

Dear John,



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*The thing that bothered me most when Barry broke up with me is that I'd given the guy everything! We dated for over two years and every day was focused on him. He didn't like my 80's music so we listened to his stupid jazz. He didn't like Dancing with the Stars so we watched Monday Night Football. He didn't like VEGETABLES, so I never cooked them even though I love them! Everything Barry wanted, Barry got, and I went without. And for the most part I did it happily. For two years I gave and gave, while he took and took. Even if he stayed out late and didn't call, I bit my tongue, not wanting to nag. And then he dumped me! Why would he call it quits when I gave him everything he wanted?*

*Signed,*

*Gave 'Til it Hurt*

Dear Gave 'Til it Hurt

Hate to tell you, but Barry called it quits precisely because you gave him everything. Contrary to popular opinion, men don't want pawns we can push around; we want women who'll cook vegetables when they want to eat vegetables. You thought being selfless was the way to Barry's heart, but instead it made him lose interest and respect. You should not give up the things you love for anybody. And I say this knowing you like 80's music.

Barry probably enjoyed your beck-and-call-girl routine and might have even fostered it. But in the long run it didn't help the relationship. Where was the give and take? Where was the complimentary connection? When a man is left begging for nothing, he's likely to become bored and abuse the power his mate has given him. And when that happens, his timid partner grows quietly resentful and feels taken advantage of. Over time the relationship loses its ability to grow, and then it dies altogether.

A good rule of thumb is: It's okay to be a dear, just don't be fawning. Being fawned over gets old fast and the relationship stagnates. A healthy relationship embraces periodic challenges because small doses of conflict foster growth and make the union more interesting.

Next time around, if your guy comes home late, let him know you aren't happy. And for God's sake, get him to eat his vegetables. It will make him healthier, and will make your relationship healthier, too.

Thanks for playing,

John