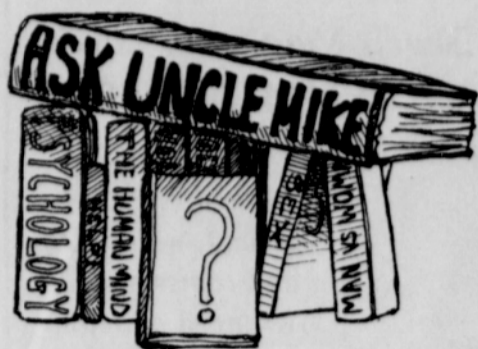


Therapy Page



Dear Uncle Mike,

I am a 47 year old single woman. I've never been married but have had several long term relationships. None of them ended well and I haven't been involved with anyone for two years. I recently met a man who interests me and I find myself asking if I really want to go through it again. He has made his interests plain and so even though he's a nice guy the pressure is there. I don't think I'm asking you what to do, how could you know?, but just whether this means I'm destined to be spinster.

Carolyn, Portland, Oregon

Dear Carolyn,

Uncle Mike is sadly unable to predict your future. He continues to be surprised by his own. Any predictions he has about life are strictly limited to the present. You are a grown woman; a woman not many years away from village elder status. Uncle Mike wonders why you take yourself so lightly. Have you learned nothing from the pain and sadness delivered to you, and by you, in your relationships with men? Are you saying you're not a stronger and smarter human being now? Even if life went on forever, it would be too short to say no to intimate companionship on the basis of it not being worth the trouble you think it might bring. What is it you're doing that makes you too busy to love? As you make up your mind, remember that the mind is much better at posing questions than answering them, that none of us knows anything much about tomorrow, and that life is generally as good as we believe it's going to be. Were Uncle Mike advising himself, he'd recommend he listen to his heart. That much he knows.

Dear Uncle Mike,

Do you believe in sin?

Chris, Santa Barbara, California

Dear Chris,

No, Uncle Mike believes in horrible mistakes. There are seven deadly ones: greed, wrath, pride, lust, envy, gluttony and sloth. They're deadly mistakes because, if you live your life indulging them, you'll have a miserable life. This becomes everyone's business because miserable people have a personal investment in, or an uncanny talent for, making other people miserable too. A sin is an act committed against God. A horrible mistake is an act that's inappropriate to the way the universe works. The wages of sin are death. The wages of horrible mistakes are a life of pain and sadness; and the sort of spiritual loneliness that can make death look good.

Dear Uncle Mike,

You hear a lot about unfaithful men. What about unfaithful women? I just separated from my wife and have filed for divorce. We were married for four years and she had three affairs I know about. She always said she was sorry and I believed she'd change. Women don't think men have any feelings but this tore me up so bad I almost lost my sanity and my job. I'm still a mess but I'm going to get over it. Women talk about men destroying their self esteem. They're as good at it as men if you ask me. I never read letters about this in the advice columns. How come?

Recovering Husband, Gresham, Oregon

Dear Recovering,

Uncle Mike couldn't help but notice you didn't include your name. Men are, thank goodness, reluctant to share their pain, especially when it's been delivered by women. This is not, as many suppose, a sign of emotional impairment. In grief management, it is no longer accepted as gospel that the bereaved will feel better if they talk about things. For some people, talking about what's eating you keeps you from getting over it. When confronted with loss, some people are better off to just get on their horse and ride away. Popular psychology calls this stuffing your feelings, and recommends instead that we wallow in our depression and describe it to innocent bystanders. Men (not all, but Uncle Mike would venture to guess most) continue to just ride away. It's hard to do this and write to an advice column at the same time.

The second reason is that no one is allowed to point out shortcomings in women. In fact, several studies indicate women don't actually have shortcomings; just strengths men can't deal with. Pardon Uncle Mike while he slaps his knee and snorts. Your soon to be ex-wife is, or at least was, what country western songs call a faithless woman. Eat your pain and ride away.

Dear Uncle Mike,

Did you see the news about the new chastity belt for men? Lordy! It's a clear plastic bent tube with a padlock on it. And the inventor says he has worn his for a year! Okay, okay... my first thought was how does he wear this cumbersome object... and then, of course, show me. The purpose, they said, was to make a woman feel trust. Can you imagine? Maybe you could write your comments about trust in relationships and sell it to them. Has it come down to this?

Unbelievable, Beaverton, Oregon

Dear Unbelievable,

Evidently it has. Not, however, on Uncle Mike's block. Your first thought was how this hopeless mope wears his moral truss. Uncle Mike's first thought is why his friends and family haven't intervened long before now. Let's dispose of the obvious silliness first. The key. Does one keep it with one or is it hidden in a self help book? Does one give a spare to a friend in case of emergency? Must one practice at home so that the process of unlocking is a swift, smooth action rather like throwing off a cape? Do they come in colors and why not? Pardon Uncle Mike while he weeps.

If the avowed purpose of the contraption (which, were Uncle Mike promoting it, would be called the Little Emasculator) is to elicit trust from the woman of the first part, Uncle Mike would hope the result is a lasting marriage, thus saving two other people whose lives might otherwise be normal. In Uncle Mike's world, trust is something that's earned by what we do. We're either trustworthy or not and, short of strategically implanted

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- Moses Hadas (1900-1966)

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