

POSSESSIVE GIRLFRIEND

WARM-UP • Read the headline of the advice column. What does it mean? Can you guess the content of the column? Discuss with your partner(s).

VOCABULARY • Match the following words and phrases with a meaning. Use a dictionary if you need to.

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| 1. Possessive | a) kind of, to some degree |
| 2. Intense | b) taking all of a person's time and attention |
| 3. Somewhat | c) a relationship between two people or companies |
| 4. Overwhelmed | d) in a way that is hard to notice |
| 5. Over-the-top | e) extreme |
| 6. All-consuming | f) wanting someone's attention and to have a strong influence over their life |
| 7. Partnership | g) very strong |
| 8. Subtly | h) feeling like an emotion or situation is too much to bear |

Dear Debby,

I'd like to know what you think of my girlfriend's behavior. First off, I really like her. She's pretty, smart, and funny too. I feel lucky to have found someone with similar interests. We're both into books, poetry, and visiting the various cafes around our city. I guess the only problem is that she can be a bit possessive. She wants to know where I am and what I'm doing all the time. She sometimes sends a message asking what I'm doing, and then 10 minutes later, she asks the same thing again! It's like, nothing has changed in 10 minutes, you know? Also, she won't let me meet my friends without her. Sometimes my male friends just want to get together without girls around, but she always wants to be there. I like sharing my life with her, but do I need to share everything? I guess I'm saying, she's great but just a bit intense. The other day she told me she'd kill herself if something happened to me. I love her, but wow(!), that was over-the-top. So, what do you think, Debby? Is this a serious problem?

Somewhat Overwhelmed, HONG KONG.

Dear Somewhat Overwhelmed,

To be the object of an all-consuming love is special, and my advice for you is to enjoy it while it lasts. If you weren't into her, it would be a different story, but if you love her as you say you do, I think you should just ignore the small concerns that you mentioned in your letter. Over time, I'm sure her behavior will become less intense.

It's true - a healthy relationship allows each partner to have their own life, apart from the shared world of the partnership. So, I agree, you should be able to meet your friends without her. This will be easier for her to accept if she has comparable options. Does she have friends or hobbies? Subtly encourage her to develop friendships or activities that don't include you. With more balance in your relationship, she won't have a problem when you're doing your own thing.

Debby Dupont

COMPREHENSION • *Decide if the following are true (T) or false (F), and then discuss your answers with your partner(s).*

1. Somewhat Overwhelmed (SO) and his girlfriend are both writers. (T / F)
2. SO thinks his girlfriend contacts him too frequently. (T / F)
3. SO was happy to hear his girlfriend mention suicide. (T / F)
4. Debby thinks SO doesn't need to worry. (T / F)
5. Debby suggested the couple develop common interests to become closer. (T / F)

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

1. Are your emotions strong? Do you feel strong love, jealousy, fear, or other emotions? Would you rather feel emotions strongly or weakly?
2. What things are you into? Is it easy to find other people that share your interests?
3. How important is it to find a romantic partner that shares your interests? Could you date someone that is into totally different topics and hobbies?

4. In a relationship, when you're not physically together, how often do you want to be contacted by your partner? How often do you contact them?
5. Do you enjoy meeting your same-sex friends without any members of the opposite sex present? Why or why not?
6. Somewhat Overwhelmed (SO), the writer of the letter, is not sure if he has a problem. Does he have a problem?
7. Debbie suggests that SO should "enjoy it while it lasts". What do you think about this advice?
8. Do all relationships start out intensely and then get less intense as time goes by? If not, what other patterns do relationships follow?
9. Should a couple do everything together? Or is it important that each person has their own life?
10. If you were dating a person that was quite possessive, how would you feel?

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

Comprehension answers: 1-F, 2-T, 3-F, 4-T, 5-F