

# Running away is more serious than just packing bag

When you were little, did you ever run away?

Maybe you packed up your backpack and made it down the driveway or to the shed in your friend's backyard around the corner, but after a little while, you forgot why you were running away, and it was getting dark out, so you went home.

Hopefully that was the last time you ever thought about running away, because there's a big difference between thinking about it (or walking a few blocks down the street) and actually running away.

Running away is a very serious problem. According to the National Runaway Switchboard, an organization that takes calls and helps kids who have run away or are thinking of running away, one in seven kids between the ages of 10 and 18 will run away.

And there are 1.3 million run-away and homeless kids living on the streets in the United States. As many as 100,000 of these runaways and homeless kids in the United



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• prevention center

States are preteens.

Why do kids run away? Remember how you felt the last time you got into a big fight with your parents or one of your brothers or sisters? That kind of anger and hurt can be what pushes someone to run away from home.

In fact, most kids run away due to problems with their families. Some kids even decide to leave without ever having a fight. They might have done something they're ashamed of, and they're afraid to tell their parents.

Other reasons include violence in the family, divorce or separation, death in the family, birth of a new family member, family financial worries, abuse of drugs or alcohol

by the youth or parents, problems at school, peer pressure and failing or dropping out of school.

These are problems faced by a lot of kids and teens — and there are ways to deal with all of these problems besides running away. Kids who think about running away might not know how to solve tough problems or don't have adults to help them. Sometimes a really big problem can make it seem like running away is the only choice.

Unfortunately, the problems kids hope to escape by running away are replaced by other — sometimes even bigger — problems of life on the streets.

The reality of running away? When you think of running away, you probably imagine that there will be no more rules, no parent to tell you what to do, no more fights.

Sounds great and exciting, right?

In your imagination it may be, but in reality, running away is anything but fun. Kids and teens who run away face new problems that are very real, like not having any money, not having food to eat or a place to sleep and not having anyone to look out for them.

People with no home and no money become desperate, doing anything just to meet their basic needs. Because of this, they often find themselves in risky situations that would be frightening even for adults.

Runaway kids get involved in dangerous crimes much more often than kids who live at home. Each year, more than 5,000 runaway and homeless kids die from assault, illness or suicide.

Kids who live on the streets often have to steal to be able to live. Many take drugs or alcohol to get through the day because they become depressed and feel that no one cares about them. Some are forced to do things they wouldn't normally do to

make money, including prostitution.

The number of kids with HIV/AIDS and other diseases is higher on the streets because these kids might use IV drugs or have unprotected sex (often for money).

Let's face it — stress is a part of life, even for kids — but being able to deal with problems with confidence, hope and practical solutions makes kids less likely to run away. To build your problem solving skills, practice these things:

- Know your emotions. Be able to know what you are feeling inside and have the words to describe it.
- Express your emotions. Don't be afraid to tell those close to you how you are feeling and why.
- Know how to calm yourself down when you're upset (walking, jogging, listening to music)
- Think about different ways to solve your problem, and get some guidance from someone you trust.

If you're thinking of running away, talk to your parents if you can. They need to know you're upset or

even afraid. It may be possible to work together as a family to find a solution. Sometimes talking to a counselor as a family can help.

If the problem is an abusive parent, talk to your school counselor, clergy or another trusted adult. Another option is calling the National Runaway Switchboard at 1-800-621-4000.

If your friend is thinking of running away, warn him about how tough it is to survive on his own. He's probably scared and confused. Try to be there for him so he doesn't feel alone, and remind him there are other ways of dealing with problems.

Though it may take a lot of courage, the most important thing is to tell an adult you trust as soon as possible.

Being a real friend doesn't mean keeping a secret when it can hurt someone. It means doing the best thing possible for your friend. And running away isn't a solution for either of you. It only leads to more problems and danger.

## 4-H news

The meeting of the Beaver Valley 4-H Club was called to order Monday, Oct. 11, by President Ashley Christians. There were 12 members, two leaders, three guests and four adults for a total of 21 present.

Ashley then called on Austin Hernandez to lead the group in the American flag salute and Cappi Thomas in the 4-H flag salute. Andrea Roeder then read the minutes, and they were approved as read.

Club officers gave their reports. Leader Kim Roeder then announced the club was in charge of the Achievement Awards on Sunday, Nov. 7. The Ruleton Eager Beavers were the helpers.

The club needed people to volunteer to bake 13 dozen cookies. She then passed around a sheet for people to sign up for a committee.

There was no unfinished business. In new business, Ashley got people to bake cookies and parents to volunteer for the next monthly

meeting, which is parents' night.

For the program, Tanicia Arnold gave a project talk on her dog Iggy. She also led the group in a game of four corners for recreation.

Ashley gave the announcements that the next meeting would be Monday, Nov. 8, and that Achievement Awards would be Nov. 7. The meeting was then adjourned by saying the 4-H motto.

Reported by Paige Phillips



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