

Spring 2002

Relationship Advice

By David A. Kenny

I asked Arm Landers and Abigail Van Buren (Dear Abby) to forward to me some questions that they have received about relationships. I then farmed out these questions to experts in our field and they have written back with answers. Because they were so busy, I asked them to give very short answers. To give our relationship experts anonymity, I have only used initials. Here are the questions and answers'.

Question: There is a girl at school that I like a lot and I am kinda shy. I do not seem to be able to find a way to get her to like me. Can you give me some help?

Answer from DD & AA: Is there a shaky bridge near where you live?

Question: My boyfriend keeps wanting to know where I am going and who I am going to be with. He accuses me of having sex with every man I know. What kind of jealous guy am I dating?

Answer from BB: Perhaps preventive but very likely anxious.

Question: I have been married some 30 years. We no longer even touch each other and the only thing I seem to say to her and she to me is "Yep" and "Huh." I find this relationship to

be totally unsatisfying. Why do I continue to stay with her?

Answer from CR: Investment, investment, investment

Question: My girlfriend Jane and I seem to have a problem in our relationship and maybe you can help us. She keeps giving me gifts, and when she does, I buy her a gift in return. However, instead of being grateful when I buy Jane a gift, she gets pissed off at me when I do this and says I did not have to buy her a gift in return. What type of couple are we?

Answer from PC & JM: Jane communal, you exchange.

Question: I was involved for some 20 years in a relationship with a man I deeply loved. Unfortunately, six months ago he left me for someone else. I keep thinking about him and wonder what I could have done to have kept him. What should I be doing?

Answer from SD: Move onto stage 4 and try some grave dressing.

Question: We have been married for 10 years, and I thought we had a happy marriage. But lately my spouse has been very hostile and has been blaming me for all the problems in our marriage. What is the matter?

Answer from FF & TB: Looks like he has a bad case of negative attributions.

Question: I am married to what would seem to be the perfect woman. Everyone I know thinks I should be the happiest man in the world, but I am not. What can I do to be happy?

Answer from HK: You need to lower your CL(alt).

Question: I keep dating humanoids who are very dominating and unfriendly? Can you give me any advice on finding other types of partners?

Answer from JW: Sample some other part of the circumplex.

Question: I go on blind dates all the time and no one likes me. What is going on?

Answer from DK: Evidently you have an exceptionally low partner effect for affect. Maybe someday you might get lucky and find someone with a positive outlier relationship effect.