

Dear Uncle Mike,

I read your column all the time and you sound pretty cool so I thought I'd write and ask your advice. I'm 17 and will graduate this year. My grades are good and I don't get into trouble. The only problem I have is my boyfriend. Or rather my parents. He's 22 and my folks think he's too old for me. He's not. We love each other and do lots of stuff together.

It's not like I'm going to run off and get married. Does our age difference really matter? I don't think so. What do you think? I promise I'll listen.

Kirsten in Lake Oswego

Dear Kirsten,

Uncle Mike is glad you think he's pretty cool. There are those who would tell you you're young and have much to learn.

Does age difference really matter? All things being relative, it depends. As any used car salesman will tell you, it's not the age it's the mileage. There are 17 year olds Uncle Mike would trust with his car, if he had one. There are 22 year olds who need instructions to chew gum. The issue is maturity, a boring word that means having the experience necessary to make sound decisions. One of the soundest decisions you can make is to listen to your elders. Especially those who know and love you.

Uncle Mike is glad to hear of your lack of plans to marry. It reminds him of one of the many parables of poker. There are good hands, there are bad hands, and it's a long game.

Dear Uncle Mike,

Do you think they're going to legalize marijuana? I know you're in favor of it. Why? Have you tested its effects on yourself?

Brad in Portland

Dear Nosey,

Does Uncle Mike think 'they' are going to legalize marijuana? No, that would involve a loss of face. They're just going to make it available to anyone who can demonstrate signs of stress. Yes, Uncle Mike is in favor of this. As a human, Uncle Mike thinks he should be able to eat, drink, snort, or smoke anything that grows in the garden. He also believes he is the sole caretaker of his body. Has Uncle Mike tested the effects of marijuana on himself? Yes, many times. It's what makes him drive cars into trees and rob 7-Elevens.

Dear Uncle Mike,

Why do people sniff wine corks?

Unenlightened in Astoria

Dear Unenlightened,

Because Uncle Mike knows no one who does, he's unable to say. He does know people who look to see if the cork is damp. Uncle Mike can't remember if it's supposed to be or not. Even now, he doesn't care. He drinks sour mash whiskey and so, doesn't have to.

Dear Uncle Mike,

Is there proper bathroom etiquette when people spend the night? When you're ready for bed, should you offer your guests first use, or leave the bathroom for them after you've retired? I know it's not an earthshaking issue but I was just curious.

Mariah M., Portland

Dear Mariah,

Uncle Mike whimpers at the thought of anyone imagining an issue exists. People he knows well enough to let them sleep in his home go to the bathroom when they need to and go to bed when they're tired. If your guests start yawning (something Uncle Mike would bet happens a lot) and you're sitting on their hide-a-bed, by all means go brush your teeth and give it a rest.

Dear Uncle Mike,

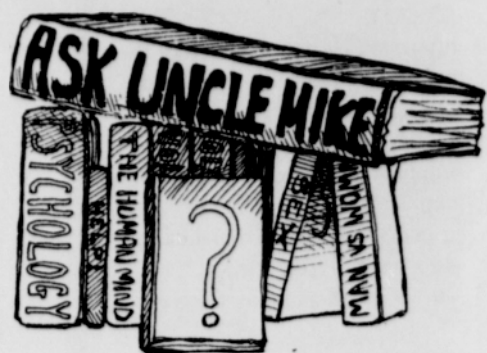
A long time ago, you mentioned three rules for living on the planet. I forgot what they were. Sorry.

Melissa A.,

Dear Melissa,

It's okay, not to worry, don't let it happen again. The rules you refer to are Reverend Billy's Three Rules for Peace in the Universe: 1) Nobody hits, 2) Everybody eats, 3) There is no third rule.

To this, Uncle Mike would add a corollary: we get to love whoever we want. There are also, just in case, Reverend Billy's Three Rules for Surviving on the Planet: Never play poker with anyone named Doc, never eat at a place called 'Mom's', never sleep with anyone crazier than you are.



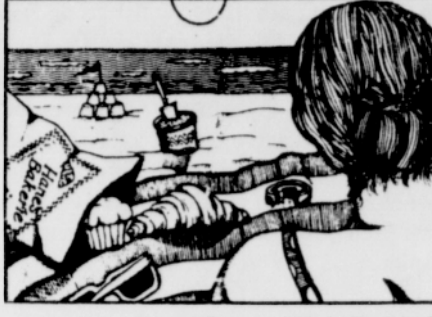
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