Dear Alice,

I haven't been in many relationships but when I do meet someone I tend to end it quickly. As soon as the relationship nears any possibility of becoming sexual with each other, I bail. I feel this is due to my lack of experience. I just can't get past the kissing. Sometimes I don't even let it get that far. What can I do to prevent this from happening in my next relationship?

Just need to know

Answer

Dear Just need to know,

Relationships can be tricky for many reasons, whether they become sexual or not. And you could choose to interpret your "bail reflex" in different ways. You can rest assured that not every relationship has to end up in bed after just a short while. And, there is no reason that a relationship needs to become "sexual" within a certain amount of time. It might be worth it to give yourself a break and explore the reasons for your actions. Taking some time off now can help you regroup, whether on your own or with the help of a professional, and will likely increase your chances of having the type of relationship you're looking for in the future.

What do you think might be behind your tendency to abandon ship? Here are some possibilities to explore:

- Maybe you aren't ready to have sex yet? that's perfectly fine.
- Maybe you haven't found a person who you're really interested in going farther with? also a great reason to hold back.
- Maybe the possible emotional repercussions of having sex seem overwhelming right now.
- Maybe having sex means something to you, like committing to a person, that you aren't interested in incorporating into your life at the moment.

These are just some starting points to consider, there may be other reasons that you flee at the thought of making whooppee. It may seem like a big mystery right now, but if you begin to ask yourself 'why' you may be able to uncover the reasons behind your sudden departures.
If you really want to try staying in a relationship longer, why not take sexual activity off the table and just spend time getting to know one another? The more time you take to get to know a person, the more comfortable you will feel when you are ready for your relationship to become sexual. Perhaps you can find an alternative to "bailing" on a relationship when it looks like it's becoming hot and heavy. Have you considered telling the person who you're with about how you feel? Not only can this reduce your anxiety, but it will open those all-important lines of communication. If this is someone with whom you might eventually be physically intimate, becoming emotionally intimate first can be a very positive process.

It's natural to feel anxious and uncomfortable about having sex with someone new, let alone being for your first time. The initial step to overcoming these feelings is to identify what you really want for yourself, not believing what you think others want from you. Once you know what you want, you'll be able to let whoever you're dating know where you are at that time. That person can then choose to respect your feelings, or take a hike.

Of course, baring your true feelings can be hard. Take it one step at a time. With the next person you date, you could tell her/him that you'd like to get to know her/him well before allowing the physical aspect of your relationship to bloom (well... in so many words). Sharing your needs and feelings from the get-go will help you weed out potential partners who aren't ready to be caring, sensitive, and supportive of your feelings.

If none of this seems to help, perhaps there are more complex issues that you need to deal with. No one ever said that mastering one's sexuality is supposed to be easy! Talking with a counselor may help you identify the underlying reasons for your feelings, actions, and behavior, and can help get you closer to what you want.

Alice!

Category:
- Relationships
- Miscellaneous

Related questions
- Healthy versus unhealthy relationships
- Girlfriend gets scared every time I say, "I love you"
- Told him my true feelings and now it's truly awkward
- I don't want a relationship, okay?

Resources
- Mental Health Service (CUMC)

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