

# Dear John,



Dear John,

*My boyfriend of three years has a problem of not being totally honest with me. I have caught him doing things I don't approve of after he'd promised not to do them. For instance, I found out that he visited an old friend of his recently who I consider bad news and who my boyfriend agreed not to see. I was very angry and told my boyfriend not to see the friend again. A few weeks later he came home late, and when I asked where he had been, he confessed he'd been at the same friend's house. He tried to explain himself, saying I can trust him to be there, but I flipped out even more than the first time. I did not talk to him for three days after that.*

*I cannot believe he does things he knows I don't want him to. I get so angry, and it only gets worse when he tries to explain himself. I'm mad that he wants to do these things, and madder that he chooses to deceive me and do them anyway. How do I make him see that an open, transparent relationship is the only way to a healthy future?*

*Signed,*

*Still Fuming*

Dear Still Fuming

You are right that a transparent relationship is the way to a healthy future, and a good way to get it is by fostering an environment that makes transparency easy and rewarding. Just as a relationship cannot tolerate duplicity from one party, it cannot accommodate intolerance from the other.

Let me play devil's advocate and assume your boyfriend is a good person and wants to be honest with you. Being transparent would be hard for him if he felt he could not trust you to accept his honest disclosures. For instance, when he told you the truth the second time about visiting the friend and wanted to explain himself, maybe you could have heard him out instead of showing only anger. If you revealed the pain and vulnerability caused by his deceit instead of showing anger, the communication between you might have been more intimate, more productive, and more honest. Showing only anger puts a wall between people; and acting like your side is the only side makes a partner reticent to tell his side.

Don't get me wrong. Being mad at his deception was completely appropriate. Likewise, you are not to blame for his dishonesty. And obviously he has to right his ship and be honest with you. But, like all things in relationships, it takes two for a couple to be transparent. Both parties need to be trustworthy, and both need to be trusting. And both need to show that they have enough confidence in the other to let them make their own choices, even when those choices may differ from their own.

If your boyfriend begins to feel he can trust you with his disclosures, my guess is he'll disclose more freely. As he opens up, you should then be able to trust him more.

Thanks for playing,

John