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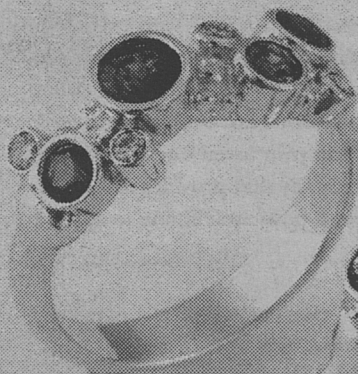
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Naked Curiosity: Benefits and Risks



**dennis
scott-bush**

Lawrence and Chris have been friends for years. They met during college and have remained close through a series of jobs, boyfriends and assorted adventures.

A few weeks ago, they both got hired by the same company and decided to treat each other to an expensive dinner to celebrate. They stopped at a couple bars on the way home and ended up at Lawrence's apartment for a nightcap.

According to their identical retellings of the tale, what happened next was completely unexpected. They were sitting on the sofa talking about their new salary and benefits packages when they

calls, they had no contact with those sex-only pals.

Lawrence and Chris didn't want to merely add another playmate to their lists at the expense of losing a good friend. Yet, neither could picture the other as a serious boyfriend. They liked being friends but also liked what they'd just shared.

Can casual sex between friends really remain casual, and can the friends stay friends after sex?

When I first met Dirk, years ago, he told me that he slept with all his friends. We gradually became friends and his string of bedded buddies was uninterrupted. It was peculiar, at first, to experience getting laid in such a laid back

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found themselves making out and groping each other's packages. And, without discussing what was happening, they went from being friends to being friends with benefits.

Was it the cocktails or the convenience of congenial cocks and tails that led them to their lusty linking? Neither was a stranger to the foreplay-facilitating power of alcohol and neither had been particularly active, in terms of sex, in recent months. So, their pumps were primed.

As they languished on Lawrence's bed, after injecting the carnal component into their friendship, they pondered the impact of their actions.

They both had men in their lives who were strictly sex buddies. A call to one of those chums for a no-strings romp in the sack yielded results but no real connection beyond the physical. Between

way but I was able to adapt.

We'd go to a movie or museum and, afterward, instead of a hug or quick kiss goodbye, we'd go back to Dirk's apartment and have sex. It's not something we talked about or planned but it was a tacit assumption that whenever we got together, we got together.

At his birthday party, I met a roomful of guys who were also enjoying enhanced companionship with Dirk. A group of us clustered in the kitchen to compare notes and, of course, to compare ourselves to each other.

We discovered that all of us had stopped looking for other romantic or sexual relationships soon after we'd gotten acquainted with Dirk. In addition to the realization that Dirk was having sex with a lot of guys and we were all getting it only from Dirk, we rec-

ognized that we'd each gotten lulled into the comfort and convenience of a handy, randy friendship with benefits.

One night, that same year, another friend and I got frisky and, though risky, decided to make our relationship sex-inclusive. Scott was a great guy and appending the pleasurable extras to our friendship seemed to go without a hitch. During that same period, I was dating a gentleman who traveled occasionally for business. Not coincidentally, when he was out of town, I spent more time with Scott. That pattern went on for a couple months, though it wasn't long before Scott began to resent feeling like a seat filler at an awards show. He suggested that I would be better off being single and focusing on my friends.

Scott had repeatedly denied any desire for us to be full-blown boyfriends. He said that he liked our arrangement just as it was and didn't think we should take a chance by adding romance. So he clung to what we already had rather

than explore what we might have had, instead.

Like most complex relationships that appear to be simpler than they are, casual sex between friends requires a lot of communication and clearly established parameters. Even then, there are still inherent dangers.

At its best, a friendship with benefits can offer a safe, nurturing environment for sexual expression. But, at its worst, it can be a tangled mess of co-dependence that's more of a trap than a safety net.

Are the benefits worth the risks?

Ask a friend. ▼

D. Scott-Bush's work appears throughout the country. E-mail him at

NakedCuriosity@aol.com.