

## Senior Advice: Long-distance relationship can work if you do

by *Doug\_Mayberry*

Q: Through a friend I recently met a lady to whom I was immediately attracted. However, she lives nearly 50 miles from my home. I have dated her several times, and we find ourselves mutually compatible. However, because of our geography I am not sure whether I should pursue her. What is your recommendation?

A: Do both of you want to make your relationship work? It can, but it is tough. You need to discuss this question openly, and each partner needs to understand how much extra time and energy will be required to make it successful. Are you willing to hop planes and trains or drive to the other's home? Can you afford to do so?

My partner and I have been successfully able to do so for more than four years. Historically, military service, distant family health issues requiring attention, career-advancement issues and other valid reasons prove separations can be addressed and worked out.

To maintain a stable relationship, both partners need to be honest, send gifts, telephone every day, fantasize, and plan to participate in each other's social and family lives as frequently as possible. E-mail is also an important way to keep in contact.

Commitment to monogamy is a must to maintain your relationship. Intimate phone calls can raise your adrenaline, and the anticipation of getting back together is something to which you both will look forward. When you do get together, your partnership will be revitalized.

By necessity, there will be times when you will still need to go it alone when birthdays, holidays and other occasions conflict in your schedules. In order to keep everyone happy, compromise is always necessary since both families can be touchy about your nonattendance at these functions.

If you love each other and are able to communicate your differences, you can handle separation. It takes two to keep and maintain a relationship - just as it would if you lived together full time.

Q: Since my wife died I have been lonely, and last month our German shepherd died. When Mary and I were married, Sally was already a member of her family, and we inherited her. She was partial to my wife but tolerated me.

Now I am considering buying another dog. I am hesitating because of the expense, time and energy

required. It also would tie me down as I like to make at least one major trip per year. I hate the thought of putting my dog in a kennel. Do you believe caring for a dog is worth the effort?

A: Absolutely. It has been proven that a pet can cheer you up. Pets are good medicine. The kind of unconditional love good pets provide are worth their weight in gold. They depend on you for food, water and maintenance, and in return they offer you unconditional love, attention, enthusiasm and companionship that you can't find elsewhere.

Dogs make you healthier because they want to play. they also make you get out of bed in the morning even if you don't feel like it for their walk. Numerous hospitals and nursing homes now allow dogs to visit. Some even have live-ins because they cheer up their patients and diminish their anxieties and blood pressure.

They are also encouraging and calming. Best of all, they bring you closer to nature when you play outside with them or take them for a walk. Walking a dog could end up in your making new friends. Who knows? You make also find a lady dog-walker who will become a friend and perhaps even a new partner in sharing your life.

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