

## Dear Philani

Your friends are giving you bad advice. Although some people say *mbanje* makes them relaxed, others find it makes them confused and afraid.

I understand that you feel left out without a girlfriend, but the best thing is to talk to girls just as friends. Friendship may grow into a relationship.

Start by just saying hello, smiling, and saying something about school, the weather – anything. The real trick is to ask other people about themselves and be interested in their lives and problems. Girls will appreciate this more than if you try to show off.

And remember, nobody is watching out for you to do something stupid. They are too worried about making mistakes themselves!

You can't solve your problems through drugs like *mbanje* or alcohol. Many people behave badly when drunk or stoned, leading to problems with family, friends and employers. Also, smoking *mbanje* is illegal and can get you into trouble.

You don't need drugs to be liked by other people, nor to get the courage to do something. There are much better ways to overcome your shyness. Good luck.

**Auntie Stella**

# ACTION POINTS

- Make a list of all the drugs you know and the effects they have on people who use them. Which ones are addictive (this means that once you start using them, you can't stop)?
- Look at the list of reasons why young people take drugs. Discuss which of these are the most relevant for you and your friends. Put them into order from 1 to 5, starting with the most common reason and ending with the least common reason.

Teenagers take drugs because:

- their friends are doing it
- to escape from difficulties in their lives
- they want to escape from who they are
- they think the drugs will give them courage
- they are bored

- After discussing this list, assess whether you are at risk of using drugs. How can you and your friends help each other stay away from these drugs? Who else can help you?
- **ROLEPLAY:** You need a girl and a boy. The shy boy approaches the girl and starts talking to her. After a few minutes, change roles so the girl starts talking. Then discuss:
  - a** What it felt like to start the conversation, and to be the other person?
  - b** What you learnt about overcoming shyness and making friends?