

ADVICE

Family affair

She's creepy, but I love her kids

DEAR MS. BEHAVIOR:

I am a 39-year-old single gay female. For more than 10 years I was in a relationship with a woman who decided that I wasn't enough and that she was going to explore her feelings with my 19-year-old niece, who had just left an abusive relationship.

It will be a year this month since we broke up, and I've found I can live without her.

But I don't want to live without the children. She has six kids who I love like my own. I've known the youngest, who is now 13, since he was 2 weeks old. In my heart, he's my baby.

I don't really want anything to do with their mother—it hurts too much—but I miss them terribly. Do I pretend to be nice to her so I can see the kids? I have a hard time with that because I don't like to live any kind of lie.

—*Foolishly Gave My Soul*

DEAR FOOLISHLY GAVE MY SOUL:

Be cordial to your ex. Your goal to see the kids on a regular basis is hardly a frivolous one. It's not like you're talking about sucking up to your ex so she'll

buy you a mansion or a diamond ring.

Being "nice" to her isn't living a lie, particularly since it doesn't include having sex with her (does it?) or condoning her icky behavior with your niece. Politeness, even if it feels like a stretch, seems worthwhile if you can see the kids.

As much as you may be tempted to react to your ex's involvement with your 19-year-old niece, you'll probably also have to refrain from making incest cracks or referring to your ex as a lesbian Woody Allen (at least publicly). Perhaps you can also start a fund to help your niece pay for the therapy she'll need.

DEAR MS. BEHAVIOR:

After spending my 20s happily adhering to the urban diesel dyke mode of dress and behavior, I have matured a bit and would like to acquire some polish—develop a more genteel and professional presentation. While studying manners and etiquette out of books is good, I think I could benefit from having someone in the know observe and advise me about voice and body language—and not someone who wants to overdo it and make me into a Southern belle.

I have found several professionals who assist male-to-female transsexuals with post-operative presentation issues. Are there any such services for lesbians? Or any cultured gay men/

women who might get a kick out of playing Henry Higgins?

—*Eliza*

DEAR ELIZA:

It's too bad charm schools have fallen out of favor.

Ms. Behavior hopes your desire to acquire more "polish" arises from a career goal or some other positive place; it would be sad to think of you killing

off your inner urban diesel dyke in response to pressure from others or your own internalized homophobia. Either way, leather and chains and other butch accouterments can be heavy and tiresome, and your wish to acquire a new look might be quite fun.

Ms. Behavior knows of no services offered for lesbians, and she suspects the professionals who assist transsexuals may be oriented toward a more florid femininity than the one you desire. If you're going to rely on anyone else's taste, it had better be someone who has a light touch with makeup and accessories (not to mention perfume!), and the previously mentioned professionals frequently don't qualify.

You may, however, find help from the corporate world. If you look up "media training," you'll find people who specialize in preparing professionals for public appearances with an emphasis on speech and body language. You may need to interview a few such consultants until you find the one with whom you'd be most comfortable in your attempts to de-dyke.

You may also achieve good results just from watching women you admire. Try to figure out what you find appealing about their manner and their dress. Listen to the rhythm and cadence of their speech.

An acting class might help you feel more comfortable in trying out new roles. Look through magazines. If you have the flexibility in your career and your personal life, moving to a new city may help; people often reinvent themselves when they relocate.

Ms. Behavior hopes that when you do achieve the desired transformation, it will include vestiges of your glorious and apparently visible dykeyness. ☐

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MERYL COHN is the author of *Do What I Say: Ms. Behavior's Guide to Gay and Lesbian Etiquette* (Houghton Mifflin). Her Internet site is www.msbehavior.com. Send questions or correspondence to msbehavior@aol.com.



Ms. Behavior
by Meryl Cohn

Congregation Neveh Shalom, an open and progressive Conservative Jewish synagogue, extends a warm welcome to all sexual minorities. Shabbat services 8:15 pm Friday and 9 am Saturday. (2900 SW Peaceful Lane. 503-246-8831.) (5/03)

Congregation P'nai Or (Faces of Light) is a vibrant, egalitarian, Jewish Renewal congregation in Portland. Meets several times a month in various locations. (PO Box 42187, Portland, OR 97242-0187. 503-248-4500. www.pnaiorpxd.org.) (5/03)

Dignity Portland meets for Mass on Sundays. (503-262-6947.) (5/03)

Eastrose Fellowship Unitarian Universalist, a welcoming congregation, offers Sunday service and children's religious education. (10:30 am. 1133 NE 181st Ave., Gresham. 503-665-2628. eastrose@teleport.com.) (5/03)

Faith United Methodist Church is a welcoming community of Christians in Troutdale that values and encourages all people in finding a place of belonging in the family of God. Sunday worship at 10:15 am; Adult Education at 9 am; children and youth at 10:30 am. Wednesday Prayers 6-6:30 pm. (27400 SE Stark St. 503-661-4520.) (5/03)

First Unitarian Church of Portland is an open and affirming liberal religious community offering a wide range of programs to nurture spiritual growth, community and social justice. Sunday service 10 am. (1011 SW 12th Ave. 503-228-6389. www.firstunitarianportland.org.) (5/03)

First United Methodist Church of Portland, a welcoming and reconciling congregation, believes no one is left out in God's family. Sexual minority potlucks held monthly. (10:30 am Sunday. 1838 SW Jefferson St. 503-228-3195. www.fumcpdx.org.) (5/03)

Grace Space is a New Thought spiritual center dedicated to offering ways to experience Spirit. Sunday evening celebrations with Rev. Stephanie Torres, Conscious Breathing experiences, Chanting, Healing Services, Meditation classes and a miracles study group. (5 pm. Bridgeport Community Church, 621 NE 76th Ave. 503-287-3216.) (5/03)

Integrity is a group of sexual minority Episcopalians and friends. Various locations throughout Oregon. (Bruce Mason 503-286-9111. brucepdxor@attbi.com. www.integrityusa.org.) (5/03)

Interfaith Spiritual Center houses spiritual directors from various world religious traditions, who are available for guidance, classes and retreats. (Second Floor, 3910 SE 11th Ave. 503-233-2026, ext. 3. www.interfaithspiritualcenter.com.) (5/03)

Keshet Portland is a group for Jewish members of the sexual minorities community and their partners, spouses and supporters. Monthly social, religious and cultural events. (David or Lane 503-226-7079, ext. 14.) (5/03)

Metanoia Peace Community United Methodist Church is a "house church," bringing gay and straight together. (Daily prayer 7:20 am, Sunday gathering 5 pm. 2116 NE 18th Ave. 503-281-3697. www.tearsoup.com/metanoia.) (5/03)

Metropolitan Community Church of Portland holds ecumenical Sunday morning worship services at 9 and 11 am. Sunday school for children is held during the 11 am worship service. (2400 NE Broadway. 503-281-8868. info@mccportland.com.) (5/03)

Portland Center for Spiritual Growth is a New Thought Center offering an uplifting, warm and refreshing service with the Revs. Casey and Berdell Moffett-Chaney. (10 am Sunday. Call for location. 503-777-0727.) (5/03)

Portland Church of Religious Science is a liberal, open, progressive New Thought community welcoming everyone to discover the spirit within. Change your thinking, change your life! (10 am Sunday meditation, 10:30 am service and junior church, 6:30 pm Wednesday prayer circle. 3983 NE 112th Ave. 503-261-0677.) (5/03)

Portland Radical Faeries meet twice a month with potlucks and circles at the full moon and the new moon. Open to all men seeking alternative spiritual growth and community. Coffee hours start 9:30 am Saturdays at 3 Friends Coffeehouse, 201 SE 12th Ave. (503-235-0826. otter@pccz.com.) (5/03)

SisterSpirit offers women's spirituality celebrations, discussion groups, a drumming circle, workshops and classes. Schedule of events available. All women are welcome. (Suite 102, 3430 SE Belmont St. Mailing address: PO Box 9246, Portland, OR 97207. 503-736-3297. sistersp@teleport.com.) (5/03)

Spirit Circle is for lesbian, bi or trans women seeking a welcoming community in the Catholic church. Meets every third Thursday in the St. Andrew Nativity School. (7 pm. 806 NE Alberta St. litspircircle@yahoo.com.) (5/03)

Southminster Presbyterian Church is a challenging, supportive community that welcomes all people. It is the first More Light Presbyterian Church in Oregon. Sunday school and nursery care. (10 am Sunday. 12250 SW Denney Road, Beaverton. 503-644-2073. staff@southmin.com.) (5/03)

St. Andrew Catholic Church invites all to join a diverse faith community for prayer and fellowship. (9:30 am Sunday. 806 NE Alberta St. 503-281-4429.) (5/03)

St. James Lutheran Church, a Reconciled in Christ congregation, welcomes all people for traditional, liturgical worship where we experience God's reconciling love that sets all people free. (9 and 11 am Sunday. 1315 SW Park Ave. 503-227-2439.) (5/03)

Gay and Lesbian Outreach (GALO) of St. Philip Neri Catholic Church celebrates an affirming Mass followed by a social. (7:30 pm Friday. Paulist Center, 2408 SE 16th Ave. 503-231-4955.) (5/03)

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church has been welcoming all people since 1863. (12:10 pm Wednesday and 7:45 and 10 am Sunday. Sunday school and child care at 10 am. Southwest 13th Avenue at Clay Street. 503-223-6424.) (5/03)

Waverly Heights Church (UCC) is open and affirming with worship, children's school and child care. (10 am Sunday. 3300 SE Woodward St. 503-238-1337. www.waverlyucc.org.) (5/03)

Wyeast Unitarian Universalist Congregation is an open and liberal religious community offering intergenerational services and religious education for children. It welcomes gay, lesbian, bi and trans members. Nurtures spiritual growth and promotes living by Unitarian Universalist principles. (4 pm Sunday. 3915 SE Steele St. 503-777-3704. www.wyeast.pnwd.uua.org.) (5/03)

Zion United Church of Christ, an open and affirming congregation, is open to gay, lesbian, bi, trans and heterosexual people who wish to worship in a Christ-centered, warm, caring, multiage/race/cultural faith community. (11 am Sunday. 2025 NE 23rd Ave., Gresham. 503-665-8741.) (5/03)

Washington: Spirituality

Abundant Life Center is A New Thought Community for spiritual awakening and transforming lives through love. A safe place where children learn to embody spiritual principles. (10 am Sunday. 10006 NE Ninth Ave., Vancouver. 360-573-2626.) (5/03)

East Vancouver United Methodist Church is reconciling and welcoming. (10 am Sunday. 5701 MacArthur Blvd. 360-693-4761. ourclarkcounty.columbian.com/273/.) (5/03)

First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, holds two Sunday services, traditional and "less traditional" in an open and affirming congregation. (1220 NE 68th St., Vancouver. 360-693-1476. vanucc@aol.com.) (5/03)

God's Holy Territory offers a spirit-filled worship experience, seeking God for holiness and wholeness. For gay, lesbian, bi, trans and straight. Everyone welcome! (11 am Sunday, 7 pm Thursday Bible study and prayer. 1500 NE 49th St., Vancouver. 360-885-9461. gmbea68@netzero.net.) (5/03)

Michael Servetus Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, a home for the liberal religious spirit. (10 am Sunday. 4505 E 18th St., Vancouver. 360-695-1891.) (5/03)

Willamette Valley: Spirituality

First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ is an open and affirming congregation offering worship and church school. Child care provided and wheelchair accessible. (9 am Sunday learning hour, 10 am worship. 700 Marion St. NE, Salem. 503-363-3660.) (5/03)

Morningside United Methodist Church is a reconciling congregation where everyone is welcome to participate in the full life of the congregation. (8:30 and 11 am Sunday. 3674 12th St. SE, Salem. 503-364-5013.) (5/03)

Sacred Souls honors all sacred paths, promotes peace and strives to create an environment that supports and promotes interfaith dialogue. Meets at the Oregon School of Massage. (6:30-8 pm Sunday. 440 Ferry St. SE, Salem. wholth@aol.com. www.sacredsouls.org.) (5/03)

YOUTH

Metro: Youth

Flavors, a program of MultiQueer and Brother to Brother, is a social support

group for sexual minority youth of color 24 and younger. Meets every other Sunday for food and socializing. Regular events and activities. (Des 503-228-3892 or des@lmfamily.org. Stephan 503-417-7991 or hey_stephan@hotmail.com.) (5/03)

The **Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)** fights to end anti-gay bias in K-12 schools. (12700 SW North Dakota St., Suite 180, #129, Tigard, OR 97223. 503-525-1177. glsen@glsenoregon.org. www.glsenoregon.org.) (5/03)

MultiQueer, a program of Love Makes a Family, provides advocacy to sexual minority youth. Offers resources and support in the community and the school systems, with a focus on support for youth of color. (Des 503-228-3892. des@lmfamily.org.) (5/03)

Outside In operates a clinic for anyone who can't qualify for the Oregon Health Plan as well as needle exchange services that include those who inject hormones. Can provide transitional housing for youth 20 and younger as well as for those HIV+ and younger than 23. Also plays host to VOICES (Voices of Individual and Community Empowerment from the Streets), a self-support group for queer youth. Needs volunteers of all ages. (10 am-6 pm Monday-Friday. 1132 SW 13th Ave. 503-535-3800. www.outsidein.org.) (5/03)

Vanguard Youth Services, a program of Cascadia Behavioral HealthCare, offers support and recreation to gay, lesbian, bi and trans kids 23 and younger. Programs include: **Clackamas County Sexual Minority Youth Connection (COSMYC)** provides opportunities for queer and questioning kids to get together for free, fun and supportive social activities. Also one-on-one support and referrals to Clackamas County service providers. (503-969-0060. cosmycyouth@yahoo.com) **Expression** is a free art/expression support group in Gresham for queer youth. Hang out and have fun every Friday! (Jonathan 503-872-9664, ext. 28.) (5/03)

Pride Project brings together Washington County queer and questioning youth to plan and attend monthly social events. Also information, referral and advocacy services in Washington County. (Molly 503-260-5792. molly@prideproject.org.) (5/03)

Sexual Minority Youth Recreation Center (SMYRC) offers drop-in computer access, pool tables and an informal place to hang out. Weekly youth support groups includes Trans Youth Group and Personal Deity Proxy (a creative group). (4-8 pm Monday and Wednesday, 4 pm-midnight Friday and Saturday. 2100 SE Belmont St. 503-872-9664. TTY 503-231-9286. www.smyrc.org.) (5/03)

Youth HIV/STD Prevention Project provides fun and educational programs along with counseling and testing to queer youth in a friendly, relaxed environment. (503-872-9664.) (5/03)

Washington: Youth

Triple Point offers education, support and advocacy to gay, lesbian, bi, trans and questioning youth in Vancouver, Wash. Meets 6-8 pm Tuesdays in the basement of Youth House, 1112 Columbia St. in Vancouver. (John 360-695-1325.) (5/03)

Willamette Valley: Youth

Gay, Lesbian, Bi, Transgender and Questioning Youth Group for ages 13 to 18 offers support, information and fun in Eugene. Free, confidential, adult-facilitated. (Drop in 4-6 pm Friday. Amazon Community Center, 2700 Hilyard St. 541-684-3466.) (5/03)

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Youth Group for ages 25 and younger meets every Monday in Eugene. (5 pm. Koinonia Center, 1414 Kincaid St. 541-346-1134.) (5/03)

The stunning Jefferson Dancers enchant audiences Dec. 12-14 at Portland State University's Lincoln Hall

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