

# YOU asked!

By Suzanne Takowsky



**Q.** I am 37, have never been married, and it looks as though I never will be. I've never understood men and have always had difficulty with relationships. When I was younger, I always put the blame on whomever I was dating. But, the older I get and the more men I go with, I'm having to face the fact that the problem is with me. I am the one who can't get along.

I've never broken off any of the relationships because the men call it quits and their complaints are similar. They say that I'm bossy, controlling,

mean, sarcastic and unyielding. You name it. The truth is I know I am, but I can't stop this awful pattern. It seems the only time I am happy is when I am calling the shots. I don't feel confident or happy unless I have the upper hand.

My last relationship ended a month ago. We were together almost 10 months—a record for me. I really loved him and I feel horribly every time I think about all the nagging and fighting that went on because I always had to have my way and be in control. I want to get married and be happy. How can I break this rut and have a normal relationship with a man?

**A.** There comes a time when it's necessary to seek a qualified therapist and share disturbances in our lives that are causing us pain. From what you are telling me, that time has arrived for you. You didn't talk about your family life growing up, your parents, their relationship or anything that happened to you as a child that could be behind your behavior as an adult. But I would feel safe in saying your childhood is probably where this began. We tend to pattern our adult relationships after childhood observations. Insecurity and lack of self-esteem are culprits behind many difficulties in our lives. The need to be in control stems from feeling out of control, helpless and inadequate.

Speaking with a therapist is just about the best thing you can do. You have spent too much of your life being unhappy and trying to figure out what is wrong. Isn't it time you began the process of understanding yourself so you can start the journey to a full and happy life, with or without marriage? Many times, what looks insurmountable is easily overcome when someone lends a hand, points us in the right direction and gives us the tools necessary to overcome obstacles keeping us stuck in a rut.

I'm sure when you sit down with a therapist and begin to think back to your childhood, you will discover the answers to your questions. It could be that your parents were so controlling that lights flash when you are in a situation where you once again feel out of control and someone else is in charge. Instead of sharing your feelings in a calm manner that elicits co-operation from your partner, fear takes over and you feel threatened and get bitchy. Possibly growing up, you decided it was better to have the upper hand, than feel vulnerable — an emotion that takes a great deal of no-fear to pull off. Perhaps you witnessed your parents in non-stop arguments — neither willing to give in for fear of losing their power. Each argument had to end with a loser and a winner.

Realizing something is causing pain, then taking the steps necessary to correct it, is the biggest gift we can give ourselves. ●

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**Q.** A year ago, a friend of mine was dating a guy I thought was great. She obviously didn't think so and dumped him. I had been around them several times, and he and I got along extremely well. I had a bit of a crush on him, although I never let on. After they broke up, I would occasionally see him, and things were always cordial, although there was never any actual flirting between us. A week ago, I bumped into him at a club and sparks flew. We ended up leaving together and although we didn't spend the night together, we had a passionate "make-out" session in his car for more than an hour which left us both wanting more. He has called me and I've called him, but that's as far as we've taken it. I'm unsure of how to handle this since I'm still friends with my girlfriend. Is there a rule on dating a friend's "ex?"

**A.** There is no "rule" set in cement concerning dating a friend's "ex." There are those who don't mind at all if an "ex" ends up dating a friend. They feel once the relationship is over—it's over, and everyone is free to move on in which ever direction they want. There are others, however, who insist their "ex" be off limits to anyone within a 50 mile radius. For instance, the break-up might have been an extremely painful one and the sight of their "ex" wrapped around someone they both knew while they were together may be just too much to handle. Remember there is a very thin line between love and hate and no one knows the dynamics of a relationship, or what went wrong, but the people involved.

If it was your friend who broke off the relationship, most probably she will not mind you dating him. Although you do not need her approval, especially considering the amount of time that has passed since their break-up, I would nevertheless give her a call and drop a dime on your intentions. It wouldn't hurt and might help avoid an embarrassing situation if by chance you and he happen to run into her which will leave you looking like a snake and feeling guilty as hell unless by then, you and she are no longer friends.

The wording you use when speaking to her is important. Rather than "Can I?"...ask her "How do you feel? Since you have just begun the long process we know as dating, be sure to do just that; make it a long process, carefully watching to see just what kind of a guy he is before proclaiming it to be mad, passionate love. You could lose her friendship, if not right away, maybe down the road. Is he worth it? Is her friendship worth chancing it? Maybe so, but maybe not. Time will tell. Here are a couple of things to keep in mind if you decide to date a friend's "ex." Make sure he really wants you, and isn't hoping to make her jealous at the sight of the two of you together. And since you may be moving in the same social circle, decide beforehand how the two of you will handle bumping into her or mutual friends.

Long lunches, instead of romantic late-night dinners are a great way to test the waters before you jump into full-fledge dating. Leave the bubbling champagne for down the road, after you get to know each other a little better. You may have known him before as the boyfriend of your friend, but things are entirely different now that he is your future "ex"! ●