

Senior Advice: Friend's self-absorption blots out communication

by Doug Mayberry

Q: I don't know how to handle one of my best friends. She has been wonderful and we have been great friends over many years. I have moved into the same retirement community where she has been living. Lately, when we begin our conversations, she listens for a moment, and then virtually ignores what I said and continues to tell me about her doings. I try to break in politely, but when I do she reverts back to her "doings." This is taking all of the fun out of our relationship. What can I do?

A: We all know others who don't realize we all like to talk about ourselves. Your friend is missing out by not letting you take your turn to talk. Her reasons for now taking command of your relationship could be she is shutting down somewhat, that she could be in pain, which causes her major insecurities, or other reasons. Try taking the imitative and begin your conversation with something like: "Mary, I enjoy learning about your activities, but I, too, need to share my life with you. I'd like to take a few minutes to tell you about my feelings and what's going on in my life." This may shock her a bit, but may also serve as the wake-up call she needs to continue your friendship.

Another approach might be telling her you are bored with a mutual friend because she is always talking about herself, and you are not enthusiastic about seeing her as often as you used to do. Ask her if she agrees. This could be the subtle way of making her realize she is doing exactly the same thing with you.

The bottom line is if she wants to continue your friendship, she needs to understand relationships are a two-way street, and if she does permit your sharing her life with here she is going to miss you as a regular friend. Neither of you desire that!

Q: Our granddaughter, who is 17, is attractive, has a good personality but is unhappy because she doesn't have a boyfriend. We talk with her mother and father who believe the reason she doesn't enjoy a male companionship is because she is about 20 pounds overweight.

Our granddaughter says she will loose weight, but over the last year she hasn't. Her parents have unsuccessfully offered her a health club membership, which she won't accept, bought motivating books and eliminated dinner desserts. As grandparents what can we do to help?

A: It's tough! Overeating and dieting are major obstacles to overcome at any age. Millions of dollars are being spent in efforts to solve weight concerns.

Some experts believe the inability to establish a desired weight is caused by a lack of self-esteem. We all know that trait evolves over time. Learning to love ourselves, becoming self-reliant and moving forward are

major challenges. Your granddaughter's weight issues will only be resolved when, and if, she is self-motivated to do so. She will choose her own priorities, timing and reasons to thin down.

At her age, there are many teenage pressures involved. Putting too much parental pressure on her may be an issue along with peer involvement activities and scholastic expectations. Setting the weight goal too high may be a problem, as just losing a few pounds will encourage her to do more.

At this time, perhaps lightening up and being patient might be the right medicine. Luckily, she is gifted with your families' support plus her existing talents, which will help her find that boyfriend she is seeking.

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