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Imagine your best friend has just been diagnosed with sickle cell disease, a disease requiring regular transfusions of platelets. Imagine your baby cousin was born with a heart defect and depended on daily blood transfusions for survival. Imagine your dad was involved in a fatal car crash, in critical condition and facing death, with his only hope being a blood transfusion. Not very nice images are they? Sadly millions of Americans every day are faced with problems such as these, simply because no one took the time to donate blood.

Hospitals have a plethora of resources including fancy equipment, some of the world's best doctors, state of the art patient facilities, yet none of which matter if they do not have the blood necessary to save a life. Naturally, perceptions have led us to believe that hospitals will always have the answers, but when it comes to blood it is up to us to respond. Naturally, you would want to do everything in your power to help those in need. Whether it is transfusions of red blood cells, platelets, or plasma, donating blood saves lives, and in the time it takes to donate a pint of blood the lives of three people could be saved.

The blood supply in the U.S is consistently low, and unfortunately the demand for blood increases every year. Why is this? The problem lies in the fact that healthy donors are the only source of blood, and in the U.S this number is relatively small. From that small number that can donate, an even smaller number end up actually donating blood. So what is the big deal with donating blood? Are you scared of needles? Do you think you are too busy? Those are not good excuses! There are semiannual blood drives at many of your high schools, and as teenagers I'm guessing you have experienced a lot more pain over your lifetime.

The actual blood donation part only takes about 10 minutes. And there's no use getting all hyped up about the pinch of the needle... you can only feel it for about a second. The rest of

the hour is spent with registration, checking health records, etc. Trust me, the satisfaction of knowing that you are doing your part to help save lives far surpasses that little prick of the needle you feel.

Once you get past the pain barrier you are probably thinking to yourself, "I'm just one person. How am I going to solve such a huge problem?" or "I have a common blood type, I'm sure plenty of other people can help pull my weight." Truth of the matter is that every two seconds someone in America needs blood, and even if you have a rare blood type, it doesn't mean that it isn't needed as much, or that you should just wait until there is a shortage. Thinking like this plays a large role as to why the problem is not solved, because everyone starts to have the same opinion. If everyone thinks like this then no one will end up donating blood because they think everyone else is.

Life comes at us all very fast and sooner or later virtually all of us will face a time of great vulnerability in which we will need blood, and I'm sure when that time comes we all would expect blood to be there for us. Yet, with the small fraction that does end up donating blood, compared to the millions that need it, the numbers don't add up. What difference would donating blood make to you? For teenagers who have so much on their mind, probably not a lot, but for the nearly 5 million Americans who are in need of blood transfusions every year, it could be the difference between life and death.