

UNHAPPY COUPLE BRINGS EVERYONE DOWN

Aug 8, 2021

WARM-UP • Read the headline of the advice column. What does it mean? Can you guess the content of the column?

VOCABULARY • Match the following words and phrases with one that has an **opposite** meaning. Use a dictionary if you need to.

1. Hang out with
2. Break up
3. Private
4. Mean
5. Reluctant

6. Unpleasant
7. Uncomfortable
8. Check on
9. Stupid

Opposites:

a) not spend time with, b) kind, c) willing, d) leave alone, e) stay together, f) intelligent, g) pleasant, h) public, i) comfortable

Dear Debby,

A friend of mine, 'Jack', has been with his girlfriend, 'Tina', for about three years. They often hang out with our group of friends as a couple, so we know and like Tina as a friend, even though we're closer with Jack. Lately, it has seemed like they might break up because they argue, and actually Jack is sometimes quite mean to Tina, even around us. The other day, he called her stupid when she made a simple mistake. It makes me feel uncomfortable when he is mean to her, but I'm reluctant to say anything. I feel like a couple's relationship is their business, not mine. Also, I don't want Jack to think I'm taking Tina's side. Jack is an old friend, and he's usually not mean at all. I don't like how he's acting now, but it seems like their relationship is the reason. What if they keep fighting and Jack keeps being mean to her? It's already unpleasant, and I don't know what to do about it.

-Uncomfortable around an unhappy couple, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

Dear Uncomfortable,

Every couple has to learn how to act around other people. Many types of private couple behavior should stay private! In your friends' case, it sounds like Jack and Tina haven't learned exactly what should stay private and as a result, they are making their friends feel bad. I'm afraid that the only thing you can do now is to avoid hanging out with them altogether. Hopefully, they figure out why they are not being invited. They will either break up, or they will improve their public behavior. Check on them in a year or so - they might be quite different, or they might not be a 'they' at all. Then you can choose which one you want to remain friends with.

Debby Dupont

COMPREHENSION • *At first, try to answer the following questions without looking back at the text. Look back if you can't remember the answers.*

1. How long have Jack and Tina been dating? **a)** a long time, **b)** 2 years, **c)** 3 years
2. Who called Tina stupid? **a)** the writer, **b)** Debby, **c)** Jack
3. Why does the writer feel uncomfortable around the couple? **a)** The writer doesn't like couples, **b)** the writer doesn't like arguing couples, **c)** the writer secretly wants the couple to break up
4. Why doesn't the writer give advice to the couple? **a)** the writer feels discussing business should happen outside the office, **b)** the writer doesn't want to talk to them about something private, **c)** the writer has nothing to say to the couple
5. What is Debby's advice to the writer? **a)** Debby tells the writer to learn how to act around other people, **b)** Debby tells the writer to take Jack's side, **c)** Debby tells the writer to avoid the couple
6. What does Debby mean when she writes, "they might not be a 'they' at all"? **a)** the couple might break up, **b)** the couple might get married, **c)** the couple might not want to be friends anymore

DISCUSSION • *Discuss the following questions with your partner or group. Try to speak in sentences and ask follow-up questions.*

1. Do you hang out with any couples? What is the difference between spending time with single friends and with couples?
2. What would make you think a couple might break up soon? What signs might you notice?
3. What do you think when you hear a person being mean to their partner?
4. How do you feel about arguing in a relationship? Is it a necessary part of a relationship? Is a relationship with no arguing a healthy one?
5. Do you give your friends relationship advice? Why or why not?
6. If someone gave you relationship advice, how would you react?
7. What types of private couple behavior should remain private?
8. What did you think of Debby's advice? Do you have a better idea?
9. What do you think will happen to Jack and Tina?

Vocabulary answers: 1-a, 2-e, 3-h, 4-b, 5-c, 6-g, 7-i, 8-d, 9-f

Comprehension answers: 1-c, 2-c, 3-b, 4-b, 5-c, 6-a