

Teenagers need rites of passage into adulthood

By Emily Keith
Reporter

Our generation has not lived a very sheltered existence. We have witnessed a war. We have watched the statistics of divorce grow at a phenomenal rate. We have seen the AIDS epidemic grow into a dilemma that almost seems helpless for us to even try to control. The future for our generation has never seemed to hold a lot of hope. But what's sad is that our generation has the skills and the intelligence to be able to deal with all the problems

that we are inheriting; we just don't have the dedication. We'd rather sit around and drink coffee in a moth eaten chair and talk about how unfair life is than get off our high-horses and DO SOMETHING!

What is it that can spur youth into action? Since the beginning of America teenagers have never been offered a meaningful cultural experience that values things that are important to them. American youth do not have a meaningful event to mark the end of childhood. I firmly believe that this is most of the

problem. I think that we really need a rite of passage that young adults can experience that can mark the turning of their place in society from a carefree teenager to a young adult with a debt to society. Several cultures have variations of this. Many Native American tribes send their young men off around the age of 13 to experience a vision. Jewish men and women train to perform and experience the change over to becoming a woman or a man in the Jewish community. There are even some really simple rites. In America, the

driver's license at the age of 16 becomes a symbol of freedom for most teenagers. Youths of today celebrate the end of their high school career with a thing called prom. Similarly, we put our exit from high school to ritual in a celebration called graduation. America's teenage culture seems to be lacking traditional substance.

America is crying for a rite of passage. Today's teenagers are in desperate need of putting ritualistic rites in to their life. When I see a young adult with multiple piercing or many tat-

toos, I only see the desperate need for initiation that their bodies and minds must be experiencing. It's incredibly sad. Maybe I shouldn't blame my generation for their own ignorance. Maybe I should blame America. The principle of America steals significant rites of passage from the youth. We need to rely on ourselves for what our bodies and minds need. If our culture will not allow us to have a national ritual rite, then maybe it's up to us to find out what our souls and bodies need in order to grow.

Online love may be answer to loneliness

By Alec Ferrell
Staff Writer

"Why must I be a teenager in love?"

I love that song. But more importantly, it does indeed convey a very monumental question. The many subtle, yet powerful levels of teenage courtship are enough to overwhelm those around and within the relationship itself to the point of insanity. However, if one is like me, it has been a painfully long time since those powerful waves of romance have submerged me into a realm of - well, you get the picture. But alas! For all those who feel that there is no hope left to salvage the motivation to re-enter the teenage dating game, there is an answer: the *online romance!*

Yes, folks! Thanks to the wonderment of scientific advancement, and through such computer networking systems as Prodigy, CompuServe and America Online, I have now successfully established cyber-dates with girls all across the continental United States, and then some (total lie)! All you have to do is type in what you want to say and send it to who you want to say it to, and then they write back! It's that simple! No embarrassing personal interaction! No gut-wrenching phone calls to people who will probably reject you! No worries on whether or not they think you're ugly; they can't even see you! You have total control of what you want to do and how you want to do it! You can even be whoever you want to be; no one knows what you look like unless you tell them! It can be absolutely

anything and everything you want it to be, with absolutely no possibility of disease! Utopia for dating! Eureka!

Actually, it is quite a depressing process. One signs on to their designated Internet-server, in my case America Online, and then can proceed to search through various "rooms of interest," each with its own set title or topic. For instance, there are many different "TeenChat" rooms, designed for the purpose of creating an open forum for teens to talk about teen stuff. The process then involves a main dialogue screen, in which one sees what everyone says, and enters their own comments or questions through a smaller entry window. Sounds fun, huh?

Upon my first entry into a TeenChat room, I was attacked by myriad "cyber-dweebs" who: a) thought I was a girl, b) provided detailed scenarios of various obscene middle school mating rituals that they wanted to partake with any and all available online females and c) had poor grammar skills. To ward off these Internet-vermin one can either counter their offer with the colorful metaphor of your choice, or simply move on to another room. As I began to learn that the TeenChat is probably the lamest place that one can go on the vastness of the service, and also that it is the last place in the world to go to if one hopes to meet someone for a mutually stimulating relationship, I simply moved on.

I was now in search of a room in which I could truly meet some interesting, mindful hospitable and non-vacuous people. I looked down the descrip-

tions of all available rooms. *Iowa Babes 40+?* Nope. *SexlessinDesMoines?* Not today. *Nuttin-But-Squid?* Don't think so. AHH! I found it! If ever there was a room in which to find a wholesome, meaningful cybernetic life-mate, this was it: *JustNicePeople*. Upon entering the room, I was awash with congenial greetings such as "Herro!", and even a few punctuation tricks mimicking various silly faces like (lean your head to the left) ;) or !-}. I felt at home with these people! They were actually "just nice people"! However, the amount of niceness was painful and annoying. I bade my farewells and kept on surfen'.

Well, I began to get desperate for some people who were like me: moody, likes winter, depressed most of the time for no reason, and generally had nothing better to do on a Saturday night than stare at a computer screen for hours. So I found my room: the *IndieRockChat*. (For those who aren't sure, "indie-rock" is a genre of music that involves people making thought provoking, original sounds but don't have enough money to make it big on MTV - my kind o' stuff.)

I was in heaven! The several other people in the room and I complained hours on end about our crappy lives and the fact that we never have any money! I met people from all over the place! William in Kentucky, Heather in Atlanta, Jokie in Carson, CA; all very interesting people with whom I had stimulating conversations.

And then I met *her*. Sarah in Connecticut. We started off talking about bands

like Stereolab and The Sonic Youth which ultimately led to us discussing our lives and how much we truly *did* have in common. We are both seventeen, we both listen to the same music, we both bite our fingernails, we both have many of the same problems with school and with relationships; I immediately felt a bond with her, and she felt the same with me. It was just a glorious, wonderful thing and we have been sending actual mail and packages ever since (this was back in June). The colleges that we both want to go to are extremely close to each other, and we are both working very hard to get accepted (education is wonderful and all, but there are some forms of motivation that will drive seventeen-year-olds above and beyond any rational scheme of scholastic advancement), so I'll attempt to keep you all abreast of the developments of the relationship (because I know you really want to know about my lame-o personal life, right?).

Point being, the Internet has something for everyone. I dove in, thoroughly skeptical and pessimistic about it, and came back a boy smitten over a girl almost 800 miles away. It was, indeed, a grand occasion and is a service worthy of everyone to *at least* give consideration. It is a safe, enjoyable activity through which one can meet people of same interest, or people with whom you have absolutely nothing in common. It is truly the wave of the future, and should be surfed with an open mind and a clear conscience. Who knows? Online romance may await you yet!

Reader response helpful to journalists

By Ted Chen
Reporter

Yesterday, I was reading over our beloved school newspaper. I soon became enthralled by all the issues that were discussed. The topics ranged from stereotyping to teenage drinking, winter sports to the IB program. After a while of reading all these articles I began to wonder whether anyone was actually truly reading what we had to say. Sure, people read the papers but do they actually take what we have to say with true sincerity? Do we actually make a difference in the daily lives of people?

Journalism is a daily struggle between trying to find something interesting to say and finishing it by the deadline. Sometimes it gets hectic and stressful (like now, for instance), but in the end it is worth the

trouble. BUT it is only worth it if people actually care. We, as writers, thrive on the responses of our readers. We need you in order to make this paper something that actually involves your concerns. If we just sit here and blabber gibberish from our mouths then we won't get anything accomplished. Please tell us how you, as the general public, feel about what we publish. If we know how you feel on certain issues then maybe we could improve our current school environment. Whenever I write, I hope that it makes an impact upon my readers. If you feel that I am completely off base and don't tell me, it won't help the situation. I'll just keep on writing disappointing articles and you will just keep getting angry at me. Martin Luther King once said that he would rather have a person be outright against his beliefs than to have a person who took King's ideals with luke-

warm acceptance. I feel the same way. If I write something, I want to be confronted. That's the only way that any of us are going to improve. When someone reads my articles and disagrees, I would like them to acknowledge it to my face. I don't want someone to resent what I have to say and not respond. That is about the worst thing that anybody can do. Many people don't realize that when we speak, we are speaking for you. We are your representatives in this school bureaucracy.

I also begin to question whether actions are being taken in response to what we write. Is the school administration doing anything in response to our complaints? Do they actually care about what we think? We try to voice our opinions but maybe it is all useless. Maybe the administration is playing games with us. Maybe they want to trick us into believing that we are in an un-

repressed environment in which students can actually have an impact on important issues; you know, just like what the school motto says-Students First. Anyway, if we can TRULY make an impact on our current school situation then it would be wise for you, the reader, to write to us. I would like to think that our audience is not just a bunch of mindless imbeciles, but actually something worth being called a student body. If you have any objections against what I say, write me!

I begin to wonder whether my opinion on things mean anything to the people who read my articles, for example, this one that I am writing now. Do you really care? In fact, I begin to question whether anything that this journalism staff has to say is significant to you, the reader. If the answer is no, then why are you holding this copy of High Life in your hands?