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ASK AMY: Advice for the real world

22-year-old should set up house on her own

Amy Dickinson

Ask Amy:

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Dear Amy: I am a 22-year-old college student finishing up my degree and living at home.

My boyfriend is two years older than I, and he works full time.

Our plan has been to move in to an apartment because we spend so much time together (quite happily) and wish to be practical regarding rent.

It seems ridiculous for each of us to be spending more than \$1,000 per month to live separately. I thought that we were doing the right thing, but my boyfriend's father informed him that he and his wife do not approve of us living together for moral reasons.

Up until this point, I have had a wonderful relationship with his family, but now I am extremely uncomfortable.

Amy, the reality is that while he and I are in love, marriage is something we only see in the distant future. I honestly don't think they are encouraging us to marry as much as disapproving of our plan.

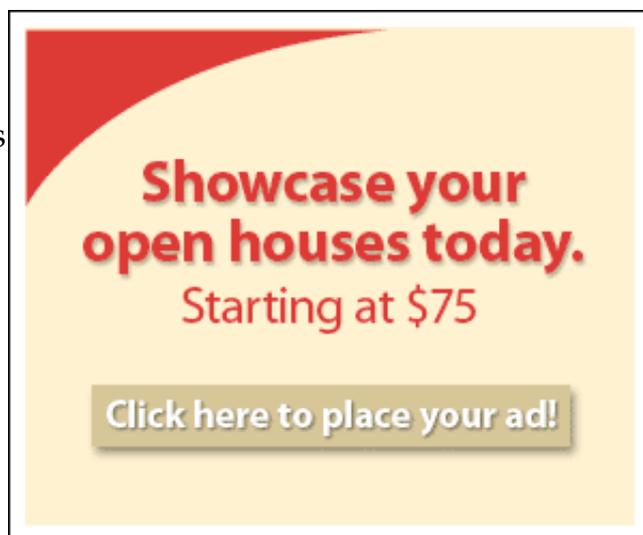
Should I try to speak to them, or should I leave this for my boyfriend to negotiate?

The last thing I want is to cause a rift between him and his family, but it just feels unfair.

My boyfriend still wishes to follow through with moving in together, but now I'm unsure if this is the right path to follow.

-- New Yorker

Dear New Yorker: Part of being an adult is taking responsibility for your actions, even when others disapprove of them. You aren't necessarily causing a rift between your boyfriend and



his parents -- his choice to defy them is his own responsibility.

I'd like to weigh in, however.

Don't move in with your guy -- at least not yet. Despite what you seem to think right now, saving money simply isn't a good enough reason to live with your boyfriend.

You're 22. You would be moving from your family's home straight into a live-in relationship. Maintaining your own household as an individual -- outside of your romantic relationship -- is vital to your development as a person.

I hope that you'll rethink this plan and choose to set up house (perhaps with a roommate or two) for at least a year. You need a taste of adulthood outside of your romantic relationship. You have the rest of your life to cohabit, if you choose to.

Dear Amy: My partner and I have been friends with a couple I'll call "James" and "Brenda." Apparently, last summer Brenda began an affair with another man, "Scott." She has continued the affair and is now leaving James for Scott. I told her that I support her, but that I do not at all support what she is doing. I told her I feel sad and angry.

The problem is that Brenda keeps trying to make plans with my partner and me, including her new beau. We are appalled by what has happened and actually stand on her husband's side.

We would feel very uncomfortable going out with her new boyfriend at this point.

When she asks us to go out with them, I respond with questions inquiring how her husband is, but she has not taken the hint.

What should I do?

-- Feeling Guilty

Dear Guilty: A woman in the throes of leaving her husband for her lover has lost the ability to take a hint. Don't bother.

You have been honest with "Brenda" through much of this -- you need to continue by saying the words out loud: "We're not ready to spend time with you and Scott together. This situation has been hard on us, so you're just going to have to give us more time to adjust."

Dear Amy: I am responding to a letter from "Another Grandmother," who wrote to you about her friend's frustration at not having her baby grandchild come to her house for baby-sitting.

My son and daughter-in-law have three wonderful children, from 1 to 12 years old.

By choice, I have never baby-sat my grandchildren in my home. It is so much easier for the grandparents to go to the home of the children than for the children to come to the home of the grandparents. When young children are involved, all of the necessary equipment is right at hand in the child's home.

Do these grandparents have a crib, stroller and toys in their home?

I have always preferred to go to the child's home as there is less trauma for everyone.

You have all of the love and less stress.

-- Also a Grandmother

Dear Grandmother: I can understand a grandparent being eager to host grandkids at her home, but some parents don't feel comfortable leaving their babies at other people's homes, for the excellent reasons that you cite. It's just too hard to tote all of that equipment and baby-proof someone else's home.

Ask Amy appears Mondays through Fridays in Tempo, Saturdays in the Weekend section and Sundays in Q. Send questions via e-mail to askamy@tribune.com or by mail to Ask Amy, Chicago Tribune, TT500, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60611. Previous columns are available at chicagotribune.com/amy.

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