

Ask Aunt Gay

Aunt Gay, housepainter and gardener, lives in a cold, corner of the Northwest Queerdom. She's been learning from her mistakes for 87 years.

Dear Aunt Gay,

You would not believe the arguments my lover and I get into about dogfood. No, it's not the brand or the odor; nor the political implications of feeding horsemeat to a genetically mutated, semi-consensually domesticated animal while inner city Hispanics are protein-deprived. Nothing so lofty. We argue about the storage location.

You see, we don't live together. The dog lives with me, the lover lives alone, and the three of us get together at the lover's place. Frequently. Being the efficient sort, I keep some of my things there. Now it's fine with him to have his small bathroom cluttered with my razor and blades, toothbrush and paste, underarm deodorant, and an extra pair of shorts. But, heaven forbid, if I should suggest tucking a half a dozen cans of dogfood discreetly into the corner of a kitchen cabinet so spacious that he doesn't have to stack his pots and pans, off he goes: "I thought I made it perfectly clear from the start that I will not live with a lover." If you're moving in, I'm moving out." Have I had a memory lapse? I don't recall applying for a marriage license." And on and on. This otherwise reasonable man is convinced that the absence of dogfood on his pantry shelf is synonymous with his independence from me, and that his life would be threatened if the lone tin should park in the garage in case of a blizzard.

Aunt Gay, I'd drop the whole subject, but those cans rolling around in my car are so irritating. What do you suggest?

Dear Efficient,

Roll those cans up in a paper bag and tuck them under the driver's seat. The empty space in your lover's cupboard is a symbol of his safety around relationships. Right now you need to take the symbol

seriously. It's my guess he's been somehow trapped or stifled by a close person in the past. Having one's selfhood squeezed can feel literally life-threatening. And relationships do tend to be about feelings.

Once you're not pushing dog food at him he might relax enough to take another look at his feelings. But that has to happen at his pace. I know this is hard on you. For those who live by reason, the world can be trying indeed.

Dear Aunt Gay,

I don't understand people's attitudes about age. Between me and my lover there is a difference of 26 years, and I've never been so compatible with anyone. But, besides mistaking us for mother (her) and daughter (me), people seem to see us as some phenomenon instead of an ordinary couple, which is what we ourselves feel like. Our close friends are fine with it, but there are only a few of them. What is the big deal? I feel like wearing a sign that says "Stuff Your Assumptions."

But now they've got me wondering. When we're occasionally not getting along I can't figure out whether it's because of who we are, or do our ages get in there some way? Do you think age really makes a difference?

Dear Compatible,

Congratulations! Compatibility is wonderful. And, sure, age makes a difference. So does your ethnic background, where you grew up, and the way you were treated as a child. Everything makes a difference.

An inter-generational combination can be a lot of fun. Have you gotten your lover to tell you her life story, and how it fits with the events of her times? Have you told her your story?

Around your friends, is one of you the only person in her age group, and feeling self-conscious or invisible? It could be very nourishing to the era-specific part of each of you to spend some time with agemates.

You're pioneers in an ageist society. But attitudes do change when people are freed up to discuss them, and you're in a great place to start people talking. Good

luck, and enjoy being ordinary!

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(Send questions to Aunt Gay c/o OITM, PO Box 177, Burlington, VT 05402)

Wendy's Bigot Burgers

Last August the Rev. Donald Wildmon's American Family Association Journal (AFA) urged its readers to send complaints to Wendy's hamburger chain. The AFA was outraged that Wendy's advertised on a rerun of NBC's L.A. Law in which a gay Olympic athlete sued a cereal company when he came out of the closet. The episode also featured a closeted gay judge.

What upsets the AFA is that viewers were "treated to two positive, 'normal,' homosexual characters."

Wendy's answered all complaints from AFA Journal readers with a form letter which said, in part: "... the particular episode of this show was not consistent with the kind of programming we wish to be associated with. Moreover, Wendy's tries to sponsor programs we feel have a wide appeal to the family viewing audience."

Wendy's needs to learn that gays and lesbians are not "anti-family," and shows which realistically portray characters who happen to be gay or lesbian or which deal with homophobia are not "promoting homosexuality."

We suggest you remind Wendy's that gays and lesbians also form warm, loving families. Why not tell them about your family, or one you know of. And while you're at it, remind them that family dining isn't just for heterosexuals, and that they are at risk of alienating a huge, hamburger-eating market.

Write James W. Near, President Wendy's International Inc., PO Box 256, Dublin, OH 43017 or call him at (614)764-

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