

## Love and Sex Prescription

By Jasbina Ahluwalia and Anju Mulchandani

### QUESTION

I have a really awesome boyfriend whom I met about a year ago—he is smart, funny and handsome. We get along really well, but unfortunately there is one problem: his job involves a lot of travel and he is on the road and away from me, sometimes for months. I find that very difficult to deal with (although when he comes back, it's almost like all that lost time in between never even existed, he is so nice!) This will probably continue the same way in the long run as well. How do I cope with it? And do you think that it would be fair to move on if he is not around? I'm sure he wouldn't say no, but it would hurt to give this up. What should I do?

### ANSWER by Jasbina Ahluwalia

Whether or not to end this relationship is a decision only you can make, but I can share some thoughts in the hopes of empowering you to navigate your way to the right decision for you.

Have you and your boyfriend ever had a heart-to-heart addressing this issue? Have you openly shared with him how you feel in his absence? Have you given him the opportunity to share openly with you how he feels about his travel in the present time and whether he foresees a similar level of travel in the future? For this discussion to be most beneficial, encourage him to be candid about his thoughts and feelings by letting him know you can handle hearing whatever they are (as opposed to him feeling the need to be less than candid to not disappoint you).

If you both feel truly invested in your relationship, perhaps the two of you can attempt to explore ways to accommodate your respective needs regarding this issue. For example, it may be feasible for either one of you to visit the other during extended periods of travel, perhaps on weekends. Share a brainstorming session regarding potential areas of compromise with respect to this issue.

Given how positively you feel about your boyfriend and how well you believe you get along, it seems it may be well be worth the effort of discussing your respective feelings about his travel and together exploring ways to deal with it.

Perhaps most importantly, the manner in which you both approach accommodating each other's needs with respect to this issue may help you decide how you feel about remaining in a relationship with your boyfriend. Best wishes as you work towards the right decision for you.

### QUESTION

My boyfriend criticizes everything I do. I don't think he's trying to be mean, even though it comes off as very condescending. I feel like I'm walking on eggshells around him.

I try to brush it off as him being anal-retentive but it's really starting to wear on me. He gets so critical about the smallest things, like my hair falling on the floor (even though I'm constantly picking it up), what I'm wearing, if I forget my purse at a restaurant or there's a spot on the mirror that I didn't clean.

I used to think that if I just did things the way he wanted, he would stop criticizing, but it hasn't worked out like that.

I know he isn't perfect, so I'm never as hard on him. I have tried to point this out when he scolds me. He sometimes apologizes, but he just doesn't see the need to change. What should I do?

### ANSWER by Anju Mulchandani

It sounds like you've got a perfectionist on your hands. Perfectionists are often ruled by a nagging, self-critical inner voice and tend to have idealistic expectations of themselves and the people around them. Striving for excellence is usually an admirable quality but not if means your boyfriend has unrealistic standards for you and expects you to do everything perfectly.

The problem gets worse if you have a tendency to please because you can get caught in the trap of trying to keep him happy. But as you've realized from doing things his way, there's always something else for the perfectionist to find a fault with.

It sounds like you have tried to gently remind him that you are only human, but maybe you need to just stop him and make him realize how his actions are affecting you. Even if he believes he is justified in feeling annoyed, there is no justification for the way he deals with it: repeatedly hurting your feelings. His behavior is also causing you to feel like you are walking on eggshells, which makes for a very tense atmosphere.

Ask him to put things into perspective to help him prioritize what is most important to him. Different areas of our life deserve different levels of importance. For instance, there are more important things in life than cleaning a spot on the mirror—he has to pick his battles.

You also have to realize that some people are limited in their ability to see how their actions are affecting others or to change these behaviors even when they are aware of them. Hopefully your boyfriend will understand where you are coming from and try to limit his constant criticism, but if that isn't the case, it's important to know so you can decide if you are able to tolerate this behavior for the long term.

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Jasbina Ahluwalia is the founder of [Intersections Matchmaking](#), the first elite, personalized Matchmaking firm for South Asian singles nationwide.

As a former practicing lawyer with a graduate degree in philosophy, Jasbina can relate first-hand to the demands and challenges facing her accomplished clients. As a second-generation Indian-American, Jasbina has a unique understanding of the successful blending of South Asian and American cultures.

For more information, please visit [www.IntersectionsMatch.com](http://www.IntersectionsMatch.com). Jasbina may be contacted directly at [Jasbina@IntersectionsMatch.com](mailto:Jasbina@IntersectionsMatch.com).

Jasbina Ahluwalia runs *Intersections Matchmaking*, a personalized Matchmaking firm for South Asian singles nationwide.

Anju Mulchandani is a graduate of the Columbia School of Social Work. Her clinical experience has focused on providing counseling for individuals with a variety of emotional problems.