

CAN THIS BE LOVE?

DO YOU TELL THE TRUTH AND NOTHING BUT? (And who are you kidding?)

Honesty is probably as necessary to a successful relationship as having both partners' parents live in another state, and nobody would seriously argue with the need to be scrupulously truthful when it comes to things like letting our lovers know what we want for our birthdays. But it isn't always easy, or particularly rewarding, to tell the truth—like when you have to explain why the newspapers, which you promised to cancel before the two of you went on vacation, are now piled up to your second-story windows.

The following questions should help you find out if you're a stickler for the truth, or if you don't mind making hash out of it occasionally in the interest of self-preservation.

You have a friendly dinner with an old boyfriend. Do you then tell your partner

1. immediately, so that if he's going to be a jerk about it you can deal with it right away?
2. two or three years later, in the middle of a fight?
3. in a sealed letter, to be opened only in the event of your death?

Your partner invites a totally gross friend from college to spend the evening with you. Afterward, when he asks, "Isn't Arnie great?" do you say

1. you'd rather spend an evening with The Thing, and if that's your partner's idea of amiable companionship maybe you, too, should learn to make belching noises to the tune of "Old MacDonald?"
2. something noncommittal, like, "He reminds me of my cousin, Frank." (Chiefly known for passing out cold at every family function he attends.)
3. you find Arnie almost as enchanting as your partner's other school chum, Bernie, the lawyer who donated his services free to anti-ERA groups?

Your partner asks you to mail his car insurance payment, but you forget and don't

remember your oversight for several weeks. Do you then

1. call your partner at work the moment you realize what has happened, hoping that he can rectify the matter with the insurance company?
2. wait until he gets a reminder from the company, then swear you mailed the payment and rant and rave about the inefficiency of the post office?
3. hide the reminder from the company and pray he doesn't get into an accident?

Your partner decides to shave off his mustache and then asks your opinion of this obvious mistake. Do you

1. study him for a moment before blurting out that you never realized his nose was so long?
2. say he looks "very cute," rather like the little five-year-old boy in *Kramer vs. Kramer*?
3. say you're delighted, then go out and buy him a ski mask as a surprise gift?

For your birthday, your partner turns up with a present at once ghastly *and* expensive (a cashmere sweater with your name, in rhinestones, across the front). Do you

1. explain to him as kindly as you can that the only people who wear their names across their clothes are prizefighters?
2. say it's "very nice," and then wear it only to places you don't have to take off your coat, like ice-sculpture shows or candlelight vigils?
3. feign delight, then make sure the garment meets with a serious accident, like a run through the dishwasher on pot-scrubber cycle?

Your parents ask you to spend Labor Day with them and you accept, even though you know your partner is planning to watch baseball with some cronies that afternoon. When he explodes at your news, do you

1. say "tough," and point out that he owes your parents a visit, seeing as how he hasn't been to their home since 1981?
2. tell him you had to accept the invitation, because the alternative was having them at your house for the weekend?
3. look astonished when he reminds you of his other plans, then maintain your ignorance at all costs?

SCORING: Give yourself one, two or three points for each question, according to the number alongside your chosen answer.

If you scored less than eight points, propose yourself for President. George Washington had nothing on you for truth.

If you scored thirteen points or less, you can congratulate yourself on the fact that you probably lie to your partner no more or less than he lies to you.

If you scored fourteen points or more, your partner is in all likelihood blissfully ignorant of everything you do, think, or feel. You are either total strangers, or very happy together, or both.

(Next month find out if you're living with Honest Abe, or with Mr. He-Wouldn't-Know-The-Truth-If-It-Jumped-Up-And-Bit-Him.)

by Bette-Jane Raphael

August 1984, Glomour

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