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NEW ADVICE COLUMN

Motown Lowdown

LEENA

The busy in this remarkably bonded foursome, Leena is 28 years old and married to a fellow chef five years ago in a bar.

She's got a master's degree in speech pathology from Wayne State University and works in the Oakland County public schools.

She's also a part-time model who works most weekends. Talk about a full plate.

Luckily, her husband cooks. And bakes. (Her sisters could die of envy.)

Leena's described by her siblings as empathetic to a fault. "She can be a little sap," says oldest sister Reham with a laugh. "But then, we all cry at commercials." For her part, Leena calls herself "sensitive, energetic and patient. You have to be," she says, "to work with kids."

So you know she's going to give your issues a thorough hearing.

Her take on how to help people? "You have to take their feelings into account," she says, "and draw in personal experiences of your own. I think that gives what you say more weight."

Her crazy schedule doesn't leave much time for clubbing. But she does love tennis and snowboarding, when she can get around to them. Mostly, she says, she spends her free time playing with Reham's brand-new baby boy.



RANA

At 31, Rana's found her dream job — she's public-relations director for the Detroit Zoo.

"I love the fact that I'm one of the few good stories on the local news," she says. Unmarried and loving that too, she describes herself as fun, ambitious and adventuresome.

Next week she's going to Kenya. And that time she went skydiving? "I landed in a tree and got stuck up there," she says. "They had to send the rescue vehicles."

Her sisters call Rana the entertaining one, but watch out when you ask for advice. It's tough-love time.

"It's best to tell the truth, though a lot of people like it sugar-coated," she says. "But I think it's better to live in harsh reality than false dreams."

Ouch! But then, as Reham says, "Leena and Ruba connect more on an emotional level. Rana and I are more practical."

Luckily, Rana relishes this role. As she says, "I like to give the answers: 'This is how you fix it.'"



Four sisters tackle your questions about love, dating and family concerns every Tuesday



Photos by Donna Terek / The Detroit News

Dish it up: The four Kozouz sisters from left, Rana, Leena, Reham and Ruba get together every Sunday with their mom, Ruth, center, to catch up on what's new in their lives.

Michael H. Hodges | The Detroit News

Male or female, who couldn't use four wise sisters to advise you?

Because let's face it: Every once in awhile, life smacks you around.

Everyone needs a support system — to comfort, counsel, and on occasion, slap you upside the head when you've been a complete dolt.

That's why, once a week starting Tuesday, The Detroit News will bring you help from the Kozouz sisters — Leena, Ruba, Rana and Reham — four savvy, smart-talk-

ing twenty- and thirtysomethings from Oakland County eager to fix your most vexing problems.

This isn't any one-size-fits-all kind of column. Each of our advice divas will weigh in with her own comment — four, individual points of view on how to clear up the mess you're wrestling with at the moment.

It's kind of like calling your four wisest friends — just without the long-distance charges.

How to submit questions If you're looking for advice, send your queries, including your city of residence, by e-mail: features@detnews.com or by letter: *Motown Lowdown*, The Detroit News, 635 W. Lafayette Blvd., Detroit, MI 48226. Because of the sensitive nature of these issues, we will maintain the confidentiality of those seeking help.

RUBA

Ruba "is the queen of patience," says Reham. The comfort person. The one you go to in a crisis. What better attribute for an advice columnist?

This 30-year-old, like Leena and Reham, chose the schoolteaching life, and works with third graders.

Like all her sisters, Ruba went to Wayne State, and like Leena and Rana, she has her master's degree.

She's not married — yet. But she's dated her boyfriend, the brother of Reham's husband, for the past seven years.

Given her druthers in the winter, Ruba would jet off someplace exotic, hot and sunny, her CD case jammed with anything except country music. When it comes to helping people, Reham advises taking in the whole picture.

"You need to look at both sides of everything," she says, sounding very much like someone who's broken up a lot of third-grade disputes. "There are always two sides."

She also suggests lifting your gaze above the petty details.

"A lot of times people get caught up in the daily grind, the small stuff," she says. "You need to step back."



REHAM

Reham's the oldest sister, and the one the rest all goes to for advice — so when she talks, prick up your ears.

At 33, Reham's the only mother in the foursome so far; little Marcus, the light of his aunts' lives, is almost a year old.

Right now Reham's delighted to be a stay-at-home mom. But before settling down, she worked in advertising here and in Chicago, and then became a schoolteacher.

She even had a shot at the CIA. "I wanted to do research," she says, "but they wanted me for espionage."

The government's loss is our gain.

Reham admits to being, just once in awhile, the bossy one — but what oldest child isn't? Burdened with the responsibility of watching out for hapless little sisters, she grew up with a natural ability to size up a situation and dispense advice.

Reham calls herself a leader who's creative and strong. Her sisters call her a "mother hen" they couldn't live without.

