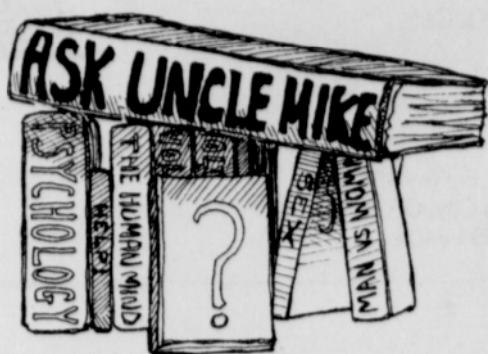


# THE THERAPY PAGE



Dear Uncle Mike,  
Hi, you are cool and much more interesting to read during 4th period Physics than the text book. My friend and I were wondering if you had a fan club. Thanks!  
S.A.M. and M.A.D. in Vancouver

Dear S.A.M. and M.A.D.,

You're welcome. And thank you. You've no idea how warmed the cockles of Uncle Mike's heart were by your letter. To know you think Uncle Mike is not only cool but more interesting than a textbook absolutely makes his month. Uncle Mike thinks you're cool too. You wrote the date as: 7-1-95? Anyone who either cannot remember the year or disputes the notion of time is okay in Uncle Mike's book. Which brings us to fourth period.

No one knows Uncle Mike better than Uncle Mike and Uncle Mike can assure you he's much less interesting than your physics textbook. Listen carefully. There's nothing more interesting than quantum physics. Or more lovely. The world behind this one is a faery land of elemental beings, the dance of water and fire, air and earth; a living plasma of probabilities in which nothing is more real than potential. The world we observe is the thinnest of surfaces, a delicate membrane of events on an infinite sea of what might be. We're more than participants in this universe; it's our consciousness that creates it. Quantum relativity reminds us of the rules and life's much more fun when we know them.

You ask if Uncle Mike has a fan club. No, he doesn't, but if you want to start one, he won't stand in your way. The two of you could be it, in fact charter members of the very first chapter. Wouldn't that be something? Here's what you should do. Send Uncle Mike as much money as you possibly can and he'll whomp out an official charter, a couple of membership cards, and a photocopy of his old dog Easy. The membership cards will get you free admission to the many conventions and outings Uncle Mike has no intention of sponsoring. Were he to put out a monthly newsletter filled with fascinating details of his private life (something he'd open a vein before doing), you would be on his mailing list. It would be absolutely free, or at least priced modestly enough so that anyone with good credit or the willingness to wheedle money from their parents could learn more about Uncle Mike than they ever wanted to know: what vegetables he despises, what hobbies he avoids, what happened that summer in Scappoose, and what if anything he wears to bed.

Should your idea take off, Uncle Mike would be more than willing to supply you with expensive official sweatshirts, therapist alert bracelets, and secret decoder rings. Owing to a promise he made his grandmother before the family sent her away, there would be no official baseball caps. If bunny ears were good enough for her, they're good enough for us.

Dear Uncle Mike,

How do you know if a boy likes you? There's a boy (Peter) who's REAL cute and I like him (well, actually love him). Anyway, once he looked at me dreamily, and he walks past my table at lunch A LOT! Sometimes he stares at me straight in the eye.

Signed,  
Cluelessly in Love

Dear Clueless,

At his age, when Uncle Mike notices someone looking at him dreamily, walking past his table a lot and staring him straight in the eye, he assumes they've been sent by the authorities. At your age (which, judging from the way you dot your I's with little hearts, is newly in double digits), Uncle Mike strongly suspects young Peter is smitten with you.

The first thing you should know is that Peter is sweating blood. He's put a lot on the line being bold enough to look you in the eye. Contrary to what many girls think, boys do not thrive on rejection. You should, at first opportunity, stare back at him and smile. You should also walk by his table at lunch. From the sound of things, you've got the dreamy looks covered.

The best plan is always to treat the other person like you'd like them to treat you. Peter's letting you know he likes you. If you like that he does that, return the favor. Don't be surprised if he says something stupid or faints. Even big boys do that.

Dear Uncle Mike,

Last month you made reference to your 'poker support group'. I take this to mean you gamble. My girlfriend is addicted to poker machines and blows a good chunk of her paycheck on them. You hear on the news that gambling addiction is a growing problem in America. Don't you think it's a little irresponsible for you to encourage this sort of behavior?

Concerned in Portland

Dear Constipated,

From the tight-sphinctered tone of your letter, Uncle Mike assumes two things: that your girlfriend might be hanging out in front of the machines to avoid you, and that you've never played poker.

Poker isn't gambling. Poker is life distilled to something you play with chips. Poker is generally acknowledged as the most intricately simple game ever invented by humans: a marriage of probabilities, skill, and baldfaced deception. In poker, one doesn't gamble, one bets one's hand and one's ability to play it. It's no surprise that, while loosely rooted to other card games, poker flourished on the riverboats of America.

But we were talking about your girlfriend. Playing video poker is gambling. Because it's played by only one human and a machine, it cannot properly be called poker. And any government that deals cards to drunks can't properly be called a government. Encourage your friend to start a poker support group. Be a friend and don't join.

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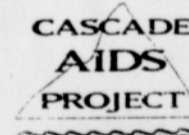
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