Amy Skinner is a Master's of Arts student at Simon Fraser University in Women's Studies. She has a Bachelor of Education from Queen's University, and joint-Honours Bachelor of Arts from Trent University.

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Girl Power

What is girl power? Everybody you ask will probably give you a different answer. That is exactly what makes it so great - girl power can be anything you decide it should be. For the purposes of this 'zine, however, girl power is the imagination to create, the confidence to decide, and the strength to tell it to others.

Girl power needs your self-esteem. That is why everything you find here is intended to help you develop and maintain good self-esteem. But just because that sounds serious, does not mean it has to be serious. Not only does girl-power mean self-esteem, it means having fun. And having fun includes making decisions that are good for you, your individuality, and respecting other people's individuality.

You might flip through this and come across articles that do not seem to have anything to do with you, but they probably affect someone you know. So when you are reading and come across new, scary, or topics that seems 'bizarre,' keep reading. Never be afraid of new ideas: you do not have to try them, and thinking about them will only broaden your mind and increase your creativity!

Go big, be strong, and get bold!
This is what girl-power is all about!
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What is Self-Esteem?
-Andrea Remington

It is hard to say exactly what self-esteem is. It cannot easily be measured on any sort of scale and change be both healthy (positive) and unhealthy (negative) depending on the situation. Self-esteem is how we feel about ourselves, and self-awareness is the knowledge we possess about ourselves. Both self-awareness and self-esteem change and grow throughout our lives. So what you know and think about yourself right now is not necessarily what you will know and think next year, or even next week.

Self-esteem is something that every person wants more of and which each of us needs. We want healthy self-esteem because it increases our chance of finding happiness in life, and makes it possible to cope with life's disappointments and changes. We need self-esteem because nothing is as important as our psychological (mental) well being.

Our level of self-esteem affects how we see the world and our place in it. It affects how others in the world see and treat us. It affects the choices we make - choices about what we will do with our lives on any given day and with whom we will be involved. It affects our ability to take action to change things that need to be changed. If a person has poor self-esteem, she will not be able to act in her own best interest and will often feel overwhelmed, immobile, powerless, and will eventually 'give up.'

Self-esteem is the measure of how much we like and approve of who we are. It is possible for us to carry a very distorted image of ourselves based on the messages we receive in childhood and throughout our lives from those close to us as well as from society in general about who we 'ought' to be. Although there is no real 'scale' to measure your level of self-esteem, it is possible to take tests that point out the strong and weak areas in how you feel about yourself. www.queendom.com/tests/health/self_esteem.html is a great website that does free psychological tests online. The self-esteem test is written specifically for young women and gives an interesting analysis of your results.
For very serious information about self-esteem the National Association for Self-esteem has great resources and suggestions, but is geared towards adults (especially parents) and uses fairly complex language. Their website can be found at: www.self-esteem-nase.org/.

Mia Hamm (United States, 1972-)

Mia Hamm has always been a great soccer player. At 15 she was the youngest player to join an Olympic soccer team. In the women's international soccer association she holds the record for number of goals scored. Not only is she an incredible athlete, she has started her own charity foundation dedicated to research into bone marrow diseases and in support of young female athletes.

For pictures, stats, a full biography, and more about Mia Hamm's foundation visit www.miafoundation.org
Photograph: www.geocities.com/Colloseum/Field/7676.mainpage.html
What you see is not what they've got
(Myth of the Perfect Body)

Almost all the models and actors in magazines, on tv, and in movies are really skinny. But for most of us, being thin is not healthy or natural. If it were normal it would not be so hard to diet, right?! An American psychological study published in 1995 found that three minutes of looking at a fashion magazine causes 70% of women to feel depressed, guilty, and shameful all because they do not look like the models. So before you start feeling badly about yourself simply because you don't look like a model, keep these things in mind.

① In the 1960s models weighed about 8% less than the average woman. In the 1990s models weighed about 23% less than the average woman.

② Photographs are air-brushed. Air-brushing is a computerised technique that magazines use to 'fix' the way models look. It can stretch bodies to make legs look longer, cut off pieces to make them look thinner, smooth skin so that faces look super-smooth, widen eyes, lighten/darken skin colour, and put together pieces of different models in to one seemingly perfect perfect body.
Professional hair, makeup, and clothing staff. If you had a crew of professionals following you around doing your hair, fixing your makeup, and picking clothes to match carpet and wallpaper colours, you would look incredibly different too. Not only would that be really expensive, but it would be irritating too! Can you imagine playing baseball with someone always running after you to fix your hair? Can you imagine not going swimming because you could wreck your makeup? Can you image being hungry but have someone stopping you from eating, because you were supposed to be staying one weight?

Models and actors have a lot of people working to make them and their photos look a certain way. There are entire industries that depend on you feeling bad about your body (diet foods and programs, makeup, clothing, hair products...) so that you will buy their stuff.

Do you really want to spend the time, energy, and money it takes to change the way you naturally look? Why not love your body the way it is? You can enjoy yourself far more when you accept and love yourself, than when you get preoccupied with thinking about your body negatively.

For a great article that dissects magazine photos, go to:
www.fabulamag.com/archives/matters/v3i1_matters_goodbadugly.html
Want and Need: Advertising Strategies

Whether you see them on t.v, the net, or in magazines, advertisements have a purpose: to sell you a product. In order for you to want to buy the product, the commercial must convince you that you NEED it or WANT it. (There is no coincidence that advertisers use 'want' and 'need' as strategies, those are the same categories use to promote self-esteem in women. They try to tie self-esteem with buying stuff).

**NEED:** There is probably at least one aspect of your body or life that you would like to change (for any reason). Ads try to target those aspects, making you feel like you need the product in order to make that change. Or, they suggest threats about what could happen if you do not change. You probably do not need to change anything, but ads will try to convince you otherwise.

**WANT:** Ads that make you want products usually try to convince you that your life or body could be better if only you buy things. These ads tend to make promises.

Of course, you probably do not really NEED any of the products (could you live without it?), and until the commercial you probably did not know you wanted it. So how come they work so well?

Advertisements are designed so that we want the whole image, not just the product. Commercials for skin cleansers do not just advertise their soap, they present the promise of being pimple-free with being thin and sporty, having cool clothes, super friends, and popularity. No cleaner in the world can deliver all those things, but the possibility makes it alluring. (Hmm, if I did not have pimples I would feel more confident to make friends and go shopping in malls...or Hmm, if I do not get rid of these pimples I will never make friends...)
reflections on beauty
media portrayal
Next time you are watching t.v. or reading a magazine look carefully at the ads. Try to figure out all that the ad is promising or threatening. Think critically, do you really think that product will grant you all it promises?

**Big Promises, Little Size**

Not only do advertisements tend to make unrealistic promises and threats they really mess around with people. Seriously, they manipulate their models/actors so that certain stereotypes are reinforced. Magazines and t.v. companies are pretty careful about not publishing racist ads, but they suck when it comes to publishing sexist ads. That is, ads that diminish women/girls' size and importance are common. A guy named Erving Goffman wrote a pretty cool book (*Gender Advertisements*) that looks at how advertising works. He found some pretty crazy stereotypes that ads use all the time; all of them reinforce the idea the women and girls just are not as important as men are.

**Height:** The height of people in ads are meaningful because it is supposed to symbolise (or express) social importance. Men are almost always shown as taller than women are, unless the men are of a lower status (poor, not white, disabled, gay...).

**Function:** What people are shown doing reinforces ideas of who should be doing what kinds of work. Dieting commercials almost always have women models/actors, which reminds women that they should be trying to loose weight. Cleaning, housework, and baby ads usually have women doing the work, unless they are teaching their husbands (it is always 'husbands' because nobody is 'supposed' to have babies unless they are married). When women and men are in ads together, men are usually shown as the professional, leader, or instructor.
Subordination: Subordination means dependence or lesser importance. This is usually shown by women and kids laying/sitting on a bed or floor doing unproductive or 'useless' things (like playing or talking). Women and girls are often shown with their necks or legs bent, so that it is obvious they are not planning on moving any time soon, but they are usually smiling so that they seem agreeable. Girls are usually shown looking at boys or giggling so that they seem silly and in awe of boys, not active and more concerned about the way they look than anything else.

Touching: When shaking hands women are more likely portrayed as barely touching, pretending to be delicate. Men's hands are shown as strong and firmly grasping, which is supposed to show their self-confidence and competence. Women and girls are often shown as stroking themselves, gentle, and lightly caressing, which is supposed to remind us that we are tender, fragile, and constantly trying to attract sexual attention. We also, according to ads, put our fingers in our mouths (which is supposed to be sexually suggestive) and play with our hair all the time (which is a stereotype for being vain and brainless).

Emotions: If you have ever heard the phrases "cry-baby" and "wussy-girl" you have heard the stereotype that girls/women show more emotion than men, especially sadness. This is not necessarily true, but ads sure make it seem true. Women are likely to be portrayed as emotionally overwhelmed while men seem to be in control and emotionless. Unless the ad is for some sporting event, in which case men/boys are totally involved and women/girls are bored or distracted.

For some amazing websites that show good and bad ads, and dissect what they are trying to say check out: www.about-face.org and www.justthink.org. Both sites list super-cool books that discuss media and advertising, and each site is a lot of fun to wander through.

For more information on the material from this article check out Erving Goffman's book, Gender Advertisements.
Performing Expectations

Hopefully you know that you can do anything you want to do. And hopefully you have never been told that you cannot do something because you are a girl, not pretty enough, popular enough, thin enough, cool enough, or the 'wrong' colour. But have you ever heard that you (or someone else) should be good at something for that kind of reason? At first it might not sound bad, but when you think about it some more...

Stereotypes are oversimplified concepts that tend to be used to identify and explain groups of people. Often stereotypes are negative (like all blondes are 'dumb'), but positive-sounding ones also exist (like all Black people are good basketball players). None of these are true because not all people are the same, regardless of skin colour, race or ethnicity. But everyday we are inundated with messages from media, school, parents, friends, blah, blah, blah that subtly try to tell us how to look and act, and those messages usually have some sort of stereotype behind them.

Whether or not we really believe any stereotypes, they seem to have a strong effect on us. Studies done on young students show that when reminded of some sort of stereotype before exams, their performance on the exam will match the stereotype. But when no stereotypes were given, all the students did equally well. Sounds strange and impossible right? Look at this:

▼ Before a math test all students were told that boys do better than girls in math. In another room, another group of students did the same math test, but were not told anything about boys being better at math. In the class that was told boys were better, the girls got much lower scores than the boys. But in the class that did not hear the baloney about boys, girls and boys did equally well

▼ In another school, before a reading comprehension test one class of students was told that Black students do not do as well as white students. In another room, another group of students
wrote the same exam but were not told about any racial difference. In the class that was told the made-up racial difference, Black students did not score as well as any other students. But in the other class there was no difference in scores.

At another school, female students of Asian descent had to do a math exam but were asked about either their racial identity, gender, or phone service before they started. The girls who had to focus on their racial identity did the best, ones who thought about being a girl did the worst, and ones who thought about phone service scored the same as boys.

What does all this mean? These examples all show that students are aware of stereotypes, and when reminded of them perform to those expectations. So what you think to yourself before taking a test (or performing any activity) probably has a big impact on how well you do. Think positively about yourself and you can crush all those negative stereotypes!


Prejudices, it is well known, are most difficult to eradicate from the heart whose soil has never been loosened or fertilised by education; they grow firm there, firm as weeds among stones.

-Charlotte Bronte
You Have Something to Say: Everyday Activism

You have an opinion. You have interests. You have favourite music. You have something to say. So, do you want to sit back and listen to other people, or are you going to make yourself HEARD?

Young people around the world are starting their own 'zines, clubs, organisations, and businesses and they are being incredibly successful. No matter what your interests, skills, or talents are there are many ways to convey yourself. Whether you have a purpose in mind, or want to share your mind: whether you want to join an existing group or start a brand new group, the possibilities are as great as your imagination.

Our society has a bad habit of expecting little from young people - especially from girls. We are taught to act nicely towards everyone; we are not supposed to be noisy, to dress or look differently, to speak out against meanness (like racism, sexism, and homophobia...) and we are not expected to do anything particularly great.

But we are great! You know things, do things, and like things that are unique, so why not share them with everyone? If you don't create your own opportunities, nobody else will.

At School:

☆ Create your own newspaper, 'zine, or website to reflect your opinions. Report on good/bad movies, t.v. shows, advertisements, music, etc. Research fashion trends and makeup products. All you need is a computer or a photocopier.

☆ Start a club that interests you. Whether you want an adventurous group to explore and do activities, or want to
Help raise money/donations for a relief effort, all you need to do is get a small group of people (and maybe a teacher) and plan your actions.

To learn more about current relief issues and groups check out:
www.justthink.org

To start self-defence and assertiveness groups check out:
www.homealive.org and www.empowered.org

Name hatred and stop it. Whenever you hear sexist or racist (or any other phobia) comments and jokes, make sure your objections are heard. Say loud and clear how rude and inappropriate those comments are. People will quickly learn that you are to be respected and will stand up for yourself and others.

In your Community:

* Host your own radio show. Sounds wild but many colleges and universities have their own radio stations and will train young volunteers to have their own shows. You can usually pick any topics you like and can choose your own music.

The Simon Fraser University radio station, CJSF at 93.9 cable fm, is always looking for girls to host their own shows. If you are interested in having your own show or sharing a show with a group of friends email Emily at: pa@cjsf.bc.ca

* Organise your own book club or media-watch group. By starting your own group you get to choose topics that interest you. Plan to have a topic/book/movie to discuss at each meeting.

For great ideas on media-watch topics check out: www.about-face.org or www.interrupt.org

To get amazing book ideas check out reading suggestions at:
www.lsisters.com and www.womenswire.com

Reply to the news. All newspapers and magazines have sections called "Letters to the Editor." In these sections, letters and comments sent to the paper are published.
Next time you read a story or article that you disagree with or do not think was inclusive (meaning, it did not include all points of view), email or mail them a letter describing your objections and opinions. Make sure to include your name, age, and the title of the article you are responding to because they just might publish your letter!

Make your own news. Newspapers, t.v. news shows, and radio stations all have 'tip' lines for people to phone in events. News media only tend to report on young women when something awful happens to one. Make them start taking you seriously for all the great stuff you do: starts phoning in tips for events that interest or include you.

Start your own organisation or business. You do not have to be older to come up with a great idea; lots of young women lead their own groups.

For ideas and organising help check out www.girlsinc.org a website for young female entrepreneurs.

Join an organisation. All non-profit groups rely on volunteers and most will give you all the training you will need. If you know of a Centre, group, or organisation that you like just call them up and ask about their volunteer programs. They would love your help!

Mary Shelley (England, 1797-1851)

By 19 years old, Mary Shelley had written the famous horror-story "Frankenstein." Even though the story is about bringing dead bodies back to life, she wrote it in part to warn people about the dangers of doing scientific experiences without any idea of what the consequences could be. She went on to write many more books, magazines and journal articles, and biographies for encyclopaedias.

To get your pants scared off read "Frankenstein" or rent the video. To learn more about Mary Shelley check out http://home-1.worldline.nl/~hamberg
Expressions and slang words often slip into things we say, especially when we are slinging insults. But have you ever really thought about what those expressions actually mean?

When it comes to insults, expressions usually compare the person being insulted with a presumable inferior type of person or characteristic. As well as insulting the person, you end up insulting all people associated with that characteristic.

Before you use any of the following expressions (or when you hear someone else use them) think carefully. Words and expressions are very powerful so be careful how you use them.

**Fag/Gay/Homo/Queer**  All of these terms refer to people who are homosexual and using them as insults announces that gay people are somehow worse than straight people are. These terms all use sexual innuendo because they suggest sexual activity. If you do not think you know anyone who is gay, wait a couple of years and you will discover that there is nothing 'bad' or 'wrong'.

=**Homophobia**

When you want to know more about what it means to be gay check out some of the following sites, they are casual and informative sites: www.grrlpower.net, www.cangay.com/news/issues/straight.htm and www.glaad.org

**Gyp/Gypped**  The word 'gyp' comes from the cultural group of Gypsy/Gypsies. This culture used to travel around Europe and, because many people
did not understand their lifestyle of constant travel, they were believed to be thieves. This term is still used when theft is suspected, but it still refers to Gypsies as thieves.

=Racism

For more information on the history of Gypsies check out: www.encarta.msn.com/find/Concise.asp?ti=043F9000 and www.history1900s.about.com/homework/history1900s/library/holocaust/aa021099.htm

_Moron/Retard_ These names often refer to something or someone 'dumb,' but they pertain to people who have mental disabilities, injuries, and illnesses. People who have disabilities did not choose them and using them as insults is insensitive to mental differences and the people who live great lives with them.

=Ability

For more information on mental disabilities and the wonderful lives people who have mental disabilities have log onto: www.dawncanada.net, and www.onthemove.ca

.Quad/Para_ This expression makes fun of people who are paralysed; people who do not have function in their legs, bodies, and even arms. Injuries and illnesses can cause paralysis. Using these conditions as an insult misconstrues real peoples' lives.

=Ableism

For more information on paralysis check out: www.spinalcord.org/children & young adults.htm

To see how women with paralysis lead great lives go to: www.dawncanada.net

_Gimp_ This term is used negatively (to compare usually healthy and fully able-bodied people) in reference to people with physical difficulties and differences.

=Ableism

For information on physical disabilities and differences go to: www.disabilityhistory.org/dshp.html
Fat When 'fat' is used as an insult it says that people who are not skinny are lazy, ugly, less intelligent, not good as a friend, and not as important. Body size really has nothing to do with any of those qualities. Making fun of someone's size is just as insensitive as making fun of someone's culture or disability. =Sizism

Sissy/...like a girl Guys calling other guys a 'sissy' or telling them they do anything like a girl is a common insult, but that does not make it alright. When being called, or compared to, a girl or woman is intended to be negative, it is because the person saying it believes that men are better than women are. =Sexism

Slut/Scank/Whore These words are totally made up, they have no real meaning other than as insults to female sexuality. They are usually used against girls/women to express distrust and distaste. All of them imply that women's sexuality is 'bad,' is available for sale or trade, and should always be for the pleasure of men (opposed to own pleasure and having the right to not be sexual). =Sexism

Tease The verb 'tease' means to entice, torment, or anger but when used as an insult against girls/women it implies sexually enticing someone just to turn them down. This is a creepy insult because it tries to blame women for being sexually attractive.
and for not being attracted to every person. It implies that women should be sexually active with any and every man who finds them attractive, that women are always trying to attract men, and that we do not have the right to decide who (if anyone) we want to be sexual with. =Sexism

Bitch Literally a 'bitch' is a female dog. As a verb it means 'to complain.' As an insult, it refers to women who complain, or simply a woman who has her own opinions. There is no equivalent word for men who are opinionated. =Sexism

Bastard This is an old English word used to identify children born to unmarried parents. It used to imply that being born out of marriage was 'bad,' that your parents were immoral, and that you were less recognised (and less important) by society. =Sexism & Classism

To find the origin of any word or expression go to the following website: www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary.

Opportunities are usually disguised as hard work, so most people don't recognise them. -Ann Landers

Lady Murasaki Shikibu (Japan, 973-1025 A.D.)
Murasaki Shikibu, a member of the Imperial Court of Japan during the Heian period, is believed to have written the first fiction novel anywhere in the world. She was only in her 20s when she wrote The Tale of Genji.
To learn more about Murasaki Shikibu, female Samurai, and the Heian period go to www.womeninhistory.com/heroin9.html

Women are repeatedly accused of taking things personally. I cannot see any other honest way of taking them. -Marya Mannes
Understanding 'Isms'

After reading about the meanings of insults you probably have a good idea about the 'isms.' The terms that end with 'ism' are names for general patterns of misunderstanding, hatred, or stereotypes pertaining to characteristics. Phobias are similar to the 'isms' but include the element of fear (as in being afraid with people with that characteristic). If that sounds confusing do not worry, I am going to explain them all.

**Racism** - Racism is the belief that there are significant differences between races and that one race is superior to all others. This notion argues that intellect and abilities are determined by race, so that differential (usually worse) treatment is justified. 'Race' is a term used to describe people who share a common history, geographic region, or nationality. Some of the most famous outcomes of racist political regimes were the Holocaust (in Northern Europe caused by Fascist Germany) and Apartheid (in South Africa).

**Sexism** - Sexism is a range of opinions that argue men and women are significantly different, that one sex is inferior to the other, and all roles/responsibilities assigned to the inferior sex are less valuable than those performed by the superior sex. 'Sex' is a term used to describe the physical and reproductive differences between women and men. Sexism can be used to categorise stereotypes based on sex.

**Classism** - Classism is a bias (unfair prejudice) based on social or economic group. It presumes that
level of wealth or community dictate intellect, abilities, and characteristics (like trustworthiness, possibility of criminal activity, and work ethic) in all its members.

**Ableism** - Ableism is the belief that people who are fully able-bodied (have all limbs and have full control and function of their body) are superior to those who do not. This includes people who have physical or mental disabilities, illnesses, diseases, or do not have all their limbs.

**Sizism** - Sizism (pronounced size-ism) is the belief that people of a particular physical size are superior to those who's size is too big or too little. This can apply to weight and height. It is most commonly apparent in the belief that people who are 'fat' are also 'lazy.'

**Homophobia** - Homophobia is fear, hatred, or aversion to people who are homosexual (gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender). Homosexuality is not a 'disease' and cannot be 'caught,' nor is it a 'cult' that 'recruits' members. Homosexuality is a sexual preference.

*What we have is because someone stood up before us. What our Seventh Generation will have will be a consequence of our actions today.*

- Winona LaDuke
Low days - Sometimes I want to be cranky

Every once and a while I have a low day: the kind of day when nothing seems to be going very well. When my school, jobs, family, friends, social life, and body just seem *blah*. When there is no real reason to be unhappy, but I can not seem to be happy about anything. Magazines and television shows always seem to have the same advice; *focus on the positive,* "*smile,*" or *go shopping.*" But when nothing seems very positive, when my smile is totally fake, and I do not have enough money to buy new stuff (or do not like the way anything fits me), that advice just does not work. So I usually mope around cranky and disappointed for a while.

So, I have been thinking about low days and have decided that maybe they are good things. Some days I feel crummy and just want to be cranky. Here is why I think that having a blue day is just fine.

➢ Not many people are really happy all the time. Some days are just going to be bad, and sometimes it feels good to not pretend to be happy.

*(But if you are really unhappy for weeks at a time, you are probably depressed. For more on depression read "Stop the Gloomy Take-over" and talk to someone you trust.)*

➢ There are lots of reasons for having low days. When you know that things in your life are not REALLY bad, there could be another reason for your blahness.

Maybe:
* You did not have a good sleep and do not have the energy to get excited.
* You are getting sick (or starting to get better).
* You have not eaten well enough (have you eaten enough today? Have you eaten enough fresh fruit and vegetables? Have you drank any water?), and your body is saving energy.
* You are stressed by things you cannot change (i.e. moving to a new school, parent starting a new job, it has rained all week and you want to go biking...).
* Something exciting is over and now you are let down. This happens at the end of every school year for me. I get excited about summer, but when it starts I have nothing super-fun planned.
* Your body wants fresh air and sunlight.
* You have not been challenged lately and are bored.
* You need to go do some kind of physical activity. Exercise stimulates your body to produce chemicals that fight depression.

There could be lots of reasons why you are feeling down. When there are things out of your control (like parents fighting and/or splitting up, money problems, someone you know is sick...) it is completely normal to feel badly about them. Let yourself be upset, disappointed, frustrated, and scared because those feelings are natural and understandable. But try not to let those feelings take over entirely because they make it very hard to remember what is really great and fun about your life.

www.girlsinc.com is a great website if you are feeling down. The Strong Girls section has a great quiz on your emotions, and the
Inspiring Girls section is full of stories by girls about getting over depression.

www.bodysoul.chickclick.com/articles/16782p1.html is a really interesting site about depression and feeling crummy with good tips, stories, and links.

www.queendom.com/tests/health/self_esteen.html has an amazing quiz that checks out your self-esteem level and analyses your depression. Fun and informative.

Boadicea/Boudicca (former country of Iceni, died 61 A.D.)

We do not know how old she was, but Boadicea (also known as Boudicca) was the Queen of Iceni, what is now Northern Britain. Furious with the way the Roman Empire treated her, her family and her country she led a massive revolt against them. When it became apparent that she was going to loose the war, she committed suicide. Legend says that she was a great leader and warrior, but she was also really vicious and led brutal campaigns of vengeance against all people who disagreed with the war.

To read more about Boadicea check out www.boudicca.de/boad-e.htm and www.britainexpress.com/History/Boudicca's_Revol.hml
Tips to Stop a Gloomy take-over:

So you felt crummy for a while and now you know that you do not want to feel miserable forever - you just have to figure out how to brighten things up a bit. Here are some approaches that my friends and I try. But do not be frustrated if some do not work, you need to figure out which ones work best for you.

Pour it out yourself.

- Write in a journal or notebook everything that you are feeling. *Keep this in a private place.*
- Write a letter to the person/people you are upset with, telling them your side and how it makes you feel. *Save this letter, do not send it. Write all the things you wish you could say.*
- Write a story or a poem about a girl in your situation explaining everything that is happening and how the character feels. *Include any solutions possible for the character (superpowers work really well!)*

Tell someone who will listen.

- Talk to someone you really trust and who will really listen to you (a friend, relative, teacher, or phone a counsellor).

Talk to someone who will help you.

- Some times you just need to get out your feelings, but sometimes you need to get help understanding what is happening and what can be done to help you start feeling better. Help-line counsellors are really good for this.
Once you have figured out what is pulling you down, you will need to figure out how to pick yourself up (because it is not fun being miserable all the time).

- Make a list of your favourite things about yourself. For example: great dodgeball player, super speller, and awesome hair colour...

- Make a list of the good qualities you share with other people. For example: loyal friend, can make people laugh, always remember to say 'Happy Birthday,' don't spread gossip...

- Remember what makes you happy. Think back to your happiest moments: what were they? What were you doing? Who were you with? Write these down so that whenever you need to remind yourself, you can.

- Think back a couple of years or a couple of seasons and figure out what you liked best about them. Whether it was an activity you really enjoyed, a week when you got to make all your own decisions, or a place where everybody was your friend. What was the best part of spring break? What was the best thing about school this year? Last year? Last summer? Write all those things down and save them.

So now you have a pile of lists to remind you of good times. Keep them all in a safe place (a journal or your own computer disk are good ideas), and add more whenever you remember or whenever something great happens. If you are still feeling blue then it is time for some serious happy action.

- Make a plan for the upcoming week: plan to do one thing special or visit/phone one person each day that
has brought good memories. Look through your lists if you are having a hard time coming up with ideas. For example:

**Monday**- phone grandparents  
**Tuesday**- play hacky-sack with Jenn  
**Wednesday**- plant sunflower seeds  
**Thursday**- wear favourite blue sweater and do something different to hair  
**Friday**- rent movie  
**Saturday**- sleep in late and have a sleepover with Andrea  
**Sunday**- finish homework before lunch and play all afternoon

- Surround yourself with happy thoughts.
- Find a few pictures of yourself doing something fun or pictures of you with a big smile. Write out a joke that makes you laugh or a funny story. Hang the jokes, stories, and pictures in places that you spend lots of time so you see yourself being happy.
- Pick fresh flowers and put them in vases (glasses and empty bottles also work well) around your room.
- Paint your fingernails and/or toenails with bright colours.

- Make some changes.
  Once you have figured out what is making you unhappy, and what has made you happy before, it might be possible to change around some of your 'have to do' duties (like chores and schoolwork). If vacuuming is one of your jobs, but it always gives you a headache, see if you can trade it for another job or if you can wear a Walkman
and listen to music while doing it. If your classroom is always noisy during math time and you cannot concentrate, ask your teacher if you can work in the library. If you get bullied during recess, talk to a teacher you trust about ways to stop it.

You are definitely not alone if you are feeling totally crummy. For stories about other people's bouts of blah check out:

www.riotgrrl.com/archive/xriotJ2.htm to read one woman's moaning about Valentine's Day and the dumb pressures of holidays, clothes, boys, and work...
www.riotgrrl.com/archive/true6.htm if high school seems scary now, this will make you feel a lot better.

When you need really good advice, this site has great counsellors:

www.feminist.com "Ask Amy" will personally respond to your questions/problems in a couple of days. The advice is easy to follow and realistic about what young women face everyday.

To talk to someone over the phone (for free) call:

Kids Help Phone  1-800-668-6868  For help with anything.
Safe School Centre  1-888-224-7233  Bullying or school stuff.
Youth Contact Line  (604) 775-4264  Gang or community problems.
Vancouver Crisis Centre  (604) 872-3311  When you are about to fall apart this Centre can help set up meetings with counsellors, get food to your house, help assess medical needs, and arrange emergency intervention.

Call 911 if you are in the midst of any emergency.

No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.

-Eleanor Roosevelt
myth of
the perfect body
performing

expectations
Ode to Nail-Polish (or nail polish activism)

You know that you own your body and no one else gets to control it, right?

Until recently, women were not considered the sole owners of their minds and bodies. They were not considered 'equal' to men and could not determine their own lives. Fathers, husbands, brothers, and any other male family member owned their women and could do whatever they wanted to them. In slavery, people owned other people (women, men, and children).

We are pretty lucky to live here and now. But, some people still believe that women (especially young women) should not have full control over their bodies to decide what to do, how to act, and how to look. They think that women should be trying to please men all the time and that everything we do is just to attract men. I think that makes us sound like robots, so I wear 'weapons' to confuse people. My favourite weapon? Nail polish.

If you saw me right now you would not be shocked. My nose is pierced, my hair is a fairly naturally-looking colour, and my toenails are painted silver. I have had other piercings (lots in my ears, my tongue, and my belly button), have dyed my hair all sorts of colours, and have a tattoo. Everything I have done to my body has
been my choice, and at one point I thought they all were my versions of beautiful. But they have also served as reminders to me (and announcements to other people) that I can alter my look however I want. Of everything that I have done, and do, with my body, nail polish is my favourite.

When I'm feeling down, I tend to paint my nails blue. Pink is for my princess days. Orange or red, when I want attention. Green, purple, confetti, or meteor-burst for funkiness. Black, for 'don't-mess-with-me' days. Gold, silver, or bronze for a touch of glamour. Of course, I also stripe and polka-dot colours, layer them, or alternate colours and rainbow a hand or foot. Nail polish is pretty cheap ($2-6 a bottle, and there is always some on sale) and I can change it whenever I want to. And, when I chew all my nails down the colours remain.

I love nail polish because it reminds me that I can do anything, can make mistakes, and can change my mind. My body, my choice.

*When people tell you that you can't do something, you kind of want to try it.*

-Margaret Chase Smith

*Unfortunately, sometimes people don't hear you until you scream.*

-Stephanie Powers
To Shave or Not to Shave?

I started shaving my legs when I was in grade 4. There was some sort of irresistible glamour to the whole thing. Thick foamy bubbles drenching my legs, hour-long baths, tender stroking, and dribbles of blood reminding me to pay close attention. I used to save up my little allowance to buy the fanciest creams and razors available in the drug store. I thought having perfectly smooth and hairless legs was incredibly important. That was my belief until I went away travelling in grade 11 and discovered that our country (and the United States) is just about the only places where being a hairless woman is important.

In grade 11 I was lucky enough to live/work and go to school on a tall-ship (a really big boat) and travel around the world. When I packed I included a full month's supply of razors and shaving cream. After a few weeks on the ocean I noticed that one of the female teachers and several of the other female students had hairy legs. Not just stubble, but full-blown leg hair! At first I was totally disgusted. It seemed so lazy. Didn't they know how gross it looked? But then I ran out of my fancy shaving cream and had to shave using normal soap for a week. I still remember how many more cuts I gave myself, how rough my skin became, and how coarse my stubble came in. Then terror of all terrors, my razors all were rusty because of the salt in the air. None of the islands we went to had drug stores and the men's razors I bought were old, stiff, and went rusty after one use. I was baffled that the women on the islands couldn't understand my urgent need for good quality razors until I realized that they had leg hair.
too! As the months went on all the girls on the boat had to give up shaving; there were just no women's razors anywhere we went. By the end of the year I had given up shaving entirely (even when I could buy them) because it just did not seem important at all. Having hairy legs did not make me lose my intelligence, my sense of humour, my friends, or stop people from being attracted to me. When I got off that boat I had full-blown leg hair too, and a whole new perspective on shaving.

It has been several years since I stopped shaving regularly. For most of the year my legs are covered by soft hair. It is a pretty light colour so no one notices it until they are up close to me, which is sometimes disappointing. When people do notice they usually just ask me why don't I shave. My usual answer is that I do not want to, do not see the point in it, and would prefer to spend my money and time on other things. Every once and a while I do shave though. I shaved my legs for my high-school grad, for my sister's wedding, and when my mom 'specially requests it. But the times that I shave without being prompted really bother me because I know why I do it - when I cannot happily accept my body the way it is I make desperate attempts to change it. I shave my legs to blend in, so that there is nothing noticeable about me, so that I do not draw any attention to my body, and so that I can minimise physical differences that other people could use against me. For me, shaving my legs is a sign that my self-confidence has plummeted. Being strong enough to resist shaving means that I am strong enough to be myself and be different.

I base most of my fashion taste on what doesn't itch.

-Gilda Radner
I have no control of my body

It all started when I was about 12, or rather it all ended when I was about 12. Crazy, unplanned, and unstoppable things started happening with my body. Before then the usual stuff went on: I got colds, eating too many cherries would give me diarrhoea, and trying to back-flip off my bunk beds usually ended in a bleeding nose. But the most bizarre things came along around the same time that my periods started. Suddenly it became difficult to talk to boys, I began sweating, pimples erupted at the most inopportune times, and I suddenly became very aware and concerned about smells. Prior to that I had not ever really thought about my body and all the things it does, it never got in my way. But as soon as all the unpredictable things came along I became acutely aware of the humiliating possibilities that my body could create.

The most embarrassing things in the world seemed to be things that were body-related (like farting, snot dribbles, clogging toilets, and any evidence of menstruation), but it has been more than ten years since I started being mortified by these things and they still happen. The only difference between then and now is that I have discovered that they happen to everyone. It took me a while to admit to myself that my body does 'gross' things, and even longer to be comfortable enough to talk about them with other people. So as awful and as embarrassing as they seem now, don't worry too much. They happen to everyone, and even though they never stop happening they do make more sense: it is all natural and normal stuff that goes on and makes your body function. Besides, it will not take long before you figure out how to control, cover-up, or just laugh off your body's craziness.

Crisis changes people and turns ordinary people into wiser or more responsible ones.

-Wilma P. Mankiller
Sometimes it is messy, unexpected, and comes from "down there."

**Periods and Products**

If you have not already had your first period you probably will soon, and it is really not so bad. Actually, it is really not a big deal at all. It will only take a couple months before you are totally used to menstruating and until you are comfortable doing all the stuff you did before your periods even started. Don't let menstruation scare you, as cheesy as it sound it is kind of exciting to know that you are becoming a woman!

**What is happening?**

A period is the end of a cycle that happens naturally inside your body. Hormones (tiny chemicals that flow inside you) from your brain have told one of your two ovaries to release an egg (this is a tiny speck the size of a piece of sand). The egg runs through a Fallopian tube (which is similar to a vein in your wrist, but below your belly button), ending up in your uterus. When it nestles into your uterus layers of blood and tissue will form around the egg. If the egg is not fertilised (by a sperm- meaning you are pregnant) it, and the layers surrounding it will drain out of your vagina for a few days. The whole process, starting with the hormone message from your brain, takes about a month. And as soon as your period starts (the draining/bleeding part) the process starts all over again. It sounds kind of mysterious doesn't it?

For more detailed information on what is happening inside your body when you start menstruating check out this awesome website by a
group called "Red Spot". It has super graphics, advice, and information about periods.
www.151.196.212.171/redspot/

**What will it feel like?**

Most of the time you will not feel anything different. But a couple of days before your period (the bleeding) you might feel something going on. The most common premenstrual symptoms are:

- Muscle cramps in your lower back or below your belly button
- Water retention (puffiness) anywhere on your body; stomach and boobs are most common
- Diarrhoea
- Dizziness when you stand up quickly (this is caused by rapid blood loss and can usually be avoided if you eat lots of Iron, like spinach and raisins, before and during your period)

It is not very likely that you will get all these symptoms every month, but even if you do they will only last for 2-3 days. Two days before my period starts I usually get 1 or 2 of those symptoms, but they stop as soon as the bleeding starts. Talk to a doctor if you are in lots of pain or if you get really dizzy.

The period itself goes on continuously for 4-6 days and tends to have 3 stages. First, you will probably have a day of slow dribbling reddish blood. Then, 2-3 days of continuous bleeding. Finally, a day or two of thicker, sort of chunky (like mushy coffee grinds) red/brown bleeding that stops and starts whenever it feels like it. That is it! Now you will have 3-4 weeks again before your period comes again!

Sometimes the bleeding can take you by surprise, coming earlier than you expected. If you want some help figuring out exactly (usually to the day) when it will start check out the following website.
This site has a cool personalised calendar that helps you determine how long your cycle is; you can even set up a reminder that will e-mail you the day before your period is probably going to start!

www.cyclepage.com/

What to Use?

So you know what is going on inside your body, and you have a pretty good idea about what your period is going to feel like. Now all you have to do is figure out what to use and how to use it. There are about 7 different types of products produced for women having their periods. Each type of product can be as good as the other, but you will probably find out you like 1 or 2 types best. If you can find them all, definitely try them all out.

Pads and Panty-Liners (disposable):

Pads are probably the easiest products to find and use, so they might be the easiest way to get used to your period pattern. These are about the length of your hand and about as thick as the tip of your pinkie finger (but can be bought in different thickness). There will be a strip of sticky adhesive so that you can attach the pad onto the inside of your panties. The idea is that you wear a pad for a couple of hours and throw it away next time you go to the bathroom (or when you can feel wetness from it). When you only use pads, you will probably go through 6-10 of them in 24 hours. At night you will want to use a thick one (and place it further back in your underwear so that it won't leak) unless you get up in the night to pee.

✓ Super easy to use! Just slap one into your panties and go!
size and image
so cool women
Good quality, well-fitting pads (with "wings" and wrap-around pieces to hold them on your panties) cost $6 for 20.

Recent t.v. commercials promise that pads have become less bulky in recent years (i.e. less like short diapers waded into your underwear). This is true, but you can still always feel them against your vagina and inner thighs.

- Pads absorb and hold blood. So when they get full (or if they aren't in the best place on your panties) blood will leak onto your panties, legs, and even pants.

- **Don't flush them!** Pads are notoriously bad for blocking toilets - causing EVERYTHING to come back up the toilet and onto your floor.

- Pads are usually made of dense poly-cotton fibres (like cotton balls) wrapped in thin plastic (to limit blood leaking onto your clothes). Just like diapers, these are awful for garbage dumps: they take more than 10 years each to decompose.

- If you wear a pad into water it will fill up, bunch up, swell much bigger, and cotton stuff could start to come out.

For more information on pads and panty-liners check out:
www.kotex.com/products/ and www.carefreeliners.com/

**Pads and Panty-Liners (Re-useable):**

These are very similar to disposable pads, except that they need you don't throw them away each time you use one. They need to be washed and dried in between uses, so you will need to own 3-4 of them (but they last for at least a year each).
Better for the environment than disposable pads because you only use a few each year, and when they are thrown away they biodegrade in less than a year.

Fabrics (cottons like fleece and terry towel) are used for the outer layer and feel super nice against tender vagina and thigh skin.

Each pad will cost at least $25 (unless you make your own, which only costs about $3) and you will need several.

After each use these need to be cleaned and dried (hand-washing in a sink and then hanging to dry work well). Doing this at school or in a mall might feel awkward at first because not many women know about these and will be curious.

For more information on reusable pads check out these sites: www.pacificcoast.net/~manymoons/moons.html and www.teleport.com/~gladrags/. For a free pattern and instructions to make your own reusable pad go to: www.pacificcoast.net/~manymoons/howto.html

**Tampons!**

There are 2 different types of tampons: with applicator and without applicator. After general information about tampons in general I'll be telling you all about the differences between them!

Tampons are compressed bundles of cotton (about the length of your nose, but with different thickness to make your flow) with a string. You insert the tampon into your vagina a full finger-length up. There is only one place it can go into, so don't worry about putting it in the wrong place. The string hangs out so that the next time you go to the bathroom you can just pull it out.
♀ Using any kind of tampon requires you to get comfortable with your vagina - you are going to be touching it!
♀ Using a tampon does not mean that you lose your virginity.
✓ Once a tampon is inside you, you should not be able to feel it at all (but if you do, it is probably not far enough inside you).
✓ You can wear a tampon for up to 8 hours, even through the night!
✓ Your vagina walls (the inside parts) hold the tampon inside you. Go jump up and down, swim, and do all your other activities without worrying about it coming out or disintegrating!
♀ Flushing. Most recent plumbing (houses, condominiums, and apartments built in the last 15 years or so) can handle tampons being flushed down the toilet. But highly used toilets (like school and mall bathrooms) will often clog. If there is a sign in the stall asking you NOT to flush or if you are worried about the toilet backing-up, just wrap your used tampon in toilet paper and throw it away.
□ Depending on the type and brand, tampons usually cost between $4-7 for a box of 20.
✗ Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS). Because tampons hold your blood inside you and are mixed with chemicals found in tampons there is a slim chance that your normal bacteria will become irritated (causing TSS). It is not very common, but it would make you feel really tired and generally crummy (like a bad cold). To avoid TSS make sure you don't keep a tampon in for more than 8 hours, and never try to re-use a tampon.
The cotton used for most tampons is really white, meaning that all natural colours have been bleached out. Lots of women worry that some of that bleach (a really harsh chemical) stays in the tampon and comes in contact with the vagina. A few companies are starting to sell un-bleached, natural cotton tampons. These work just as well, but are a khaki colour instead of bright white. The colour of the tampon does not change how well they work (and how often are you really going to be looking at them?), so if you are worried about getting chemicals in side your body spend an extra dollar and get unbleached ones.

Sometimes tampons can be hard to slide inside. When you are bleeding heavily there is lots of moisture to help the tampon slide. But if you are nervous or not bleeding much they kind of stick. There are a couple of ways to get them in easily: change your position or add some moisture. Try standing up and putting one foot on the toilet seat in front of you (this relaxes your muscles and opens your vagina up). Or, put some lubricant around and in your vagina opening. Make sure your lubricant is safe for internal use (most lotions and creams will say "for external use only"). Vaginal lubes can be bought at any drugstore, and they feel really nice!

To read more about tampons there are two websites worth looking at. www.cyclesofwellness.com/nfmy_product/ob is run by the O.B. Tampon company and has lots of pictures that describe the different types of tampons they sell. This company sells many different varieties of tampons, so you can see the differences all on one site. www.mum.org/tampondir.html is a super-cool site called "The Museum of Menstruation." They have a directory that discusses each brand and
variety of tampon sold in Canada, as well as the history of tampons and all things related to menstruation!

Tampons (With Applicators):

About 2/3 of all tampons for sale come with applicators. These are plastic or cardboard cylinders that push the tampon inside you, so that all you need to do is get the applicator into your vagina and push on the end. All packages come with instructions to help you out.

♀ Using an applicator means that you are not using your fingers and might not be getting to know your vagina. Don't be afraid of getting your fingers in there; just be sure to wash them first!

✔ When you are first getting used to tampons, applicators help to get it far enough inside you.

✗ When you are dry inside, the applicator can feel rough and can push the tampon uncomfortably fast.

✗ Applicators come on all the tampons in the box and have to be thrown out after each use. Cardboard applicators biodegrade in less than a year, but plastic ones never do. Tampon applicators create tonnes of garbage.

Tampons (No Applicators):

Most companies that make tampons sell a variety without applicators. These boxes will look different than tampons with applicators because all you get are the tampons themselves (smaller boxes, smaller individual packages). These come wrapped in plastic, which you take off before using, and will be smaller than your thumb. When inserting these tampons you do all the work with your fingers pushing them up and into a comfortable place.
Using these tampons will quickly get you comfortable and familiar with your vagina.

Creates far less waste than tampons with applicators!

Using your fingers to insert, you get control of how far and how fast the tampon goes inside.

Until you find your comfortable spot for a tampon, it is possible to not push them far enough inside. You will know if it is in the wrong place, because it will be massively uncomfortable. If this happens you will be able to feel the tampon, and might find it difficult to bend at the waist.

**Menstrual Cups!**

Just like using a tampon, these cups require you to use your fingers! They are plastic or rubber devices that hold your blood inside you. Whenever you go to the bathroom you pull the cup out and let your blood drain into the toilet. There are 2 different types of cups (reusable and disposable) and each works a little differently.

For pictures and descriptions of all the menstrual cups on the market check out The Museum of Menstruation's website: www.mum.org/Mencup.html

**Menstrual Cups (Disposable):**

Disposable cups should only be used once. These are almost flat plastic circles (like a miniature Frisbee or big contact lens) with super thin plastic in the middle and a thicker plastic rim around the outside. Because these are really bendable and soft they easily change shape to match your vagina walls.

To insert a cup you need to fold it in half so that it can slide inside your vagina. Then you push the rim as far
up as your fingers can reach and wiggle it around until the outside rim is up against all sides of your walls. When you are ready to take it out, pull down one side of the rim and let it slide right out. Blood will have collected inside the cup (so let it drain into the toilet) and will take a few seconds to drain out of you. Wrap the cup in toilet paper or its original package and throw it away!

♀ Using a cup will get you really comfortable with your vagina and with your blood.

✓ You can wear these cups for 12 hours, so you only need a few each day!

✓ The entire cup stays up inside you (no strings or pads to worry about)!

✓ The plastic is really easy to slide in and out, even when you are nervous or dry inside.

□ A box of 6 will cost between $6-8.

✗ DO NOT FLUSH! These will clog any toilet they go into.

✗ Until you have used these a few times it can be difficult to figure out where exactly the cup is supposed to fit. If it is not in quite right blood may leak and you will feel it moving around.

✗ These are non-recyclable and do not biodegrade.

✗ Not many companies sell these, so they can be difficult to find in a store and expensive.

The only disposable menstrual cup for sale in Canada is called "Instead" and can be found at most Safeway and Shopper's Drug Mart. Their website is [www.softcup.com](http://www.softcup.com) and [www.mum.org/Mencups.html](http://www.mum.org/Mencups.html) has good pictures and discussions on all sorts of cups.

**Menstrual Cups (Re-usable):**

These cups seem to combine the best features of all previous products, but they are new to the market so can be hard to find and can get you lots of questions from
curious strangers in bathrooms. These thick rubber cups look like upside-down nail polish bottles (a thick stub sticks out the base with a hollow half egg on top).

To insert these, squeeze the cup so that it can fit comfortably into your vagina. Using the stub to push upwards, slide the cup up as far as it will go. Next time you go to the bathroom pull the stub down and out. You can empty the cup into the toilet, but need to rinse it with water before you use it again. When you are alone in a bathroom it is relatively easy to just rinse the cup under tap water.

If you do this in a public washroom (I know several people who do) yell out a warning before you run out to rinse and be prepared to answer lots of questions!

One cup is all you need for several years!

Very easy to use!

Each cup costs around $45.

Can be hard to find because they are not sold in drugstores.

To see what these look like and get listings for stores carrying them check out these websites:

www.keeper.com and www.pacificcoast.net/~manymoons/keeper.html

Sponges?
Believe it or not, sponges make really good menstrual products. They act like a combination of tampon and cup, by holding blood inside you and being re-useable, but these are made by totally naturally products - sponges from the ocean. Whether you buy sponges already prepared for internal use or make your own they are really
simple to use. All you need to do with one is run it under water to soften it up, squeeze it into a little ball, and slide it up as far as your fingers reach. Next time you go to the bathroom just pull the little string (or the sponge itself) to slide the sponge out. Rinse it under running water until the water is clear, and use it again!

- Nothing like natural fibres up your wazoo to make you feel in touch with nature!

✓ Super cheap (a couple dollars for a whole package if you make them yourself, about $4 each if you buy them).

✓ Good for the environment because they are re-useable and when thrown away they disintegrate very quickly.

✓ Each one will last several years!

□ Sponges do not naturally come in sizes, so you will need to experiment with the size. They can be cut (using scissors) and shaped in any way that makes you happy and that feels good.

✗ If worn in chlorine-treated water (like swimming pools and hot tubs) they only last another month or so.

To read more about sponges and find out where to buy prepared ones check out www.jadeandpearl.com.

For free directions on making/preparing your own sponges go to www.onewoman.com/redspot/sponge.html

We make ourselves up as we go. -Kate Green

People call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat or a prostitute. -Rebecca West
Smoking

You and I know that smoking cigarettes is a totally unhealthy habit, but is the connection to self-esteem clear? How are they supposed to be related?

Imagine this: Classes just ended for lunch at your new school. You have a couple new friends but can’t find them and are eating alone outside. A girl/boy who has a locker near yours is standing with a group of her friends, spots you, and introduces you. They are all sharing a cigarette and invite you to take a drag. (This is when self-esteem is involved) Do you smoke to fit in with this group?

Smoking is a very social habit - especially at school. There tends to be a smoking spot where you can usually expect to find a few people hanging out. So it seems like you immediately have a group of friends and a place to find them. Go for it! Hang out with them. But if you are tempted to start smoking, try to figure out why.

Smoking will make your tongue feel fuzzy, make your breath and hands stink, and probably get you in lots of trouble. And that is only what happens right away. You have heard all the bad things that may happen to your body, and quitting once you are addicted is incredibly hard to do. So before you ever start smoking, make sure you realise that it is very possible to make friends without ever taking a puff.

If you are a little nervous about standing up for yourself when faced with the opportunity to smoke there are some simple things to say that will decrease the
pressure on you. I do not usually like to lie, but this is a situation that might warrant blurring the truth.

"I have allergies and cigarette smoke makes my nose run, eyes water, throat scratchy..."  
"My mom/dad has allergies to smoke and even hours after she/he can smell it, will get sick, and will bust me..."  
"I have asthma and smoking will give me an attack."  
"I don't like the way it tastes."

Of course, saying the truth is really the best thing. So keep reality in mind; it will be really hard for someone to argue against these statements.

"I do not want to."  
"There is enough cancer, I don't want to chase it."  
"It will make breathing harder."  
"I play sports, it will wreck my lung capacity."  
"I would prefer to keep my own teeth, not really into dentures."

If you want more information on smoking check out...

www.infotobacco.com Health Canada published this website to give accurate information about cigarettes and programs to help you stop.

www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/tobacco/yac/yac/index.html This Health Canada site describes what it is in cigarettes that make them so dangerous, why they are so addictive, and what you can do to avoid smoking.

www.canadian-health-network.ca/faq-faq/tobacco-tabagisme/3e.html The Canadian Health Network describes and shows pictures of exactly what starts to happen to your body from the first time you take a drag. Good links to other sites, awesome question
Cleopatra (Egypt, 69-30 B.C.E)

Cleopatra became the Queen of Egypt when she was 17 by marrying her 12 year old brother, Ptolemy XIII. After 3 years of reigning together, Ptolemy exiled Cleopatra so that he could rule the country by himself. In order to regain her power, Cleopatra conspired with Julius Ceasar (who was battling to take control of the entire Roman Empire). Together they led a war against Egypt and succeeded in killing Ptolemy. Ceasar proclaimed Cleopatra the Queen of Egypt again. Cleopatra and Ceasar lived together, even though she was legally married to her even younger brother Ptolemy IV. Ceasar was killed a few years later by assassins, and Cleopatra had to hide for her safety. To protect her power she had Ptolemy IV poisoned, her sister and many other enemies killed.

Cleopatra later had a wild affair with another Romain Emperor, was named Queen again, fought in more battles, and died under very mysterious circumstances when she was only 39.

To read more about her amazing life and get details into the myths that still surround her, go to http://interoz.com/egypt/cleopatr.htm or www.geocities.com/Athens/Aegean/7545/Cleopatra.html. Shakespeare wrote a play about her called "Anthony and Cleopatra," and there is a great, really old movie about her called "Cleopatra."

I am tough, ambitious, and I know what I want. If that makes me a bitch, okay. I can throw a fit, I am a master of it.

-Madonna
RELATIONSHIPS

Whether it is with a parent, friend, relative, special someone, or yourself, you have relationships. A 'relationship' is how you relate (act, think, and feel) to people, and it reflects how you feel about yourself. A healthy relationship should let you feel comfortable and happy about who you are. An unhealthy relationship is often stressful and makes you feel badly about yourself. There are some general signs that can help you determine what kind of relationships you are involved in.

Signs of Healthy Relationships:
- You can be yourself
- You can resolve conflicts
- You can be open and honest
- You can communicate your feelings without fear
- You can feel special and loveable
- You can trust the person and are trustworthy
- You receive and give respect

Signs of Unhealthy Relationships:
- You expect to have or find a 'perfect' friend/lover
- You need to act or look a certain way to please them
- You have sex (kiss, or fool-around) only, or mainly to please them
- You agree with them to avoid conflict
- You believe and expect others (or love) will make you happy
YOU EXPECT ONE PERSON TO PROVIDE ALL YOUR EMOTIONAL NEEDS
YOU ARE DISRESPECTED, PUT DOWN, THREATENED, PRESSURED, HIT OR FORCED TO DO THINGS YOU ARE NOT COMFORTABLE WITH?

SOMETIMES UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS CAN BECOME HEALTHY WITH LOTS OF TALKING, UNDERSTANDING, AND TRUST. BUT, THEY CAN ALSO BE SO UNHEALTHY THAT YOU ARE BEING EMOTIONALLY HARMED. IF YOU ARE UNSURE, PUT SOME SPACE BETWEEN YOURSELF AND THE OTHER PERSON AND TALK TO SOMEONE YOU CAN TRUST ABOUT IT.

TO TALK TO SOMEONE ABOUT YOUR RELATIONSHIP QUESTIONS, CHECK OUT THE CONTACT INFORMATION AT THE END OF THIS 'ZINE.

FOR SEMI-SERIOUS TESTS TO EVALUATE RELATIONSHIPS CHECK OUT: www.queendom.com. THE 'SELF-ESTEEM' AND 'RELATIONSHIP-ATTACHMENT' TESTS ARE VERY THOROUGH AND OFFER GOOD INSIGHT INTO YOUR PATTERNS OF RELATIONSHIPS. BUT IF THEY THINK YOU ARE IN AN UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIP THEY WILL TELL YOU, THERE IS A SERIOUS SIDE TO THIS 'WARM AND FUZZY' WEBSITE.

Joan of Arc (Jeanne d'Arc: France, 1412-1431)
At the age of 17 Joan of Arc left the small French village where she had been raised to kick British invaders out of France. Very pious, she believed that God had sent her as a messenger to assist the King of France (Charles the 7th) fight against the British army. Her military strategies and leadership were so successful that in two years most of the British army was forced out of the country. However, being young, uneducated, female and claiming to have religious visions made Joan of Arc seem very untrustworthy to many people in the Royal court, including
the King. After leading victorious military campaigns, her own King charged her with being a heretic (someone who is against or who corrupts Christianity) for claiming to receive religious visions and for wearing men's clothing amongst other things. She was burned to death for refusing to say that she had made up the visions. She was only 19 when killed.

Medieval Woodcut: www.godecookery.com
For more information on Joan of Arc go to www.newadvent.org/cathen/08409c.htm or rent the video "The Messenger"
Violence and Abuse

It stinks, and it does not have to be this way, but most women in Canada either have experienced violence/abuse in their lives or will at some point. Violence and abuse is not 'normal,' 'deserved,' or 'good for you.' It can seriously harm you emotionally and physically. There are 5 common forms of abuse and in most cases male relatives or acquaintances perpetrate them. Only about a quarter (25%) of violent attacks are committed by strangers.

**Physical Abuse:** includes hitting, shoving, slapping, kicking, choking, withholding medication, using a weapon, threatening to assault.

**Sexual Assault:** includes rape (forcing a woman/girl to have sex against her wishes), making her do sexual acts that she doesn't like, sexual harassment, any unwanted touching, kissing, fondling, sexual threats.

**Verbal Abuse:** includes name-calling, put-downs, insulting, blaming

**Emotional Abuse:** includes controlling everything she does, keeping a woman/girl from her friends and relatives, being very jealous, ignoring her, threatening to hurt her, threatening to hurt someone or something special to her, threatening to kill himself, threatening her with deportation, keeping her immigration/refugee papers

**Economic Abuse:** includes having control over all money in the home and bank account, not allowing a woman to have her own money, keeping her from getting a job or more education.

If you or someone you know experiences any of these types of abuse, talk to a professional and get help. You deserve it. You do not have to stay in violent situations.
If you are being hurt, or see/hear someone else being hurt, call 911.

If you are not sure if you are being abused, or have experienced abuse and need someone to talk to call the YWCA, they will help you and refer you to the most appropriate services.

YWCA Women's Information Centre: (604) 895-5790 or email wic@ywcavan.org
For more help-line numbers check out the last page of this 'zine.

**Rosa Parks (United States, 1913-)**

Even though slavery was outlawed in 1865 in the United States, legal practises of segregation maintained that people of African heritage could not have full rights. These laws dictated the separation of African-Americans from 'white' society by establishing separate schools, neighbourhoods, stores, and even water fountains. The idea being, that African-American people were inferior and would 'pollute' or 'contaminate' European people's purity and righteousness.

In 1955 Alabama, Rosa Parks inadvertently started nation-wide protests against segregation and legal subordination by refusing to give up her seat on a public bus. She had sat in a 'whites only' seat and was arrested for not moving to stand at the back of the bus. Alongside Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, Rosa Parks and the bus incident came to the country's attention. People, both Black and white, respected her courage and also revolted against the unfair laws. Police led violent campaigns trying to stop these protests, but the Supreme Court finally admitted that segregation laws were racist and could no longer exist.

For more information about Rosa Parks and the Civil Rights movement in the USA check out [www.achievement.org/autodoc/page/par0bio-1](http://www.achievement.org/autodoc/page/par0bio-1)
Reporting Violence or Abuse

This is scary and really sad, but it is important to know. More likely than not you or someone you know will be assaulted at some point in your life. This could include physical, verbal, or sexual violence and it can happen anywhere (home and school included). In B.C. close to 60% of all women aged 16 years and older have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence. Only 14% of women report their experience to the police. Your age and your clothing do not determine whether or not something could happen to you, bad things do happen to good people.

If anything happens, or has happened, that makes you feel uncomfortable, unhappy, or confused call any crisis line. Tell them what has happened and how you feel about it. They are excellent at giving good advice, and will help you at the hospital or with police.

If something happens to you or someone you know it is important to get help right away, you could be physically injured and will need help to recover emotionally. Remember, nobody deserves to be abused and the person/people who have hurt you need to be stopped.

There is no absolutely right way to report an incident, but here are some suggestions that will make the process easier.
Phone 911 if you are in the midst or have just been hurt (or if you see/hear someone else being hurt)

- An emergency operator will answer the phone and ask if you need an ambulance, police, or fire personnel. If you do not know who you need, the closest ambulance/police/fire truck will come to where ever you are phoning from.
- The operator will ask you where you are and if the perpetrator (the person causing harm) is still there. Do not worry if you do not know the address, they can track down where the phone call has come from. If the perpetrator is still nearby the police will arrive first.
- The police/fire department will ask you what has happened and will get you to a safe place (hospital, their offices, or a relative's home). They will ask you lots of questions and will try to figure out the best way to help. They have lots of experience with this stuff, so their advice is usually very good.

After any kind of assault go to the hospital. Emergency nurses and doctors know exactly what to do if you (or someone else) have just been assaulted. If you have hurt in any way, by anyone, go to the hospital. If you aren't sure that you need to go, call any crisis line. Tell them what has happened and that you aren't sure about what to do next. They will give you good advice and will go with you to the hospital (if needed).
• The nurses will ask you lots of questions to find out what happened and may take pictures of your injuries. If a crisis line worker has come with you, she will help deal with the doctors and nurses to make sure they listen well.
• They will get police to come talk to you, a social worker to help you emotionally, and will arrange a safe place for you.
• If someone has attempted or committed sexual assault the nurses/doctor will do something called a 'rape kit.' Using a long q-tip they will carefully check for body fluids up inside your vagina (in a part called the 'cervix') and will test your blood.

If any kind of assault has already taken place (but has pretty much healed) or if you are scared that something will happen, talk to the police. They have specially trained people who will listen to you, ask you questions, and find out what they can do to help.

☎ Phone a help-line if you have experienced any sort of violence. They will listen to you and help you figure out what to do next. Even if you just want to tell someone what has happened, they will listen.
Bad things can happen to anyone and it can be really difficult to admit that they have happened.
need or want
self
When something bad has happened it can be difficult to figure out what has gone on, and why it happened. If you are confused by something that happened TALK TO SOMEONE, ANYONE. Crisis lines are the best way to get advice and they will help you in every way possible.

If you do not get medical help right away you may end up with permanent injuries or illnesses.

If you do not tell someone right away, the person/people responsible may never get in police trouble for what they have done.

If you do not get emotional support you may feel badly about yourself for a long time.

To organise a self-defense workshop for you and your friends call the Safe-Teen Program at 255-5147
To find out more about recovering from assaults and abuse check out www.rapereliefshefletter.bc.ca or www.web.net/~wavawrcc/start.htm

If you need to talk to someone about your experiences call Vancouver Rape Relief at (604) 872-8212 or Women against Violence against Women Rape Crisis Centre at (604) 255-6344.

I don't waste time thinking, "Am I doing it right?" I ask, "Am I doing it?" -Georgette Mosbacher

Don't be afraid to cry. It will free your mind of sorrowful thoughts. -Don Talayesva
Sojourner Truth (United States, 1797-1883)

Born into slavery in New York State, she and 2 of her children escaped (one of whom she stole back from a slave-owner in Alabama) to freedom and poverty in New York City.

She worked for the abolition of slavery and drew attention to racist and sexist social roles. One of her most famous and powerful speeches has become known as "And Ain't I a Woman?"

*That man over there say women need to be helped into carriages and lifted over ditches- and ain't I a woman? I could work as much as a man and bear the lash as well- and ain't I a woman? I have borne 5 children and seen them almost all off into slavery and when I cried out with a woman's grief, none but Jesus hear- and ain't I a woman?*

Photograph: Microsoft Encarta '98
For more information on Sojourner Truth check out

Good and evil are twin threads that run through the history. And often they intertwine.  

-Jostein Gaarder
So Cool Music

I am a HUGE music buff, but I want my music to fit me. As far as I am concerned the best music is not necessarily what is popular on the radio, but what matches the way I feel and think at any given moment. So I have a pretty big collection of compact disks and mixed tapes of all varieties (dance/hip hop, soul, r&b, classical, acoustic, heavy metal, show tunes, lounge singers, country, you name it). I like a variety because I do not like fitting in to anybody's expectations and I always want something from the music. The following list of artists are some of the greatest musicians out there (I think) who you probably will never hear on the radio.

Erykah Badu  Amazing r&b (rhythm and blues) songs that she writes herself. This is one tough lady who holds her culture dear (she always wears her traditional African clothing, headdresses, and accessories), sings about her family/friends/environment honestly, and passes on great messages about strength. It's funky and inspiring.

Ani diFranco  Hilarious guitarist and singer who writes and produces her own music. Great angst music for when you're feeling feisty and super-independent. Lots of strong guitar and songs about breaking up, making up, giving up, and starting all over again. Her lyrics make incredible come-back lines!
k.d. lang If you like to sing along with artists, you will love any of her c.d.'s. She has a liquid voice that always seems to make my duets sound good. Mostly songs on love and friendship that are pretty mellow and relaxing.

Melissa Etheridge You have probably heard a few of her songs on the radio, but stations do not play much of her because she sings candidly about love, sex, and desires. This is very growly stuff, but when I am frustrated emotionally it is perfect - nobody portrays anger and frustration like her.

Vanessa-Mae If you have never heard the electric violin, this is the way to start. She is a young Asian-American artist who makes classical music fun by speeding it up, mixing it up with other styles, and incorporating homemade instruments. It is pretty up-beat stuff that gets me ballet-jazz dancing around my room (and will really please your parents because it uses some classical composers).

Luscious Jackson This amazing band mixes jazz, funk, punk, and hip hop into some seriously cool tunes. With song titles like 'Mood Swing' and 'Under your Skin' you can bet that these women will crack you up and inspire some true funkiness.

Me'shell Ndege'ocello Looks hard to pronounce (sounds like ney-gay-o-cello),
but this Canadian funk and soul singer sounds amazing. Fun to dance with and great lyrics that will really get you thinking.

Bikini Kill If you feel like doing some yelling, this is the group to yell with. They are angry and they definitely make it clear what they are angry about (stupid dating games, jerks, people who lie...), but they turn funny and sad stories into amazing songs.

Queen Latifah Not only is she an amazing actor and super-spokesperson of all things equality-related, the Queen is an incredible artist. She does soul and rap that reads like poetry and includes all her personal politics.

Queen Elizabeth the 1st (England, 1533-1603)

Queen Elizabeth the 1st was one of the most powerful and important rulers in British history. She became Queen when she was just 25 years old, and reigned for 45 years. In that time she succeeded in preventing wars between Catholics and Protestants (encouraging religious tolerance), reorganised the government into more fair and efficient structures, and created an atmosphere where culture and arts were highly appreciated. She was able to outsmart many attempts at assassination and several conspiracies to overthrow her. The Queen was a very independent and strong woman:
she made all her own decisions personally and politically at a time when women were not recognised as men's equals and could not hold property in their own names. She chose to not get married, preferring to say that she was married to her country.

For more information, pictures, stories, and to learn about Renaissance England and Queen Elizabeth 1st go to
www.luminarium.org/renlit/eliza.htm
Painting: www.luminarium.org/renlit/eliza6.jpg
Catherine the Great (Russia, 1729-1796)

Catherine the Great was born a Princess in Prussia (now Poland). In 1745 she married an heir to the Russian throne, Peter the 3rd. After 17 years of an unhappy marriage, Peter became the Emperor. He was very unpopular and was soon overthrown and assassinated in a coup led by Catherine. She acceded the throne and was known as 'Empress Catherine of all Russia.' Although marrying a royal heir was necessary in her plans to rule the country, she did not allow the men in her life to make decisions for her. During her reign she modernised Russia, supporting the development of arts and sciences, leading military take-overs of many countries, starting a judicial system, and developing educational programs for girls. She never remarried, preferring to have a succession of boyfriends instead!

To learn more about Catherine the Great and Russian history check out www.ursulahistoryweb.f2s.com/CGREAT.HTM
Resources

Crisis Lines for emergencies:

Police
Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention
Vancouver Rape Relief and Shelter
Women against Violence against Women
Prideline (gay and lesbian help-line)
Kid's Help-Phone

Or dial '0' and ask for Zenith 1234

Counselling and support

Safe School Centre
Youth Contact Line
Children affected by Family Violence
Immigrant Services Society of BC
Vancouver Native Health Society

911 (604) 872-3311
(604) 872-8212
(604) 255-6344
1-800-566-1170
1-800-668-6868
1-800-224-7233
(604) 775-4264
(604) 874-2938
(604) 684-2561
(604) 254-9949
Autographs