



## Escape March 2011

The Verdadera staff encourages you to discuss and explore the issues and stories, as the publication aims not only to offer an outlet for expression, but to improve our lives. Keep in mind that the emotions that flow through the text and the feelings behind the words could be those of your child, your classmate, or your best friend.

*Things to consider:*

- *What do you do to escape?*
- *Are your escapes healthy?*
- *What causes you to escape?*
- *How can you tell if a friend has mentally escaped?*

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### Student Submissions

By the middle of freshman year I used to look up ways to end my life in the library

By the end of sophomore year, I started to inquire into how much it would cost to end it the easiest, least painful way

By junior year, I tried to cut myself to control my pain, but I couldn't bring myself to do it. That's when I realized that neither suicide nor self-mutilation was going to change anything, but bring grief.

I persevered to give my children the life I never had

I persevered to give myself to change this world that I hated to live in

I persevered to touch the lives of those who would go through the same things I would.

My desires to do these things, to do what I loved, to have an impact was my escape.

I'm 28, and Monta Vista is still a potent memory of the past.

I coached soccer for years and I had to opportunity to make young girls who believed that had no talent in a team year after year.

I have a job in which I change the face of technology in an innovative way.

My advice to MV students:

Its almost done.

You've worked so hard, and it will pay off. You're misery will end, find your friends, help each to keep going.

Fight for what you love.

It will get you through,

It will be your only escape.

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"Nobody ever did, or ever will, escape the consequences of his choices." ~ Alfred A. Montapert

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What do you do to escape? Maybe you read a good book, perhaps a little nap, a daydream...hide in trees and hunt for squirrels? I tend to escape into colors. Don't ask me why but what I paint always depicts what kind of mood I'm in. If something works out, that means I am mellow, calm. If my colors are dark and scattered...well, you get the jist. I love painting skulls, I don't know why...but they are easy for me. Ask me to do a flower or landscape and I am screwed. Maybe because it is too realistic and I am more of a fantasy kind of girl. Maybe I love skulls because they freak me out. And anything that makes me a little apprehensive gives me a little rush. Maybe because they are, in some realms...taboo, that makes it so enjoyable to paint. I like to bug out their eyes, give them strange expressions. My skulls, never look the same, I just noticed that. They are all painted a little differently than the last. Hmmm, perhaps I should start sticking to one, but would that make them just a little bit on the boring side?

I'm not the only one; there are people in my life that have the same kookiness over them. And they mean the world to me. Sometimes I know, that I don't spend enough time with them and I wish that I could. If you have the time I'd like to see you soon. Maybe we could paint a dream together...

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"You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today." ~ Abraham Lincoln

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My escape is through a smile...

In my 16 years, I've had an eating disorder, OCD, and was on medication for several years. I've had friends who've escaped through cutting, a friend who attempted suicide, and I've had thoughts like these myself. I've been made fun of, bullied, and abused. I've run away from home, I'm bisexual, and quite honestly I have no idea who I really am.

I've been through a lot in these past 16 years, more than I think any teenager should. Sometimes I just smile up the pain.

Sometimes I laugh to cover up my sadness; but whether I smile or laugh, I can never hide what I really feel inside.

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"A person is neither whole nor healthy without the memories of photo albums. They are the storybook of our lives. They provide a nostalgic escape from the tormented days of the present." ~ Patrick Gary

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Escape. I want to escape, this lonely place, where love is only and truly embedded within a perfect GPA. Wow. We may not always realize it, but we are truly living within a bubble. I'm grateful for such a positive environment with a plethora of opportunities, but frankly, I'm tired of being surrounded by artificial people who drone endlessly on grades. Since I haven't personally met many from "outside the box", I go on omegle sometimes. Sometimes I get a feel of what other places are like, just by talking to teenagers in other parts of the country and world, it's amazing. It's amazing how many real experiences they have...as opposed to our feeble experiences of camping out early on Running of The Bulls and such. No, these are real people. They taught me to relax a bit, and be a bit more real. They taught me that I should live during this "Teenage Dream"...not gawk over the 'hottest' new TI-graphing calc and gush over cool-looking SAT words.

Someday, I'm gonna escape. Literally. Not as in a runaway. As in, I'm going to depart this little sheltered life of mine, of crazy obsession of grades and such, and of fake material interests. I'm gonna escape into the real world, into the blue, out of the box, and I'm not coming back. I see the light, the life, and I'm following it.

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"I think the more stressful our times get, the more we look for fantasy escapes." ~ Jeri Ryan

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Escape. Sounds hella chill. Im in college and im pledging a frat. Drinking and smoking weed is pretty much all I do. Not gonna lie after high school all this shit has been my escape. College is aite. I pretty much have different escapes in college. Back in high school it was about tv or doing random crap. Now all this freedom in college is chillier. i guess its the freedom that I have in college that drives me towards these things. And probably the lack of partying in high school. And the instant gratification hahaha. I know its gonna end someday, probably by the end of this awesome year. So why not enjoy this new form of escape while it lasts?

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"The object in life is not to be on the side of the majority, but to escape finding oneself in the ranks of the insane." ~ Marcus Aurelius

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Escape. Is it just the far corner key on your keyboard that you never seem to use, or is it something more?

What if that tiny corner key fits the description of “escape” perfectly? Because escape is always an option, but how often do we actually choose to use it? Most importantly, what does it actually do—for us?

The idea of escape has played a role in my life since I was little... in fact, ever since I’ve received any responsibilities to do anything at all. When I would have to face reality, face my family—and in most cases, face my homework—I could always turn to something like the Internet or other video games for escape. I could believe that that’s how lots of people find escape in the world, no matter how small or insignificant that moment of escape is; it’s the fact that we get to step out of the world that we’re in right now and go somewhere new that matters. But as we grow with age, we grow with all the stress and how rooted we are in our own lives that we always need to do more and more just to get that small bit of escape. It’s definitely true in my life.

Sure, it could start with something innocent like TV or games or the Internet to distract you from reality the first few times around, but when I started getting more caught up in the tensions and the stresses of life and of school, it just wasn’t enough. No, I had to take escape to its literal meaning, and really try to get out of it all. Get out of the school. Get out of the same-old life that I’d been living. I don’t remember if I felt this way before I entered Monta Vista, but surely it was something I had felt strongly about once I had been here for the first year or two. It felt like I was suffocating in my own environment, having all of that pressure on myself to do well, to live up to expectations, to not make a fool out of myself. And it’s exactly those feelings that made me want to get out more and more. Sure, my life isn’t that terrible, but to see how this affects the very people around me is astonishing. Maybe today I could get away with skipping school—catch my breathe and escape out of the stress for a day—but maybe tomorrow I won’t be so content with just that. In the case of some people I know, this ended up with drug use. They were so wrapped up around the idea that they were stuck in this mundane and beat-down life that they simply needed the help of drugs to “get high” and “get over it.” It helped them chill out, calm down, and most of all, escape from reality and all those problems that came with it. Is it bad to escape every once in a while, like the eight-year-old version of myself who would sneak in an hour of cartoons every day? Probably not, but as time went on, I started to see more and more how there weren’t many options left for escape in the life I live now. Skipping school... Drugs... Alcohol... Sex... All these things I notice the people around me use just to get away, but is it really worth it? The more I tell myself that I need to think about “escape” less, the more I feel like I really need to escape. The more I’m around these people who have their own personal ways of escape, the more I realize how troubled I am. Even now, some people have simpler, happier things to think

about when they hear the word “escape,” like listening to music, watching a good movie, eating good food, etc. But not me.

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“What is life, except excuse for death, or death but an escape from life.” ~ Anonymous

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If you asked me what the first thing that comes to my mind when you say the word “escape,” it’s not something as simple as drugs, abuse, truancy, no. Escape to me doesn’t just mean momentary escape from all my responsibilities anymore—it means permanent escape. Death. And it’s gone through my mind much more than just once. It’s starting to become a trend, that whenever I can’t even deal with the reality in front of me, all of that work, and all of the things I expect myself to live up to, I just can’t handle it anymore. How can you step out for a moment, when you know that in the next, you’ll just be right back to where you were? The way I see it, when you think about escape, what’s the final and biggest escape there is? And yet it’s still so horrifying seeing how all those people out there in the world can choose suicide so easily. A long time ago, I always saw suicide as the easy way out, as something you would because you were too weak to face up to the same problems that everyone else has. But as time goes on, it’s made more and more sense to me. It’s gotten to the point where simple escapes just aren’t enough. And that’s exactly what I fear the most. When I see people have to go through the death of a loved one, when I think about what that means for me and all the things that would come afterwards, it’s truly scary. In general, escape is a scary thing is a scary thing to me. Maybe you can get out of the pains of life that you have to deal with now, but eventually, it’s all gonna catch up with you whether you like it or not. And I could only hope that at that time, we have the sense to just face our responsibilities instead of having to keep finding worse and worse escapes that will ruin our lives in the end. So with that fear, nowadays I just throw the idea of escape out into a corner of my mind and try not to think about it... Because just like that one tiny key that’s pushed back into a corner on your keyboard, you don’t know what huge repercussions it could have waiting.

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“Writing is a form of therapy; sometimes I wonder how all those, who do not write, compose, or paint can manage to escape the madness, the melancholia, the panic fear, which is inherent in a human condition.”  
~ Graham Greene

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The first thing that pops up in my mind when I hear the word “escape” is Inception. As strange as it sounds, I think that escaping one’s mind in that sense is actually really important. People get caught up in life with all the little things in life and lose sight of the big picture. And the big picture is that high school isn’t that big! From my viewpoint at least, I find that

some students in hyped schools like Monta Vista are grade crazy, and never seem to escape from themselves, which needs to happen sometime or another rite? Now I guess you could call me a “regular” student. I study to do well in school and all that crap but I can still socialize, thank God. Surprisingly, my friends were shocked when I showed up at a dance during freshman year. I was like “C’mon I’m not that lame!”, although I admit I felt a little out of character at first. After a while, I started to dance like there was no tomorrow, and for that 20 minute span, I completely felt like I had escaped myself. And it felt great. So in that way, I can see that escaping is pretty beneficial, because I know from personal experiences that looking at the larger perspective helps, but I guess it might hurt too. I think if you start to escape from your mind too often, you can lose sight of what’s real, leading back to my opener regarding the movie Inception. As scary as it seems, that movie is crazy real. And to me at least, escaping from oneself is just as crazy, and just as real.

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“Every man builds his world in his own image. He has the power to choose, but no power to escape the necessity of choice.” ~ Ayn Rand

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When life throws problems at you, people need to find a way to release their stress or escape. Some people resort to participating in activities like drinking alcohol, smoking marijuana or taking other misc. drugs. To me, those things only present me with more stress. To escape, I simply find friends and families with open ears and open hearts. I find people that will not judge me, no matter what I have to tell them. This always makes me feel better no matter what the situation is.

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“The best way to escape from a problem is to solve it.”  
~ Alan Saporta

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Monta vista definitely puts a lot of pressure on us high schoolers. Im really excited for the day I can leave for college and have a chill life, unless I go somewhere just as stressful like Berkeley or like some intense ivy league, but with the grades im getting at mv, that is not likely at all. To escape from this stressful lifestyle, I like to watch tv. Yeah, I know it seems kind of lame, but really tv is so nice, I don’t know why it makes me feel so great, but it does. Its like, I get to step out of my life and for an hour or so, just step into someone else’s, and not have to worry about anything at all. The bad part is when I stop watching tv and I realize I still have a whole lot of crap to finish before school the next day.

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When you've got nowhere to turn, turn on the gas.  
~ Truman Capote

I know for some people ""escape"" means a physical escape. Getting out of the house, out of class, away from whoever it is that is tormenting you. It's not always possible for me, so to me ""escape"" means a mental escape. When I'm about to breakdown, I escape in my head. I'm not here anymore. And that doesn't mean that my hand still isn't writing out my Spanish vocabulary. I just stop feeling things and go numb. It's like I'm floating around in space. I don't hear what my parents are yelling or what my friends are complaining about. The problem is that after I've had to mentally disconnect to keep myself sane for a couple of days, I get stuck in ""escape"" mode. When good things happen, I don't feel them either. I have to really work to start feeling anything again. It's a cycle, and yes, I know, it can't be healthy. But escaping problems is a lot easier and more comfortable than facing them.

But I do have my more trivial escapes, too. Listening to music, watching TV, or reading. And then there's in-bed escape. Wow, that didn't come out right. But you know what I mean. When you're lying in bed before you go to sleep, and you start imagining scenarios or conversations and things? Yeah. That always gets pretty interesting. It's all the same thing though, trivial or not: a mental escape.

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“The past is our definition. We may strive, with good reason, to escape it, or to escape what is bad in it, but we will escape it only by adding something better to it.”  
~ Wendell Barry

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With all the stress from schoolwork, grades, parents, and even friends, it seems that there’s minimal time to leave to myself to do the things I want to. On the rare occasion when I find a moment to choose anything to do, there’s a list of activities that can truly let my mind run free from worries. One thing that really lets me escape from the craziness of daily life is being in the dance studio. I can walk into the studio after a bad day, and everything would disappear from my mind. Dancing is the one thing that I desire to do for myself because it balances out the stress and heavy load that takes place throughout the course of a regular day. Escapes provide relief and delight, and give me a sense of personal pleasure.

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“I'm interested in how artists and writers do this, using art as therapy. Escaping into the worlds we create. We're all victims and few of us are truly free.” ~ David Lloyd

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i'm usually pretty efficient, but when i have a fat load to do my mind suddenly steers in another direction. i find myself staring at the computer screen, engrossing myself in miscellaneous wiki articles, convincing my mind that there is nothing more important than learning about what criteria a rock must fit in order to qualify as a boulder. or reading about finance within the derivatives market. my brain feels happy to consume this

scattered information and for hours i can forget about what i should be doing. it's not a healthy habit but it's a temporary escape from stress, and as long as i'm not harming other people, i find no reason to find an alternative escape.

it's just annoying when i realize it's 2am and instead of finishing my essay i've learned about saint agnes of rome.

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"Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality but an escape from personality." ~ T.S. Elliot  
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I want to do what that lady in Eat Pray Love did. Really escape.

But maybe before that, I think college would be my idea of escape. No ties to my past, some place new and neat. This sense of escape isn't necessarily because I hate my past but more because life is so monotonous, planned, boring. I hope college is my escape that provides some grand change.

And I hope I never become one of those old people who go to work, go home, sleep, go to work, go home, sleep. No, after college I want to travel. Do something meaningful – not necessarily meaningful to others but more to myself. Essentially, my escape from life is more life. And I can't wait for that more life!

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No one can escape his destiny. ~ Plato  
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I wish I had an escape. An escape from the pressures of home, The un-reachable expectations of being the perfect child The un-bearable sadness of disappointing the people you care about. The un-deniable fact that the people you care about don't actually love you, but what you should be. The un-reliable devil that is one's heart, that has dragged me to my own demise I wish I had an escape from it all. But all I can do is cry. I cry. All the time. At the slightest of things. A joke, an insult, a criticism. I cry. Two lovers in front of me, a family having dinner together, sisters that gossip over boys. I cry. The lack of understanding, the inconsistency, the loneliness. I cry.

## Escape

By Beth Proudfoot

### **For kids:**

Sometimes life can feel like you're running on a wheel in a hamster cage, going nowhere, seeing the same scenery over and over again, exhausted from the effort, but unable to slow down or step off. All of us have this feeling sometimes. Some of us just need a mini-vacation, and then are okay with stepping back on the wheel. Others feel angry, like they need to start a riot so they can steal some weapons and break out of the cage. And a few just give up, curl in a ball and ride the wheel round and round, feeling more dizzy and helpless with each rotation.

There are many ways to escape from the wheels of hard work, boredom, tough negative feelings, or unhappy relationships. Some escapes are like mini-vacations, they're deeply restful and fill us with energy and hope, like meditation, art, dance, journaling, poetry, hiking, playing or listening to music, hot baths, reading, talking with friends. Some are stimulating, like going someplace you've never been before, or learning to play chess, or building something, just for fun. When you've learned something or connected with someone or rested enough to come back to all that homework you have to do feeling refreshed, then you know you've escaped in a good way.

Many escapes are not so positive, however. Some seem like they should be restful, but are actually just addictive and stimulating in a way that's bad for your brain, like television and video games. In small quantities, these activities are useful as distractions, but very few people can stop after only a half hour of Call of Duty or even online Solitaire. When you can't stop and spend hours and hours thinking about your escape or participating in it, then maybe you haven't escaped after all...maybe you're just on a different wheel to nowhere.

Other escapes are downright harmful. Everyone reading this probably knows someone who goes partying every weekend, hoping that drugs or alcohol will help them out of the cage they feel closing in around them. Other harmful escapes are practiced in secret: spending hours on the web with porn or gambling or games, eating too much or too little, cutting. The problem with these escapes is that they become the cage with the wheel, often very subtly and very quickly, creating more problems than they solve.

Do you need to "escape from your escape?" If it's gotten bad, and these negative escapes are taking up a lot of bandwidth in your brain, it will be really hard to do this. You're going to need some help. And, caring and supportive as they are, your friends don't have the knowledge it takes to help you.

Your parents are, of course, the very last people you'll want to talk to about how stuck and unhappy you are, even if you have a great relationship with them. However, they are the best people to get you the help you need. If it's just too hard to talk to them about it, here's one strategy: highlight the paragraph below and leave it somewhere your parents can see it.

*I don't want you to freak out about this, and I don't want to tell you why, but I'm feeling like I'm stuck and I think I need to talk to a counselor. Please read the article for parents in this magazine.*

Another place to go for help is your favorite teacher. They'll be able to connect you to one of the counselors on campus. Or, call the Youth Crisis Hotline: 1-800-843-5200.

I find I can't leave this topic without a word of advice about how to handle negative feelings without having to escape in some way. One of the best pieces of wisdom I've ever heard came from a wise guru who was visiting the bay area from India. He said, "Think about it carefully: Nothing in this whole universe stands completely still. Everything changes constantly. Some changes are slow and hard to see, but they're there nevertheless. Why do you think that this emotion you're feeling right now will stay forever?"

Where we tend to get stuck is when we have an uncomfortable feeling, like sadness or boredom or anger or pressure to succeed, and because we don't like having that feeling, we do everything we can to get rid of it. We yell at the person who made us angry...which causes more problems because they fight back. We procrastinate by watching reruns we didn't even like the first time around...which adds time pressure to the success pressure. In an ironic way, the act of trying to make the feeling go away actually makes it worse. This goes against our natural way of doing things, but the best way to tackle a negative feeling is to name it ("Hmmm, I'm feeling pissed off that I have so much work to do") and then just to wait it out. Seriously, just sit with it. To avoid the thoughts that might keep the feeling going ("I hate my teachers, this is so unfair, I must be stupid, etc.) try to find the place in your body where you have an actual sensation of that feeling and just bring your attention to that spot, patiently waiting for the tension there to ease up. I promise it will. Everything changes. Emotions, if you don't fight them, last about 15 seconds. Then take a deep breath, telling your unconscious brain that the crisis is past. Time to hit the books.

### **For parents:**

High school students are under a lot of pressure to succeed, and Monta Vista students in particular are stressed to the max with multiple AP courses, athletics and demanding extracurricular activities. Some students are up for it and succeed brilliantly. Others stumble.

A few of the student articles in this magazine are scary, I'm sure, for parents to read. These kids are in pain. They're struggling to recover from despair. And some of them are making bad choices. When I met with the Verraderra staff about this issue, their main question was, "how can we help these kids to get some help?"

Here's the frustrating reality: parents are the key to kids getting the help they need. But parents are often the last ones to know there's a problem! In fact, the kids with the most serious problems seem to find the most clever ways to hide them from their parents. It takes some detective work to uncover whether your child is falling through the cracks. Don't look just at how good their grades are or how well they're succeeding in athletics. Many high-achieving kids are keeping very busy trying to cover up the emptiness they feel inside. Look, instead, at the ways that they escape.

Does your child take mini-vacations, doing restful things that renew her spirit that she's excited to tell you about? Or, does she just...disappear? And then lie about where she's been, or become outraged that you'd question her about what she's been doing? These are warning signs.

If you're concerned that your child is going through a difficult time emotionally or in his relationships with his friends or in his family life, here are a few things you can do to help. The first is to plan healthy escapes for your family. You don't have to go to Disneyland. You can just all go for a walk after dinner, or get out that dusty old Monopoly game, or build something together, or put on some 50's rock and dance in the living room. Everybody needs some fun, some play. Make time for it. Make it part of your day.

The second is to listen. Really listen. Without talking. This is one of the hardest things I've ever done as a parent, and I'm a counselor who listens for a living! We're so used to solving problems for our kids when they're little, it's hard for us to back off as they grow. A good time to practice this is when your child is complaining about something. Our natural tendency is to either tell them to buck up and stop whining, or to show them the obvious (to us) solution to their problem. Try this for an experiment, instead: show with your face and your whole body that you totally "get" how frustrated they are and say something like, "that sucks," or "that's so unfair," or "oh, man, what an awful thing." Period. No advice. No stories about something similar that happened to you. If they ask what you think they should do, say, sincerely, "I don't know, what do *you* think?" You will be amazed at the results of this simple thing. Get ready, because you may get an earful.

Or, you may not. Teens' relationships with their parents are fraught with ambivalence, which makes communication a minefield. Although they love you very much, it's their developmental task, the natural, normal, and painful journey they have to make at this time in their lives, to separate from you. And one way that they tend to do that is to keep much about themselves, and especially the things they're not proud of about themselves, private. They need to talk to somebody, though. And, if they're in pain, they need to talk to somebody who knows how to help them to navigate their way out of that pain. Their friends are often amazingly supportive, but they don't know how to make things better.

One of the best gifts you can give your teen is a trip to an experienced counselor, not for years of laying on a couch talking about how crazy they are, but for an hour, sitting in a chair or playing a game, talking through the day-to-day problems they're grappling with and how to solve them. This doesn't have to be expensive and it doesn't have to be time consuming and it's definitely not just for kids who are seriously in trouble. And it can make a huge difference in their lives.

So, if your child has highlighted the paragraph in the article for teens in this issue, or if you are just vaguely concerned that they're not happy or that their "escapes" might be destructive, I urge you to pick up the phone and make arrangements for them to see someone. You could call me. I know a lot of excellent therapists who specialize in working with teens. Or you could call the JFK Community Counseling Service. They're a local nonprofit, not too far away in Sunnyvale, and they see clients on a sliding fee scale. Their number is (408) 524-4900.

All right. One last thing: please don't let worry about the kids who wrote articles for this issue, or for your own child, keep you from seeing all that is healthy and good about the vibrant energy, curiosity and passion of teens. My main prescription for you is to have fun with them. Escape!

*Beth Proudfoot is a licensed marriage and family therapist with a private practice in Los Gatos where she specializes in working with children and parents. Her website is [www.bethproudfoot.com](http://www.bethproudfoot.com).*

### Upcoming Issues and Submission Deadlines

| <u>Issue</u>             | <u>Deadline</u>          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Disability and Disorders | 6pm, Saturday April 2nd  |
| Parental Relations       | 6pm, Saturday April 30th |

### Ways to Submit

1. Visit us at [www.verdadera.org](http://www.verdadera.org). You can submit stories here, learn more about Verdadera, and meet staff members.
2. Stories can be turned in to **any staff member** – hardcopies or emails, anything is welcomed. Staff members are also there to help answer your questions about issues, topics, anything.
3. Email it to [verdadera.entries@gmail.com](mailto:verdadera.entries@gmail.com)





**Escape**  
**March 2011**

*Verdadera is a publication created by and for Monta Vista students for the purpose of instigating communication concerning the reality of high school within the community. Each month, an issue on a topic relevant to the lives of our students is sent home for reading by both parents and students. While we do not edit submissions, we aim to publish personal experiences, not opinion articles. Please utilize all the resources present and feel free to email comments and feedback.*

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