Dear Alice,

My best friend recently graduated from modeling school and now her ego has swelled to a huge size. She acts as though she is the best at everything and her attitude is way out of hand. She says she can kick everyone's ass. All my friends want me to tell her to leave our group, but she's my best friend. What should I do? I'm afraid if I tell her how she's acting and/or tell her to leave the group, she really will kick my ass.

Answer

Dear Reader,

Remember that song from a few years back? "I'm too sexy"? There's a reason why it was such a hit: no one likes it when a person's ego enters a room before s/he even gets there. But how do you express frustration with someone without being rude and running the risk of getting into a confrontation? Good question.

In reality, your friend may have a case of fragile self-esteem. While she may know how to swish her hips, catwalk, and turn on a dime? all while shooting bedroom stares and swinging shiny hair? modeling school probably didn't teach her that no matter what she looks like, there are other reasons people enjoy her company. Acting like a full-of-herself bully might just be her way of protecting herself from self-doubt or a fear of rejection. With that in mind, what will telling her to leave your group accomplish? Your friends may not have to deal with her attitude anymore, but making this choice might leave you, your friend, and possibly your other friends feeling like you've been as nasty as she has been arrogant.

Another question is why your circle of friends is insisting that you be the one to break the news. You say that your modeling-school-graduate is your best friend. Are your other group members jealous? Are they trying to drive a rift between you two? How would you feel if your friend weren't welcome around the lunch table or at parties? What is it that makes the two of you such good friends?

It might help to start by talking with the other non-models about the things you like about your friend-turned-cover-girl. She probably had qualities that made her fun to be around and maybe even she needs to be reminded of those. If taking the focus off of her looks doesn't work, here are a few other tactics to try:

- **Talk to her in private.** Since you're her best friend, talk with her in private about what your group has been feeling. Ask her whether she is aware of how her words and
actions are affecting her friends. Be caring and gentle, so that you don't elicit a strong response fueled out of self-defense.

- **Avoid ego petting.** As a group, agree to ignore self-centered or swelled-ego comments on the part of your friend. Try to steer clear of the topics that tend to bring these on, and find creative ways of re-directing the conversation. Doing something all together that you can focus on as a group may help ? especially if you pick something that someone else in the group is good at, or that encourages you to think outside of yourselves, like working with children or at a soup kitchen.

- **Steer her clear of the runway.** Maybe spending time with your friend alone will take away the pressure on her to “perform.” People often act more cocky in big groups than they do one-on-one. Also, this way you'll get to hang out with her while avoiding the frustration your other friends are having.

- **Ask for help.** If nothing seems to be working, you can enlist the help of a teacher, mentor, older friend, or relative. If you do sit down as a group, make sure not to attack your friend. Allow each person time to express her or his views and ideas for how to resolve the frustration.

Sometimes, just getting things out in the open helps to smooth out the conflict. Your friend may not realize that her behavior is offending everyone, and the rest of you will then have the opportunity to also hear how she's feeling. Everyone will benefit if you remember to be honest about any self-doubts your friend's modeling success may be bringing out in you, too.

Alice!

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