

Rocky seas lead to drifting ships

Dear Annie: My wife and I are drifting apart. I'm a recovering alcoholic of four years. I put her through a lot when I was drinking. When I got sober, I put my recovery first. I went to a lot of meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous and put her second. Now, she is seeing someone else.

I think at this point it's only an emotional affair, not a sexual one. But there have been times when she said she was going out with friends, and I know she went out with him. I'm not sure how I feel about it. I should be angry, and I'm not. But I don't like it — it bothers me to no end. Communication in our relationship is nonexistent. I'm not sure what to do. — *Drifting*

Dear Drifting: Let's start with congratulations on your recovery. Four years is something to be very proud of. It sounds like your wife still harbors resentment and pain from your drinking days. I might suggest that she attend Al-Anon meetings to help her better understand why you have to put your recovery first. My guess is that you know that if you didn't, everything else in your life would fall apart, including your marriage.

The past is past, and it sounds like you have made amends. Communication is key in any marriage. It's been so long that you and your wife might need to rebuild these communication channels to make this work. Take action and seek the help of a professional marriage counselor. If your wife refuses to go, then you should go yourself. Sometimes, when people use alcohol to numb their feelings for years, they lose touch with them. It's time to go to a therapist or counselor and rediscover how you do feel about things.

And keep going to meetings. As they say in AA, the program

works if you work it.

Dear Annie: I'm a married woman who has been in a secret relationship for three years with a co-worker of mine. My boyfriend died by suicide last week, and my world has been turned upside-down. I was the last person he texted, and he wanted me to come over. I told him I couldn't. A couple of hours later, he was gone. I have been crying uncontrollably ever since, and no one understands why.

He, too, was in a relationship, and I was led to believe she knew about us and was OK with our relationship. My husband does not know. Because I'm the "other woman," I had no say in anything after his passing and wasn't able to keep anything of his as a memory. My question is this: Would it be wrong to reach out to his family? They do not know about our relationship, and I wonder if I should tell them. I also want a few belongings (just a T-shirt, if anything!), but would it be wrong to ask? — *Grieving "Girlfriend"*

Dear Grieving Girlfriend: There is a lot to unpack in your letter. First, I am sorry that you lost your boyfriend to suicide. It is truly a tragedy when someone takes their own life. As far as wanting to tell his family that he was having an affair with you, I might hold off for a while. They are grieving the loss of their son.

This might be a good time to get into therapy yourself. First, to understand why you felt the need to stay in your marriage, and then to process the trauma of losing your boyfriend to suicide. Assuming you still want to stay married, you owe it to your husband to get into marriage counseling and to come clean with him and hope that you can rebuild your relationship based on trust and forgiveness.



ANNIE LANE
Creators
Syndicate Inc.



A grey seal lounges on a small island in Casco Bay off Portland, Maine.

Robert F. Bukaty/AP Photo

Seals spark passionate debate

By **PATRICK WHITTLE**
and **MICHAEL CASEY**
Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine — Nick Muto has fished up and down the New England coast and there is nothing that gets his blood boiling more than the sight of a seal.

Muto, whose two boats fish for groundfish such as skate and monkfish as well as lobster, is among a growing group of anglers, beachgoers and local officials who are quick to blame everything from disease to depleted fisheries to increased shark sightings on the exploding seal population.

"Areas that we used to traditionally fish that were as close to guarantees as you could get have been strip mined of fish, and the fish have been driven out of there by seals," Muto said. "They have eaten fish out of our nets. They have been caught in our nets. They are everywhere."

The debate over seals was reignited after the death in July of a swimmer killed by a great white off Harpswell, Maine. Seals are often shark prey, and experts believe Julie Dimperio Holowach may have been mistaken for a seal.

No one questions that seal and shark numbers are on the rise, mostly due to federal protections. It's estimated there are

as many as 50,000 grey seals in New England waters plus a lesser number of harbor seals. The animals were almost eliminated through hunting and bounties decades ago.

But experts maintain there is not enough science to determine whether the current population is too big and little basis for culling the marine mammals. Even suggesting seals are destroying fisheries or are solely to blame for shark attacks is not supported by hard evidence. Experts say warming waters and other factors also could be playing a role. The Gulf of Maine, which stretches from Cape Cod to Nova Scotia, has been heating up faster than 99% of the world's oceans.

"We get into this question of how many grey seals there are. The next question is how many seals should there be, which is kind of where people are going to go next with that, which is a very challenging thing," said David Johnston, a marine ecologist at Duke University who has done grey seal population estimates using Google Earth and tagged seals to demonstrate how their feeding behavior changes due to sharks in the northwest Atlantic.

Seal population rise has prompted the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to propose guidelines for deterring marine mammals,

including physical barriers to keep seals away from fishing gear.

"Frustration by fishermen and property owners stemming from conflicts with marine mammals has increased," NOAA's proposal notes. The agency is taking comments until Oct. 30.

But Johnston and Stephanie Wood, a University of Massachusetts Boston seal biologist currently surveying seals in the Boston Harbor, said the public should view seals as a conservation success story, rather than a problem to be managed.

Hunted almost into extinction by the 1900s, seals were given federal protection in 1972 by the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Seals began returning to New England waters in the 1980s and 1990s from Nova Scotia and have thrived ever since — often raising pups on federally protected islands once home to hunting and fishing camps. They also disperse widely and have benefited from a wide-ranging diet, including fish, crustaceans and squid.

"Habitat opened up for seals, which is sort of the opposite story that we hear about a lot of other populations struggling to recover," said Wood, noting that other marine mammals such as whales and monk seals "haven't recovered in the same way."

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CANDIDATE FORUM

A forum for candidates in the November election will be held on
Oct. 6 from 7 to 9 p.m. in Astoria

The forum will be conducted via Facebook Live and will also be broadcast by Coast Community Radio on Oct. 7 from 6 to 8 p.m.

STATE HOUSE DIST. 32

- **Debbie Boothe-Schmidt (D)**
- **Suzanne Weber (R)**

ASTORIA WARD 2

- **Tom Brownson**
- **Floyd Holcom**

ASTORIA WARD 4

- **Joshua Conklin**
- **Tom Hilton**
- **Heather Kelez**
- **Lisa Morley**

The forum is a collaboration between the American Association of University Women Astoria Branch, Clatsop Community College, The Astorian and Coast Community Radio.

People can submit questions for the candidates via
aauwforum@gmail.com