

Dear Uncle Mike,

My girlfriend and I broke up a few months ago. We were together, not living together but dating exclusively, for a little over a year. The breakup was mutual. We both thought it was time to do other things, see other people. We're both 29 by the way. We talk on the phone a lot and try to get together for dinner or drinks once a week. To make a long story short, I'm falling in love with her again. She's seeing someone else but the impression I get is that it's not the love of her life or anything even though they sleep together. I asked her one night if she ever thought about getting back together. She got this really nice smile on her face and said no, not for a while anyway. But her eyes and smile said different. I'm not seeing anyone now and I'm starting to not want to start a new relationship in case she makes up her mind. It's been a month now. If you were in my shoes, what would you do?

Brian M. Tigard

Dear Brian,

Uncle Mike would tap himself on the forehead with a mallet. Brian, Brian, Brian. Sit down and look at things as they are. You and this woman dated for a year without moving in together. Since the breakup was mutual, we must assume a measurable distance has always been part of your relationship. Personal space, free to be me sort of thing. From this less than epic romance you moved on to greater personal space, other things, and other people. Let Uncle Mike know when he's going astray. So, being modern and with it, you maintain your friendship. For several months, during which time she finds a new lover and you don't. You're feeling lonely and left out, she's not. Things clearing up yet, Brian Bob? So, in a grand display of humiliation, you ask if she's interested in rekindling the matchstick of your former love. Like Uncle Mike, you should have a hard time believing you did this. But you did. And what did the woman say? She said no. Can you say 'over', Brian? You get the impression her new man isn't the love of her life. If she actually said this, you failed to mention it in your letter. Maybe she doesn't choose to share breathless descriptions of her love life with you. Good for her. If Uncle Mike were sitting across the table from an old love who was making cow eyes over the pasta, he'd find other things to talk about too. But she said no with her lips and yes with her eyes, right? That's odd behavior all by itself, babe. And it's been a month now and she hasn't said an encouraging word. And you're moping around in your bathrobe waiting for this woman to make up her mind? While Uncle Mike admires your ability to endure without hope, he thinks you're acting like a character in a painful Woody Allen film. He suggests you stop it.

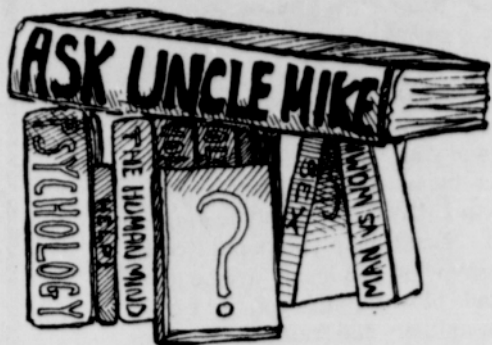
Dear Uncle Mike,

Relative to car alarms: I would consider supporting a rule that car alarms had to have a time limit and if the owner didn't turn it off, the doors would automatically unlock and the car would start. The only thing I see against this rule is I think there are too many rules and so I have trouble promoting a new one. But, if we could trade this in for some other rule, a bad rule, then I could support it. Hey! That should be a rule: Any new rule must include removing some existing rule. This would help to promote: "Not More Rules, Better Rules". I like it. I reads like a bumper sticker.

Sincerely, Victoria F.

Dear V,

Your idea is a dandy. Uncle Mike senses in you a kindred spirit and warns you not to forget to take your medicine. Any rule that undermines the notion of personal responsibility is, on Uncle Mike's block, a bad rule. Car alarms should only be activated when the owner snaps on a collar sheathed with a highly conductive metal. The moment someone tampers with his or her personal driving machine, a stiff but nonlethal jolt of electricity awakens them and persists, relentlessly, until they go turn it off. As long as Uncle Mike knows they're in pain, he can live with the sirens.



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Presidential Commission Report, 1876

If someone became addicted to counseling how would you cure them?

Tim O'Brien