



HARLAN COHEN

a little about...

Harlan Cohen offers advice to people in their teens and 20s. His column has reached millions of readers on college campuses over the years. Harlan was born and raised by two loving parents in the suburbs of Chicago as the youngest of three brothers. In his free time, Harlan enjoys running, but not as much since completing the Chicago Marathon. Now he can only run a few miles, and then his hips get a little bit sore the next day. Harlan currently resides in Chicago, Ill.


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Girls With Little Self-Respect Tend To Lie And Get Disrespected

By Harlan Cohen

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Dear Harlan,

I have a really good girl "friend" that I've known for a while. She has had a boyfriend for a couple months now, and he treats her like garbage. She says she's too afraid to break up with him. She also says that she likes me and that I treat her way better than her boyfriend. I actually make her smile whenever she's down. I care about her, and I don't want her to get hurt. Another problem is that she does a lot of terrible things — for example: drinking, sex, stealing, lying, anger issues, blah, blah, blah. I care about her so much that I even told her I would go to a doctor to get her checked out for any STDs or anything like that. She tells me that she stopped smoking pot, but everyone is saying that she was smoking some yesterday. She told me she wasn't. How do know if she's lying? And what should I do?

The Good Guy

Dear Good Guy,

Oh, I'd say she's probably lying. Expecting her to be honest with you when she can't even be honest with herself is expecting way too much from her. What jumps out more than the lying is her being scared to break up with this guy. It might be that she's scared to date someone who respects her (people with little self-respect have this problem, as well as the lying problem), or there could be something he's doing. Her boyfriend might be controlling, abusive or even physically dangerous. If she won't share why she's so scared, get an adult involved or professional who can be there to help her through this. She needs to know that she is surrounded by people who will support her and love her. She needs people around her who can hold up a mirror and help reflect what she can't yet see — that she deserves respect. In addition to saying it again and again, get her the book "Respect: A Girl's Guide to Getting Respect & Dealing When Your Line Is Crossed" (Free Spirit Publishing). On the inside cover, write a little note that goes something like this, "Now you can always demand the respect that you know you deserve. Your friend, (insert name)"

Dear Harlan,

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