

Dear Sir:

I am sure you expected some flak about your comments on obesity. I couldn't help being predictable and taking offense. While I agree we are a country of couch potatoes, there are many out there who have emotional problems that lead to eating disorders that are comparable to other mental disorders and addictions. May I point out that people with weight problems are not all dull-witted sloths. Many are discriminated against based on their physical appearance. An alcoholic can get and hold a job and may not be suspected as having a problem but many overweight people can't even land the job because of the prejudice we have towards them. Just because obese people wear their addictions on the outside, insensitive boobs, such as yourself, feel it's OK to make fun of them. Many women live their lives feeling inferior because they do not measure up to a totally unrealistic "thin" image they are convinced they should achieve.

Yellow Bellied Fat Cow, Portland

Dear Yellow,

Uncle Mike can't help being taken aback. After shuffling repeatedly through his back files, the only letter he found which made any reference to obesity was in answer to a woman in Nevada who'd been treated like a dangerous leper for smoking a cigarette on the sidewalk. Uncle Mike responded with this: "The health and fitness enlightenment that's somehow generated the most overweight American population in history may sanction dosing their emotionally neglected children with Prozac but they'll never stop flogging you for smoking tobacco anywhere near them." If you consider this an attack on overweight people, Uncle Mike must make two assumptions: 1) that you're a little too tightly wrapped, and 2) you've never read his column before and hence have no notion of how vicious and petty he can be.

Now then, on to you and the points you make so pugnaciously. Is UncleMike aware of an emotional basis for eating disorders? You bet. That these disorders are comparable to other mental disorders and addictions? Absolutely. He's also aware of the sort of genetic predisposition that produces sumo wrestlers. To this, Uncle Mike would only reply that we all have our crosses to bear and demons to fight. It's nice that people like you are there to steadfastly defend those addicted to tobacco, strong drink, and controlled substances. You do, right? Uncle Mike cannot remember ever thinking, let alone saying, that overweight people are "all dull-witted sloths". In the first place, he's not convinced that sloths are dull-witted, certainly no more than the legions of sleek and clueless who jog in hundred dollar sneakers and deep breathe exhaust fumes. You mention that many of the overly plump are discriminated against because of their physical appearance. Imagine that, a less than perfect world in which surface is rewarded more than substance. Maybe all of those black people were right. Discrimination in hiring based on percentage of body fat? The folks you want to talk to are the insurance companies who feel, along with the folks in health sciences, that, since obesity is a prime factor in heart disease and stroke as well as a strong contributor to other maladies vile and various, it constitutes a personal as well as a national health problem.

"Just because obese people wear their addictions on the outside, insensitive boobs, such as yourself, feel it's OK to make fun of them." Innocent. Uncle Mike has his hands full poking fun at insensitive boobs. As for the many women who "live their lives feeling inferior because they do not measure up to a totally unrealistic 'thin' image they are convinced they should achieve", Uncle Mike feels much compassion for them and sincerely hopes they grow a brain. Buying into hogwash is a personal choice. Much like that second trip to the buffet.

Dear Uncle Mike,

When you take a girl to a restaurant and they take you to the table, does the guy go first or the girl?

Eric S., Astoria

Dear Eric,

Uncle Mike is surprised that, living in Astoria, the question ever came up. Like most matters of etiquette, it depends. As a rule of thumb, the young lady is deferred to and precedes her escort to the table. This doesn't apply if the joint to which you've taken her is known for impromptu apache dancing and the breaking of beer pitchers over heads. In this case, neither of you should go first. Before you ask, it's the gentleman's responsibility to pass judgment on the wine. This is so the lady doesn't cut her nose sniffing the screw cap.

Dear Uncle Mike,

My boyfriend and I are very physical. We wrestle around a lot. Sometimes he lets me win. It's a lot of fun and sexy. We usually have great sex afterwards. Except when he tickles me. I've told him I don't like it but he just laughs. We've had fights about it (not physical) but he still does it sometimes. Is there any way to get him to stop?

Kate in Seattle


Dear Kate,

Uncle Mike would like to suggest tapping his forehead lightly with a mallet; but since the first rule on the playground is that nobody hits anyone ever, he won't. Uncle Mike sees two possible approaches. The first involves waiting around for the nimrod to start taking you seriously as a human and respect your wishes. The second is to cut your losses and find someone who knows how to play nice. Speaking of play, the sort you're indulging in would be seen by an alien naturalist as a ritualized power struggle whose object is domination and submission, faux warfare different only in degree from boxing and football. Relationships aren't sports and domination is for sissies.

Letters to Uncle Mike: PO Box 1242, Depoe Bay, OR 97341

The beauty parlor is full of sailors and the circus is in town.

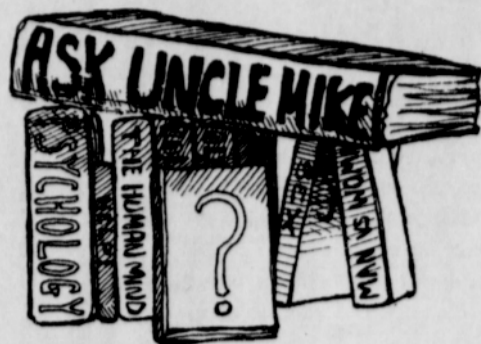
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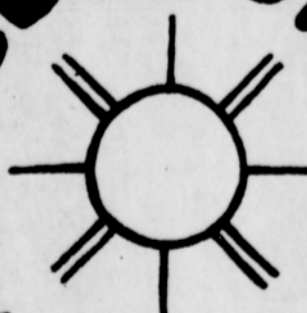
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