



Dear Uncle Mike,  
 What do you do when a woman breaks up with you and you can't get her out of your mind? I'm going crazy, I mean it. She won't return my phone calls and ignores me when I go to the restaurant she works at. I thought we were in love. At least I was and I don't know why she stopped seeing me. She won't tell me anything. She won't even talk to me. I drive by her apartment at night just to see if she's home and then wonder if one of the cars is her new boyfriend's. I've never done this before, usually I'm the one who leaves. Is this normal? It's like a hole I can't see out of.  
 Down Deep, Portland

Dear Down,  
 Interesting word, normal. We'll ignore it in favor of a standard easier to work with: appropriate. Your behavior is inappropriate, unacceptable and, one only hopes, beneath you. Uncle Mike strongly recommends getting a grip. The woman wants nothing to do with you. Short of shooing you away with a broom, what would you have her do? She doesn't want to talk things over or fix whatever was broken. She wants you out of her life. Given this, your romantic thrashings are flirting with harassment and, in some jurisdictions, stalking. Legal distinctions aside, you need to stop behaving like a mope. If the woman was meant to be with you, she'd be with you. If you lose something, it's because it's not yours anymore. Everyone's got a sad song to sing. How long you want to sit in your little hole and sing it is entirely up to you. Why not liven things up? Whenever the urge to wallow in your self-imposed emptiness strikes, stand in front of a mirror, bash your forehead with a fry pan (aluminum has a nice tone) and laugh at the cartoon your life has become. Then do something about changing it. Uncle Mike feels your pain. He just has little patience with it. Neither should you.

Dear Uncle Mike,  
 Some friends of ours recently got a dog. They brought the puppy over the day they got it, unannounced. My husband and I don't care for dogs but by allowing the puppy in, our friends assumed their dog was welcome also. It's now a large dog. These friends live in a nearby town and we don't see them all that often and so we hate to say anything that would make them feel uncomfortable. On the other hand, isn't it good manners to ask if we mind opening our home to a domesticated animal? We've made a few very veiled references to our feelings but they weren't picked up on evidently. What would be your approach?  
 Mamie, Bakersfield

Dear Mamie,  
 Uncle Mike's approach would be not to have insensitive friends. You can take this approach by telling your friends, politely and humanely, how you feel about dogs and asking if they'd mind leaving theirs at home. This will awaken their sensitivities and, depending how deeply into the love-me-love-my pet gestalt they're mired, your former friends. Either way, life will go on. Just as it would have had you used the opportunity to examine your feelings about dogs and friendship.

Dear Uncle Mike,  
 I don't know if you know anything about this but I thought I'd ask. My apartment doesn't allow cats. Do goldfish make good pets?  
 Lonely in Bend

Dear Lonely,  
 Uncle Mike has no idea how lonely you are but has trouble imagining how a goldfish might help. It would be unfair, although tempting, to say that goldfish are dumb as posts. They have a modest brain and a nervous system able to respond to stimuli at lightning speed. You just probably won't be one of them. Every species has its blind side, its Achilles heel, its little oar that doesn't reach the water. With the fish, its a nearly complete lack of memory. Your little pal may come to the glass when you rap on it with the frisbee, but it will have forgotten it ever laid eyes on you by the time it circles its tank. Only you know if you're this lonely. Did you know, by the way that goldfish are a breed of carp? Designer carp, granted, but carp nonetheless.

Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work. Thomas Edison

No problem is so formidable that you can't walk away from it. Charles Schultz

I always wanted to be somebody, but I should have been more specific. Lili Tomlin

An idealist is one who, on noticing that roses smell better than a cabbage, concludes that they will also make a better soup. H. L. Menken

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