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Take the Terror Out of Calling Your Crush

by Erin Brereton, 07.02.02

Your palms are sweaty, and your shaking hand is clamped so tightly around the phone receiver that your knuckles are turning white. The dial tone buzzes ominously; you frantically try to swallow and test your voice — will it crack? Will you stutter?

We've all experienced our share of phone panic. Although Jamie, 14, doesn't get too nervous talking to a crush on the phone, she says the first few minutes of the call are always rough.

"Calling guys is very stressful and scary," Jamie says. "You don't know if they're going to think, 'Why is she calling me? What does she want?' It's the same for the guys. They don't know what the girl's thinking, or if she thinks he's stupid for calling her."

We *all* want to make the phone call — sometimes that hour you spend together in the same algebra class every day just isn't enough time to get to know somebody. But before you dial, check out these tips to make your call a cool conversation:

- **Set the stage.** Make sure you're sitting in a quiet room that's not heavily trafficked by family members or pets, somewhere you can relax/recline if you're on the phone for a while.
- **Stay cool, calm, and collected.** Clear your throat and take a deep breath. "The most stressful thing is coming up with something to start talking about," Jamie says. "Once a conversation gets started, it usually goes pretty well, but if you call without something to say, there's awkward silence, and that's no fun!"
- **Be polite if a parent answers.** Not that your crush won't be sitting by the phone waiting for your call, but in case that's not the situation, always be nice to any parents who pick up. A little "please" (as in "may I please speak to ...") can go a long way.
- **Remember to ask open-ended questions.** You want the things you say to lead to further conversation, so ask questions that won't just prompt one-word, "yes" or "no," answers. For example, if you ask, "So you're trying out for the baseball team this year?" And if you get a "yes" or "no," you could then ask, "Are you nervous?" or "How'd you decide to do (or not to do) that?" Ask things to get your crush to open up. "Last Halloween, I didn't have a costume and neither did this guy I liked," says Jamie. "We spent all of Halloween on the phone together. We talked about everything, and the next day I asked him out and he said yes!"
- **Speak up and dazzle.** So how do you convince your crush that you're cool over the phone? Simple, says Renee Grant-Williams, author of *Voice Power: Be assertive*. "Worthy people are often overlooked because their speaking skills represent them poorly," says Grant-Williams in her book. She suggests speaking clearly and loudly, emphasizing consonants and using pauses for dramatic effect. But don't go overboard using these tips — it's just a phone call, not a public speaking class.
- **Warning: Mom!** If your mom should happen to accidentally pick up the phone during your call, don't freak out and scare your crush by yelling, "MOM, I AM ON THE PHONE!" And don't panic and slam down the receiver to try to get out of the situation — that will leave your mom and your crush on the phone *together*, alone. Just explain to your mom you are on the phone and you'll let her know when you are off, which will be soon, so she can place her call.
- **Lend your crush an ear.** Remember to pause sometimes to let your crush talk. In no time, you'll be smack dab in the center of conversation-land. And during a phone call to your crush, believe us, that is a happy place to be. And like so many things in life, phoning your crush takes practice, and it gets less stressful every time you do it! So take a deep breath and dial — what's the worst that could happen? If you find out your crush doesn't have the same interest in you, while that may feel devastating, at least you found out early on that she or he has poor taste! And, it gives you the perfect opportunity to find the digits for that other cutie in history class.

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