

Dear Sandy Sez,

I am a fan of your article and I think you give sound advice so, I submit my problem to you. I am uncomfortable with disorganization in my home. I like chairs pushed into place after one leaves the table, drawers and cupboards closed after use and tools put away after a task is completed. My husband regularly does not do any of these things. When he gardens, he leaves all of the tools lying about. He never pushes in his chair after use, he leaves all sorts of papers laying about and he never closes cupboards or drawers after opening them. I walk into a room after he has been there and I become very agitated. When I try to talk to my husband about this he tells me I am being obsessive-compulsive and anal-retentive!

B.Q.

Dear B.Q.,

I think the main problem here is that when you try to express your concern to your husband he does not listen and then he says that you are the one with the problem, not him. This is a clever and oft-used defense when one feels criticized (the best defense is a good offense). So, the trick here is to express your concern in a way that is not critical of him. Talk to him about you and how the concern affects you and then make a request. Remember, I always say if you have a complaint, you have a request.

For example, "Honey, I really have a concern that I would like to share with you. I have tried to share it with you before and it has not gone well. My concern is that I like our home to be clean and organized (notice how this example does not say anything about him-you are talking about you). When I come into a room and the drawers and chairs are left all about, I get anxious and distressed. This has me be short tempered with you and I don't want to be that way (you are now talking about how your behavior effects him). (Now, make your request) Can I ask that you please be more mindful when you open things and try harder to close them? It would really make me more comfortable."

You can also let him know that as he tries to be more considerate of you, you will be more patient and considerate of him when he forgets to follow through. Your concern is all about feeling valued (both you and your husband). You feel devalued when he leaves things askew and he feels devalued when you complain about him. That is the conversation for the two of you to have.

Dear Sandy Sez,

My live-in boyfriend is still in touch with his ex-wife. He stays with her when he goes to her area to visit and he sends her money all of the time. Their daughter is an adult and the ex-wife won't let him see the daughter unless he sends money for the property taxes or car insurance or anything else on property that does not belong to him.

I have made my feelings very clear that I do not like this and I do not want to be in this relationship if this continues (the ex-wife has sent me very nasty letters about her dislike for me). My boyfriend does not stick up for me. He will not talk to me about this and he continues to visit and send money.

P.L.,

Dear P.l.,

This relationship may hold more distress and pain for you than it provides comfort and pleasure. It may be time for you to make decisions for yourself and to stop expecting him to change his interactions with his ex-wife. His actions are speaking loudly and clearly. Please listen to them and take care of your own self.