

Dear Uncle Mike,

I am a 14 year old girl and I am writing to you because I am unhappy. I am not good looking. My mother says I'm pretty in my own way but nobody else thinks so. My girlfriends always have boys around them, I don't. I know boys aren't everything but I wish they were interested in me and they aren't.

My mother says be patient that boys learn to like girls not just because they're cute. (So much for being pretty in my own way, huh?) I am writing to you because you have answered similar problems from kids my age and I am hoping you can help me feel better. I sure would like to.

Debbie, Portland, Oregon

Dear Debbie,

Uncle Mike is sorry to hear you're unhappy. It happens to all of us from time to time. Whenever it happens to Uncle Mike, he reminds himself that people are usually about as happy as they decide to be. It may not make him feel better but it puts the ball back in his court. Uncle Mike is happy when he looks for something to be happy about.

Okay, let's say for a moment you're not this year's definition of pretty. (Neither, if you must know the truth, is Uncle Mike.) This does not, and will not, doom you to a life of loneliness. What could doom you to a life of loneliness is to not engage the world, and the clueless boys in it, as if what truly matters is a person's spirit and the greatness of their heart.

Uncle Mike would strongly suggest you listen to your mother. You are, believe it or not, an attractive young lady. Act the part. Find something you do well and be all over it. Find something you want to know and learn it. Find people you like to be with and be with them. We're all attracted to people who are a) interesting, and b) interested in us. Be that sort of person. Laugh whenever you can, smile often and mean it. There's no great mystery to finding happiness: we just need to actively, and intelligently, seek it. People who are seeking it are more attractive, and more intelligent, than people who aren't. No one is less attractive, or more dense, than boys who think girls are only skin deep. With luck, and your help, they might grow up to be men with a brain.

Dear Uncle Mike,

I've been going out with this girl for about two months. Last week I stopped by her place during the day without calling and she was kissing a kind of friend of mine goodbye. They didn't see me and I just kept going. We went out that night and I waited for her to say something but she didn't. So I asked her if she was seeing someone else and she said not really. So I told her I saw her and this guy and she said he just came by to bring her some (colloquial term for carefully cultivated hemp). I asked him and he said there's nothing going on but it sure looked like it to me. I'd like to trust everybody but I don't know. What would you do? Shawn, Eugene, Oregon

Dear Shawn,

Uncle Mike would give them the benefit of the doubt. Then Uncle Mike would wait and watch. What Uncle Mike wouldn't have done in the first place was drop by anyone's home without calling first. Very bad form.

Dear Uncle Mike,

An old and very dear friend of mine is dying of cancer and I have been helping with her home care. She has been ill for some time and her chemotherapy leaves her sick and exhausted. I count her husband as a friend and the ordeal has been very hard on him. I have never doubted their love for each other. I still don't, even after this: the other night after my friend had gone to sleep, he asked if I would give him a (euphemism for fellatio). We're both mature people and he explained that the stress and lack of sex with his wife were driving him to seek comfort elsewhere and since we were friends. . . I nearly fell on the floor. I can (nearly) understand that, since I am giving care to his wife, he might assume by some male logic that I would do the same for him. I dealt with the situation in my own way but would be curious to hear what your response might have been had you been in my shoes.

Not Going There, Portland, Oregon

Dear Not,

Uncle Mike would have offered his sympathy to hear the sleazy mope had lost the use of his hands.



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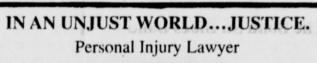
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