

HIV  
Testing Day

Scoliosis

Cause: Faceless  
International

Cover photo  
by Mel

June 2010  
TeenHelp.org's eZine  
Volume 3,  
Issue 12

# Avatar



Choosing a College or University  
Tips for choosing a college or university that suits you!





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



*Letter from the Editors and acknowledgments.*

## Letter from the Editors

Hello everyone, welcome to the June edition of Avatar!

We hope spring is treating you well and would like to take this time to thank you for your support and contributions in the past year. This issue of Avatar marks our twelfth and final release for Volume 3, which means that Volume 4 of Avatar is just around the corner! In Volume 4, we have a lot of fun and inspiration coming your way, along with a brand new design and more. To see what's to come and to join us in celebrating the past few years, be sure to stop by next month!

This month we're going to lead the way in **TeenHelp Times** with a piece on a variety of political leaders from around the world as well as some news events from May 2010 that matter to you. Be sure to check out June's **Cause of the Month**, Faceless International.

In **Mind and Body**, we have an informative article on National HIV Testing Day, which discusses the HIV virus and ways you can take action against HIV and AIDS. While you're there, don't forget to check out our piece on scoliosis and advice in **Dear Avatar**!

In **Lifestyle**, we have some tips lined up for you! For those of you who are deciding on a college or university right now, "Which School is Right for You?" would be a great read. And for all of the animal lovers among us, if you're looking to adopt a pet, we have some great points for you to consider when making this huge decision. While you're at it, don't forget to check out **Fun and Games**! If you're looking for something for your soul or more fun, be sure to stop by **Self Expression** and **Horoscopes**!

We hope that you enjoy this issue, and we hope to see you in Volume 4!  
The Avatar Editors

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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!

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## World Leaders

*by Casey (Cas\*)*

Recently, during a class discussion, I was shocked to realize how many of my classmates did not know who the current world leaders were. Right now, there are 181 nations listed on the CIA's website, although not all of them are recognized as nations by the United States. Can you name a third (sixty nations) of them? I can name eighty-seven. Of those I cannot name, some I have never heard of and others I know little about. I cannot tell you of all 181 nations, but I will tell you about the world leaders of eleven of these nations.

First, a little about Commonwealth nations. The Commonwealth realms are sixteen independent states within the Commonwealth of Nations who still formally accept HRH Queen Elizabeth II as their sovereign. They are connected historically in most cases by their status as former colonies of the British Empire, though their modern governance is only associated to the United Kingdom ceremonially. In each realm outside of the UK the Queen appoints a Governor General to fulfil her functions in her absence.

Australia, also known as the Commonwealth of Australia is a federal constitutional monarchy under a parliamentary democracy. The Queen, House of Representatives, and Senate make up Australia's governing body. In addition, each of the six states has their own constitution, and in total there are seven sovereign parliaments. The Governor General of Australia is Quentin Bryce and the Prime Minister is currently Kevin Michael Rudd.

Next, we have Canada, a Commonwealth realm. Canada is a parliamentary democracy within a constitutional monarchy, meaning that it too has a Queen. The Queen is represented by the Governor General, currently Michaëlle Jean. The Canadian parliament is composed of an elected lower house (the House of Commons), and an appointed upper house (the Senate). The party with the most elected MPs in the Commons forms the government, and the leader of that party becomes Prime Minister. The current Prime Minister is Stephen Harper. The Prime Minister then appoints a Cabinet who run the country day to day.

I know you know something about China, but do you know who leads China or the kind of government in China? China is also known as the



People's Republic of China; it is a Communist country, although it appears to be heading towards Capitalism. The President, currently Hu Jintao, is the head of state but does not actually have that much power. The State Council is actually the chief authority in the PRC.

Denmark is also a constitutional monarchy. The head of the Danish government is the Prime Minister, currently Lars Lokke Rasmussen. There is a queen, Queen Margrethe II, but the Prime Minister and the cabinet oversee the eighteen departments of the government, although they are all appointed by the Crown, based on party composition of Parliament.

France is a social and democratic Republic. France is semi-presidential, meaning that the power of the executive branch is divided between two officials, the President, who is the Head of State, and the Prime Minister, who is the Head of Government. The president of France, currently Nicolas Sarkozy, is elected directly by the people. Currently, the Prime Minister is Francois Fillon.

Next we have Greece, which has been in the news a lot lately. We all know of the stock market crash in Greece, and the fall of the Euro, but do you know about the Grecian government system? Greece is also a Democratic Republic. They have a President, Karolos Papoulias, although he is not the Head of Government, who is elected by Parliament. The Prime Minister is the Head of Government, currently Yeoryios Papandreou, is elected directly by the people.





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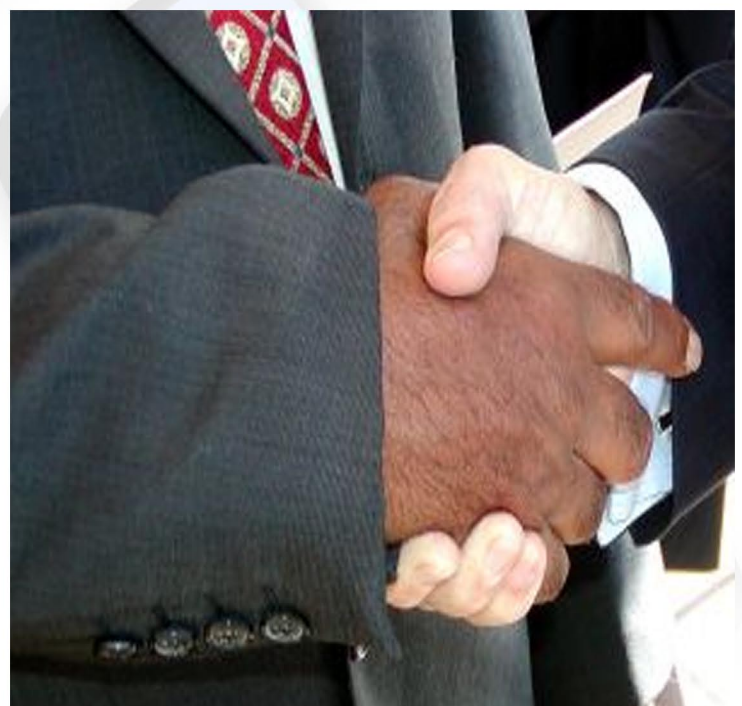
Germany is also a Democratic Republic, with the Chancellor as the Head of Government. The Chancellor is not elected by the people, but by Parliament. The President is basically a ceremonial position, mainly ceremonial duties, like diplomatic appearances, although he does hold a position of power. The current President is Horst Koehler, and the current Chancellor is Angela Merkel.

Ireland is also a republic. The head of government is the prime minister, who is appointed by the president, after being chosen by the lower Parliament. The current president is Mary McAleese and the Prime Minister of Ireland is Brian Cowen.

Japan is a constitutional monarchy, and they have an Emperor, Emperor Akihito. The power of the emperor is really limited though, he is basically for ceremonial and diplomatic purposes. The Prime Minister, Yukio Hatoyama, has the majority of the power, and is the head of government.

Russia, which has the ninth largest population in the world, gained its independence from the Soviet Union back in 1991 and is now a federation. Russia's government currently includes a Chief of State, President Dmitriy Anatolyevich Medvedev, several different heads of governments with focuses on different areas of the government, and a cabinet, all of whom are elected by the popular vote.

Last but certainly not least, the United Kingdom is not a single country, but actually made up of several different countries: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The United Kingdom, a Commonwealth realm, is a parliamentary democracy within a constitutional monarchy. The head of state is Queen Elizabeth II. The UK parliament is composed of an elected lower house (the House of Commons), and an appointed upper house (the House of Lords). The party with the most elected MPs in the Commons forms the government, and the leader of that party becomes Prime Minister. The current Prime Minister is David Cameron. The Prime Minister then appoints a Cabinet who run the country day to day. ■







## News that Affects You: May 2010 in Review

by Jessie (Asylum)

If you're digging the warming weather (and we know you are) you may have gotten behind on breaking news from this past May. If you missed the headlines, this is what people were talking about in May 2010!

### Health

**Five a Day!** A new study in the Journal of Pediatrics found that children with higher levels of pesticides in their body are at a greater risk for developing Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). About 20-30% of our fruits and vegetables from supermarkets are contaminated by pesticides, so it's best to buy organic (which means the produce is grown naturally, without synthetic chemicals like pesticides) or to wash your produce!



**Power nap = power brain.** New research suggests what we've long known—sleep helps us to better perform, from day-to-day tasks to activities involving memory and recall. A so-called "power nap", a nap lasting about an hour and a half, has been found to increase a person's memory. So what's the catch? You have to dream! Dreaming helps you to process and file information, so you can remember the important stuff and eliminate the rest.

### Politics and Economy

**Conservative Dems?** The UK general elections were held on May 6th 2010 and resulted in a coalition government. The Conservative Party gained the most seats in the election, with the Labour Party coming in second. After discussions, Nick Clegg of the Liberal Democrats moved to back the Conservative Party, resulting in a coalition government with David Cameron as the new Prime Minister of the UK.

**Financial Fallout.** On May 5th 2010, starting at midnight local time, plane, train, and ferry traffic in and out of the country of Greece stopped. Schools, as well as some hospitals and private businesses, closed as a nationwide strike protesting proposed spending cuts and tax increases took place. The protests, inspired by Greece's massive national debt, quickly turned violent as demonstrators threw rocks and glass at police and set fire to public buildings. The violence resulted in deaths of three bank workers and dozens of injuries, as well as the arrest of more than 100 people.



### Environment and Natural Disaster

**Massive Spill.** The Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, an enormous, ongoing oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, continues to threaten over 400 species in the Gulf, particularly along Louisiana marshlands and the coast. Estimates are widely inconsistent, ranging between 5,000 barrels (210,000 US gallons or 790,000 litres) and 100,000 barrels (4,200,000 US gallons or 16,000,000 litres) of petroleum released per day. British Petroleum chief executive Tony Hayward suggested that the impact of this massive oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico will be "very, very modest".

**Ashy Airspace.** The Eyjafjallajökull volcano is still disrupting air travel and trade this month. Although seismic activity seems to have slowed, and maybe even stopped, the newest ash cloud from this volcano has yet to dissipate.

For more news check out the Current Events and Debates forum, or reputable online sources like [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk) or [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com)! ■





## HIV Testing Day

by Marie (Rie)

**June 27th 2010 is National HIV Testing Day**, or NHTD. NHTD aims to increase awareness of HIV and AIDS and to encourage early testing. It is estimated that one in five people in the US are unaware of whether or not they have HIV. Lack of care and the stigma surrounding HIV and AIDS can make it difficult for those in need to get appropriate health care and may discourage others from being tested. Around 11% of HIV infections are seen in babies who have acquired the virus from their mothers, 10% from injecting drugs, 5-10% from sex between men, and 5-10% in health care settings. The remaining proportion accounts for sex between men and women, of which a disproportionately high percentage of reported cases are among young women of color. Estimates from the UNAIDS 2009 AIDS Epidemic Update states that around 31.3 million adults and 2.1 million children were living with HIV at the end of 2008.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus that attacks the immune system cells. As time passes, HIV gradually destroys these cells leaving the body vulnerable and prone to infections, which it struggles to fight off. AIDS can be diagnosed when the number of immune system cells in the blood of an HIV positive person drops below a certain level. Your body can't make as many anti-bodies, which is what are needed to fight off infection. When the immune system is deemed too weak to fight infection, the person is said to have Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, or AIDS.

HIV can be passed on through bodily fluids such as blood or semen. Most commonly it is transmitted through sexual contact. It can also be passed on through needles, including those used for tattooing and body piercing, blood transfusions, childbirth and breastfeeding. There are many misconceptions surrounding how you can get HIV, such as kissing, hugging, crying, sweating, shaking hands, insect bites or sharing a bathroom. Rest assured these are not true.

You should get tested if you have injected drugs, steroids, or have shared equipment with others, if you have had unprotected vaginal, anal, or oral sex with individuals who have had sex with multiple or unknown partners, if you are unaware of the sexual history of any of your partners, or if you been diagnosed with or treated for hepatitis, tuberculosis, or a sexually transmitted infection (STI). You should always get tested if you plan to get pregnant as HIV can be passed onto the baby.

The most common HIV test is a simple blood test that detects the HIV infection. Tests can also be taken using



saliva or urine. It can take anywhere from twenty minutes to a few days to receive results. Should the result come back positive, another test will be taken to confirm the infection. This test usually takes longer than the others, and may take anywhere from a matter of days to weeks.

Antiretroviral therapy (ARV) can prolong the onset of AIDS in a person that has already been diagnosed with HIV. Modern treatment is highly effective and can give those with HIV the opportunity to live the rest of their lives without developing AIDS, if the treatment is continued and successful. Many people can still benefit from antiretroviral treatment once they have AIDS and it can improve the quality and length of their lives. Although antiretroviral treatment can prevent the onset of AIDS in a person living with HIV, many people are still diagnosed with AIDS today.

There are four main reasons why people continue to be diagnosed with AIDS; some people were infected with HIV before combination therapy was available have developed a drug resistance, therefore leaving them with limited treatment options. Many people are never tested for HIV and don't become aware until they have developed an AIDS related illness. These people are at a higher risk of mortality and are less likely to respond to treatment at this stage; it's better to be safe and get tested. Sometimes people taking treatment are unable to tolerate the side effects of drugs. In many poor countries antiretroviral treatment is not easily available. Even in richer countries, such as America, many individuals are not covered by health insurance and cannot pay for the treatment.

There are many ways you can take action on National HIV Testing Day, from hosting an event, to practising safer methods in an attempt to prevent HIV. Supporting people living with HIV/AIDS, and talking about HIV prevention with friends, family, and colleagues can also play a huge role in preventing future outbreaks of HIV/AIDS. Anybody can get HIV, regardless of age, race, or sexuality. If you want to make sure that you're HIV free or you want to receive support, go out and get tested on National HIV Testing Day. ■





## Scoliosis

by Briana

### June marks Scoliosis Awareness Month.

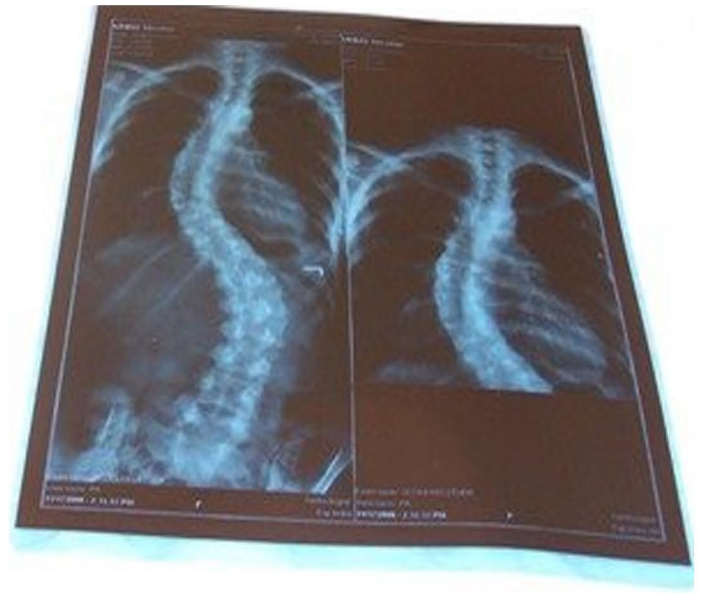
Scoliosis is the curving of the spinal cord and is a genetic disorder that can affect both females and males between the ages of six and fourteen. However, this disorder is more common in females.

A person without scoliosis may have zero to fifteen degrees of a curve in their spinal cord, whereas someone who has scoliosis will have a curve between thirty and ninety degrees. A few signs that a person may have scoliosis are uneven shoulders, waist, or hips. If a person bends over, scoliosis can be very apparent, as the spine would be curved in a different direction and one shoulder blade may be more prominent. To be diagnosed with scoliosis, a person would need to see their doctor and be referred for further tests, such as an MRI scan, x-rays of the spine, and neurological tests.

There are a couple of different ways to treat scoliosis, such as wearing a brace or having surgery. When a patient is first diagnosed with scoliosis, the doctor will typically have them fitted for a brace. Braces help to gradually push the spine back into a normal position. There are a few different braces: the Boston brace, the Milwaukee brace, and the Charleston brace. The Boston brace is plastic and covers all of the person's body under the arms and above the hips; this is the general brace to be worn. Usually, patients wear the brace up to twenty-three hours per day. The Milwaukee brace will most likely go above the arms and have a neck ring to hold it in place. It is similar to the Boston brace because it should be worn for twenty-three hours as well. Lastly, the Charleston brace is also known as a night time brace. When the patient goes to have this brace molded, they bend in a certain direction to push the spine back in place. With this brace, patients may pick different patterns or colours to personalize it and make it their own.

Another form of treatment is spinal fusion surgery. Usually, doctors will only perform this type of surgery if the curve exceeds fifty-five degrees. Spinal fusion is a major surgery and could last up to eight hours. During the procedure, doctors will open the back and place metal rods on to the spine to straighten it out. If a patient has two curves, one on the top and another on the bottom, they can not correct the whole spine. If they did, the patient would not be able to bend at the hips very well.

My sister and I were both born with this genetic



disorder. My sister had a Boston brace and I had a Charleston brace. She went into surgery around the age of twelve and had a double spinal fusion. The doctors thought I had stopped growing, but by the time I was twelve, they did not see the need to perform surgery. When I was seventeen, I had a lot of pain in my back. I went to the doctor and my curve went from a forty-five degree to a seventy degree. In December of 2009, I had a double spinal fusion. I was in the hospital for five days and it took months to recover. I still have a small curve on my lower spine, which causes my hips to be uneven. Having two metal rods on the spine, I had to learn how to modify the way I performed different actions, such as tying my shoes or bending over to pick something up. Usually, people can bend using their backs, whereas I can only bend from my hips. The plus side from having the surgery done, however, is that I have perfect posture and cannot slouch.

Unfortunately, scoliosis can cause major problems in different parts of the body. Some curves can actually compress lungs and make it hard to breathe. Other times, such as in my case, scoliosis can cause hips to be uneven and legs to be bowed. After my spinal fusion, I had two more surgeries to correct my bowed legs, adding up to three major surgeries in a time frame of a year. I now have a plate in each thigh holding my thigh bone together.

Scoliosis can be a disorder difficult to deal with. One of the best treatments is having someone who is always there through all of the struggles of scoliosis. People with this disorder are not different from anyone else. If you or someone you know has scoliosis, remember you are not alone in any way. ■





## Cause of the Month: Faceless International

by Katrina

**No matter who you are, you are blessed** with talents that you sometimes don't even know about. This month, I challenge you to look past yourself on the outside, and introspect just a little bit. Try to find your own talents and your own callings, and think creatively about how you can make a difference. One of my own favorite organizations, Faceless International, has been chosen as June's Cause of the Month. Faceless International, serving more as a coalition of different causes and an encouragement for change, is a little bit different than some of the organizations we've had in the past, but that doesn't make it any less important.

Faceless International was cofounded by Stephen Christian (member of Anberlin) and two of his friends, Seth and Sarah, while they were on a trip in Haiti. As they began to truly recognize not the positive changes that they were certainly making on their new friends in Haiti, but the positive changes that their new friends in Haiti were making on them, Faceless International was born.

"The purpose behind Faceless is simple. We want to put a face on the many people in our own country and around the world who have gone faceless, or unknown, for so long. Everyday in our own country, people pass by many who are struggling."

Faceless International wants to serve not as an end in itself, but as a means to an end. They want to be the starting point and want to empower and ignite a spark in each and every one of us, to further research and look into the causes that make up the backbone of Faceless International. The organizations currently include Kiva, Do Something Now, Divine Chocolate, Free the Slaves, Stop the Traffik, Made by Survivors, and Land of a Thousand Hills (causes that may very well be featured in future issues of Avatar), but Faceless International does not limit itself. It promotes tolerance and passion for ALL causes and truly is making the world a better place one step at a time.

It only takes three minutes to make a difference.

[www.facelessinternational.com](http://www.facelessinternational.com)







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**For reasons I can't change, I'm back in a place which has bad memories and is encouraging me to get into old bad habits, which part of me still encourages myself to do, how can I get accustomed to being here without succumbing to my old-self and maybe be at peace with the place?**

It sounds like things are hard for you right now. I can totally understand where you're coming from; I have been in a similar position myself before, so I can really empathise with you here.

You have described the behaviours that you want to get into as 'old bad habits', which is actually quite positive for a number of reasons. Firstly, it implies that you haven't yet started to fall back into these habits again which is great and secondly, you realise that they're bad. I really encourage you to work through the temptations to fall back into these habits while you still realise that they're bad. Unfortunately, once you stop believing that they're bad, it will be much harder not to fall back into them.

Just because you're back in this place does not mean that you have to hang around with the same people or fall into old routines. Habit and routine seem to go hand-in-hand with each other. As you develop a routine, you often develop habits at the same time. You could do this by doing things in a different routine on a morning, which will help to shake things up a bit and keep it new.

Another thing that you could try is to meet some new people in this old place. Often it can be difficult to step away from bad habits when we're around the same people. They know our old habits and things that we do and may comment when we change our ways. As a result, we might feel pressured into acting the same way. Also, if the bad habits look slightly odd to others then people who are used to it wouldn't comment but if you make new friends then they might notice and make comments which would encourage you to stop.

I think that one of the most important things that you can do in a situation like this is recognise when you're beginning to slip back into your old habits, take a step back, look at what you're doing and change it. The earlier you catch it, the easier it will be to change or avoid. If you feel like things are getting too much for you or if you need some extra encouragement and support at a time like this then I would really urge you to speak to someone, perhaps a close friend or an adult you trust, or even someone here on TeenHelp.

**My sister's boyfriend has begun to really irritate me. His family has financial problems and he now comes round to our house to wash their clothes. He is very rude and unsupportive towards my sister and she always seems to be doing things for him, including driving him everywhere. I used to talk to him a lot but recently, I have stopped speaking to him in the hope that he will realise I am annoyed with him. My sister buys a lot of stuff for him and I don't know what to do.**

It sounds like you're having a few difficulties right now. I'm sure you'll be pleased to know that you're not alone in this situation. Many people just like you struggle to adapt to new people entering their family, and it sounds like you have a number of issues with your sister's boyfriend.

You're not going to want to hear this, but I'm afraid that at the end of the day, it really is your sister's choice who she goes out with and if you try and interfere it will probably just end up with her getting really annoyed with you which wouldn't be very good.

I think that the best thing that you could do in this situation is not to ignore her boyfriend, but just to try and get on with him. At the end of the day, it's not going to help anyone if you stop speaking to him. By making an effort to talk to him and get on with him, you would be helping to keep the peace within your family which will keep stress levels down and overall improve your family relationships. I do realise that this could be hard for you and if you feel like it's really beginning to affect you and you're very concerned about things then you could try explaining how you feel to your sister.

Overall though, I really do think that this is up to your sister. It is her boyfriend and if she loves him then it's unlikely that anything you say or do is going to change that. If you begin to act hostile towards him, it's just going to stress everyone out, so I really do think that you just need to put up with it for now.

### Ask us for advice!

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





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I went to my girlfriend's house and found a hidden pot of marijuana growing in her back garden. Her brother is always in trouble with the police but is currently living at home. We told her Dad but he just told her brother to get rid of it, which he hasn't. Her parents won't do anything because they're afraid of her brother and don't want to upset him. Should I turn him into the police? It would probably upset my girlfriend but I'm worried that if I don't tell anyone then I could get into trouble for knowing. The police have an anonymous text line but I don't want his parents to get into trouble. Should I be loyal to my girlfriend's family or abide by the law?

It sounds like you're in a really difficult place right now; on one hand you want to be loyal to your girlfriend and her family but on the other hand, you recognise the need to abide by the law and prevent yourself from getting into trouble.

I think that a good thing to do right now would be to make two lists: the advantages and disadvantages of telling the police versus the advantages and disadvantages of not telling them. This way, you can clearly see all of your thoughts written down which will hopefully help you to make more sense of everything in your head.

Personally, if I were you, I don't think that I would tell the police. At the end of the day, it is just one marijuana plant which would suggest that he was only growing it for his own use, not to deal. I think that if you did tell the police it would do more harm than good as you would lose the trust of your girlfriend and upset relationships both between you and her family, and probably her and her family. I highly doubt that you would get into trouble for knowing and not telling the police as it wouldn't really be possible for them to prove that you knew should they ever find out about the plant. I don't think that you're really in a position to be trying to sort out your girlfriend's family, and I think that for now you should just concentrate on your girlfriend, being with her and building a strong relationship with her. However, all this being said, it is up to you and I'm sure that in the end, you will make what you feel is the best decision for you.

I was really close with one of my friends who was a girl when I was a freshman. We would talk to each other on the phone a lot and sometimes fall asleep doing so. She opens up to me a lot and I always give the best advice I can. We sometimes flirt with each other, but we always have boundaries. One night she texted me saying 'forget about the boundaries' so we did, but the next day at school she acted as though nothing had happened. She gets jealous if other girls touch me or if I speak to her friends on Facebook and she likes it when I hug her before hugging her friends. I don't know what to do because I really like her but she confuses me and I don't know if she likes me back.

This girl sounds really sweet! It's great that you have such a close and open relationship with this girl and I think that you should really value and hold on to that. It also sounds like you're beginning to like her as more than just friends. This happens all the time to people our age and can be a very exciting (but sometimes anxiety-provoking time).

She sounds like a really nice girl and it seems like you have a very strong bond. That being said, girls are very confusing! It can be difficult to figure out what it is that they really want and whether they actually like you or not. Girls are very good at playing games and hiding their true emotions.

I reckon that for now you should just keep doing what you're doing with this girl. Continue to spend time with her and if you both want it then I'm sure that eventually it will turn into something more. I wouldn't recommend asking her out right now as if she says no, which I'm not saying she would do, it could cost you a friendship as it's likely to make things very awkward between the two of you. I think that you're friendship is too special to let a thing like that happen.

I really think that you should try and relax about this, chill out, talk to her, have some fun and see where things lead!

## Ask us for advice!

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







*Kicking off your month with pizzazz.*

## Which School is Right for You?

*by Brittany (.Brittany.) and Sabrina (Sabrina.)*

**As we approach the end of the year, many of us** face a new, and huge, decision: how to choose a college or university to attend in the upcoming year. Choosing a university to attend is not going to be easy, but if you go about things in a healthy way, it also doesn't have to be as stressful as many people make it out to be! Even if you're not quite to the point of starting this new chapter in your life, you may be in the future, so it's never too early to start doing research and considering all of your options!

You should consider a number of factors that are important to you when looking at schools. Some examples include, but are not limited to: program, campus, residences, school-spirit, student atmosphere, scholarships, prestige, location, distance from home, cost, if your friends are going there, sports, clubs, and more. You need to decide which factors are most important to you and then consider those factors when comparing your options. It can be a really exciting process, don't worry!

### Before the Progress Begins

There are many things that you must begin to do even years before you're at the point of making a decision about your future education plans.

Firstly, in years preceding your last year in any sort of school, you must focus on your academics but also seek to be a well-rounded student by participating in many clubs, committees, and councils that catch your interest. A TeenHelp user, Sabrina (Sabrina.), gives us a bit of insight as to how she's managed to stay successful and active during her education: *"Now that I am in grade twelve, I am the President of our school's Athletic Council, a member of four other councils/committees, on three sports teams, an executive member of the Youth Cabinet in my city, and have held many positions in the past (i.e. The Vaughan Youth City Councillor position that I held last Fall). I have also won many awards and gained reference letters from very important people as a result of my involvement in these activities. In addition, I have worked hard (since grade 9) to keep my grade average above 90% and this year, it is the highest I've ever had it – at 95%."* Clearly, upon being accepted to many prestigious universities, we can see that this hard work has paid off for Sabrina, and can certainly pay off for you as well if you set high goals for yourself. Not everyone is as active as Sabrina, but any outside activity and every good grade will count in your favor! Remember you are competing against a

bunch of other students whose grades are roughly equal to yours, so sometimes it's volunteer hours that count the most!

### Making the Decision and Managing Stress

To be accepted into a college or university (which will, of course, help you to make your decision based on where you are accepted and who is willing to offer you the best quality of education for the price you're willing to pay), there are several requirements. For General Arts, Social Science, Science, and other common programs, there are often no non-academic requirements. When looking to apply to universities, you need to check the specific course requirements for your programs. For Arts, Humanities, and Social Science, in some countries, you will need to take (and do well in) pre-requisite courses, grade twelve course is University Level English. If you're planning on going into Sciences, however, there may be pre-requisites that consist of University Level Calculus, Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, and Biology. The pre-requisites for programs will certainly vary from country to country, and even from university to university, so it's really important to look into your specific programs of choice much in advance to ensure you have the correct pre-requisites for entry into that program.

As you fill out applications, further research various schools, and write different essays or resumes for various scholarships, keep in mind that you will also be completing classwork from your current school. Sometimes, balancing these two roles can get somewhat overwhelming! As you go through this process, don't hesitate to rely on family and friends for support and encouragement. They want you to get into the school of your choice just as much as you do, so be sure to keep them informed and updated on the situation! Also, check to see if your school has a college or career counselor. Many students don't take advantage of this wonderful resource that's typically free of cost and readily available to you any time you need help sorting out different situations you may find yourself in! ■







*Kicking off your month with pizzazz.*

## Adopting a Pet

*by Cheyenne (Desert)*

**Pet adoption can have many benefits.** Not only can it allow you to give a home to an animal in need, but adopting a pet may also improve your own mood and give you the chance to care for something that will love you in return. If you're considering adopting a pet and need a few tips, you've come to the right place!

Choosing a pet can be a challenge. Some people choose to adopt dogs or cats, while others prefer more exotic pets such as snakes. It all depends on your personal preference and how much time you're willing to devote to your new pet. Here are a few key points to consider when choosing a pet:

Firstly, do you have the time needed to spend house-breaking or training your pet? If you work a lot or have a family, getting a new rambunctious puppy may not be the best idea for you. You have to make sure that your priorities are in order and that you aren't abandoning anything important.

Secondly, you must also keep in mind how big your new animal will grow in the long run. Sure, every pet is cute and small when it's young, but some pets can become much larger as they grow into adulthood. So will there be enough room in your house to accommodate your pet and keep the pet safe and happy? Remember, once you adopt a pet, it's yours for life.

Don't forget that there are also different costs attached to the care of different animals. If you're adopting a fish, the costs of a tank and food may not seem very high. However, if you're splurging on a new golden retriever puppy, there are the costs of vet bills in addition to the money spent acquiring the puppy.

So be sure to take into consideration the amount of money that you can afford to spend on an animal.

Once you have chosen the type of animal and breed you want, it's time to decide where you're getting the pet from. There are many different options, each with its own pros and cons. One of the places that you may consider is The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA). The SPCA is always a great choice for adopting pets. They treat their animals well and keep them healthy. Fees are inexpensive, and they have a wide range of animals to choose from, including gerbils, cats, dogs and rabbits. Additionally, their branches are widespread, which means that you most likely will have no trouble locating one. You could also consider talking to friends or other acquaintances and looking for any pets that have been given or sold from someone whose dog or cat has just had a litter. Keep in mind, however, that some of these pets can be malnourished or have other unhealthy attributes that will affect you if you choose to adopt. If you're planning to adopt from a pet store, make sure that you know where the pets there came from and how they have been treated. Quite a few pet stores get their animals from puppy mills or similar places. Unfortunately these pets can also have health problems, so it's important to get all of the details.

These things should all be carefully considered while choosing the type of pet and breed that you'd like to adopt. Thoroughly research everything before making your decision. There are both positive and negative aspects of every breed of animal; each has different needs. Understand that you'll need to be able to fulfill these needs in order to keep your new pet healthy and happy.

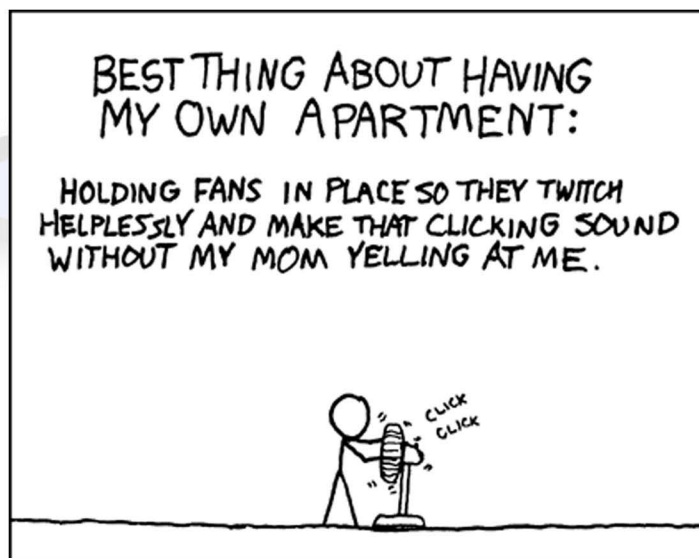
If you're going to adopt, we hope that everything goes well! ■







## June Comic



## (Slang) Word of the Month:

Legit - (adj.) A modern synonym for words such as "cool," "ill," "tight," or "dope." Used to describe a noun that is of a particularly excellent quality. The slang use of this term is slowly but steadily increasing in popularity.

## Movies Out in June

Get Him to the Greek; Marmaduke; The A-Team; The Karate Kid; Jonah Hex; Toy Story 3; Grown Ups; Knight and Day; The Twilight Saga: Eclipse

## TeenHelp Trivia

What are the four most common locations to receive advice or support on TeenHelp?

## Can you say it?

Spanish - luz del sol  
Bulgarian - Съншайн  
English - sunshine  
French - lumière du soleil  
Italian - luce del sole  
Russian - Солнечный свет

German - Sonnenschein  
Czech - sluneční svit  
Eslovenian - slnečný svit  
Dutch - zonneshijn  
Polish - światło słoneczne  
Swedish - Solsken

## Name that tune!

*"Just in time, I'm so glad you have a one-track mind like me.*

*You gave my life direction, a game show love connection we can't deny."*

TeenHelp Trivia: Answers: 1) The support forums, 2) The Chat Room, 3) HelpLINK, 4) Live Help.  
Name that Tune: Hey Soul Sister, Train

## Apricot Coffee Cake

1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
2 teaspoons baking powder  
6 tablespoons white sugar  
1 egg  
2 tablespoons butter or margarine  
1/4 cup dry milk powder  
2/3 cup water  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
2 cups pitted and diced fresh apricots  
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon, or to taste  
1 tablespoon white sugar, or to taste

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F (190 C). Place the flour, salt, and baking powder in a large bowl. In a separate bowl, cream together the sugar, egg, and butter until smooth. Mix the powdered milk, water, and vanilla into the batter, stirring until well blended. Pour the batter into the flour and beat until smooth. Spread the batter into a greased 8 inch square pan, and sprinkle the diced apricots evenly over the top. Dust with cinnamon and sugar. Bake in the preheated oven approximately 45 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean.

## Strawberry Shortcake

3 pints fresh strawberries  
1/2 cup white sugar  
2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour  
4 teaspoons baking powder  
2 tablespoons white sugar  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
1/3 cup shortening  
1 egg  
2/3 cup milk  
2 cups whipped heavy cream

Slice the strawberries and toss them with 1/2 cup of white sugar. Set aside. Preheat oven to 425 degrees F (220 degrees C). Grease and flour one 8 inch round cake pan. In a medium bowl combine the flour, baking powder, 2 tablespoons white sugar and the salt. With a pastry blender cut in the shortening until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Make a well in the center and add the beaten egg and milk. Stir until just combined. Spread the batter into the prepared pan. Bake at 425 degrees F (220 degrees C) for 15 to 20 minutes or until golden brown. Let cool partially in pan on wire rack. Slice partially cooled cake in half, making two layers. Place half of the strawberries on one layer and top with the other layer. Top with remaining strawberries and cover with the whipped cream.





Expressing life through your fingertips.

Flowers by Briana



## It Tells Me

by Abbie Haley (SpazMaz)

I guess I should know  
That you do care  
I guess I should understand  
You'd do anything for me  
I do understand, but hug me again  
Because it Tells me that you care  
I should try harder  
to be what they want me to be  
but you won't let me  
You want me to be me  
I think it's in my best interest  
if I grow to accept  
the fact that if I change  
I wouldn't be me.  
Some people tell me  
I won't amount to anything  
you hold my hand and tell me to keep  
smiling  
because you understand  
I need you to know  
that deep inside  
something lies in me so deep  
that no one can find  
But you already found it  
It's showing right now  
it's me, the real me  
not what they want me to be  
Their intense stares, awkward glances  
I look to you and ignore them  
You're helping me realize that being me  
was better than being them  
So hug me again  
Cuz it tells me you care.

Fireworks by Moyshi (moyshi239)







*Keep a firm grasp on that determination!*

by Katrina

## **This month's sign:** Gemini (May 21 - June 20)

Gemini, happy birthday! Hope you're having a great one. You're a nice sea-foam green this month. The beginning of the month is looking like it's going to be great for you, and we can only hope that the middle of the month will be as well! The end of the month might be a little rocky with friendships, but just remember to keep hopeful! Honesty is the best policy and communication is key.

**Strengths:** You're fabulous with communication, which will really help you out this month (and of course, in general).

**Potential weaknesses:** At times, you may have trouble finding motivation to be punctual. Just remember that you have every ability to be where you need to be with a good amount of organization.

## **Cancer**

(June 21 - July 22)

Cancer, this month, you're one of my personal favorites: bronze! Not only will you be able to bronze in the sun (if you so choose; sunlight DOES give us Vitamin D, you know!), but this month just has a bronze theme to it. It's shiny, beautiful, and really deep. You're going to have some meaningful conversations with people who WANT to talk to you, so be sure to recognize the importance of those people.

## **Leo**

(July 23 - August 22)

Well color me yellow and call me a lemon! This month, your theme color is yellow: it's bright, it's bold, it's dashing, and it's just right for you. It looks like the sun is going to be shining not only outside, but also inside for you, Leo. You have a lovely month ahead of you. Make peace with it.

## **Virgo**

(August 23 - September 22)

Frank Gellet Burgess once said, "I've never seen a purple cow; I never hope to see one; but I can tell you, anyhow, I'd rather see than be one." I say this to say nothing more than that this month, Virgo, your color is purple! It represents royalty and elegance, which is the theme that's seemingly going to suit you well this month! If you have any interviews in the works, be sure to be on your best behavior, as you never know what they might lead to!

## **Libra**

(September 23 - October 22)

Roses are red, and so is your June, Libra. Red is the color of love and romance, so it looks like it's going to be a good month in terms of prancin' and romancin'. Be sure not to jump into anything too fast though. Don't hold yourself back, but don't completely follow your heart. We all have to remember to use our brains, too.

## **Scorpio**

(October 23 - November 20)

You're lavender in June, Scorpio. Why? Well, lavender is the color of serenity and peace, and this month is going to reflect such a lavender color! Make sure you don't get too overwhelmed as you finish out school or as you begin to work this summer. Keep yourself in check by making sure you have at least some time each day to relax and unwind; you deserve it!





*Keep a firm grasp on that determination!*

by Katrina

## **Sagittarius**

(November 21 - December 21)

Violets are blue. Blue, typically, is the color of sadness. It doesn't have to be, though. It's also the color of clear skies on beautiful days and deep eyes of those we love. It's the color of the gorgeous ocean, and the color of yummy blueberries! So, with that in mind, just know that although there might be forces in the universe that seem to be working against you, life is what you make it.

## **Aquarius**

(January 20 - February 19)

Your color this month is brown, Aquarius. Now, most people think that brown isn't always a very pretty color, but think about it. Brown is a mixture of ALL the colors (blue, green, pink, red, and everything else), so I think this month for you is going to reflect that. You'll have a couple of off days, a couple of really amazing days, and a couple of every kind of day in between!

## **Pisces**

(February 20 - March 19)

Your color theme is pearl white! This color represents purity and innocence, so maybe it's time to take a hint from that and just kind of lay low in terms of anything not so pure or innocent this month. You don't want to get yourself in any sort of trouble for the first month of summer! That wouldn't be much fun, so just be careful!

## **Aries**

(March 20 - April 19)

You're orange, this month, Aries! What does that mean? Well, to me, it could mean a lot of different things. Maybe you're going to reunite with an old flame this month, and maybe it's going to be really great! Whatever happens, just remember to always go with your first instincts and don't compromise or change yourself for anyone.

## **Capricorn**

(December 22 - January 19)

Pale pink is for you this month, Capricorn. Look at that, it's the color of the season, too! Actually, all pastels are the color of this season, but I've especially seen a whole lot of pale pink. Pale pink usually represents calm and serenity, and I don't see it being any different in your case. As long as you can keep your cool, you have a breezy month ahead of you!

## **Taurus**

(April 20 - May 20)

You're a navy color in June, Taurus. I see navy as representing growth and maturity, so I think that's a good thing. This month, your perspective may change as you witness or experience a situation, but it will be a growing process. No matter what happens, at the end of the day you're going to know that you learned something and have matured because of it!





## Acknowledgements

### Image sources

Choosing a College or University: [www.morguefile.com](http://www.morguefile.com)  
HIV Testing Day: [www.sxc.hu](http://www.sxc.hu)  
Horoscopes: Star Signs: [www.grafamania.net](http://www.grafamania.net)  
News that Affects You: May 2010 in Review: [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)  
World Leaders: [www.sxc.hu](http://www.sxc.hu)

### Articles

Cause of the Month: Faceless International: [www.facelessinternational.com](http://www.facelessinternational.com)  
HIV Testing Day: [www.avert.org](http://www.avert.org); [www.advocatesforyouth.org](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org)  
News that Affects You: May 2010 in Review: [www.ap.org](http://www.ap.org); [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk); [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com)  
The SPCA: [www.spcai.org](http://www.spcai.org)  
World Leaders: [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov)

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