing that can cost as little or as much as you want.

Happy self care! ■



Photograph by Ricardo (Shish)



Cause of the Month: Locks of Love

by Katrina

We've all seen our friends have their curly, golden long hair chopped off at some point before. Sometimes, we hear them mention that they're donating it to "Locks of Love." Do you know what Locks of Love is really all about, though? While this organization isn't our typical monthly cause, we wanted to share just a snippet of the great things Locks of Love accomplishes each and every day.

Locks of Love started around 1997 with Madonna Coffman, a retired nurse living in the Palm Beach area. Ms. Coffman was inspired to start volunteering full time for Locks of Love when her daughter lost all of her hair due to medical reasons. As the family began to receive many hair donations in the mail in order to make a wig for her daughter, Ms. Coffman was able to acquire office space donated by a local hospital and partnered with a high quality manufacturer to truly kick off Locks of Love.

"Our mission is to return a sense of self, confidence and normalcy to children suffering from hair loss by utilizing donated ponytails to provide the highest quality hair prosthetics to financially disadvantaged children."

Locks of Love accepts donations of hair over ten inches to make into wigs (that usually sell for between \$3,500 and \$6,000!) for children under the age of twenty-one who are unable to afford this retail cost of these hair pieces and who have typically lost their own hair due to medical reasons. On top of just providing new hair pieces to these children, Locks of Love aims to provide the children with a confidence booster that many of them lost when they lost their hair.

An estimated eighty percent of hair comes from kids who want to help other kids! Are you eligible to donate your hair? Hair must be at least ten inches long. Hair can be curly or straight and can even be color-treated, but hair cannot be bleached (because it conflicts with the process of making the wigs). Hair can only be accepted if in a ponytail, so if you're considering donating your hair to Locks of Love, be sure to put it in a ponytail before your hair stylist starts the process of cutting your hair. For more information, please visit:

www.locksoflove.org

Cause of the Month: 10 Points of Light

by Katrina

You may remember Take Back the Night's Avatar debut when it was featured as Cause of the Month in the November 2009 edition. In conjunction with Take Back the Night's first ever nationwide event, 10 Points of Light, we wanted to remind our Cause of the Month readers of the great work this foundation is doing each and every day, and to encourage participation in this event!

On April 29th, 2010, join the Take Back the Night Foundation as they spread awareness about, and work to end, sexual and domestic violence at ten universities and communities around the United States. Following many different marches, rallies, fundraisers, and musical benefit concerts, this 10 Points of Light event will end with a candlelighting ceremony at 9PM at each of the following universities and communities: Harvard University, Brown University, The Advocacy Center-NY, Rutgers University, Kent State University, University of Tampa, University of Texas-El Paso, University of Kansas, Three Rivers Crisis Center-ND and Lehman College. For the press release on this event, to get involved directly, or to find out more information on each of the locations individually, please visit:

www.takebackthenight.org



Photograph by Adam



A unique way of seeking help.

Being happy just doesn't feel real. And it makes me feel so horrible. I've been feeling the happiest this week than I have for months, and I have reason to. So my friend told me to just cling on to this feeling and not let it go, but I almost want to, because I feel like I'm getting my hopes up for something that won't last. I don't know what to do or if I should tell someone. Has anyone else ever felt like this?

It sounds like you've been going through a rough time recently and things are beginning to look up for you, which is great!

I can understand your feelings of happiness not being real. It can be hard for someone to trust happiness again after it has let them down before. Happiness can almost be seen as a 'person'. Once it has hurt us or let us down in the past, it can be difficult to learn to believe in it or trust in it again.

The good news is that just as we can learn to rely on someone who has let us, we can learn to believe in happiness again. It won't be easy, but it is possible. Next time you feel happy, just think 'I deserve this'. Also, when you look back at happy times, try to think back to those times when the happiness didn't end so soon and when hopes weren't lost. Maybe try to remember times when you were younger and you were at peace with the world? Perhaps look back through old photo albums at times when things are good.

Also, remember, it can last. Look around you; look at the people in your school, those walking down the street. People laughing, smiling, happy! They believe in happiness and all of them seem okay. And yes, there are going to be times in your life when you're not happy, when things are hard, when things go wrong, but the fact is that you can get through these things and come out the other side and be stronger because of it!

You're not the only one ever to feel like this. I'm sure if you asked many people, especially on this site then they would say that they have felt a similar thing so you're not alone with these feelings. If you begin to find that it is really getting you down and stopping you from ever feeling properly happy then I think it would be a really good idea for you to talk things through with someone.

I hope that these happy times continue for you!

I'm underweight, which I know isn't healthy, and I'm anaemic. I have irregular periods and it's concerning my mom. It wasn't concerning me but now it is. I try and eat more, but it doesn't really work? I don't know how to get back up to the proper weight. My mom thinks I could have an eating disorder but I'm not so sure, I don't have a problem with my appearance and I really want to get to the right weight. The only times I don't eat are when I'm stressed/upset. Any ideas on what this could be?

I'm sorry to hear that you're struggling so much right now. It must be hard for you to live with this worry and I can see why it's concerning you. I think it's great that you've decided to reach out for help; I know how hard it can be to open up sometimes so I think that you should be really proud of yourself!

Eating can be difficult for many people and numerous different reasons, it sounds like you're underweight but you don't really know why. The first thing that I suggest for you to do is to try and keep a food diary for a week or so. Write down everything that you eat and then when you look back at it, you could see what your diet is lacking and so why you're underweight/anaemic. Maybe you could go through it with your Mum and together you could discuss how to improve your diet to help your health?

It can often be difficult to eat three big meals at a time, especially when feeling stressed or upset. It can be very overwhelming to see a plate full of food in front of you and when we're busy it can be difficult to find the time to sit down and eat. This is where snacks come in! I think it could help you to try and take a few snacks with you to school or if you go out for the day, for example, a couple of cereal bars/pieces of fruit. Then when you get a bit peckish, you can take one out of your bag and eat it. It won't feel like a 'big deal' and shouldn't be too overwhelming but it will help you to keep your food intake and energy levels up and may, in the long term, help you to gain weight!

If you begin to get increasingly worried about your weight issues then I strongly recommend that you speak to a doctor. They may refer you to a dietician who can help you to develop a healthy diet and keep yourself at a healthy weight. They should also be able to support you and do any other necessary health checks.

I hope that things improve for you.



A unique way of seeking help.

It is 5:30 by the time I have got in from school and had dinner and I go to bed at 9:30-10:00. My exams are coming up in April and I really need to start revising, but I have 8 subjects to revise for and I don't know how to put it all together. I want to start going for a walk or run for about 20 minutes most nights and I have homework every night. I find this sort of thing really hard as I'm dyslexic so get confused easily! Do you have any suggestions on how to put together a sort of timetable?

It sounds like you're having a bit of a time management issue at the moment! Don't worry, it is perfectly normal to struggle with time management, especially around exam periods!

I think that everyone can struggle with trying to fit things in so I think that the idea of creating a timetable to manage your time is a great idea and will really help you! I think it's great that you want to go on a run/walk every night as it can often be very beneficial for both revision and health to try and get some exercise every day, it is good to have a break!

With regards to a revision timetable, it looks to me like you have about 4 hours a night in which you can revise and then extra time at weekends! I would begin by writing down your subjects in the order of the ones you think are most important/need to spend the most time on. Then create a grid of the hours you have and try to slot them all in, beginning with the most important and ending in the least. I would also decide if you want to work it by time spent on the subject or topics covered. If you want to work by time then I would do 40 minutes revision and 10 minute breaks. If you choose to do it by subject then I would write the topics down and make sure you have 10 minute breaks between them. Also, try to break up your subjects and mix them around a bit so that you don't get bored of a certain subject.

You might want to put an hour or so aside each night for homework but if you're finding that things are beginning to get on top of you then I think it would be good for you to speak to your teachers and see if they could either help you or give you a little less homework over exam periods. I'm sure that they would be happy to help you out with that.

While all this is going on, it is really important that you make sure you're eating and sleeping enough as well as taking regular breaks. If you feel as though things are getting on top of you then speak to someone about it and see what help is available to you.

Although a little stress is normal and potentially quite good for you, try not to get too stressed! If you feel it building up too much then take a complete break and go on a run or do something else really active.

I hope this helps, good luck with your exams! I'm sure that you will do great, just try and stay calm and focused!

There is a girl I like but she doesn't even "like like" me but she likes me as a friend and I want to take it a step further. She's fourteen, I'm fourteen, and I need tips. How do I impress her? I could really use a girlfriend.

You know, there's always good news and not-so-good news in these types of situations. We'll start with the good news. Thankfully, you're already friends with this girl! That bypasses a lot of awkward situations you may have had to go through if you didn't know her at all, so props to you - you're heading down the right path already. The not-so-good news, at least in my eyes, is the fact that typically, people don't truly find valuable and healthful relationships with the mindset that they could NEED a partner.

You mentioned that you're fourteen, and let me just assure you that while you may want a girlfriend, you don't need one. Perhaps you could instead take a bit of time to focus on yourself and getting through the rest of this school year before you try to start things with this girl ... or at least WHILE you start things with her.

You don't want to just go and forget about everything else completely. With that in mind, though, there are a few things you might try. First of all, confidence (yes, confidence, but not arrogance) is key! Having confidence is so attractive, so it's definitely a big plus if you can draw that from somewhere. Don't try to impress her, per se, as usually when people try to impress others, it just kind of comes off as not so hot. Instead, maybe ask her to hang out (just the two of you) so you can get to know her and jump start this potential relationship.

Ask us for advice!

If you would like to submit a question for us to answer, you can email us at avatar@teenhelp.org or PM any of our Avatar Editors. We would love to hear from you!



Kicking off your month with pizzazz.

Choosing a Short Haircut

by Cheyenne (Desert)

It's a big decision, one that takes a lot of time and planning. It's also something that's right next to irreversible. If you go through with it and change your mind when it's over, you have months and possibly years to rectify your mistake. What decision am I talking about, you ask? Cutting your hair!

How many times have you had a friend with beautiful, long locks which they inexplicably lopped off, then cried about it for months afterwards? Unfortunately, this is often the way that it goes when going for a big change in your appearance like this. The longer your hair, the more you have to think about and decide before going for it—or conversely, not going for it and keeping your strands the length they are.

The first thing you should ponder is how long you've spent growing out your hair. If you're one of those people who have always dreamed of having hair down to your waist or longer, then this will require a great deal of thought. If in the end you decide to get it cut, it will be your hard work down the drain.

Secondly, there's the reason why you want to get it cut in the first place. Is it because you just want to make your parents angry (not the greatest plan or reason), or because your long hair is simply too hard to care for? It could also be something completely different as well—something as simple as you think it's time for a change, which is perfectly acceptable. Cutting your hair can signify a big switch in your life or newfound independence. In that case, you can look at your newfound 'do as a badge of honor. Whatever your reason is, make sure it's a good one otherwise you will probably end up regretting your choice. The reasoning behind it is probably the biggest factor in a dramatic physical change.

Now, you need to decide where and who you will get it cut by. The more you trust the person, the better it'll go. Your hairdresser could be anyone from a friend's parent who works at a salon, or your trusted stylist who you've had for years. It really doesn't matter who you pick—as long as you trust them with your hair. Whatever you do, do not go with a new hairdresser or salon that you've never tried before. Unless they are a very reputable salon, this will most likely lead to disaster.

So far, you've thought about your reasoning for getting your hair cut, the time spent on growing your

hair, and where and who you're going to get it cut by. It's the big day and you're headed off to the salon. However, your work isn't done yet. There are still a few things you need to remember both before you get in and while you're in the chair.

There are many different short cuts, but only one perfect cut for you. To find this ideal style, you'll need to figure out the shape of your face. There are many resources for you to do this—from fashion magazines to the Internet. There are also entire magazines devoted entirely to finding your perfect haircut; these are worth a look-through as they can sometimes hold the look you want. Try to find a picture of the cut you have picked: it will make life much easier for your hairdresser and yourself. Sitting there and saying, "Well, it was kind of like this, but not quite as severe as so-and-so's haircut." Chances are, that will just make everyone MORE frustrated, not less. One more thing—make sure that it's sustainable. If you don't make it to the salon often, try going for a slanted sort of cut that will keep its shape as it grows out. Bobs can be the enemy of anyone who prefers to keep their hair routine low-maintenance.

Lastly, I will give you a few tips as to what to do while actually in the chair. Listen to your gut, but don't let it jerk you around. It can be really hard watching your hair flutter to the ground, ruthlessly snipped by a pair of snapping silver scissors. However, the end result should be enjoyable enough for you to forget about that. It may be beneficial to bring a friend along for emotional support. If you honestly can't stand where the style is going, immediately stop the hairdresser and say something along these lines: "I love what you're doing, but I'm not sure I'm so crazy about this style. Could you maybe..." then tell them exactly what you want them to change.

That hair doesn't have to end up on the ground, though. Organizations such as Locks of Love are always grateful for donations of hair to fashion into wigs for cancer patients and the like. More information on Locks of Love can be found in this month's Cause of the Month (page 9).

The main thing you need to remember is that you should be very happy with your cut in the end. Following these steps should help you to make the right decision. If you do end up hating it, though, the only thing you can do is grow it out again. It will take a while to grow it back out, but in the meantime, just try to embrace your new cut and do your best to rock your new style. Think carefully and you will make the best decision for yourself. ■



Kicking off your month with pizzazz.

Oscar Overview

by Brittany (.Brittany.)

The 82nd annual Oscar Awards were held Sunday, March 7th, 2010. Whether it was for the gorgeous red carpet dresses, or just to find out who won the Oscar's, an estimated 41.62 million people watched as hosts Alex Baldwin and Steven Martin ran the show. Here are some of the night's big winners!

The Hurt Locker is an American war movie about elite soldiers in Iraq that have the most dangerous job in the world: disarming bombs in the heat of combat. Directed by Kathryn Bigelow and written by Mark Boal, *The Hurt Locker* won the following Oscar Awards: Best Picture, Directing, Film Editing, Sound Mixing, Sound Editing, and Writing (original screenplay). *The Hurt Locker* has also won seventy-two other awards in the past two years. The top actors/actresses in the movie are Jeremy Renner (*Dahmer, The Assassination of Jesse James*), Anthony Mackie (*Half Nelson, We Are Marshall*) and Brian Geraghty (*We Are Marshall, Jarhead*).

The Blind Side is the heartfelt story of an African-American football player who is homeless. When he is brought into a new home he is enabled to fulfill his potential to play for the NFL. Living in a new environment, going to a new school, he has a chance to start over. Based on the book "The Blind Side: Evolution of a Game" by Michael Lewis, the movie, written and directed by John Lee Hancock, won only one Oscar Award (Actress in a Leading Role awarded to Sandra Bullock) but has also won four other awards. The top actors/actresses in the movie are Sandra Bullock (*All About Steve, The Proposal*), Tim McGraw (*The Kingdom, Four Christmases*), Quinton Aaron (*Be Kind Rewind, Mr. Brooklyn*), Jae Head (*Hancock*), and Lilly Collins (*90210*).

Avatar takes place in the year 2154, where Jake, played by Sam Worthington, is a paraplegic war veteran taken to another planet, Pandora. The movie was developed in 1994, and was planned to be release in 1999, but the technology to produce the film was not available at that time. The movie, written and directed by James Cameron, won the following Oscars: Art Direction, Visual Effects, and Cinematography. It won another twenty-five awards as well. The top actors/actresses in the movie are Sam Worthington (*Terminator: Salvation, Rogue*), Zoe Saldana (*Star Trek, Vantage Point*), Sigourney Weaver (*Baby Mama, Wall-e*) and Stephan Lang (*Save Me, Public Enemies*).



Crazy Heart is about Blake, an alcoholic country music singer that has had too many marriages. When he meets Jean, a newspaper journalist who wants to do a piece on him for her newspaper, they start a relationship. The movie, based on the book "Crazy Heart" written by Thomas Cobb, was written and directed by Scott Cooper and won the following Oscars: Music (Original Song) and Actor in a Leading Role. *Crazy Heart* has also won another sixteen awards. The top actors/actresses are Jeff Bridges (*Stick it, How to Lose Friends & Alienate People*), James Keane (*The Gift, 7th Heaven*), Tom Bower (*The Cleaner, Gospel Hill*), and Beth Grant (*All About Steve, Extract*).

El Secreto De Sus Ojos (*The Secret in Their Eyes*) was filmed in 1999, but set like it was June of 1974. Benjamin, entangled in the investigation of a young woman that was raped and murdered inside of her own home, vows to find the killer and bring him to justice. *The Secret in Their Eyes*, written and directed by Juan José Campanella, won the Best Foreign Language Film Oscar. *The Secret in Their Eyes* also won thirty-three other awards. The top actors/actresses are Ricardo Darin (*Amorosa Soledad, XXY*) and Javier Godino (*Deception*).

The Cove takes place in Taiji, Japan, in the 1960's where former dolphin trainer Ric O'Barry captured and trained five dolphins that played in the family movie *Flipper* (1996). *The Cove*, written by Mark Monroe and directed by Louie Psihoyos, won the Best Documentary Feature Oscar. *The Cove* also won twenty-five other awards. The top actors/actresses, who play as themselves, are Joe Chisholm, Kirk Krack, and Hayden Panettiere (*I Love You, Beth Cooper, The Architect*).

(Continued on page 14)



Kicking off your month with pizzazz.

Up! starts with the young version of Carl and a girl named Ellie, then flashes forward seventy years after Ellie's death. When Carl hits a construction worker while driving, he is forced to move into a retirement home but, before he is taken there, his house flies away attached to a bunch of balloons. On his deck is eight year old Russell, an eager Boy Scout who just happens to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Written and directed by Pete Docter and Bob Peterson, *Up!* won the following Oscars: Music (Original Score) and Animated Feature Film. *Up!* also won thirty-eight other awards. The top Actors/Actresses are Edward Asner (*Gigantic, Christmas is Here Again*), Christopher Plummer (*Closing the Ring, The Lake House*), Jordan Nagai, and Bob Peterson (*Finding Nemo and Monsters, Inc.*)

The Young Victoria is a dramatization of Queen Victoria when she was younger, and her enduring romance with Prince Albert. The movie, written by Julian Fellowes and directed by Jean-Marc Vallée, won the Costume Design Oscar. *The Young Victoria* also won nine other awards. The top actors/actresses are Emily Blunt (*Devil Wears Prada, The Jane Austin Book Club*), Rupert Friend (*The Boy in the Stripped Pyjamas*), Paul Bettany (*Iron Man, The Secret Life of Bees*), and Miranda Richardson (*Fred Claus, Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*).

Precious is the tale of an overweight, illiterate high school student who is pregnant with her father's child. *Precious* is based on the novel "Push", written by Sapphire, and chronicles the life of a poor girl with an abusive mom and who was raped by her father. *Precious*, written by Geoffrey Fletcher and directed by Lee Daniels, won the following Oscars:



Actress in a Supporting Role, and Writing (Adapted Screenplay). *Precious* has also won fifteen other awards. The top actors/actresses are Gabourey Sidibe (*The Big C*), Mo'Nique (*Welcome Home Roscoe Jenkins, Steppin: The Movie*), Paula Patton (*Mirrors, Swing Vote*), and Mariah Carey (*Glitter, Tennessee*).

Star Trek is an incredible story of a young crew's voyage on board the most advanced star ship ever created: the U.S.S. Enterprise. The new recruits must find a way to stop an evil being whose mission of vengeance threatens all of mankind. Written by Roberto Orci and Alex Kurtzman, directed by J.J. Abrams, won the Make up Oscar. *Star Trek* also won seven other awards. *Star Trek* is based off of the hit show. The top actors/actresses are Chris Pine (*Carriers, Bottle Shock*), Zachary Quinto (*24, Heroes*), Leonard Nimoy (*Land of the Lost, Fringe*), and Zoe Saldana (*Avatar, Vantage Point*).

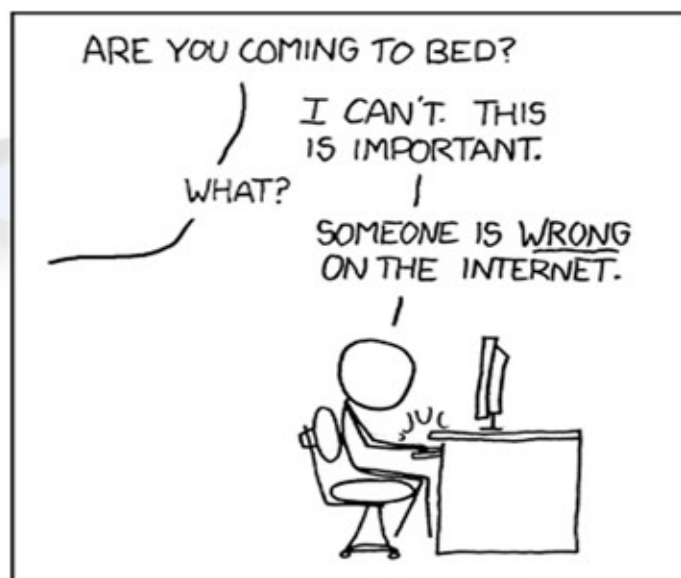
The New Tenants is about two guys that move into an apartment and find out the terrifying history of their new "home". Written by Anders Thomas Jensen, and directed by Joachim Back, this film won the Short Film (Live Action) Oscar. The top actors/actresses are Liane Balaban (*Numb3rs, Not Since You*), Kevin Corrigan (*Please Give, Don't Look Up*), Vincent D'Onofrio (*Staten Island, Thumbsucker*), and Jamie Harrold (*The Last Winter, Keep Your Distance*).

Inglorious Basterds takes place in France during a war where a young Jewish refugee named Shosanna Dreyfus witnesses the murder of her family and, several years later, plots revenge. Written and directed by Quentin Tarantino, *Inglorious Basterds* won the Actor in a Supporting Role Oscar. *Inglorious Basterds* has also won fifty-six other awards. The top actors/actresses are Brad Pitt (*The Curious Case of Benjamin Button, Burn After Reading*), Melanie Laurent, Christoph Waltz (*The Green Hornet*), and Eli Roth (*Cabin Fever, Hostel*).

The Hurt Locker was the undeniable winner of the night, bringing home six Oscars. Although people think that *Avatar* should have won Best Picture, I disagree. Let's face it, *The Hurt Locker* wasn't relying on special effects and technology to win. Besides, it was about time a female director won this top honor, and who is more deserving than Kathryn Bigelow, James Cameron's (*Avatar*) ex-wife? ■



April Comic



April Fools Day Pranks!

1. Tie a rubber band around a sing sprayer so that when the faucet is turned on, the person will get wet!
2. Put food coloring in a milk cartoon.
3. Place a raisin into a toothpaste bottle so that the next person who uses it will think it's a bug! (Try cutting the raisin in half if it's hard to get into the tube)
4. Stuff tissues (or paper towels) into the very tips of your family's shoes so that when they try to put them on- they can't!
5. Change the autocorrect on your family's computer with April Fools! (Try replacing commonly used words like it, the or and).
6. If you know your mom always showers and then blow dries her hair, try filling the hairdryer with baby powder or confectionary sugar so when she turns it on, she'll be clouded with white powder!
7. Switch the salt and pepper, or salt and sugar
8. Set a bunch of alarm clocks and place them around your house to drive your family mad!
9. Set all the clocks in your house to one hour earlier- including your parents alarm clock.
10. Get a huge cardboard box and tape it shut. Then, pretend like it's REALLY heavy as you try to move it. Call a friend or family member for some help. When they see you struggling, they will prepare themselves. As they put their hands on the box ask things like "You got it?" and when they say yes, let go. Of course they will overcompensate and laugh.

TeenHelp Trivia

Who are the new Avatar Editors?

Hint: There are five new members.

Challenge: What is the position of each new editor?

Movies You've Got to See!

Clash of the Titans
Leaves of Grass
Warlords
Don McKay
Date Night
Death at a Funeral
The Losers
The Back-Up Plan
A Nightmare on Elm Street
Furry Vengeance
Please Give

How do you say that?

English- Friend
Spanish- Amigo
French- Ami
Italian- Amico
German- Freund
Russian- друг

Name that Tune!

*"'Cause if one day you wake up and find that
you're missing me
And your heart starts to wonder where on this
Earth I could be
Thinking maybe you'd come back here to the
place that we'd meet
And you'd see me waiting for you on the
corner of the street"*

Word of the Month:

Busker - A person who entertains (as by playing music or dancing) in public places to make money.



Expressing life through your fingertips.

Butterflies

Katelin ((Insert Name Here))

However common is the thought
 That rainbows never end
 I came upon a pail of gold
 Whose lid was just an arm
 Whose fist was loose and worn
 With clutching
 With clutching



Stannington bird by Stephanie (Konstantine)

Purple by Adam



Sonnet for my Best Friend

Chris (snappydog)

Her hair not blonde, not fantasy is
 she;
 Yet eyes are round, and I get lost in
 them.
 Brown are her locks, and beautiful
 to me,
 She's wonderful, could melt the
 hearts of men.

Mine is she not, another's neither
 hers.
 She loves me, true, but never in that
 way.
 She looks at me as if we siblings
 were,
 But can't love me, though always
 'love you' says.

Do I love her? Yes, yes, I surely do.
 But in what way? I cannot tell for
 sure.

I know she's brilliant, and tell the
 truth:
 She's beautiful, I love no other more.

My best friend she, and I love her.
 But not in that way... o, would that
 it were.



Expressing life through your fingertips.

Untitled by Casey (Arbiter)

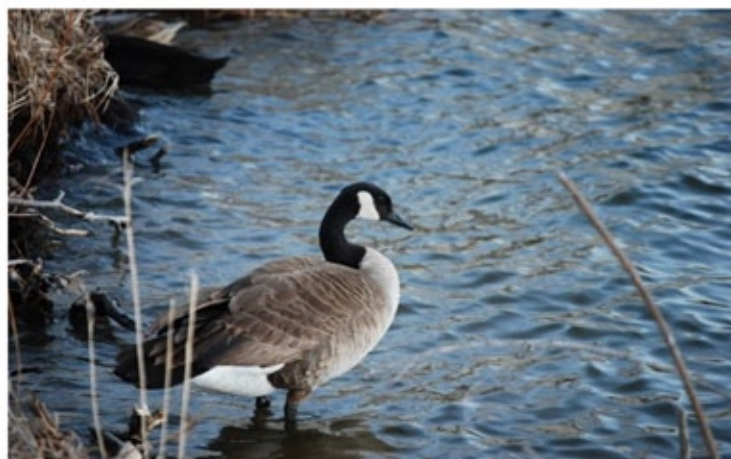


Waiting

by Grace (juliet)

I'm lost out at sea waiting for you to come and find me. Minutes pass by so slowly and days crawl by like slugs. I'm floating out there on a little life raft. There is only room

for two. Who will save me? The tide rolls in and out, and the waves carry me further out to sea. Clouds move in and block out the sun. The sky grows darker, and the waves are choppy. Waves are no longer lapping at the sides, but rather crashing over the edge. The raft begins to rock back and forth rapidly. Thunder rolls in the distance, and lightning cracks through the clouds. Panic will not take over because I know that you will save me soon. Thunder and lightning will come and go, but I will be waiting, waiting, waiting for you. The waves start to calm down a bit, and the lightning is gone. All that I can hear is the distant roll of thunder. There is a figure on the horizon. Could it be you? My heart beat is pattering in my chest like a humming bird flapping it's wings. The figure is moving into view. Your hand reaches out to me and pulls me on board your ship. Quickly, you embrace me in your arms. I begin to feel your warmth, and I get lost in your kisses. Or was I only imagining this? I'm still waiting, waiting, waiting for you. Save me...



Untitled by Maria (Gidig)

Chance Liz (Boxy)

We used to play doctor
And bandage up the ill
But the miracle a bandaid gave
This time didn't fulfil

We used to play cops and robbers
And chase eachother in the yard;
We'd shoot with fake guns
And come home unscarred.

We used to have sleepovers,
And camp behind the house;
Trick or treat on Halloween,
And dress like Mickey Mouse.

Spooky stories by the fire
Scared me late at night.
But you were there for comfort
And to make the wrong feel right.

We shared birthday parties,
And shared our first drinks.
We held eachother's hair
While barfing in bathroom sinks.

You helped me raid my closet
For something to impress.
I brought you to the mall
To shop for your prom dress.

I'm glad to have these memories
Because we won't be making more.
You're gone, but I'm still here;
I wish I knew what for.

You were there in the beginning
And I'll be here till the end.
I wish I'd had the chance to say
"You are my very best friend."



Like a ram, but not so stubborn!

by Katrina

This month's sign: Aries (March 20 - April 19) Happy birthday, Aries! This month, *"the ball is in your court."* Really though, it is! If there's a situation you've been wrestling with for the past couple of months, now is your time to go ahead, lay all of your cards on the table (oh dear, two clichés in one horoscope?) and try to get past the situation. You have everything you need to combat this situation, so don't hold back. I hope you have a lovely birthday month!

Strengths: You're courageous and brave, you have the potential to be very confident, and you're not afraid to be adventurous and take risks.

Potential weaknesses: Sometimes, you may make decisions impulsively without thinking. As long as you do take time to think through things, though, you should be fine!

Famous Aries: Reese Witherspoon, Sarah Jessica Parker, Vince Vaughn, Eddie Murphy, Robert Downey Jr., Victoria Beckham.

Taurus

(April 20 - May 20)

"Follow your heart" this month, Taurus. I feel like I heard this phrase at least once a day, but sometimes, we really do need to take it in and act on it. If something's been holding you back from doing a good act to someone else that you know is morally right, don't let it hold you back anymore. This is your time, Taurus.

Cancer

(June 21 - July 22)

"Honesty pays," Cancer. Sometimes, being honest is hard, but usually it truly is the right thing to do. If there's something you've been wanting to tell someone (obviously a positive comment - keep the negative ones to yourself!), I'm sure they would love to hear it. You never know just what a compliment can do for someone!

Leo

(July 23 - August 22)

Leo, *"holy smokes!"* If you're anything like me, this is what you've been saying every day for the past two months! After so many wild and crazy months, it might be a good idea to slow down and take this one easy. Before you get overwhelmed, try to get a way for a weekend and just let yourself unwind. Who knows what the future holds?

Gemini

(May 21 - June 20)

"Don't worry, be happy!" I know that this last month, you have had to face some hard things in your life. Some of them have been harder than others, but I know that you've made it through to this point. If you hadn't, you wouldn't be reading this horoscope! Let your worries go, Gemini; I hope that this month goes well for you.

Virgo

(August 23 - September 22)

"Distance makes the heart grow fonder." If you've missed someone or something lately, I can certainly assure you that you're not alone. I don't know the exact statistics, but I can hardly even convey the vast amount of people either physically away from their family, friends, or a significant other. Just know that this time truly can help you to become closer when you are reunited.



Like a ram, but not so stubborn!

by Katrina

Libra

(September 23 - October 22)

Libra, "lend a helping hand" this month. No, but seriously. Volunteering can help you to feel a lot better because you're giving back to your community (and the human race in general, which is always a good thing), and it can teach you valuable lessons that you may not have learned otherwise. So, if you have extra time on your hands, put yourself out there and see what kind of good works you can do in your community!

Aquarius

(January 20 - February 19)

Hello again, Aquarius. "Never put off tomorrow what you could do today." This month, an opportunity well worth your time will pass your way by the end of the month. As you and I both know that you've missed out on opportunities in the past, be sure to take this one, and be sure to take it before it slips away! Who knows where it could lead?

Scorpio

(October 23 - November 20)

Hi Scorpio. "An apple a day keeps the doctor away!" You have a turbulent month ahead of you, but not necessarily in a bad way. I guess, though, since things were more quiet than usual, you're ready for a little business and craziness in your life, right? Just make sure that you get enough sleep and continue to eat healthy foods so you don't become ill!

Sagittarius

(November 21 - December 21)

Life, sometimes, is "easier said than done." How many times have we heard that one? Many, many, no doubt. With that said, though, you can do it! Don't get discouraged, as I know you have a few times this past month. Even if life IS easier said than done, life can also be a lot more fun to actually go out and experience than to just talk about.

Capricorn

(December 22 - January 19)

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." It's true, Capricorn. You're going to come across a gigantic decision this month that you have to make. Let yourself not be pressured by your peers, but instead make the decision on the basis of your own moral conscious. If it's something that will lead to negative consequences, it's probably best to avoid the situation altogether.

Pisces

(February 20 - March 19)

"Step on it," Pisces! While you've been on top of things for the last couple of

months, now is really your time to shine. With the end of the school year approaching, you need to really start putting in extra work to ensure that you get the grades you've been hoping for. Not in school? That's okay too! This is also the season that employers start giving raises and promotions, and if you'd like one, now's the time to prove it.



Acknowledgements

Image sources

Choosing a Short Haircut: www.everystockphoto.com
Comic: www.xkcd.com
Earthquakes: www.navy.mil
News that Affects You: March 2010 in Review: www.everystockphoto.com
Oscar Overview: www.everystockphoto.com
Stand up for Autism: www.sxc.hu
Star Signs: www.grafamania.net

Articles

Cause of the Month: 10 Points of Light: www.takebackthenight.org
Cause of the Month: Locks of Love: www.locksoflove.org
Earthquakes: www.fema.gov
News that Affects You: March 2010 in Review: www.ap.org; www.bbc.co.uk; www.cnn.com
Stand up for Autism: www.worldautismawarenessday.org

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.teenhelp.org/avatar, or email us at avatar@teenhelp.org.