

Relationships

EVERYONE'S AN EXPERT

Bad Trip?

Q ■ Are separate vacations by husbands and wives a bad idea?



HAIRDRESSER: Paul Nearest has been a hairdresser for 28 years. Many of his clients tell him he's better than their therapists.

I think they're a very good idea, as long as your priorities are straight, as long as you have enough shared time together. Sometimes in our hectic world, it's good for husbands and wives to get away with their friends to regroup. It brings excitement back to the relationship.

You and your mate should definitely vacation together; that's why you've chosen a mate. If you've had a vacation with your mate and then take a separate vacation, you're not tapping into y'all's time. We have to recharge in the relationship as individuals.

—Compiled by Leslie Garcia

Got a relationships problem that's messing up your life?

Send your question to

Everyone's an Expert, Today section,

The Dallas Morning News,

508 Young St., Dallas, TX 75202;

e-mail relationships@dallasnews.com.

Questioners' identities will

remain confidential.

Relationships

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EVERYONE'S AN EXPERT

Comparing dates to past boyfriend

Q I broke up with my boyfriend a couple of years ago, we just weren't meant to be. But he's a wonderful person, and nobody I've met since we broke up comes close. It's not like I want to date his carbon copy, but how do I stop comparing him to everyone I meet?



HAIRDRESSER: Paul Naimist has been a hairdresser for 28 years. Many of his clients tell him he's better than their therapists.

You've got to take the values and virtues he brought to the relationship and realize those were yours also. He just mirrored those. Apparently you're spending too much time in the past comparing and not being open for a new intrigue.

If you left on good terms, you may need to go to dinner to see why you're not still together. You may see some things you're putting on a fantasy pedestal.

We could compare a new relationship to every relationship we've ever had since elementary school. Ask yourself, "What am I not being honest with myself about?"

There's something that didn't work in the relationship, because otherwise you'd be together. If he was so fabulous, it should have worked out. Look at what he didn't bring to the table, and look at somebody else who can bring those things, plus the virtue and values he did bring.

You're not letting yourself grieve enough, or completely end the relationship. Maybe you should just go out with people just for fun and not look for a relationship until it develops.

—Compiled by Leslie Garcia

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EVERYONE'S AN EXPERT Shopping for a male

Q I read somewhere that going to the supermarket early on a Saturday night is a great place to meet single people. Well, I've spent hours gropping produce and comparing brands of toothpaste, and still no luck. I hate dance clubs and I'm not one of those biking and jogging types. Where is a good place to meet someone new?



HAIRDRESSER:
Paul Mohr has been a hairdresser for 28 years. Many of his clients tell him he's better than their therapists.

I've only known four people in my 28 years of doing hair who've ever met (their file partner) at a grocery store, and only two who ever met in bars. If I was picking up lettuce or canned goods and somebody came up to me, I don't think I'd take them seriously.

I think friends, dating services, sports you enjoy, classes in contributing ed are where we meet people. Churches or synagogues, too. Not just the services, but get involved in a Sunday school class, adult singles group.

I'd write down what you want in a mate. Then, all the values, virtues, assets, activities you listed, you need to become that and then you can attract that mate.

You need to find a group of like-minded people. You need to get your life in order, do what makes you feel good in the soul, enjoy your friends. Then if you find somebody you relate to and it becomes intimate, that's just icing on the cake for life.

—Compiled by Leslie Garcia

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EVERYONE'S AN EXPERT Mom wants son's friends to get along

Q My 8-year-old son, John, considers two boys his best friends. Unfortunately, those two don't get along with each other. This makes it difficult for him, because he wants to spend time with both of them, and they want to spend just one-on-one time with him. Plus, their mothers and I are friends. We'd like nothing better than to visit while the boys play. But outings become plagued with hurt feelings and yelling matches, so that seems impossible. What can we do?



HAIRDRESSER: Paul Nelrast has been a hairdresser for 28 years. Many of his clients tell him he's better than their therapists.

At first, I wanted to say some kids just don't get along. But that's a cop-out... that's what childhood is about, teaching us to get along. There aren't enough philosophical and spiritual comments on how we're all one and we're connected, even if we don't like each other.

You need to realize you are the parents and your sons are the children. You have allowed them to do this, and now you have to backtrack. Sit down and talk to the boys, first one-on-one, then together. Tell them you won't put up with these fits.

Start with 30 minutes together. If something happens before then, discipline all three boys because they were all part of it. Send each to quiet time. They have to stay there while the moms continue visiting. Next time, the moms stay for 45 minutes, then an hour.

When I was growing up with three brothers, we always had a lot of boys in the house. Our moms would sit at the table and drink coffee together. We had to work out the fits and the jealousies together. There were consequences. My mother knew she was the adult and we were the children. There's no reason why three adults can't enjoy being together with three 8-year-olds in the room.

—Compiled by Leslie Garcia

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EVERYONE'S AN EXPERT Couple not following through on invitations

Q: On several occasions, the young couple down the block have mentioned getting together with a few other families. We say that sounds great, but they've yet to follow through. We invited them over, thinking that might spur them on to make a more concrete invitation. We had fun, but still . . . nothing. Should we say something to them or just accept the fact they're more into talk than action?



HAIRDRESSER: Paul Neinstadt has been a hairdresser for 28 years. Many of his clients tell him he's better than their therapists.

Sometimes, because we are in a busy world, people have fewer and fewer social skills. What you probably need to do is invite the couple and maybe another family or two to dinner a second time. Talk about the neighborhood, about people getting together.

A neighborhood is a relationship. There has to be two or more of you to create it. Somebody has to be the social director. If that's your role, maybe you just have to realize that.

I wouldn't confront anybody negatively. We don't know what they're going through, what they're thinking. We grew up with mothers saying, "Three strikes and you're out." We all deserve three strikes. I've seen the last couple of generations not give people the benefit of the doubt. I think we have to do that.

—Compiled by Leslie Garcia

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EVERYONE'S AN EXPERT

Is it OK to set up the Boss?

Q: My boss, who is about my age, is single and a really nice guy. I have a sister whom I think he'd like, and vice versa. Would it be OK for me to offer to set them up?



HAIRDRESSER:
Paul Nebelst has been a hairdresser for 28 years. Many of his clients tell him he's better than their therapists.

That's a double-edged sword. If you start mixing your personal life and business, it has the chance of exploding on you. What if they didn't get along? What would that mean for your job? As much as we'd like to get along with everybody we work with — and this comes up for me as a salon owner — I find there are very few employees who, when it comes to emotional decisions, can define the difference between friendship and work. You'd be crossing the line, involving your family and your friendship with your boss.

If I were you, I'd say forget it. You don't mix business and pleasure. It sounds nice you want to help your sister, but you seem to be thinking more about her than you are of your job.

—Compiled by Leslie Garcia

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EVERYONE'S AN EXPERT Neighbor's 'friendly' dog has parents worried

Q: A family across the alley has a huge dog that somehow escapes its 4-foot fence periodically. My wife and I have a toddler, and we're afraid that someday this dog will charge our son and hurt him or at least scare the daylights out of him. I feel funny asking them to restrain their dog, because their kids love Rover. I'm sure the parents see no reason why Rover wouldn't be as friendly with other children as he is with theirs. What can I do about this? I hate confrontations!



HAIRDRESSER: Paul Neimast has been a hairdresser for 28 years. Many of his clients tell him he's better than their therapists.

Go with your wife and child to visit the neighbors. Present the situation in a way that's not negative. Tell them you know nothing will probably happen. What bothers you is that if the dog snaps and star- tles your child, you don't want him to be afraid of dogs forever. Talk about the safe- ty of your child, and that you never know what will happen between strangers and children. It's naive of your neighbors to think nothing will happen just because the dog's friendly with their own children.

Confrontation is something you need to start dealing with. The worst that can happen is that they get mad. The best is that they see your concern and be con- cerned, too. If the shoe were on the other foot, they'd have the same concern you do.

— Compiled by Leslie Garcia

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EVERYONE'S AN EXPERT

When you don't click,
just say so

Q—What's the best way to avoid a second date? We had a pretty good time, but I can't tell this girl just isn't my type. Yet I could see by the look in her eyes throughout the evening that she thinks I'm HER type! I don't want to hurt her feelings, but . . . what to do?



HAIRDRESSER:

Paul Neimast has been a hairdresser for 28 years. Many of his clients tell him he's better than their therapists.

When you're first dating, you can't take anything personally. If you don't relate to someone right away, you need to let them know. I'd much rather have somebody call me and tell me they're not interested . . . than not call at all.

When people say they don't want to hurt someone's feelings so they don't call, that's a cop-out. That's very rude. It provides no character building for either party. Whether it's a one-time date or the rest of your life, you have to deal with it and be honest.

Tell her on the phone. Make it very clear you want to be friends and that's it. You can go to dinner again after you tell her that on the phone. But if you go out again and she still has that look, it's best just to be busy. You have told her.

There's a lack of ethics for leading her on when she's all goo-goo eyed. We have to take responsibility for what we feel. If you can't learn to be honest on the first date, how can you learn to be honest on the third or fourth?

—Compiled by Leslie Garcia

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EVERYONE'S AN EXPERT

Movies: His life or his hobby?

Q: I'm a huge film buff — I see just about every movie that comes out. I recently met a woman. We began to date casually, and I like her. However, she doesn't share my passion for the movies, especially the low-budget European-type films I really love. She's gone with me a few times, but I know she's not enjoying herself. We like to do other things — converse, go to restaurants, run errands. I admit, it's hard to meet someone who likes film as much as I do, but I also wonder whether this [relationship] is doomed.



HAIRDRESSER: Paul Neinael has been a hairdresser for 28 years. Many of his clients tell him he's better than their therapists.

Are you looking for an alter ego or a relationship? If you're looking for an alter ego, you're probably going to be going to the movies a lot by yourself. If you're looking for a relationship, you need to take the good things about it and see how many other things you have in common. In many relationships, one plays golf, the other plays tennis, yet they have a fulfilled relationship.

Movies should be your hobby, not your life. You should hope she has her own hobbies, too. In relationships, you relate. In movies you escape. Very few people need to escape that much. What you are looking for is balance. The bottom line is nobody wants to do everything together. You must respect each other as individuals. That is part of being in a relationship.

—Compiled by Leslie Garcia

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EVERYONE'S AN EXPERT

Q: With school starting, we are organizing our sixth-grade car pool, together last year, but we would love to have a fifth, so that each mother would have to drive only once a week. A new mom on the block wants to join, but her son is a handful. His language is bad; he criticizes the other kids; and his mother doesn't seem to notice or care. How can we keep her from joining when she knows we are looking for someone else?



HAIRDRESSER: Paul Neenast has been a hairdresser for 28 years. Many of his clients tell him he's better than their therapists.

You have to use discernment, not judgment, when raising kids. I don't know why this generation tends to worry about feelings so much. When I was a kid, my mother would have just told the woman the truth. That's what neighborhoods are for — to help us all grow up.

It is very weak of four mothers not to tell her what they are thinking. Let her know you do not want to take on the responsibility of having her son in the car pool when his behavior is so bad. Truth always wins. It may hurt, but it will set you free.

— Compiled by Susan Munguia

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EVERYONE'S AN EXPERT



HAIRDRESSER: Paul Meitzius has been a hairdresser for 28 years. Many of his clients tell him he's better than their therapists.



BARTENDER: Rick Jimenez is a bartender at New Amsterdam Colleenhaus in hip, urban Exposition Park.



THERAPIST: Dr. Karen Praeger is a professor of psychology at the University of Texas at Dallas and has a private therapy practice.

Her best friend misses girls' night out

Q My fiance and I enjoy spending Saturday nights together alone or with friends. But my best friend is used to having me all to herself on Saturdays, which was girls' night out when I was single. She refuses to come along to movies or restaurants and complains that I'm not the friend she thought I was.

— L.K., Dallas

HAIRDRESSER: Compromise. Try

not to make your friend feel so alienated. Find another time the two of you can spend together. If the friendship is strong, she'll say OK. You were not her Saturday night date. What if the shoe were on the other foot? Remember, it's perfectly OK to want to spend exclusive time with your fiance.

GRANDMOM: A lot of times, when you step into new relationships, you know this will happen. You should talk it over. If not, you'll make a deci-

sion that will hurt one of you. Each party has to bend to work this out. You could alternate Saturdays. Do something together one weekend, and the next Saturday do something with your fiance.

THERAPIST: Since Saturday night is traditionally "date night," you should suggest an alternate time to get together with your friend. Tell her, "I will make time for you." Your friend is feeling abandoned. Let her know that you aren't going anywhere. Your time is split, but the friendship is still important.

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GRANDMOM: Patsy Jefferson has been serving up advice and values along with her sweet potato pie to family and friends every Sunday after church.



RABBI: Rabbi Aryeh Roden has been rabbi of Congregation Ohav Shalom in North Dallas for 13 years.

Women, more so than men, tend to hold onto the intimacy of a friendship, even after they're dating or married to someone. The important thing is that boyfriends shouldn't replace friends. But the reality is they compete with friends for your precious time. There are new negotiations you find yourself making about your time [that] you didn't used to.

BARTENDER: Your girlfriend sees your fiancé as a threat. Arrange for the three of you to have a drink at a bar, where you'll be more open with

one another. Help your girlfriend and your fiancé become friends. Let them talk and get to know each other. Pay equal attention to both. An occasional kiss with your fiancé would be a good thing, but don't overdo it. Your girlfriend will start to feel left out.

RABBI: In the midst of enjoying a scrumptious fish dinner, a wise man asked the group, "Who loves salmon?" When they replied in the affirmative, he smiled and said, "I beg to differ. If you love salmon, you wouldn't have killed, filleted, cooked

and then eaten it. Instead, you would protect and care for it. Rather, you love yourself."

True friendship is similar. A friend subordinates his needs to the other's needs. By becoming engaged, you made a commitment to your fiancé to make him the most special person in your life. If your best friend is truly a friend, she should recognize this and graciously give you space to intensify the bonds between you and your fiancé.

— Compiled by Leslie Garcia

Relationships

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EVERYONE'S AN EXPERT

How does her son fit into the breakup?

Q After living with a woman and her son for seven years, we decided to break up. I'd like to continue to see her son, with whom I've become very close. She would like her son to focus his time more on her new boyfriend. How do I convince her that I don't want to "break up" with her son?



HAIRDRESSER:

Paul Neenast has been a hairdresser for 28 years. Many of his clients tell him he's better than their therapists.

The mother needs to decide whether she's raising a child or dating. And you have to get it across to your ex-girlfriend that seven years is a long time in a relationship for a child. It's pretty much common-law marriage. The emotions in the breakup are like that of getting a divorce.

If she expects her son to be with her new boyfriend — that's going to set her up for emotional abuse of the child. The child won't understand. Think of something like a divorce agreement: You get to see him every Wednesday night or every other weekend. And encourage the son to be open to his mother's new relationship. That will make you look like a bigger person.

— Compiled by Lesley Garcia

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EVERYONE'S AN EXPERT

He likes the girl,
but not her cat

Q: "I met a really nice girl at a party. We hit it off, so I asked her out. When I got to her door, I had the sudden urge to sneeze. It turns out she has a cat and I'm allergic to cats. The girl is great, but I can't handle the cat. What should I do?"



HAIRDRESSER:

Paul Neirast has been a hairdresser for 28 years. Many of his clients tell him he's better than their therapists.

You have to weigh the attraction on both sides. When my nephew came along, I had one of the best dogs I'd ever had, but my nephew's allergic to dander. So I picked some great people to put the dog with.

Some people would rather be with their animals than with humans. If that's the case, she needs to be with her cat. But if the attraction is high, I think there can be even ground. You may not have to go to her house until the relationship's solid, and she doesn't have to get rid of her cats until then.

If it turns out that you want to be together, you should sit down and talk about it, because your allergies are a big deal and her cats are a big deal. But don't make a big deal out of it until you can weigh the relationship. If it's important, this will work its way out.

—Compiled by Leslie Garcia

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