

Gift It a Rest. Let Your True Feelings Be Your Guide

DEAR MS. BEHAVIOR:

My husband and I were married in 2004, during the brief period that same-sex marriage was legal in Portland, Oregon. Our wedding was a very small, rushed affair in a friend's backyard with no chance to invite out-of-town guests, so a simple announcement and photo were sent out after the ceremony. No mention of gifts was made, since this was not the reason we got married; however, we were slightly annoyed when we received only one congratulatory card and not a single wedding gift. Of course, we never brought this up to anyone involved.

We have now received a wedding invitation from one of my best friends. My husband and I can't attend the wedding, as it is on the other side of the country. However, the invitation includes a list of stores where the couple is registered. Am I obligated to send a wedding gift? I am normally a big gift-giver, but it irks me to think that I am being asked to buy a gift for a couple who didn't even send us a card for our wedding. If I don't send a gift, do I owe the couple an explanation?

— Still Don't Own A Blender

DEAR STILL DON'T OWN A BLENDER:

Since you received virtually no response to your announcement — and since people usually respond to their friends' weddings



MS.
BEHAVIOR

with an outpouring of joy, congratulations, and gifts — something about your method of announcing your wedding may have left your friends feeling confused or left out.

Announcements — other than those designed to transmit news of a birth — are often impersonal informative declarations, like, "Hey, I'm a realtor now! Wanna sell your house?" Unlike invitations, wedding announcements are usually reserved for acquaintances, business associates, or friends of the parents who aren't close to the marrying couple. Such announcements don't often go to intimate friends, so it's easy to see why a close buddy may feel slighted by getting an announcement instead of an invitation. Such friends may (correctly) believe that other people were invited and they weren't; an explanation that it was last minute may not have dissuaded them from feeling that they were on the "B-list." Your more intimate far-away friends might even have been happy to hop on a plane for your backyard wedding if

you'd called them and explained the shotgun circumstances.

Now five years have passed, and you're still bitter about not having received gifts and cards. It's time to let go of your hurt feelings, forgive your friends, and move on. You're not necessarily "obligated" to send a wedding gift to "one of your best friends" but not doing so, as you've seen, can hurt friendships. Since you're normally a big gift-giver, act in accordance with your true feelings — not your resentment — and send your friends a lovely present and your congratulations.

♦ ♦ ♦

DEAR MS. BEHAVIOR:

For two years, my girlfriend Maria hinted, whined, wheedled, and manipulated about our getting married. I wasn't sure how I felt about marriage and said so. But more recently, after six months of talking about it every week in my therapist's office, which eased my anxiety, I finally decided to propose. When I got on my knee and popped the question, however, Maria said "no"; she didn't want me to marry her just because she wanted to get married. (Now I'm rolling my eyes.)

What the "F" is an honest butch to do? She wants me to, so I do, then she doesn't want me to because she wanted me to! What am I supposed to do now that she's rejected

my proposal? Beg? Or just forget it?

— Out-Femmed Butch

DEAR OUT-FEMMED BUTCH:

Like many old-fashioned femmes, Maria wants you to perform a task and then convince her that it was your idea all along. Proposing was not your idea, so she's not going to be happy with feeling like she talked you into it. Whatever you do, don't share your "process" with her, or reveal all the nitty-gritty details of the ambivalence you experienced during therapy. But — assuming it's true — do let Maria know that you really do want to marry her. Given the insecurity that she may have developed while you were whiling away the hours on the therapy couch — which was the right thing to do — you now need to romance her, telling her all the reasons that you can't live without her.

However, if in the darkest hours of the night, you still have a tiny bit of nagging doubt, arrange for a very long engagement while you continue to work things out with your therapist. **JO**

MERYL COHN is the author of *Do What I Say: Ms. Behavior's Guide to Gay and Lesbian Etiquette*. Signed copies are available directly from the author. Send questions or correspondence to msbehavior@aol.com.

OUTREACH

» AIDS & HIV

CAREAssist pays for health insurance premiums, prescription drugs and insurance plan co-payments and deductibles for eligible people with HIV/AIDS. Program of the Oregon Department of Human Services and the Ryan White CARE Act. (8 am-5 pm Monday-Friday, 503-731-4029 or 800-805-2313. www.healthoregon.org.)

Cascade AIDS Project (CAP) educates youth and adults about HIV prevention, supports people with HIV and their families and advocates for sound HIV policy and legislation on the national, state and local levels. Spanish-language assistance available. (Suite 300, 620 SW Fifth Ave. 503-223-5907. Oregon AIDS Hotline 800-777-2437.)

CityGuys hosts monthly HIV testing nights at The Escape and Steam; provides free risk reduction counseling, condoms and lube; and offers free rapid HIV testing and STD screening at the Men's Wellness Center. (5-9 pm Tuesday [HIV/STD] and Saturday [HIV only], 928 SW Stark St. 503-445-7699. cityguys@cascadeaids.org.)

Clackamas County Community Health in Oregon City offers anonymous and confidential HIV testing and counseling for gay and bisexual men. No needles! Free condoms! Call for appointment or walk-in testing times. (3:30-6:30 pm Tuesday, 1425 Beaver Creek Road. Clinic: 503-655-8471. Information: 503-742-5382.)

Clark County offers free rapid HIV testing and hepatitis A and B vaccinations to men who have sex with men in Vancouver, Wash. (5-6:30 pm Thursday, 3701 E Fourth Plain Blvd. 360-397-8098.)

Columbia County Public Health offers anonymous and confidential HIV testing, counseling and case management to anyone. Se habla español. We lend HIV books and videos and offer educational materials and free condoms. (503-397-4651 or 800-244-4870.)

Daily Bread Express provides home delivery of high-quality meals to HIV-positive individuals in need. Fresh meals delivered weekdays, frozen meals for weekends. Volunteers invited to inquire anytime. (Mara 503-460-3822.)

Esther's Pantry in Milwaukie provides food and personal care items to people with HIV/AIDS. Call to donate or for services. (503-349-4699. www.ourhouseofportland.org/programs/estherspantry.)

Fuzeon Information Group welcomes people contemplating, using or caregiving for Fuzeon

recipients. Facilitated by experienced patients, nurses and social workers. (5:30-7 pm second Wednesday, 5525 SE Milwaukie Ave. RSVP to Julia 503-230-1202, ext. 235. www.ohsu.edu/partnership/fuzeon.html.)

Health, Education, AIDS Liaison (HEAL) offers information about alternative views of AIDS causation and HIV testing. Call for a free packet of information. (503-227-2339. bwport@comcast.net.)

Multnomah County Health Department's HIV Community Test Site offers confidential testing by appointment with or without your name. Some walk-in testing. Sliding-scale fee. Se habla español; other interpretation by appointment. (9 am-4:45 pm Monday-Friday except 12:30-4:45 pm Wednesday, 426 SW Stark St., Sixth Floor. 503-988-3775.)

HIV Day Center offers hot meals, counseling, laundry facilities, clothing, showers and hygiene supplies, computers with Internet access, phones, mail drop, recreational activities, massage and haircuts. Volunteers invited to inquire anytime. (9 am-3 pm Monday-Friday, 2941 NE Ainsworth St. 503-460-3822.)

The Link, a social networking group for HIV-positive gay and bi men, meets the second and fourth Wednesday of every month for social events, discussions and other outings. (928 SW Stark St. 503-223-6339, ext. 555. thelink@cascadeaids.org.)

Manifest (formerly Q-LAND), a nonprofit men's wellness community, prevents and addresses HIV and STDs by empowering men to pursue their wellness passions together through programs like yoga, cycling, hiking, meditation, healing touch classes, vision teams, wellness coaching, information and referrals. (503-223-8822, ext. 1. www.manifestpdx.org.)

Multnomah County offers free HIV rapid testing to gay, bi and trans guys. Se habla español. (5-7:15 pm Tuesday, 5329 NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. 503-988-3030.)

OHsu HIV Clinic provides comprehensive health care for people living with HIV/AIDS. Services include HIV specialty care, psychiatry, counseling, addiction treatment (including buprenorphine/suboxone), case management, same-day visits and online chart access. Appointments are available regardless of insurance. (503-494-8562.)

Our House of Portland provides Oregon and southwest Washington's only network of integrated health and housing services for people with HIV/AIDS. Programs include Our House (24-hour residential care), Neighborhood Housing and Care, Community Services and Swan House. To volunteer, contact Kathryn Siebert,

(503-234-0175. www.ourhouseofportland.org.)

Partnership Project provides services to people with HIV/AIDS, their families and those at risk. Programs include HIV Case Management; Supporting Healthy Options for Prevention (SHOP), behavior change counseling to motivate people to protect themselves and their partners; and HIV 101, providing basic information for people recently diagnosed. Se habla español. (Intake Line: 503-517-3590. SHOP: Laura or Kurt 503-230-1202 or 877-795-7700. HIV 101: 503-230-1202. Positive Living: Julia 503-230-1202, ext. 235. www.ohsu.edu/partnership.)

Portland Area HIV Services Planning Council is a county decision-making body that identifies services needed for people living with HIV/AIDS and allocates federal funds annually in a six-county area. Need volunteers from all walks of life. (20 NE 10th Ave., Second Floor, 3653 SE 34th Ave. 503-988-3030, ext. 25703. www.hivportland.org.)

Positive Direction Series offers life skill workshops to people living with HIV/AIDS at Cascade AIDS Project. Topics include employment, parenting, health, women's self-image and sexually, budgeting and tenant education. (Shyle Ruder 503-223-5907, ext. 203. www.cascadeaids.org.)

Positive Living Series is a seven-week self-management series for people living with HIV/AIDS designed to assist you in taking care of your illness, give you skills to carry out normal daily activities and provide you with the tools to manage emotional changes. (Julia 503-230-1202, ext. 235. www.ohsu.edu/partnership/fuzeon.html.)

*talk is a five-week program for people living with HIV designed to reduce stress around talking about your HIV status and negotiating safer sex. New sessions start monthly. (Josh 503-223-5907. jferri@cascadeaids.org.)

Project Quest Integrative Health Center offers conventional and alternative health care, nutrition classes, support groups and recreational sports activities for people seeking a wellness focus to living and dying, especially those living with HIV/AIDS or cancer. (2901 E Burnside St. 503-238-5203. pquest@quest.net.)

The Research & Education Group provides access to HIV/AIDS research trials of new drugs and therapies for people in Oregon and southwest Washington. (2311 NW Northrup St. #105. 503-229-8428.)

The Risk Reduction Zone, a program of Outside In, provides a queer safe space that offers HIV, hepatitis C and STD prevention programs; Internet resources; peer counseling; referrals; and support groups in a nonclinical setting.

(1030 SW 13th Ave. 503-535-3895.)

Social and Support Group discusses HIV issues for men at Quest Center. Meet other nice guys, share information and have fun. (7-8 pm Tuesday, 2901 E Burnside St. Terry 503-253-2292.)

Swan House is a specialized adult foster care home for low-income people with HIV/AIDS who need assistance with personal care, mobility, medications or drug/alcohol/mental health support. (Business: 503-786-4829. Volunteers: 503-234-0175. www.ourhouseofportland.org/programs/swan-house.)

Tod's Corner in Milwaukie provides clothing, household items, companion pet care, cremations and more to people with HIV/AIDS. Call to donate or for services. (503-349-4699. www.ourhouseofportland.org/programs/todscorner.)

Washington County Health Department offers free HIV testing for guys who have sex with other guys at community health clinics. No appointment needed. Results in 20 minutes. Se habla español. (Beaverton: 5:30-7:30 pm Monday, 12550 SW Second St. Hillsboro: 4-5:30 pm Tuesday and 9-11 am Friday, 266 W Main St.)

» COMMUNITY General

Babble-On Toastmasters meets at Red Coach Restaurant to develop communications and leadership skills, including prepared speeches, impromptu speaking and running effective meetings. (4-5:30 pm Sunday, 615 SW Broadway. 503-330-2706. www.babble-onfm.org.)

Bisexual Community Forum is a space to meet people and freely discuss issues relevant to the bi community at Red and Black Cafe. Everyone is welcome. (7:30 pm first Monday, 400 SE 12th Ave. Laury 503-285-4848.)

Deaf & Hearing Out Reach (DHOR) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to building community among deaf and hearing queers and allies. Visit our Web site for programs, services, events and community resources. (dhordpx@gmail.com. dhordpx.blogspot.com.)

Double Rainbow Foundation is available to help all queer parents who co-conceive children to be treated equally. We believe, regardless of gender, two adults in committed relationships who agree to co-create children should be given the same rights as heterosexual couples. (www.myspace.com/doublerainbowfoundation.)

Elder Resource Alliance is a coalition of organizations and individuals working to enhance the lives of older members of the sexual minorities community through education, advocacy, outreach and resource development. Activities include sensitivity trainings, creating social change, recreational activities, information and assistance. (3:30-4:30 pm first Wednesday, Friendly House Community Center, 1737 NW 26th Ave. Rachel 503-224-2640. eracoordinator@yahoo.com.)

Equity Foundation is a nonprofit organization founded by gays and lesbians to build communities that embrace the dignity and worth of all people. Equity has distributed more than \$3 million in grants and scholarships throughout Oregon. (503-231-5759. www.equityfoundation.org.)

Getting Bi PDX is a women's group that meets for discussion, coffee and planning social events. (www.gettingbipdx.com.)

KBOO-FM's Out Loud queer news and public affairs show, featuring local guests and announcements, airs second and fourth Tuesdays. This Way Out, the international queer show, airs on first, third and fifth Tuesdays. (6 pm, 90.7 FM Portland, 91.9 FM Hood River, 100.7 FM Willamette Valley. www.kboo.fm. kbooutloud@yahoo.com.)

Love Makes a Family is an international organization that provides a public voice for queer-headed families. Your membership supports parents and their children, works for safe schools and encourages equal rights for all couples. (503-228-3892. www.lmfamil.org.)

Manifest (formerly Q-LAND), a nonprofit men's wellness community, empowers men to pursue their wellness passions together through programs like yoga, cycling, hiking, meditation, healing touch classes, vision teams, wellness coaching, information and referrals. We manifest wellness and love through community. (503-223-8822, ext. 1. www.manifestpdx.org.)

Men's Wellness Center is a space dedicated to the health and wellness of gay/bi men offering a variety of fun social events, discussion groups, workshops, HIV/STD testing, free condoms and lube, risk reduction counseling, WiFi and Internet access. (5-9 pm Tuesday [testing only], 4-10 pm Wednesday-Saturday, 928 SW Stark St. 503-445-7699. cityguys@cascadeaids.org.)

The Oregon Safe Schools and Community Coalition seeks to create safe schools and communities for families, educators and students statewide.

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