

Relationships

# Common goals help couples stick together

NICETIES ARE SWEET, BUT BIG THINGS ARE WHAT COUNT, AUTHOR SAYS

By ERIN HILL PERRY  
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

have kids with?" Bridson says. "This lets me know up front that he is the right man for the job."

They have two cats of their own — Clark and Lanie — named after Clark Kent and Lois Lane.

Taking on the responsibility of fostering animals has brought the couple, dating since January 2008, closer.

**'VIGILANTLY THOUGHTFUL'**

Relationship expert Caroline Tiger says while the little things count, the big things are what matter most in a relationship.

And doing the big stuff requires a certain level of sacrifice — even if it means nursing sick animals back to health while juggling work and school.

In her book, "The Newlywed's Instruction Manual: Essential Information, Troubleshooting Tips, and Advice for the First Year of Marriage" (Quirk Books, \$16.95), Tiger writes about the importance of being "vigorously thoughtful when it comes to your relationship."

Tiger, who is married and lives in Philadelphia, said staying close can be a challenge for newlyweds and even harder for couples who have been married longer.

Tiger suggests couples participate in activities that involve just the two of them that



MICHELLE KUMATA/KRT

lead them to share a common goal, such as looking for a home, going to the gym together a few times a week or taking a cooking class or a dance class.

Bridson and Moshier have the right idea.

"Getting a pet or fostering animals is a great way to stay close," Tiger says. "It's a good way to re-energize your relationship, and it gives you a common goal. And it's kind of sort of practice for having a baby."

"It's totally 50-50," Bridson says. "Eric always has my back. He's always willing to make concessions. He understands that this fostering

thing was important to me."

When Bridson realized she would have only a few days off from work in December, she told Moshier she didn't think they'd be able to foster animals for a while.

"Two days later, he brings home a foster," Bridson says. "He's taken on my obsession."

"We get attached to them," says Moshier, who works at a public relations firm and is studying criminal justice at Oakland Community College. "Some come without names, and we try to come up with funny names for them."

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**DEAR CAROLYN:** I am a single dad who raised my daughter alone. She began college this fall and is



CAROLYN HAX

returning home for holiday break. She feels

she should no longer have a curfew. She is a good student and does not use alcohol or drugs.

I know in college she can be out till 6 a.m. without consequences. She feels her history of good decision-making should allow her "college rules" when she returns home. I am not so sure.

I favor a 2 a.m. curfew as a reasonable boundary. In med school they used to say that 10% of drivers are drunk after midnight. Who wants a loved one dodging this at 3 a.m.? — G.

**DEAR G:** If that's true, then she'll be dodging it at your compromise 2 a.m., or even at a dad-friendly 12:15 a.m.

Certainly you're in a position to declare that it's your house, so you make the rules. However, she's in a position to counter that she's legally an adult, and then you'd both be discarding nuance and sensitivity for the purpose of getting your way.

Do you see what these three (bad) arguments have in common? They're all attempts to make the curfew case with logic, when the issue is really emotional for both of you.

The best solution is one that satisfies each of your emotional needs:

- You don't want to lie awake worrying about your baby.
- She doesn't want to feel like a baby.

So, agree with her that her age, history and experience with managing her own schedule mean that yes, she's due a release from her curfew. Then, say that your roles as father and keeper of the home mean that you're due some respect for your needs, too.

A responsible, adult daughter can certainly consider her father's feelings and not stay out all night knowing Daddy's lying awake at home.

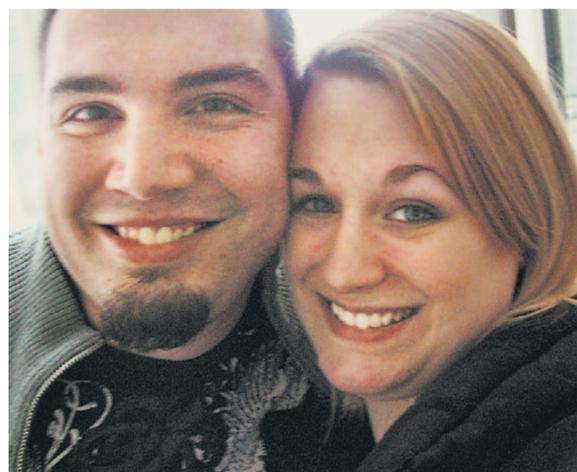
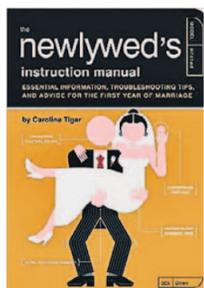
It sounds as if you both work hard to do the right thing. Trusting that quality in each other can be your lingua franca, now that she's an adult.

**DEAR CAROLYN:** My boyfriend and I are in our late 20s and have been together six years. We've never talked about marriage, but I feel secure in our commitment and fairly certain it will happen eventually. He's the kind of guy who could just propose out of the blue.

However, I've recently decided I don't want an engagement ring. How can I let him know that without bringing up a talk about marriage? — Washington

**DEAR WASHINGTON:** You can't. But if it upsets him to hear (in Year 6!) "I love you, want to marry you, and don't want the overpriced token," then you aren't on the path you think.

READ CAROLYN HAX EVERY DAY IN THE FREE PRESS. WRITE TO HER CARE OF THE WASHINGTON POST, STYLE PLUS, 1150 15TH ST., NW, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20071 OR E-MAIL TELLME@WASHPOST.COM.



Eric Moshier and his fiancée, Katelyn Bridson, of Novi foster animals from the Humane Society.

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On Detroit.MomslikeMe.com Today's topic

**How often do you talk with your parents? Here's what local moms had to say:**

"I talk to my mom a lot! some days more than others, and visit a lot since they live less than 10 minutes away. Being the youngest I am the one who helps out with stuff, her AVON or yard work."  
— mikiesmom

"Before my mom passed I probably called her once every 3 weeks or so. More often if there was a medical issue or party planning."  
— last2know

"I try to talk to Mom once a week just to check in. Sometimes the week slips by without the chance."  
— HappyGirl72

"I tried to call at least once a week when I was living away (like out of state) from mom. Now I still get the urge to pick up the phone between 2 and 3 to ask her what I should bring for dinner and if she wanted me to play her lottery numbers."  
— cmgrayson1

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