

# Life's Big Questions

J-14's guest columnist Alexa Ray Joel gives her expert answers to your trickiest questions!



## My parents won't let me date

**Q:** I like this guy and I think I'm in love. I've told my parents, but they said that I can't date until I am 15. I tried going out with him secretly, but I got caught. I can't keep away from him! What should I do? —*Jessica, 13*

**A:** It seems like you're in a bit of a pickle because you shouldn't date this guy behind your parents' back, but you really like him. I would try to just keep it friendly with him for right now. I know that sounds hard, but there are things you can do to keep the friendship interesting so that the desire to be more than friends doesn't die out. And in two years — who knows?! You both might feel just as strongly about one another and you'll be able to date freely and openly without any restrictions.

In the meantime, here's a few fun ways to keep the friendship flirtatious and enticing:

Leave him little notes with compliments once a week — he will be surprised by such a sweet gesture! Invite him to hang out with you and your friends on the weekends. Your parents won't be concerned if they see you are spending time with him in a group dynamic like at the

**44%** of J-14ers are not allowed to date

movies, and that will make it easier for you to see him socially. The best part is that you can make sure you sit next to him in the theater!

I know it might be hard to wait two years until you are able to officially date him, but if it's meant to be and he is really the one, then this guy will happily wait for you. And believe me, he will respect you so much more because he's gotten to know you without any other complications. From my experience, I've learned that the slower you take it with a guy, the better.

J-14's guest columnist Alexa Ray Joel is a singer/songwriter and daughter of singer Billy Joel and supermodel/actress Christie Brinkley. Her song "All I Can Do" was featured on a recent episode of *The Real Housewives of New Jersey*. Alexa also enjoys writing and helping girls battle self-esteem and depression issues. For more information on Alexa, visit alexarayjoel.com.



## My ex is dating my BFF

**Q:** I'm having trouble getting over a breakup and now my ex is dating my friend! Please help! —*Sabree*

**A:** Well first of all honey, it really surprises me that your friend has the nerve to date your ex! That's a big no-no! I can completely see how you are hurting on both fronts. However, I can't help but think that neither of these two are worth your precious time — the fact that your ex is even dating a friend of yours shows that he is thoughtless. If I were you, I would go in the opposite direction of them and take the high road. For instance, I would ignore them in school and just act completely fabulous and totally unaware of their existence. Believe me — you will feel like a rockstar by showing them that you have moved on.

If you are still hurting and need to express your feelings, which is completely normal, I would talk to your true friends and family — they are the ones who really care about you and will be there for you no matter what. Believe me, you don't need this guy at all. It might be hard or even impossible for you to see it now, but you are so much better off without him!

PHOTOS: FROM TOP: COURTESY OF KRISTEN GRAY; COURTESY OF CARM BAER/FOX

**32%** of J-14 readers find it hard to make friends

## I don't have a lot of friends

**Q:** I'm not one of those people who has a lot of friends. People laugh at me and it's starting to get on my nerves. I may not be the prettiest, skinniest, most talented person in my school, but I'm still a person. What should I do? —*Rebecca, 13*

**A:** I sincerely hope that you don't allow any of these kids make you question your worth as a fabulous girl. Your peers only do this because they are insecure and it makes them feel better if they make someone else feel insecure. Please don't allow them to succeed at doing this because then they will have the power. Of course, I completely under-

stand why their hurtful remarks would get on your nerves. Still, as hard as this may be, the best thing you can do is walk away. The less attention you pay them, the less power they will have over you. Then, they will be the ones feeling small because they didn't get a reaction out of you. Believe me, as you get older, you will find your true friends who will make you feel happy and fulfilled.

## My best friend is depressed

**Q:** My best friend has been really depressed lately and she keeps telling me that she's had thoughts of suicide. I'm really scared for her and I want to tell someone, but she made me promise not to tell. What can I do? —*Kelley, 13*

**A:** Dearest Kelley, You are a wonderful friend for showing such concern. This is a tough one because a situation like this does call for alerting her parents. However, I understand that you do not want your friend to feel any sort of betrayal. I would make a compromise with your friend: Promise her that you will not tell anyone as long as she seeks professional help *immediately* — like within the next 24 hours. Thoughts of suicide are not something that should be taken lightly.

When discussing this with her, make it clear that there are people she can talk to who are experienced

at handling situations like this and won't judge her. Please give her these listings and urge her to make the call: The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or The National Hopeline Network at 1-800-784-2433. These hotlines are completely free of charge and confidential. I guarantee you she will find 100 percent support and understanding here. You should also feel free to call these lines yourself for more tips on how to help your friend.

If she refuses to seek professional help, then you should alert her parents immediately. It'll be for her own good.

## I'm taller than all of my friends

**Q:** My height is a big problem — I'm only 11 and I'm as tall as my mom! And all my friends are way shorter. Why does my body grow so fast? Is this normal? What's wrong with me? —*Jess, 11*

**A:** There is absolutely nothing wrong with you! At your age everybody is growing and developing at different rates. My little sister Sailor was already 5'7" when she was your age. She felt self-conscious about being the tallest girl in her class, but now she loves her height and uses it to her advantage! She stands out from the crowd, she doesn't have to look up at the boys in her class, and she's the same height as most grown-ups, so

everyone notices her right away when she walks into a room.

Please don't ever think there's anything wrong with you. You may look a little different than your friends right now, but that doesn't mean that there's anything "bad" happening — it just means that you get to be the tall, glamorous knockout of the bunch! And at least you'll never have to suffer through wearing heels when you get older like me — I'm only 5'2"!



Ask  
**J-14**

Stressing over a question that's too humiliating to ask? Send it in confidence to J-14's expert with your age (name optional!): Life's Big Questions, c/o J-14, 270 Sylvan Avenue, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632 or by email at lbq@j14.com.