

## Dealing With Ego Maniacs in Dating

### Shades of Sopranos: Reader Wants A Date With Therapist

Dear Mark,

I've been dating steadily since I got out of my relationship last year but haven't found anyone that sparks my interest. I love the advice you give people and you seem like someone I could really get along with. You probably get this all the time but I love your picture in *The Express*. Any chance that you're single? I would love to take you to dinner.

Signed, Admirer

Dear Admirer,

No chance. It was a very sweet offer but I've been in a relationship for ten years. Keep trying and good luck.

Dear Mark,

I really like your column and it is one of the first things I read when I get the Express. I never thought about writing to you, but now I realize maybe you can give me some insight into something I have been finding very common among gay men.

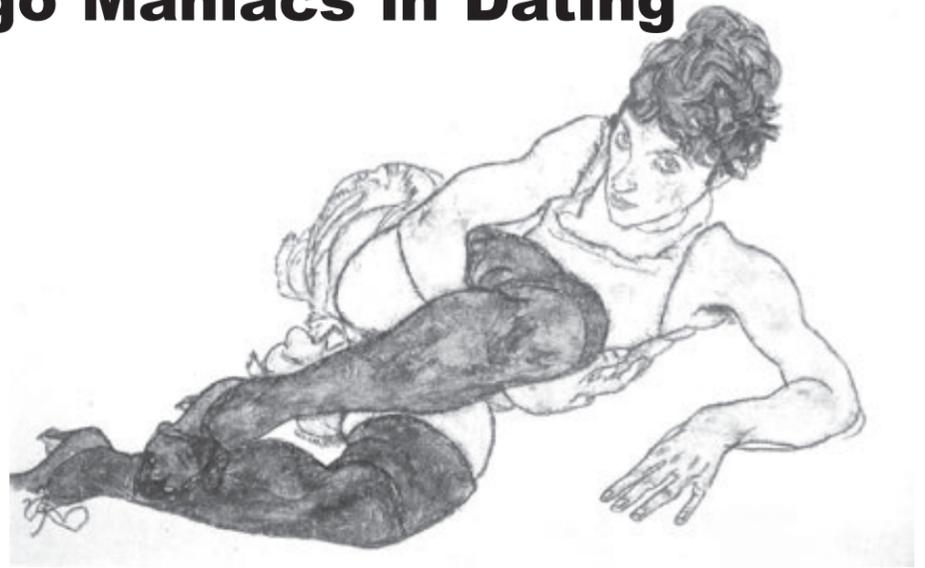
I have been out of a LTR for about four years and in the last year have seriously started dating. I am an attractive, gay professional man in my mid 30s and don't seem to have any problem getting dates. In dating there is something I have encountered enough times to make me wonder whether many gay men (and I guess also straight men and women and lesbians, but I haven't dated any of those) don't know the basic about having a conversation.

The scenario I am talking about is going out on a first date and when the conversation starts rolling you find that all you do is listen to the other guy talk about himself. At first you are polite and ask questions and express interest, but when you realize that he doesn't reciprocate, you start interjecting comments about yourself that may prompt him to take an interest in you and your life. But generally the monologue just continues and after a while you get tired of listening and become incredibly bored. At first I thought this might be do to first time nervousness and desire to make a good impression and that once you spend some time together he would feel comfortable enough to be open to sharing. But typically this is not the case.

On the second and third date it's the same scenario. One guy I dated three times and heard about his life in incredible detail (not that it was that interesting) and realized at the end of the third date he knew next to nothing about me I always thought of conversation, particularly those "get-to-know" you conversations are something like a tennis game—a lot of back and forth volleying. What I have been getting has been a lot of one man shows. Also I thought one of the purposes of these initial conversations was to find out something about the person you're dating (and visa versa).

It might be good to know whether your date is a convicted ax murderer. That's the problem. Could you tell me 1) Why so many guys are like this and 2) how do you respond when you find your date is into a monologue.

Thanks Joe



Hey Joe,

Your problem and subsequent questions seem to be universal spanning both genders and sexual orientations. From both my personal experience and from the clients I have talked with there seems to be a variety of reasons. The most prominent reason is the general lack of self esteem found in many people. Oddly enough, it is when a person is feeling badly about him/herself that they exhibit some of these negative behavior traits.

The thought behind this is "if I make myself look good enough to this prospective person, maybe they will like me". So they launch into this "sales pitch" in an effort to win you over. The problem is that this rarely ever happens. Most people, not unlike you, are left feeling somewhat ignored. The opposite usually happens. "Hey, what about me?" or "Who does this guy think he is" have probably been some of your thoughts.

Another thought is that they might be

so anxious about being on a first date that the person doesn't think about actual "first date protocol" and just rambles on because he is too nervous to do anything else. In either case you should first try the subtle approach. Attempt to interject things about yourself and see what he picks up on. If you find that he is repeatedly unable to hold a two way conversation it may be time for you to move on in your search.

This kind of emotional unavailability speaks to someone who is not ready for a relationship. Keep looking. You will find that most men out there are capable of intelligent conversation. Some of these initial bad experiences will make you appreciate a good listener all the more.

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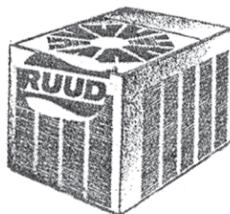
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