

## **Dear James**

Do you have a right to be jealous and suspicious? No. Trying to control who your girlfriend can and can't see is disrespectful and abusive. After all, no one person can ever satisfy 100% of another's social needs and it's perfectly possible to have a platonic friendship with a member of the opposite sex.

Do you have grounds for these feelings? It doesn't look like it from here. It's not as if your girlfriend is secretive or meeting this lad on the sly, so she doesn't seem to think there's anything but friendship with him, does she? Even if he wants more, it takes two to tango and she's presumably continuing to be your girlfriend. You also say that she's loving towards you so it doesn't sound like she's given you any real reason to believe she wants out of her relationship with you.

The fact remains that you've felt insecure. Why not tell her what you've been feeling and ask for her reassurance? Assuming she cares about you, she'll be glad to give it. You might say you feel sorry for this guy too and ask her if you'd like to go out as a threesome. You and he may become friends in your own right, and the more friends, the merrier.

Will you be ready to take her reassurances in? So long as she's open, honest and respectful of your feelings, that's your end of it. If you've always felt insecure, isn't it time to build up your self-esteem? What do your friends and family like about you? What do you like about yourself? It's OK to be confident. It's just not OK to boast.

The main thing keeping any relationship together is that both parties want to be in it. You and your gf have only been together for six months. You're only just getting to know each other on a deeper level so as yet you and she may not be sure whether it's going to last. If at any point either of you wants out, that's OK. Better to finish sooner than hanging on desperately worried and making each other unhappy.

Jealousy and possessiveness are pretty much bound to get you what they're based on: the fear that you're going to get dumped. Which is usually more about self-esteem than about the relationship. Talking to her in an open, non-accusatory way is your best next step. If it doesn't work out, take it as proof that you're attractive and likable, be glad you've had some good times and treat it as a rehearsal for your next relationship(s). But if it does work out, it would be a shame to destroy it with unsubstantiated doubts.

Good luck.

**Anne**

(taken from <http://www.tiscali.co.uk/lifestyle/agonyaunt/ask-anne/>)

## **Dear Julie**

I'm glad you've found someone you love and who loves you and gets on with your sons. Whether that means you both want the same things out of life in the same time-scale is another matter. Partly you can resolve that with discussions and partly through observation. Observation of yourself as well as observation of him.

Let's move onto tactics. His working patterns probably leave him lacking in energy. Sometimes your off-duty time will coincide with his. Given that your elder lad is 15 now, would you be willing to leave your sons alone for a day, or have them looked after by a friend or neighbour? Then you could meet your bf for a day out in London. If the boys are happy to go to a friend's house for a sleepover, you could offer to go up to your bf's home town to stay the night. It's possible that he needs to see you demonstrate more commitment before he's willing to change his life completely.

Now back to that question of what you both want. It sounds like you want a full-time live-in lover who's a stepdad for your boys. You want him to slot seamlessly into your lives, which he can only do by pretty much giving up the life he's been leading. But not everyone wants that. Some people prefer part-time romance. Some can only do intimacy in short bursts before they start to want more space. Some people can talk the talk but they can't walk the walk. Again, discussion and observation are your clues.

There are other questions that need to be resolved. Most people are on their best behaviour when they only get to see their partners for brief periods, but you never really know what anyone's like until you spend a long time together. What problem-solving skills do you and he have? (In other words, can you resolve things by discussion rather than arguments, avoidance or sulks?) Are you both good at managing your emotions and interactions productively? Is he supportive and accepting, or does he want things all his own way? Do you want the same things out of life? Do you share beliefs about men's and women's roles? Do you have similar ideas on parenting? On money, responsibilities, religion, socialising, children, family and chores? Do you and he have matching needs for the balance between closeness and space? Does he take your feelings seriously? Is he honest and open? Has he invited you fully into his life and come fully into yours? Do his actions back up what he says?

I'm sure you already know how to sustain a long-distance relationship: as much contact as possible in whatever form, with both of you making an equal amount of the running. Your question sounds more like whether you and he should get together permanently. I can't answer that. But with information gathered as above, you'll find out.

A good relationship is only possible if both people actively want to be in it on the same basis. If so, great! If not, take the good things, part as friends and move on.

Good luck.

**Anne**

**(taken from <http://www.tiscali.co.uk/lifestyle/agonyaunt/ask-anne/>)**

## **Dear Jonny**

I'm glad you wrote in. I know you've thought a lot about this girl but the pair of you are in your teens, which means you're both changing rapidly. There's absolutely no way of knowing if what you feel for her now (which is based to a large extent on how you imagine going out with her would be) is what you'll feel in the future. Seeing someone casually in company with others isn't the same as the closeness of dating. And yes, the gap from 13 to 15 is quite large. You and she may well have different expectations and ideas of what you'd like to do, let alone what it's sensible to do. Since well over 90% of teen romances end, you might from the start keep in mind that dating is both a rehearsal for relationships and a selection procedure, with both of you allowed to change your minds with no criticism of the other.

Then there's her family, which of course includes her brother. What if you asked him, "How would you feel if I asked your sister out on a date?" Some guys would be OK about this and some wouldn't. If he's against it, would it be worth losing his friendship for? Same-sex friendships tend to last a lot longer than relationships at this age. If he doesn't mind, then you could ask her out. The fact that you like her doesn't mean she likes you in the same way. And at 13, she needs permission from her parents to go out with you so they'd have to OK it as well. There'd be all sorts of safe limits and curfews, and you both run the risk of getting carried away. I'm sure I don't need to remind you that it's against the law to have sex with a girl under the age of 16.

Will there be rumours if you go out with her? Yes. Will there be gossip? Yes. People will call you a cradle-snatcher, trying to guess if you've done "it" and suggesting you're some sort of pervert or stud. Some will be thinking she's a tart and I bet half the girls in her year will be asking her intimate questions about your time together. What could you and she say to all this? "A gentleman/lady doesn't kiss and tell." "We respect her age and the law." "It's none of your business." "Her folks don't mind so why should you?" And generally it's a lot easier at your and her ages to go out with someone in the same year.

So, Jonny, with all this in mind, you can decide whether to go for it or not.

All the best.

**Anne**

**(taken from <http://www.tiscali.co.uk/lifestyle/agonyaunt/ask-anne/>)**