

Introduction

Hi. I'm an online advisor at a Web site for teens (www.thesite.org). A lot of the email I receive is about family issues. "How can I get my parents to quit being overprotective?" "What do I do to win back my mom's trust?" "I have the most annoying brother (or sister) in the entire world!"

Every once in a while teens will disagree with adults at home and siblings will drive each other crazy. Okay, it probably happens more often than that, but the point is, it happens . . . *in every family*. It's normal for family members to have trouble getting along all of the time. But normal doesn't have to mean *necessary*. If you need some new strategies for making peace at home you've come to the right place.

In addition to the usual clashes of personality and opinion, serious issues can also come up in families. Parents might fight a lot and eventually separate or divorce. Maybe you've experienced other tough family situations—like getting used to life with a stepparent, facing the loss of a loved one, or dealing with money or health issues at home. Perhaps you'd just like to feel closer to the people you live with but you don't know how.

No matter what's up with your family, you can find out a lot in these stories about six teens dealing with their own challenges at home. You'll also find quotes and advice from real teens, quizzes, tips, and insider tools for doing your part to make your family happier and stronger. If you have any questions that aren't addressed in this book, feel free to email me at help4kids@freespirit.com. I'd also enjoy hearing any stories or suggestions of your own.

In friendship,

Annie

P.S. I often use the word *parents*, but the advice here can help whether you live with one or two parents, a stepparent, a foster family, an aunt or uncle, grandparents, or other people. When you see the word *parents*, just think of the adults you live with—that's who I'm talking about.



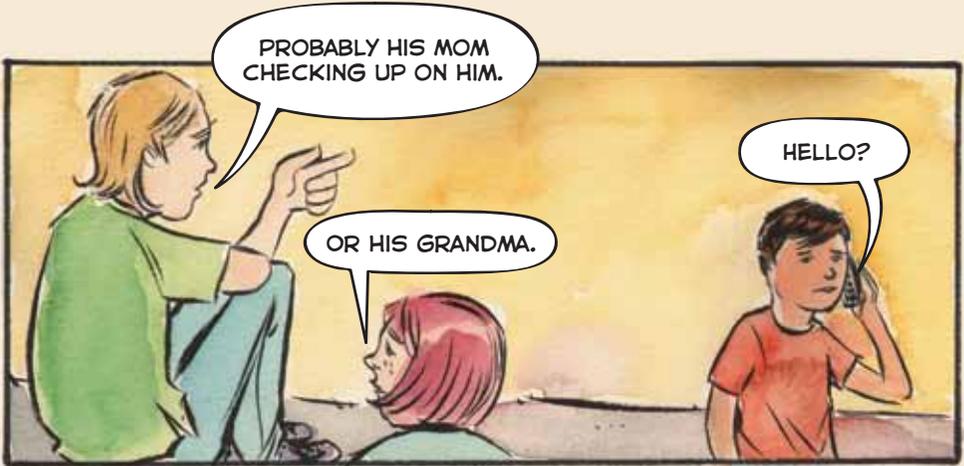
2 What's Up with My Family?

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**We were at Jack's house waiting for Jen,
when Mateo's phone rang. . . .**



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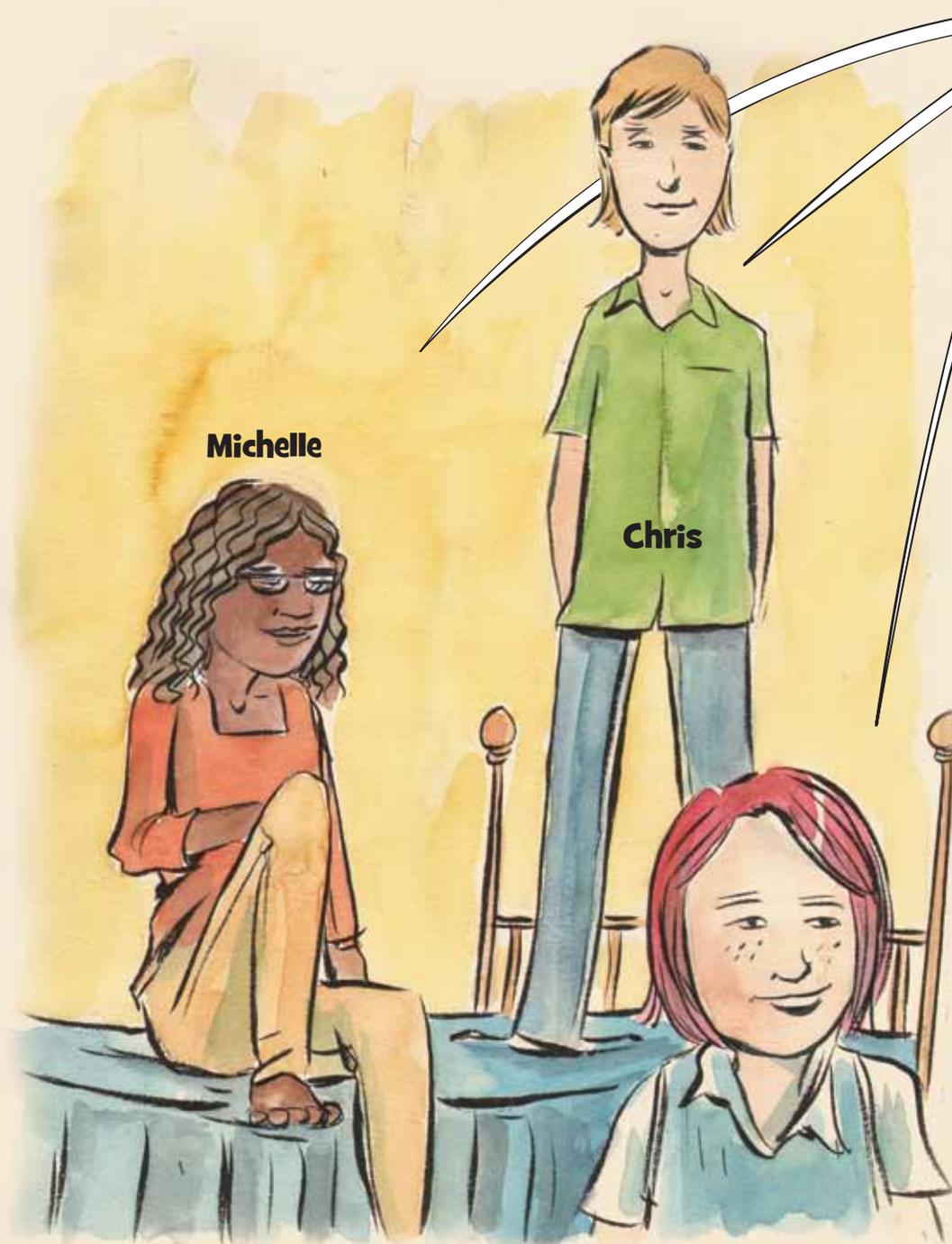
We know that no family is perfect. Jen hardly ever agrees with her parents about anything. Abby's fed up with her mom's "helpful hints" about losing weight. Jack can't stand how his sister gets away with everything. Mateo feels like his huge family is always in his business. Michelle would love to have a family bigger than just her and her mom. Chris, on the other hand, wants it just to be him and his mom again because with a new stepdad and stepbrother, it's not the same.

At times, we've all wished things were different at home, but none of us had a clue how to change what we don't like. Then Michelle asked one of her famous probing questions:



ASSUMING THAT EVERYONE'S GOT AT LEAST ONE FAMILY COMPLAINT, WHY NOT ASK OTHER TEENS HOW THEY DEAL?

So we asked. And we learned some really useful stuff that we wish we'd known sooner. But better late than never. And lately, things are better.



Michelle

Chris

Abby

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PEACE.

