

# Vis-à-vis: friend or...?



By **Vlada Gaisina**  
OPINION EDITOR

Many of the readers may still remember what happened when Harry met Sally. This endearing and relatable comedy classic featuring Meg Ryan and Billy Crystal not only earned an Oscar nomination for best screenplay, but also popularized concepts like “high-maintenance” and “transitional person.” The film’s true appeal and freshness lay perhaps in its taking on the question as to whether men and women can be just friends. As written in an Entertainment Weekly review, “In 1989, we were still oblivious to the fact that men are from Mars and women are from Venus” and Sex and the City’s perspective on singlehood in Manhattan wouldn’t come for another nine years.

However, it doesn’t look like much has changed since Harry and Sally first hit the big screen: besides the fact that single living and non-committal short-term relationships have become more of a standard, it appears the general attitude towards male-female friendships remains skeptical. Perhaps this article will change your mind.

The trap often encountered is expecting a male-female friendship to be like a friendship between two straight people of the same sex. But there is actually no reason for this to hold: typically a group of guy friends and a group of women have entirely different dynamics. Research suggests that women create connections with other people through conversation, whereas men can bond just by being around each other, without even talking. The examples of fishing, hunting, or gaming buddies come to mind. Women like to talk to each other about their lives, aspirations, experiences, points of view, while men tend to discuss more impersonal topics like common interests, current events or philosophical issues. They treat conversation as a form of entertainment. If these types of friendship are so different, then why can’t male-female friendship get its own box?

Let’s explore, then, what constitutes this new category. Even with the distinction between men’s and women’s approach to friendship, there are still overarching commonalities. When asked what they value most about their closest friends of the same sex, both men and women will list qualities like dependability, acceptance, enjoyable company, and care for their well-being, among others. These are what

really defines friendship as a general concept, and should extend to the male-female friendship, as well. What makes this friendship different, though, can be extracted from the words of Harry Burns: “Men and women can’t be friends, because the sex part always gets in the way.” He is right about the sex part, but it by no means has to get “in the way.”

Sex is almost guaranteed to come up at one point or another, if for no other reason than human beings are sexual creatures. Yet, it does not always mean an insurmountable wall in a relationship – in most cases it will be just a fleeting thought or a possibility that might seem intriguing. The trick is handling it, which can be a learned skill. It might come up in conversation, it might manifest in an accidental sexual encounter, or it might turn out like Harry and Sally, where the friendship eventually grows into a relationship. Sometimes it’s so minor, it’s not even worth bringing up. If it is put out there, a good approach would be to recognize it, own up to it, and deal with it in a mature way: be honest about your emotions and ask yourself why you primarily spend time with the other person – is it because of a platonic or sexual attraction? A lot of times the value of the friendship will outweigh that itch of loneliness, but if there are unrequited strong romantic feelings, it’s best to walk away.

The so-called “friend zone” has gotten an unfairly bad rap, with multiple things contributing to the stigma. One, it is typically used by women in an attempt to gently let down unlucky suitors, so it acquires a negative connotation, instead of being an honest offer of friendship. Then, there is always Hollywood. But there are many benefits to male-female friendship. A companion of the opposite sex can offer unbiased dating advice, insight on how men/women operate, and assistance with things your other friends may not have expertise on. A clichéd, but good example of the latter would be men helping with car trouble and women giving fashion tips to their friends of the opposite sex.

It’s a little known fact that the script for When Harry Met Sally initially ended with Harry and Sally remaining friends and not pursuing a romantic relationship because the screenwriter Nora Ephron and director Rob Reiner both felt it was “the true ending.” Eventually, they decided that the protagonists getting married would be more appropriate for the movie, even though they both admitted it was a generally unlikely outcome. Whatever ending you may prefer, true friendships are always worthwhile.



Sex Tech

THE SEX AND RELATIONSHIP ADVICE COLUMN

Sweet Pseudonym

SEXTECH EDITOR

**Q: I’m that girl that always falls for the stereotypical bad guy, and I guess I just want to know WHY I keep doing this! It always starts great, because I feel so accomplished for getting him, and then he either cheats on me, makes me feel like s\*\*t, or does both just in time to dump me. Why haven’t I learned my lesson yet?!**

A: Well, I think the answer to that might actually be found in the wording of your question! I don’t know if a feeling of accomplishment for, in essence, “ensnaring” someone is ever going to be the foundation for a good relationship. It means that from the very outset, you’ve given him the upper hand (and he most likely knows it). The reason these guys treat you like crap is because you let them. Your pride in getting a bad boy to date you is the very thing that allows them to keep being a “bad boy” once you’re in a serious relationship. Once a guy (or girl) knows that you’re going to let them get away with whatever they want, what’s to stop them from doing just that? The moral of this story is: stop looking at potential boyfriends as trophies to be won; you should instead look for a guy who treats you with respect (and vice versa). Try dating a nice boy for once; there won’t be nearly as much drama, but you might find that after a while, that’s actually a nice thing.

Submit your question through  
<http://tinyurl.com/sextech2>

# Democratic doesn’t mean free...

By **Karl Rybaltowski**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The recent upheavals in Tunisia, Egypt, and Yemen might be inspirational, but while the world observes and cheers on one emerging movement (democracy) it’s very likely they’re actually calling for something very different: constitutional liberty. Confusing the two is a dangerous mistake. Romanticizing the revolution that plays out before us through the 24-hour news cycle downplays much of the structural dilemma that will occur. Unfettered populist outrage at all elements of the old regime will lead to a disorganized opposition suddenly being forced to come up with a way to run a near-lawless country. What then?

Let me make one thing clear before I continue: Hosni Mubarak is an autocrat who has perpetrated human rights abuses and flouted his own nation’s constitution by maintaining emergency rule for decades. On this point, I don’t believe anyone is willing to argue, and there is no defense of dictatorial regimes that terrorize their people. Why, then, has the United States been lukewarm in its calls for Egypt’s leadership to democratize? Three reasons.

First, Mubarak has aggressively pursued economic liberalization since the economic stagnation of 1991, which has led to the rapid growth of a politically conscious middle class and enormous GDP growth. Second, Mubarak’s regime is one of two that maintain less-than-aggressive relations with Israel (the other being Turkey). In fact, the Mubarak regime officially supports a two-state solution to (and diplomatic resolution of) the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Finally, examine the alternative - the only organized opposition group is the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist organization officially banned by the current regime, characterized by a deep-seated suspicion of the West, and called extremist by many. Even as an illegal group, the MB took around 20% of the seats in Egypt’s parliament in the previous round

**Q: I recently dumped my boyfriend because he told me he had fooled around with another girl. I am definitely zero-tolerance about cheating but I miss him a lot. He’s constantly apologizing and trying to get me back, and is clearly upset about the whole situation. It’s definitely more and more tempting to get back with him, but I’m worried that I don’t miss him specifically so much as I miss being with someone (in the last several years, I haven’t ever been single for a very long stretch of time). What should I do?**

A: Well, I think it’s very likely that you miss him in particular, and not just having a warm body to wake up next to. However, that shouldn’t be the deciding factor in deciding whether or not to get back together with your ex. You’re obviously zero-tolerance when it comes to cheating for a reason, whether it be from past experience or not, and I think you need to keep that in mind. If you got back with your ex, do you really think that you would be able to get over the fact that he cheated on you? Trust is a big thing in a relationship, and when it’s gone, it’s extremely hard to get back. So, I think you need to figure out whether or not you’re willing to spend a huge chunk of time over the next couple weeks (and even months) trying to find trust in your boyfriend again. It’s a really tough thing to overcome, but I think that if you care about him enough, giving him a second chance isn’t a horrible idea. Just make sure that you clearly communicate what you want to see happen differently this time around, and make sure that he understands. There’s no point in dating again if you aren’t both willing to talk about your problems and work on fixing them together.



Tahrir Square on the night of Jan 26th (Photo by latenightcabdriving/Reddit)