

# Eye exams critical

Vision is a dominant process in the growth, development and daily performance of children and Colby's optometrists are wanting to make sure children in the area have complete eye examinations.

In fact, 80 percent of what students learn is through vision and yet, 86 percent of all school-age children have not had a complete eye examination, said Dr. Jeff Morrison, optometrist in Colby.

"This could mean that thousands of school-aged children simply can't see correctly," he said. "Parents and teachers need to know that with a complete eye examination, we can diagnose and begin treatment of many of these debilitating vision and eye health issues."

Students with poor vision can be misdiagnosed as learning impaired, as having attention deficit disorder, or are just plain left behind from their peer group. And these children don't know that they can't see what their friend sees, because they don't know what normal vision is like.

It also means that many children, by the time they have that first examination, may have a condition, such as amblyopia or lazy eye, which now cannot be treated

and is the leading cause of blindness. If they had had a complete eye examination earlier in their lives, the condition could have been easily corrected.

"We encourage parents to have children examined three times prior to starting school: at 6 months, 3 years and before starting kindergarten," Morrison said. "This monitors eye development and can prevent conditions that may be irreversible in later years."

Teachers can help too by letting parents know the importance of eye examinations and the link between good vision and successful learning.

Children need to have a complete eye examination where vision acuity, eye health and vision skills are measured. And they need to have these examinations at an early age.

Comprehensive vision examinations can only be conducted by an eye care professional with the specialized training needed to make a definitive diagnosis and prescribe treatment.

Keep in mind that a vision screening, while a useful tool, is a limited process and cannot be used to diagnose an eye or vision problem, but rather to indicate a potential need for further evaluation.

# Fiance still remembers deceased girlfriend

*Editor's Note: The Colby Free Press is sampling other advice columns. Please read and tell us what you think of them.*

Dear Harlan,

My fiance says he loves me. He had a girlfriend who was killed, and he says he also loves her. Is it possible for him to love the both of us?

Engaged

**Dear Engaged,**

**Loving you and loving the memory of her aren't incompatible with each other. Where the conflict might be is if you feel like you'll never be as good as her. Her memory is not something that you can compete with or should feel the need to compete with. If you're feeling this way, I'd bet your relationship might be more of an oasis from the pain of his past than about building a future together. And that's a conversation you need to have with him.**

Dear Harlan,

Two of my closest friends are younger than I am and aren't going to college in the fall. The problem is that they're giving me a hard time for being excited about the big move.

I went to orientation and met tons of people, and have made some close friends. However,

I've tried my hardest not to forget about my friends at home. But it seems as though my two friends aren't taking my move all that well. I think they feel as though I'm abandoning them.

Lately, they won't talk to me, and whenever I approach them to talk about everything, they say, "Go have fun in college with your new friends!"

What else is there that I can do to save two of my strongest friendships?

Luisiana

**Dear Luisiana,**

**These guys are such big babies. They have no clue what you're going through and no idea that being a friend would mean supporting you during this huge transition. All they can see is that you're hanging out with other people, and that's a problem. I mean, what do they want? For you to not make any friends?**

Since they won't talk to you, send them an e-mail and set them straight. Tell them that you're dealing with a lot of changes and could use their support more than ever. Your friendship is not ending, it's just changing. They'll always be your friends for life, and you hope you can make friends in college so that they can become

friends with your new friends. The alternative would be making no friends in college, and true friends would never want that for their friend.

Dear Harlan,

I am 14 and have a boyfriend, but when I get around him I freeze up and can't think of anything to talk to him about. It's like my mind goes blank, and I can't get the words out.

I would do anything to be able to carry on a five-minute conversation with him, but I can't. Please help!

Blank Around Boyfriend

**Dear Blank,**

Here's one approach to quiet the chorus of thoughts in your head that's making it impossible to listen: He's a practice boyfriend, one of dozens to come. Part of "practice" means that you can make mistakes. Once you give yourself permission to make mistakes, you don't have to be perfect. It means that even if you can't find the words, you can listen and trust that he'll carry the conversation. Once you give yourself permission to not be perfect, you can quiet the voices in your head and listen to what he's saying instead of what you're thinking. Once you really hear the words, you can

have a conversation.

Harlan is the author of "The Naked Roommate: And 107 Other Issues You Might Run Into in College" (Sourcebooks). Write Harlan at harlan(at)helpmeharlan.com or visit online: www.helpmeharlan.com. All letters submitted become property of the author. Send paper to Help Me, Harlan! 2506 N. Clark St., Ste. 223, Chicago, IL 60614.

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