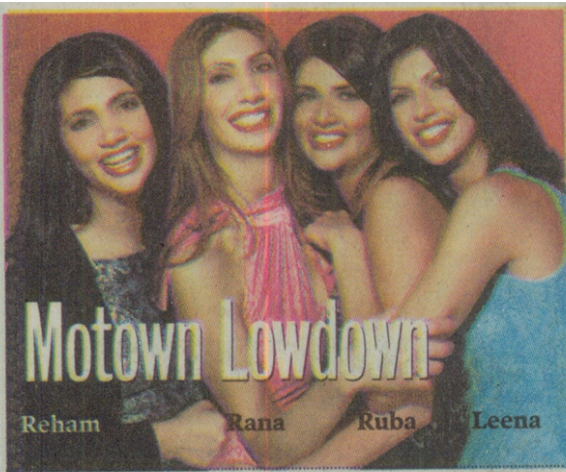


Features

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2003



The Kozouz sisters answer your relationship questions every Tuesday in *The Detroit News*. Send your questions to Lowdown@detnews.com or write to Motown Lowdown c/o The Detroit News, 615 W. Lafayette Blvd., Detroit, MI 48226.

Wife wants a nanny, but hubby says no

My husband travels all the time for work. We have four young children all under the age of 7. I'm a stay-at-home mom and I love it, but lately with his increased workload and international travel schedule, things are taking their toll on me. I've discussed hiring a nanny with him, and he absolutely refuses. He says it's too expensive and a waste of money. That's why I'm not working, he claims. It's not like we can't afford it. He makes more than six figures. I'm getting very worn out and resentful, and it's starting to affect the children. Help, sisters, help!

— Bedraggled in Bloomfield Hills

Dear Bedraggled:

While Mr. Business Class is jet setting from Schiphol to Heathrow you are teetering on the verge of a nervous breakdown. You are better off to hire the nanny yourself before you become embittered with him or your kids. Four young kids and no husband around to help you is total chaos. The more help you have with the feedings, the laundry and the dirty diapers, the more love, attention and schooling you can give to your children. Your husband has no excuse, especially since you can afford it. Keep the nanny at least until your oldest can start helping you with the chores.

— Rana

What is it with our generation? My mother raised six children (all close in age), always had a spotless house and prepared enough lunch and dinner for an army without ever breaking a sweat. Moms these days are so quick to hire someone else to replace their primary job as caregiver. You shouldn't view raising your children as a job, but rather a joy and a blessing. Be thankful your children will grow up, unlike most, knowing you better than their nanny.

— Leena

If you are not happy, no one around you will be. You are not doing anyone any good by being miserable. Consider going back to work part-time to keep your sanity and feel as if you are part of the real world. Your husband will have no right to complain about finances if you are contributing. If you do not want to return to work, lean on relatives or friends for a few hours a week to refuel your soul.

— Ruba

Raising children is a full-time job for two parents, much less one! I suggest a week getaway solo. Perhaps a trip to a spa out west or a beach bum excursion to Mexico will recharge your battery and force hubby to watch the kids and ultimately realize what's actually involved in your daily schedule. I guarantee that after a week of your absence, he'll recognize what a waste of money it is not to invest in your and your family's ultimate happiness. You'll need to find some kind of compromise, whether it's more of an active commitment on his part or a third party to assist you.

— Reham

I have a girlfriend whom I have known for many years. She's a great friend in so many ways, but the rest of us think she's cheap. She always conveniently leaves her purse at home or in the car, or has no money on her whenever we go out to eat or to the bar. We always seem to be picking up her part of the bill. She always says she'll pay us back, but usually never does. Who's in the wrong here and should we say something?

— Cashing Out in Clawson

Dear Cashing Out:

This sticky and cheap predicament calls for some sly tactics on your part. There's no reason why you and your friends can't split the bill or alternate turns picking up the check. To assure El Cheapo doesn't scam again, make sure she is in possession of her purse or wallet prior to dining out. A friendly reminder such as "Did you forget your bag?" or "Do you need to go to the money machine?" will make it almost impossible for her to pinch her pennies once again.

— Reham

Don't just assume your girlfriend is being cheap. Take a moment and explore other possibilities. For example, perhaps she is having financial difficulties and is too embarrassed to discuss it. Don't let her alligator arms ruin your relationship.

— Ruba

I have a few friends who behave like this. However, I continue to go out with them and tolerate picking up their tabs because I enjoy their company. I know that they have something genuine to offer — a friendship. It's nice to have an eclectic mix of friends. Just think, what would *Seinfeld* be without George or Kramer?

— Rana

There is nothing I detest more than frugal people. My friend had the cheapest roommate in college. When she borrowed hairspray, weeks later, the roommate insisted that she replenish the missing two squirts. I suggest that you "pump" out your thoughts to "de-volumize" the problem before this situation takes a "firm hold."

— Leena