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Are you being used? When to watch your back



Sep 27, 2012 9:00 AM by Jessica Padykula
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Fake friend alert

Not everyone you meet is going to have your best interests at heart. You're likely to meet a few people in every stage of life that put more effort into getting what they want out of you, than actually forging a genuine friendship. Before you get taken for a ride, know whether you're being used -- and how to deal.

To learn more, we turned to **April Masini**. Nicknamed "the new millennium's Dear Abby," she writes the critically acclaimed 'Ask April' advice column and answers reader questions on the free Ask April advice forum. She shares her insight into the signs you're being used by someone you thought was a friend.

It's all about her

If you're always adjusting your schedule to fit your friend's needs -- and there's no sense that he or she does the same, watch out, says Masini. "Real friends balance the need to take care of themselves with being generous and taking care of you, too," she explains. "Compromise is part of any healthy relationship, and if your friend isn't compromising or adjusting his or her schedule as often as you are, there's not equality and there's not generosity, and there's every reason to believe this is a friendship that hinges on your friend's terms, not a mutual back and forth."

She's unreliable

When your friend invites you to do things -- and then un-invites you when someone better comes along, it's not a good sign. It means you're a place-holder, not a friend, explains Masini. "Your friend thinks you're OK for now, but not a life-long, through thick and thin friend," she says. "This isn't someone you can call if you're sick and need soup or a ride to the emergency room. This is someone who's great for shopping and lunch -- as long as he or she doesn't have anything better to do or [anyone] better to do it with."

You always come in second

Rethink your loyalty to someone who makes plans with you for the weekend and drops you as soon as he or she has a date. "Even if it's a first, second or third date, you're second fiddle to the date -- not a friend," notes Masini. "Real friends can have romantic relationships and still respect their friendships. Men and women who put their dates ahead of their friends every single time without fail have a very clear priority that puts you second," she explains. "Who wants to be second best?"

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She always wants something

We all like to share with our friends, but if it's your stuff, rather than you that your "friend" is more interested in, you might want to steer clear. "This friend likes your stuff more than you, and always wants to bring other friends along whenever you've got something like the car, free passes to something or are hosting an intimate party," explains Masini. "You happen to be lucky or resourceful enough to have a lot of money to spend, a great place or a terrific car, and you're beginning to think your friend never has time for just you, but is using you for your stuff," she adds. "Trust your instincts. Gold-diggers aren't just women looking for sugar daddies. They can be friends digging for opportunity."

She goes after what you want (or have)

Some people just can't handle it when other people are happy or go after what they want. If you know someone you think of as a friend, but who always seems to want to steal your thunder, she's likely using you. "Every time you've got a job interview or a date with someone new, this person tags along, and although he or she is naturally gregarious, you get the feeling that your friend is trying to get your job, your boyfriend or the attention and favor of your best friends and family," explains Masini. "This person is a hog. Hogs are adorable on a farm -- not so adorable in your circle of friends."

Watch: Girlfriends

Kate Walsh discusses those relationships that withstand the test of time and the type of friends that will always be there for you.



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