

Friendship with woman is making him feel uneasy



ASK ELLIE | His wife says she has no problem with it, but it doesn't seem right to him

DEAR ELLIE: I became friends with a female co-worker who was dating my male colleague and friend. My wife and I had them over for dinner parties. I left that job; the couple later broke up.

I was always closer to her. Eventually I broke ties with the guy, who wasn't so great. She and I kept in touch and have had lunch together, since we work nearby. We've even had dinner and seen a movie occasionally and sometimes talk on the phone. We usually go when I have a softball game after work and have to wait several hours to play (I live too far to go home and back).

Her family likes me but doesn't approve of us hanging out. More importantly, I've asked my wife before each time that my friend and I hang out to make sure she's OK with it. I love my wife and kids and have a great life with them. I don't see my friend as anything other than that.

My wife trusts me, which makes me love her even more. Am I doing the right thing by my wife? Should I worry about what my friend's family thinks?

Just Friends

DEAR JUST FRIENDS: Why court trouble? If her family disapproves, they don't fully trust her and feel she's disrespecting someone (your wife, someone she dates?). While it's fine for married people to have friends of the opposite sex, it's best to share that friendship with your partner, rather than always meet as just you two. Invite this pal to your home when you have others coming for a dinner, and do less of the getting together without your wife.

During that wait for the softball game, you could be picking up groceries, have your wife get a sitter and meet you for a "date" before and afterward, or have the whole family come out to watch you play.

DEAR ELLIE: A family member who's very ill may have only a few years left. He's always been very angry, and conveyed that I'm lower on the scale. He's always saying he's great looking, sexy, generous, while I should wear nicer shoes, go to a better hairdresser, lose weight, etc.

I researched Narcissistic Personality Disorder on the Internet and he fits the criteria: an inflated sense of self-importance, need for admiration, lack of empathy for others. Now he's more abusive and blames us or his illness for everything, including his own nastiness.

Should I let him know he may have this disorder or will that cause a bigger outburst? He already had a major blowout and has stopped all communication with me.

Fed Up

DEAR FED UP: Do not counter his nastiness with your own — that's what your "diagnosis" appears to be: a way to get back at this man. Internet descriptions are generalized, not specific to a particular person who may have other factors affecting behavior, such as a brain tumor, chronic pain or other things that you do not know and can't assume.

Your reaction to his putdowns is partly your own contribution to the negative relationship. You could've laughed and said you love your own hairdo, you're happy with your weight. Instead, some of your annoyance has to do with your own self-esteem issues.

Leave this man with his much greater burden to bear than yours. If you want to try to rise above the situation, send him a nice note, and only see him again when you feel strong enough not to let his comments get to you.

Ellie's column runs Monday through Friday. Send e-mail to askellie@suntimes.com.

CHICAGO'S ORIGINAL CITY GUIDE

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In the Know: Brian Huston

BY MICHAEL NAGRANT

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Brian Huston, chef de cuisine of the Publican, 845 W. Fulton Market, has a diabolical smile. The corners of his mouth curl up like Jack Nicholson's Joker in the original "Batman" when he talks. It's a signal of the sinful offerings he's about to unleash on Chicago. Huston's planned opening menu, featuring cider vinegar-cured and salted pork rinds, tripe and blood sausage gratin and Wagyu steak tartare, is one of the most palate-tempting we've ever seen. We checked in to see what other devilish schemes he has up his sleeve on the eve of the Publican's opening.



Chef de cuisine Brian Huston is nervous because the Publican has been a long time coming. | CLIFTON HENRI-FOR THE SUN-TIMES

Q. What's the best Chicago-related advice you've heard?

A. Leave town. As a chef once told me, if you love Chicago so much, the best thing to do is get out of town and bring something back. So I worked in San Francisco and Colorado.

Q. Where should we eat if we come to your neighborhood?

A. I live up in Evanston. Michael Altenberg used to run Campagnola. Now there's a guy named Vince, and Altenberg's partner Steve still runs it. I think when Michael left, people forgot about it. They still turn out solid Italian standards. I don't think it gets enough credit.

thing where I embraced it.

Q. The menu for the Publican was developed at executive chef Paul Kahan's house. What was that like?

A. [Kahan] would grade us and it would be like, C-. I'd say we were successful half the time, and half the time we'd walk out asking, "Can I cook?" He's never satisfied, which is why the food is so great at both these places [Avec, 615 W. Randolph, and Blackbird, 619 W. Randolph]. Initially we just had a lot of fun, drank a lot of beer and grilled out at his house and kinda lost focus.

Q. What does it feel like to be part of the opening of one of the most anticipated restaurants in Chicago?

A. I wonder, is it going to be like going to see the new Indiana Jones, and you guys are going to go there [and say], "What, a spaceship? Are you kidding me, this isn't what I thought it would be like." I have a feeling people will be lining up at the door just to cut us down because it's taken so long to open. The food's going to be simple. That's going to be the hardest part. You've had chicken a million times in your life, and you're going to compare it to Grandma's chicken. We're going to do dash browns, and there's a diner down the street you've been going to for 20 years, and you're going to have those to compare it to.

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Emerald Loop, 216 N. Wabash: \$6

burger and fries, \$10.95 herb-crusted goat cheese salad

Union Park, 228 S. Racine: \$2 sangria and domestic bottles; \$2 for 2 tacos

WEST SIDE

Abbey Pub, 3420 W. Grace: \$2 drafts of Miller Lite; \$3 burger and fries

Black Beetle, 2532 W. Chicago: \$3 Dewars drinks

Blu Coral, 1265 N. Milwaukee: half-price bottles of selected wine; \$40-\$60 dinner prix-fixe menu

Cafe Laguardia, 2111 W. Armitage: \$5 tuxedo mojitos

NORTH SIDE

El Nuevo Mexicano, 2914 N. Clark: half-price margaritas

Kit Kat Lounge and Supper Club, 3700 N. Halsted: half-price martinis

River Shannon, 425 W. Armitage: \$10 pitchers of domestic beer, \$13 pitchers of imported beer

Witt's, 2913 N. Lincoln: \$2 drafts of Bud Light, half-price glasses of wine; \$5 burger and chips

TV TALK TODAY

"Live With Regis and Kelly" (9 a.m., Channel 9): Actress Diane Lane.

"The View" (10 a.m., Channel 7): Actor Aaron Eckhart; actor Robert Wagner.

"The Ellen DeGeneres Show" (3 p.m., Channel 5): Actress Alli-

son Janney; actor Simon Baker; music group Pussycat Dolls.

"The Daily Show With Jon Stewart" (10 p.m., Comedy Central): Former President Bill Clinton.

"The Colbert Report" (10:30 p.m., Comedy Central): Musi-

cian Jackson Browne.

"Late Show With David Letterman" (10:35 p.m., Channel 2): Actress Julianne Moore; comics Tom Dreesen and Tim Reid; music group Kings of Leon.

"The Tonight Show With Jay Leno" (10:35 p.m., Channel

5): Comedian Wanda Sykes; actor Zach Levi; musician Glen Campbell.

"Tavis Smiley" (11:30 p.m., Channel 11): Actor Ed Harris.

"Late Late Show With Craig Ferguson" (11:35 p.m., Channel 2): Actor John Krasinski.

"Late Night With Conan O'Brien" (11:35 p.m., Channel 5): Actor Billy Bob Thornton.

"Jimmy Kimmel Live" (12:05 a.m., Channel 7): Comedian Dane Cook; actors Dylan and Cole Sprouse; music group Atmosphere.