

Living with 'rents not rent-free for ex-student

Dear Harlan,

I'm taking a break from college so I can earn some decent money, buy a newer car and amass a tuition payment. I've always lived at home with my family, and my parents said that as long as I go to school full-time they would support me. My mom works at a community college, so I went there for two years for free. Now they want to charge me room and board at a quarter of my earnings. Is this fair? I'm trying to save money!

— Paying the P's

Dear Paying,

If they throw in cable, utilities and a month-to-month lease, I'll be your roommate.

I think it's absurd, but I'm not your mom or your dad. It's virtually impossible to know what they're thinking. This could be a lesson in responsibility. This could be them needing money and starting a new business venture. It could be them watching too many of those Holiday Inn commercials where grandma keeps on laughing.

The obvious suggestion is talking with them and explaining your situation to see if they can help you out. The next option is sticking things out for a little bit (assuming you don't have to sign a long-term lease) and saving money for school. The next option is to look into financial aid and scholarship money. Call up the campus of your choice and talk to a financial aid counselor. Also, check out "The Scholarship Book" by Daniel J. Cassidy and stop on-line at www.scholarship.com. There are hundreds of millions of dollars in scholarships, grants, and loans waiting for people in your type of situation.

Deal with it and don't let things get too heavy, and soon enough you'll be handing your parents a "For Rent" sign and shipping yourself out to college.

Dear Harlan,

I have had an idea in my head to attempt to become a model or an actress -- just something to get me in the spotlight. I guess you can say in my heart I'm already there, but my head tells me something different. Truth is, I'm afraid

of failure and/or rejection. I think I might have what it takes, but I'm scared to try. Any advice on how I can get the courage to try?

— Scared Model

Dear Model,

As a former cover model for "Reject Model Monthly" I completely understand your situation.

Not trying is to fail. Courage is being willing to fail. Courage always knows you're beautiful inside and NEVER letting others define you or your greatness.

Too many people sit around wondering, waiting, hoping, dreaming, but fail to take the risks necessary to make their dreams come true. The biggest tragedy is sitting on your potential for fear that you won't succeed. Another tragedy is sitting on something sharp.

As for the courage, it comes from being comfortable and confident. Once you're comfortable with yourself you'll be able to find the courage to take risks because you won't be so hungry for others to validate you. This is when you'll find the most success. If being in the spotlight means pursuing your passion, whatever happens will be a sure success.

Dear Harlan,

I'm white. I am engaged to a girl who is black. My father likes my fiancée a lot and she likes my father. However, my mother is dead set against it. I am assuming that it is because my fiancée is black, but my mother denies it. All of my friends and my parent's friends like my fiancée a lot. I do not want to be disrespectful to my mother, but I am not going to leave my fiancée because of her. I want to make peace between us two. I need help soon.

— Nervous in NJ

Dear Nervous,

Your mom will either have to ease up or expect an uncomfortable relationship with you and soon to be daughter-in-law.

This is one of those "respect what your mom says, but listen to your heart" issues. When it comes to race — changing someone's perspective is a long road that can take years.

Approach your mom like she's an intelligent person and explain to her how wonderful this woman is for you. Let her know that she's going to be a part of your life and you hope that she will one day see what is so obvious to you. Your mom might hate the idea, but if she wants you in her world she'll have to deal.



ADVICE

Ask
Harlan

The truth is that this is her problem, not yours.

If your mom chooses to say hateful or disrespectful things, just walk away. Make it clear that you will not tolerate her

ignorance. This is more an issue for your mom and her conscience than it is between your mom, your fiancée, and you. If she wants to be hateful she can do it far away from you and your happy life. Only she can learn to be tolerant.

Dear Harlan,

I've been with my boyfriend for over three years and we've had our share of ups and downs, but we've stuck together through it all. At the beginning of our relationship we both cheated on each other, but we recognized our mistakes, worked it out and promised to remain faithful. We've both stuck to that promise ever since.

Recently however, I found out that my boyfriend was in the personals section on the web looking at naked pictures that women had posted and responding to their questions of whether they look good or not.

Should I be making as big a deal out of this or am I overreacting?

— Heartbroken

Dear Heartbroken,

Are you worried he's cheating or worried he'll see your personal ad? We've dealt with this issue so many times in this column. Only you know if you can trust him, but considering the founda-

tion of your relationship is so weak due to the initial constant cheating, it's hard for you to simply let nude personal ads slide by without wondering.

It sounds suspicious to me, but there could be a reasonable explanation. Because of your past there's nothing wrong with asking a few questions. Listen to what he has to say and ask him to promise you he'll always talk to you before even contemplating cheating. If anything this offers a good checkpoint and chance to communicate openly. Let me know what happens...

Dear Harlan,

I want to ask my ex back out, but I've been getting mixed feelings from him. He tells all my friends he likes me, and he always tells them he'd go out with me if not for his girl (he's single now). Five minutes later I call him and he gets very weird like talking about his other ex's. When we were together he acts like he likes me and then stares at me if another guy comes close. Do you think he still likes me? Do I have a chance or do I give up?

— Ex question

Dear Ex,

He's a little boy. Forget him and move on. When he can learn to communicate his feelings he can attempt to be with you. Until then, ignore him and live your own life.

Next letter please...

Dear Harlan,

I'm a senior in college and hope to graduate next December. The past three semesters I have lost much of my drive to be a good student in school. You see, I have always taken responsibility for my successes and failures and lately I've come to acknowledge that not all of my troubles are purely my fault.

I have still kept my grades up until this semester. I had a 4.0 which dropped to 3.87, then to 3.49, and now who knows. I had a 4.0 when my father was alive. I never got along great with him while he was alive, but his high expectations and demanding nature kind of encouraged me to get the good grades. Since he died

I've felt that I've had no one to answer to but myself and I feel I've failed to satisfy my own expectations.

So my question to you — perhaps I already know the answer. I hope I pass everything, but I've felt depressed about my own missing classes and lack of accountability.

What's a good way to restart?

— Starting over

Dear Starting,

Please, don't be so hard on yourself. It's very cool that you've been able to do so well in school, but your life outside the classroom is equally as important. Rather than worrying about passing every class with an "A," it's equally as important to take this time for you to make some discoveries. It takes time and effort to go to class and it takes time and effort to deal with life outside class. If your grades slip a little bit, it's not so terrible. Life is a balance and this part of your life might need a little more work at this point in time.

Just like having to going to class, it's so important you talk this out. There are counseling services on campus and in your local community to help out. You still might have some grieving to do and some inner issues to work out. Don't try to do it alone. Take advantage of all the awesome resources available while they're so accessible. It's impossible for me to tell you what to think or how to feel, but know you're never alone and people are waiting to help.

Everything takes work. As hard as it might be, this is the perfect time to grow and look deep within yourself. Take this time for you, and next December, not only can you graduate on the Dean's List, you can graduate with a deeper understanding of you and your relationship with your dad. And that's something that will make everyone extremely proud.

Harlan is not a licensed psychologist, therapist or physician, but he is a licensed driver and a syndicated columnist. Write Harlan on-line at: www.helpmeharlan.com. All letters submitted become the property of the column.

Tipping 101: Time to learn the basics

By Adam Shiver
Tribune Media Services

ORLANDO, Fla. — Whether the last time you dined out was last night or last month, you no doubt had to calculate what to tip the server and/or bartender who waited on you, right?

You DID leave a tip, didn't you?

Servers across the country — whether in greasy spoons or five-star digs — hate to see anyone who looks remotely like a college student coming. While some students are great tipppers, others haven't a clue. So, with summer rolling around and your fellow classmates waiting tables or bartending to make money in time to return to school in the fall, consider this a refresher course on the subject.

A tip, as defined by Manny Gonzalez of The Original Tipping Page (www.tipping.org), is "a gift or a sum of money tendered for a service performed or anticipated." Tips originated in the early coffeehouses of England, where patrons dropped T.I.P.S. in boxes or metal tins "To Insure Prompt Service." The larger the coin, the

more noise it made when dropped — and the faster the service received in return.

Nowadays, tips are generally a way to compliment someone for a job well done. At the same time, many servers say too many customers fail to understand that tips are also a crucial part of their livelihood. The food service industry typically doesn't award servers or bartenders the hourly minimum wage. In fact, on average, wait staff make only \$2.13 an hour, which is just enough to pay taxes. Instead, servers use tips to pay their bills — and depend solely on the generosity of their guests.

The big question at the end of almost every meal out typically is "All right, so what should I leave?"

The amount of the tip depends on a few things. First, it's important to base the decision on the total amount of the bill received. The current standard is a tip that is the equivalent of at least 15 percent of the check. Consider that a base from which to either work up or down. For below-average service, give less. For any

little extras you appreciate — a warm smile, a water glass that was always filled — leave a little more. Leaving no tip at all should be reserved for only the most egregious examples of rudeness or incompetence. It is in bad taste to stiff a server who has performed his or her job — even if it was less than superior service. If you're lucky, you'll end up with a bartender or server who is not only waiting on you, but entertaining you as well. Numerous servers, and bartenders especially, are known to tell a joke or do a bar trick for you at a whim. Though they are few and far in between, there are barkeeps that will do everything from spin and toss bottles, glasses and tins to spitting and swallowing fire. All of this entertainment is meant to make your visit more enjoyable and is certainly worthy of the highest tips awarded — which typically fall between 25 and 30 percent of the total bill.

Handy info to know — seeing that it may be you who is someday waiting tables or bartending to pay tuition.

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