

DEAR MS. BEHAVIOR:

I have been going out with this guy for the past six weeks. Both his grandma and his sister are experiencing major health troubles. And he recently told me that he is bisexual. This came out recently as a result of his therapy session (due to his traumatic childhood). He says he needs some time to think and sort things out. What's a guy to do?

—Lost and Wondering



Ms. Behavior

DEAR LOST AND WONDERING:

At least once or twice a year, Ms. Behavior tries to offer the following preresult advice. Thanks for being the one to inspire it this time. (Paste it to your refrigerator if you think you might forget.)

In the first few weeks of a relationship, your prospective partner will reveal most of his or her potential "issues." Listen carefully and assess what they might mean and how they might affect you. Since these are the same problems that will torment you later, or at the very least cost you thousands of dollars in couple's therapy bills, pay attention—especially if you can do so before your, uh, brain becomes engorged.

about masturbation that feels more...satisfying. Either way, there's a hot debate among my friends on the issue of what constitutes celibacy: Is it about entanglement or orgasm? What says Ms. Behavior?

—Mary

DEAR MARY:

Whether celibacy is about entanglement or orgasm depends on why you're trying to abstain. Like, if you're doing some kind of spiritual exercise intended to keep your tantric energy focused in your spine, any form of

sexual release would count as "slippage"—or "spillage," though Ms. Behavior suspects neither term is linguistically precise in the Buddhist vernacular. But on the other (skilled, muscular) hand, self-stimulation can be a soothing practical antidote to the urge for random acts of merging with any ill-suited dyke who happens to ring your metaphorical doorbell.

Codependently speaking, what does or doesn't count as sex may reflect how you feel about yourself. If you only think you're having sex when there's another person in the room, a solo sexual marathon complete with tulips,



Codependently speaking, what does or doesn't count as sex may reflect how you feel about yourself. If you only think you're having sex when there's another person in the room, a solo sexual marathon complete with tulips, murmurings of love and multiple orgasms will still register a big zero.

Consider these issues when you are fully dressed and not walking around in a naked erotic fog. If you decide with a clear head (and no one's tongue in your mouth), that you can live with these problems, fair enough. Everyone, after all, has some little quirk or difficulty. But ignoring these problems—or convincing yourself that it will be different this time, that the magnificence of your love will help your boyfriend kick heroin, or take away his trauma, or cure his grandma's emphysema, or relieve him of his urgent desire for sex in the bushes, or whatever—will *always* be to your own regret.

DEAR MS. BEHAVIOR:

I ended a long-term relationship recently. Last month (after a disastrous fling with a crazy woman less spiritually evolved than myself), I made the decision to be celibate for three months. But is it true, as my friends say, that autoeroticism negates celibacy? Do I need to find a new form of rigid discipline, like workaholicism, instead? I'm willing to take up kickboxing or snowboarding to try to channel my physical energy if I must, but there's something

murmurings of love and multiple orgasms will still register a big zero. (Only you and your sponsor can determine whether or not this means you need extra meetings. Or healing hugs.)

Cultivating the moist flower of your desire beats most other stress-relieving hobbies. Workaholicism is antisocial and addictive, though often more monetarily rewarding than self-fondling. Sports can be dangerous—contrary to folklore, you're way more likely to go blind from kickboxing than from masturbation.

You may be tempted to ask others for their perspective. But with the exception of Ms. Behavior (who will gladly view a videotape of you touching yourself so as to offer an even more informed opinion), only you can determine whether your autoeroticism conflicts with your goal of celibacy.

Take your time and feel your ambivalence. There's no rush to answer the question; sit on it for a while and see how it feels.

■ Write your confused and conflicted heart out to MS. BEHAVIOR at MsBehavior@aol.com.

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