



## DEAR DR HARTMAN

### *Spring Fever*

Hello patients,

Well, Spring is here and the old psycho-sexual juices are beginning to stir again. You suddenly find yourself staring at attractive strangers a little too long. You start thinking about taking off all those layers of clothes and going for a swim. You suddenly remember that you've actually got a body, and soon you'll be at the beach and other people will be looking at it.

Here is a typical Spring experience. You wake up one morning and the sun is shining. It feels warm on your arms as you drive to work. You smile with pleasure and pull up your sleeve. You might as well start that tan right now.

You get a red light, so you stop, and sit waiting for the lights to change. Your eyes wander outside the car and, before you know it, little frisky thoughts start popping into your head. You're watching the pedestrians and you hear yourself think, "eh, that one looks lovely".

It's at this point that alarm bells start going off, if you are in a long-term relationship. You think to yourself: "Be careful. Don't bugger things up at home by indulging in some springtime nooky on the side." You pull down the sleeve of your jacket, you wind up the windows of your car, you want to pretend it's still winter, so you can avoid the psycho-sexual pitfalls of Spring.

I had a lass in just the other day, a sexual survivor of the sordid 70s, who has now settled down into a loving and stable relationship with a partner who is intellectually and sexually satisfying. She knows that anyone in their right mind would work to maintain this relationship for as long as possible.

However, this patient told me each year as Spring comes around, she begins to experience deep, dark, dangerous and dirty feelings for any unsuspecting spunky stranger who catches her eye. Last week she lay on my couch in complete despair and cried out, "Doctor, my partner won't put up with any more infidelity and I don't want the inner turmoil it always brings. But I keep thinking that there's nothing quite like the anxious thrill of an encounter with someone new. So what can I do? Do I need a psycho-sexual lobotomy?" I wrote her a bill and told her to bring her partner to see me next week.

Quite simply this lass is too far gone to reason with and I'll have to deal directly with her partner. In this case the Dog Training Approach may be necessary - put her on a choker chain when you take her out, hit her on the nose with a rolled newspaper if she looks at anybody else, and when you get her home each night, make her turn around on the bed three times before she curls up and goes to sleep. That way she'll know it's definitely her spot.

Patients, there is no simple solution to the age-old psycho-sexual dilemma of how to stop your partner from running off with someone else.

In my clinical experience, every couple is different. But here's a check list of long term maintenance strategies that have worked for some of my patients. Take what is useful to you and leave the rest.

1. Make a will leaving your partner everything, on the condition that they stay with you till the grave.

2. Write down something really damaging that your partner has told you, and put it in a bank vault. Then tell your partner that if they ever try to leave, you'll give the information to 60 Minutes and, even more frightening, to their mother.

3. Have sex at least once a week, even if you don't feel like it. What distinguishes a friendship from a relationship is nooky. Do whatever you must to get yourself going. Achieve coitus outdoors, aroused by the fear of getting caught. Try new things, even if they seem clinically silly.

4. Don't make small talk in the midst of intimate sex play. For example, don't mention that the car needs a pink slip while your partner is down the bottom of the bed connecting with a crucial piece of your anatomy. While chit-chat and little jokes may ease the tension in the early days of a relationship, later on it just indicates that you're distracted and fundamentally unmoved.

5. Do not ever wear your socks to bed. Research has shown that this is the major underlying cause of most divorces in this country.

6. Boredom and complacency are the enemies. Here are some antidotes.

Initiate little overnight surprises and take full responsibility for organising them. Make a booking at a luxury city hotel, arrange room service for dinner and then pick up your partner from work and take them to the hotel room for a wonderful night of play. You're both back at work by 9 am the next morning, and you feel great!

Of course, the best antidote for boredom is genuine change. Try to change fundamentally as a person during the course of your relationship. Several times if necessary.

Keep learning and questioning yourself and changing with the times. Don't cling to communism, join the New Left Party. If you've always loved opera, go mad for football. If you've never wanted children, have one. If you've been a no nonsense/no make-up feminist, get a job marketing Lancome.

7. Most importantly, pull your weight financially and with housework. If you really want a relationship to last a long time you must face up to the fact that nobody respects a bludger. Resentment will ultimately white ant a relationship.

*Send your problems to Dr  
Hartman's secretary, Julie  
McCrossin, care of ALR.*