

## Accused of being a flirt <sup>[1]</sup>

Dear Alice,

My boyfriend has recently told me that I am a flirt at work (we both work together). I feel that I am just friendly and if another man takes my comments further than they are meant to go, is it my fault? I think that my boyfriend is taking it too far.

This morning, for instance, I came in and said "nice hair" to a fellow co-worker who had been there all night. I need some advice as to how to handle this situation.

The Flirt

### Answer

Dear The Flirt,

Most people would agree there is a difference between flirting and being friendly, however most people would also agree that the difference between flirting and being friendly can be difficult to discern. For some, flirting is the first step in seduction. They're testing the water to see what kind of response they will get to help them gain the courage to take their interests a step further. For others, flirting is a way of connecting with another person, of making contact, of flattering the ego of the person you're flirting with, and a way of flattering yourself. Being friendly could also be interpreted, by the recipient of your friendliness, as flirting, even if you have no flirtatious intentions.

It wouldn't be a bad idea to examine your own behavior and your own motives. Are you just being friendly? Are you massaging your own ego? What is your intent? Can you be friendly without flirting? Perhaps as important, how is your flirting being received? Is it accepted casually, or are you getting invitations, or responses, you may neither want nor expect? Once you think about these questions, it may help to explain your thoughts to your boyfriend.

Perhaps the way to look at this situation is from your boyfriend's point of view. How would you feel if you overheard him saying, "Nice hair," in a teasing, playful way to a person at work under

similar circumstances? This may give you some insight into how he feels.

Maybe the issue here isn't your flirting, but the insecurity of your boyfriend. You could think about having an open discussion with him. Do you understand why the "flirting" bothers him? Does he understand? How does he define flirting, and how do you? And, does he feel left out or neglected when he perceives you're flirting with someone else? You may be able to come up with solutions together, if you can sit down to discuss how you both feel. With some open communication, maybe you can continue to be your naturally friendly self, and give your boyfriend some reassurance at the same time.

Alice!

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