

Getting Together

Dear Judith and James,

I've become close friends with a girl that lives in my dorm. We study together almost every night and go to the movies once in awhile on weekends. I really enjoy her and think I love her. I'd like to take the relationship the next step (and I think she would too) but I'm afraid that if we become romantic and sexual it'll ruin our wonderful friendship.

J.W.S., Washington

Many people share your concern. They're afraid they won't be able to manage the various demands an intimate relationship makes on two people. But, like anything else, that's simply a matter of experience. No one knows for certain how they will behave when their relationship expands. You'll have to learn by doing.

Unfortunately, many people build their relationships on faulty assumptions. They believe that care and attraction will only survive as long as they keep everything in place, neat and tidy, controlled and safe. Well, relationships aren't like that.

A good, fulfilling relationship is one that grows and changes. It's nurtured by ongoing discoveries and personal realizations. Much of that cannot be predicted. So, should you take the next step, you'll have to step, at least in part, right into the unknown -- and that's scary. Of course, it can be very exciting, as well!

While there are significant differences between the intimacy of studying together and becoming a couple, what remains the same is the openness and trust that springs from honest, revealing communication.

Assuming you make the decision to expand the possibilities of your relationship, you must be respectful of your personal differences, which will increasingly surface. While they can be confusing or threatening, they can also be delightful and enriching. The trouble arises when they lead to conflict. But conflict doesn't have to be destructive. Quite the contrary, the conflict of differences can be very rewarding, challenging you both to grow and flourish. But, you must be able to separate your student identities and responsibilities from the rest of your time together.

More to the point, people who have difficulty being both friends and lovers lack a strong enough sense of self to clearly define their two distinctly different relationships. Not only can't they separate romantic intimacies from the requirements of school, they don't even know that such distinctions are possible. Then, of course, they have good reason to fear mixing the two.

If you two choose to deepen your connection you'll need to talk about differentiating your school life from your romantic/sexual involvement. That will be a valuable lesson for you both.

We understand your concern. We've been married and have worked together for over eight years. We travel nationally and internationally presenting our REAL LIFE LOVE relationship trainings and maintain our office in our home. Many people have told us they would never be able to spend so much time with their mates.

We work well together because we're secure enough in our own identities to not worry about who's doing more work, or who last did the grocery shopping. We know we're both equal contributors and have each other's well being and our company's best interest in mind.

Also, and this is fundamental, we understand that every experience we have together, even the worst fights, contains the basis for personal and mutual growth. That way, all facets of our relationship are ultimately valuable.

We understand that the annoyances, disagreements, hurt feelings, fears or confusions caused by our differences are natural and normal -- not evidence that we are "wrong" for each other. Every relationship worth being part of will evoke discomfort from time to time. There's no such thing as a "conflict free" relationship when true intimacy is present.

Love holds lessons for all of us. It's never a free ride. Whether your relationship blossoms into a permanent, committed bond or it's simply a fun part of college life, there's no way to be intimately involved without being challenged to grow and change. There can be vast treasures available when this is the case.

As your intimacy deepens, your differences can become major assets, providing differing points of view, unique talents and expertise, enabling you to help one another not just academically, but also emotionally and psychologically as well.

We encourage you to take the risk of finding out if your friend has feelings similar to your own. Even if she doesn't you will be stronger for having revealed your desire.

Let us know what happens.

Husband and wife team, Judith Sherven, Ph.D. and James Sniechowski, Ph.D., are internationally recognized gender and relationship experts. Send your questions or comments to them at 12021 Wilshire Blvd. #692, Los Angeles, CA 90025 or e-mail address: ShervSniec@AOL.com. They will respond either in "Getting Together" or by return mail. You can learn more about them and download a free article from their World Wide Web Home Page at http://www3.1mail.com/Magic_Of_Differences/

John Says, "Be Nice."

John Rosomondo
Collegian Staff

We supposedly live in an age of tolerance and consideration, but do we really? Whenever you go on campus or around town it seems as if everyone is only thinking of themselves. They are always acting like they would prefer to do their own thing without taking into consideration how other people are affected. People routinely throw their garbage out the windows or their cars and expect other people to clean up after them. Hey, I plead guilty, but we have to start taking into consideration how we affect other people.

If I have one pet peeve it must be profanity. Do people really need to say f@*& this and *&%\$ that? If this university needs to control any language it would have to be profanity. All anyone does when they use profanity is show what idiots they are. What ever happened to manners?

Would it be too hard to say please and thank you, or I'm sorry? You know that a little kindness goes a long way. Do you know that person that drives you nuts? If you went up to them and said something nice it would probably make their day. If you eat up in Dobbins be considerate to your fellow students and clear off your trays. Seeing that you care enough to clean up after yourself would just make their day.

Some of the greatest people are others-centered. Mother Teresa of Calcutta is beloved because she cares for other people before she cares for herself. Who will mourn for a self-centered person? Make your life evolve around other people. Seeing other people benefit from your selflessness is more rewarding than any fix of alcohol or sex. Self-centered pleasures are only temporary, but others-centered pleasures last and last. If you help the elderly or the weak they will return your kindness in many ways. You must know the real pleasure of helping others. How are you helping society by smoking pot, drinking alcohol, or sleeping around? Do you want to be part of the problem, or part of the solution?

The greatest way to live your life is by placing others first and yourself last. The rewards are immeasurable. Isn't it great to hear he's or she's such a kind and considerate person rather than he or she is so selfish. Is your life one that revolves around self or one that wants to give to help other people? If you care about other people help them when they are down. Consider the effects of your actions upon other people. Clean your language up because alot of people find profanity inconsiderate. Try to think about other people before you think about yourself.

V-Day Angst

by Mary Began
Collegian Staff

Valentine's Day. That special day of the year devoted to lovers for, what I feel is, the mere sake of causing everyone else to recognize you love for another. Well, isn't that just grand. Letting those of us who don't really care nor have a love of their own know all about you and your "honey." You, dancing around on air, your head in the clouds, and your notebook filled with doodles of hearts. Spare me. Although yes, I too celebrated in Valentine festivities, I always remembered those who didn't, or at least, those who couldn't. Because you know why? I was once one of them. One of those hopeless, miserable, endlessly searching for love with all the wrong people type of person. We've all been one of them. Sure, I loved being single and dating freely, but when it came down to it, I never really knew what true love was until one day--POOF! There it was, and it was the greatest, most beautiful, sweetest thing alive. I danced on air, I drew hearts, I laughed and I sang. I'm sure I was intolerable to others; it sickened me at times. Then slowly, but surely, I dragged along, I stopped writing hearts, I cried and I wept. Now the love is gone and I'm empty without it; I know what it's like.

I'm not trying to tell a sob story or make those of you who can relate to this hurt even more than you already do. My point is simply this: there shouldn't have to be only one day to honor love, it should be an honor to love and be in love, everyday, whether it be love for your wife or love for your parents. For those of you who are experiencing the time of your life, go ahead, live it up, enjoy and savor every moment, but do me and the other single people out there a favor - have some consideration for us. But most of all, never take love for granted because one day--POOF! It might be gone. Trust me, I know.

