

Dear TeenCentral.Net reader

I started to write this book for my daughter shortly after I saw her holding the hand of a Frog. What's a Frog? Read on!

Frog or Prince? The Smart Girl's Guide to Boyfriends has an introduction and nine chapters. I chose Chapter Five, titled "frog boot camp," for you to read because I believe that when you know better, you do better. Relationships are confusing for lots of reasons and this chapter is intended to help you sort through some of that confusion. However, Chapter Five is in the middle of the book, which means I have to clear up some terms that are defined in earlier chapters. So here goes!

Why are we with a Frog? We either don't have the information, skills and tools to know the difference between a Frog and a Prince, or else we believe we deserve a Frog. How do we avoid a Frog? By acquiring information, skills and tools. Or by learning how to love and respect ourselves. For example, we need to be sure that our guy has *character*—does he say what he means, does he do what he says he will, and does he know enough to choose right from wrong? If your boyfriend has character, great, because at the very least a Prince has character and a Frog doesn't.

Remember the daisy game? Think back to when you pulled off the first petal: “He loves me.” And then the next: “He loves me not.” Didn’t you hope the last petal was “He loves me?” We all do! But in the real world, the daisy game gets us nowhere. Yet if you turn the game around — “I love him, I love him not” — suddenly you are in control of the game and a new question arises: “Is he the right guy for me?” And this leads to an answer that will get you somewhere. How? By making you look at your own needs first.

Most of us have a mistaken belief — we need a boyfriend to make us happy. Actually, we don’t. A boyfriend can add to our happiness but he can’t be the only “beautiful thing” in our life that makes us happy. We’re responsible to build ourselves a beautiful life — where we wake up excited about the day, feel ourselves growing happy, knowing that we’re able to fix the difficulties that seemed too big before. If you start building yourself a beautiful life, great, because at the very least it’s now possible for you to choose a Prince. Otherwise you need a fairy godmother — and they don’t exist.

To find a Prince (and to send a Frog back to the swamp) takes respect — respect for yourself. A big part of respecting ourselves is knowing what our needs and wants are and then learning to recognize what it feels like to get these met. If you don’t understand what your needs are, you won’t be able to choose a guy who will help you to meet them. This book is about needs — what needs we are responsible to meet for ourselves and what needs we deserve to get met in any relationship. There are four categories of needs — emotional, physical, intellectual and lifestyle. Here are some examples:

- emotional needs: do you value your boyfriend, that is, do you tell him what you think and feel and does he tell you what he thinks and feels?

- physical needs: does nestling inside your boyfriend's arms make you feel warm and desired, and do you know that he feels the same way?
- intellectual needs: do you find him interesting, that is, are you curious about what he thinks, and does he listen to your point of view?
- lifestyle needs: is he important to you, that is, do you include his feelings and needs in your choices and does he do that for you?

We all have the same needs; however, we each have different wants—in the book I call them *pet* wants. A pet want refers to the way we feel each of our needs getting met. Let's look at the lifestyle need "to feel important," as an example. To get this need met, a girl must feel her boyfriend includes her feelings and needs in his choices. In your case, how you want this need to be specifically met—your pet want—may be for your boyfriend to cancel his plans and come and be with you because you sprained your ankle or because you're upset and need a hug. For another girl, how she wants this need met—*her* pet want—may be entirely different.

Relationships are confusing for a zillion reasons. But the good news is they get less confusing when you set a bar. A bar is a standard for how you treat yourself and others and for how you expect your boyfriend to treat you. Think of your bar as something like the one in high jump; your boyfriend has to clear this one for you to let him into your life in any serious way. The height of your bar isn't marked in feet, inches or centimeters. How high it is depends on how you expect to be treated in your relationship. If you value yourself, then only some guys will treat you with enough respect to clear your bar. If your bar is too low, just about anyone can jump over it and into your life, whether they treat you respectfully or not.

Relationships also get less confusing when you understand how to manage your hurt feelings. Here's something for you to try. When you feel hurt or confused, write down either the words your boyfriend said or the things he did that caused you to feel that way. This is your Hurt List. Writing down what he said or did — or both — and how this made you feel is the way you begin to meet your own need to be clear and not confused. Now put your Hurt List away in a drawer for a day or two and then take it out and look at it again. If you still feel upset about items on the list, you need to have a heart-to-heart with your boyfriend. Hurt feelings are like warning signals that tell you your boyfriend probably isn't able to treat you with enough respect to clear your bar. These little alarm bells tell you to pay attention: you're experiencing unmet needs in the relationship.

The hurt feelings that show up in the early part of a relationship may not mean that your new boyfriend is a Frog. All guys have what I call an invisible timeline — their own “schedule” for certain things happening in a relationship. Along this invisible timeline are signposts that tell you he is beginning to commit to the relationship, like when he introduces you to his best friend or deliberately takes the time to help you out or begins to consider your feelings in his words and in his actions. If you think it is taking too long for any of these signposts to appear, it is your choice to exit.

We all have beliefs about relationships — Follow your heart. Love is enough. Nobody's perfect. But do these beliefs really help us get out of a relationship with a Frog and get into one with a Prince? In the book there are four new dating beliefs: 1) My boyfriend is the draw for me (in other words, you really want to meet his needs); 2) I like myself when I'm with him; 3) I like him as a person; 4) I am the draw for him (he really wants to meet my needs). If you believe all of these are true in

your relationship, you are with a Prince. If not, you're with a Frog and it is time to exit.

In the book I have used several characters and their stories to illustrate the process of learning how relationships work—why we get in, how to get out, what life with a Frog looks and feels like and what life with a Prince can be. You will see some of these characters in Chapter Five, but if you don't know all the details of their stories, don't worry. And if you don't understand some of the terms I use in the chapter, like “pink-top experience,” “To Do List,” “the big-picture love need,” “little-picture experience,” “thinking voice,” “the life-as-a-mirror idea,” and “good-point sticks,” that's okay, too. What's important is that you get the main idea of the chapter.

After you've read this chapter, here's what I hope you walk away with: more information, skills and tools to recognize both a Frog and a Prince. At the very least, I hope that you understand what your emotional needs are and then set your bar. And then — if your emotional needs are not being met — exit your relationship.

Best,

Kaycee Jane

FIVE: frog boot camp

Everybody needs to know when to exit a relationship. Knowing when and how to leave can be more important than knowing when to get into a relationship. The last thing you want is to be trapped with a Frog, feeling hurt and confused. It's easy to get trapped by mistaken beliefs ("If you kiss a Frog often enough, he'll turn into a Prince"). But nobody's kisses can change a Frog into a Prince, and if you think a Frog is going to change because he loves you, you're sure to be disappointed — or worse.

Right now, do you think your bar is set too high? Well, if your list of pet wants is too long or if you're too choosy — you give the guy a character exam and expect references — you'll figure out sooner or later that you have to reset your bar. No guy will live up to your standards. On the other hand, if you choose to give up satisfaction of any pet want, not because you can still respect yourself and grow happy but just because you have intense feelings for your boyfriend, then your bar is set too low. The guy you're with is such a Frog that you have to set your bar to "zero expectations" to stay with him.

There's a place in the maze where you can get stuck between "Do I stay?" and "Do I go?" If you're caught in this place, you're

lost in love (and not in a good way). Knowing when to exit is important because being with a Frog long enough can leave you feeling stuck, trapped or afraid, as if no action you take will make any difference. If you find yourself in that spot, do whatever it takes to get out. Every minute you stay makes leaving harder. If you're too confused to make sense of your relationship, if you love him and if you don't yet have a bar that is set just right, you need Frog Boot Camp.

Frog Boot Camp serves one purpose: to give you a way to exit your relationship when you're stuck between "Do I stay?" and "Do I go?" What every girl needs is a boot camp to help her set a little bar for the fulfillment of each of her emotional needs — if those needs aren't getting met, she can go!

Dating should be a wonderful experience — not every minute, of course, but in the big picture it should be sweet. As you move toward the middle of the relationship your experiences will change. If you start feeling ongoing hurt, disappointment, confusion or doubt after the happy beginning, you probably picked a Frog. Your boyfriend's actions are not clearing your bar. Somehow he managed to slip through your filter, which you use to identify his warts or your unmet needs. You also might have had needs that were different from those you thought you had (as in the pink-top experience).

In any relationship, you deserve to get your needs met. Gwen's in a long-distance relationship. In both long-distance and regular relationships, you must get each of your emotional needs met, but you *can* choose to give up fulfillment of any of your physical, intellectual and lifestyle needs. In giving up fulfillment of any need, you must still be able to grow happy; that is, find a substitute way of meeting that need by satisfying a different pet want. In any relationship — long-distance or not — when your needs are not getting met they show up on your Hurt List. Your bar will help you see the difference between a genuine need and a pet want.

Gwen's had to fine-tune her bar to be able to judge whether or not her needs are getting met. There's not much fine-tuning required for her emotional and intellectual needs, however, as all those lovely, intense conversations online or on the phone are how she gets those needs met. Conversations are where we do our hardest work to get our needs — to become familiar, to value, to accept, to challenge, to listen, to support and so on — fulfilled. Gwen doesn't get these needs met face-to-face, of course; she talks on the phone or on MSN and shares pictures on Flickr or MySpace or Facebook.

In a long-distance relationship, conversations are even more important, and often more intimate and intense. Without body language to refer to when we talk in person, we need to be that much more precise and expressive when we're communicating long-distance. Generally speaking, if you can't have a heart-to-heart conversation with your boyfriend, he's probably not the guy for you.

Gwen has had to adjust her bar to help her judge whether or not she's getting her physical and lifestyle needs met. This has been hard — different from a regular relationship because experiencing an unmet need often refers not to how one of her pet wants links to a need, but to frequency — how often that pet want gets satisfied. For example, Gwen's had to lower her bar for her physical needs as she only sees her guy on visits or during planned vacations. She doesn't have this unmet need on her Hurt List because she's a low-touch person. Meghan is a different case entirely. When Ben moved away, Meghan tried to keep their relationship going, but she's a high-touch person and couldn't find a substitute for the nearness of him; the lack of physical affection appeared on her list so many times it became a red flag. She had to do something about it. They broke up.

Gwen has had to lower her bar for her lifestyle needs too. She can't expect that her pet wants will be satisfied whenever she wants them to be. For instance, she'll have to give up the

shared To Do List that itemizes what each enjoys doing together and what they'll do to help each other. Her boyfriend can still please her, help her, and meet her need to feel important by planning vacations, making visits, sending emails, making phone calls, sending flowers, yakking on MSN and so on. In her lifestyle area she'll also have items on her Hurt List similar to those in a regular relationship, like his not emailing her as often or calling as much as before, or canceling visits with her.

She'll have a lot of Hurt List items resulting from needs not getting met as often as she'd like. Some pet wants that she'll crave to have satisfied won't be reasonable, however, as her boyfriend *can't* satisfy them, and for good reason: he lives in a different city. She'll either accept this and suck it up, or she can exit and find herself a nice regular relationship.

Gwen will have to add a signpost to her long distance boyfriend's invisible timeline: his willingness to talk about how the two of them can live in the same city one day. Until this conversation takes place, he hasn't moved through his invisible timeline. He's still Gwen's new boyfriend.

When you choose to adjust your bar, you'll end up with unmet needs. Any woman in a long-distance relationship will have to do a lot of work to meet her own needs and find substitute ways to have her unmet needs fulfilled. Genuine needs refuse to be ignored.

Let's go back to the regular kind of relationship. Do you love your boyfriend? Does he love you? Most of us would answer these questions with a yes. But there's a difference between having feelings of love and truly loving your boyfriend. To get — *really* get — your big-picture love need met, you must regularly experience getting every one of your needs met — as they come up, of course.

When our boyfriends don't treat us right, we feel it and we know what's going on. Yet we're often reluctant to admit it. We hope that true love will overcome our Frog experiences.

Remember, life can be less confusing with a Hurt List and the learning loop (needs-choices-consequences). Pay attention to your choices and how they make you feel afterward, because each experience creates a consequence: a need met (good feeling) or unmet (bad feeling). After any little-picture experience, you have the chance to reset your bar, and this is how you end up with a bar that's just right. After a while in a relationship, determining whether your boyfriend is the right guy for you gets a lot easier. Being armed with dating beliefs and deliberately looking at your experiences will help you develop a bar for any of your needs. This is how you come to see, feel and think your way through the differences between a genuine need and a pet want.

To set your bar to determine when a pet want is a need or just an extra goodie you can live without and still grow happy, ask yourself: "Can I give up... (insert your specific pet want) and still respect myself?" Say the pet want is bling (diamonds and pearls) and the need is to feel loved. And say you expect bling from your boyfriend on your birthday or Valentine's Day and you don't get it. If you're disappointed, the bling is just an extra goodie. If it stays on your Hurt List, it *does* connect to your need to feel loved.

If you do get bling, it's because your boyfriend *wanted* to give it to you and *could*. Now, say he wants to but can't afford it, ask yourself: "Will doing without bling stop me from growing happy?" Whether you answer yes or no will depend on your own pet wants. You'll find that some of your unsatisfied pet wants will give you reasons to exit and some won't.

Be careful, though. If you're really all about extra goodies, rather than pet wants that connect to genuine needs, you might not have moved beyond the me-me stage of life. You might feel entitled to have others meet your needs, simply so you don't have to — or maybe it's that you don't think you can? If this is the case, you risk sacrificing yourself — your *self-worth* — for

anyone who will make you feel loved, even for just a few moments, in exchange for pet-want currency.

Say Elizabeth's boyfriend gives her purely practical gifts. To her, bling indicates how much Jordan loves her. Because she really loves this guy, she's forced to ask, "Will I still feel loved and grow happy getting no bling?" Her answer is yes. This question-and-answer process teaches her about herself and her own needs. Nevertheless, it's still important for her to get birthday bling, so she finds another way to get that extra goodie: she buys it herself. Elizabeth then waits to see if not getting this pet want satisfied by Jordan will show up on her Hurt List again at Christmas — it doesn't. As you become more familiar with yourself, you get a reward: the skill to set and reset your bar.

When you don't feel clear in a relationship, it can be hard to make a deliberate choice to exit. This will make it easier: if you can answer each question below with "Yes," you're with a great guy; if you can't, you're with a Frog. Exit!

- Can I tell him what I really feel — my deepest darkest secrets?
- Can I forgive him when his actions make me really angry?
- Are lots of my needs still met by myself, my friends and family?
- Can I tell my best friend the good, the bad and the ugly experiences I've shared with him without her asking, "Why are you putting up with that?"
- Can I list his two best and two worst traits?
- Can I accept his permanent Frog warts?
- Does he accept me for who I am?
- Does he talk to me like my best friend does?
- Does he avoid using my mistakes to get his pet wants met from me?

Ella can't answer "Yes" to all these questions — Ethan is a Frog for her. She recognizes that Ethan, her frog boyfriend, is not the guy of her dreams — and breaks up with him.

Did you recognize that those were needs questions, which are based on information from the four dating beliefs? Put simply, if *all your emotional needs* are met (your need to be familiar with a guy and have him be familiar with you, to accept and be accepted, to forgive and be forgiven, to value and be valued), you have a great shot at a compatible relationship. If not, head for the nearest escape hatch because with this guy you have zero chance of getting to the fairy tale that is possible! Good luck, Ella.

Using your little-picture experiences you can find both met and unmet needs. Now let's set your bar with your emotional needs within each of the dating beliefs so you can determine with confidence if they're getting met or not.

he is the draw for me

To meet your need to value your boyfriend, you must feel confident enough to tell him what you really feel and think. In other words, you must not fear that he'll tell your secrets or reject you because of what you tell him. Time to set your bar. Can you tell him what you really feel — your deepest darkest secrets? (We're not talking about traumatic things you'd only tell a counselor or doctor.) If you can't, you're not valuing him. Your need to value may connect to any one of the following pet wants: to be able to confess to a lie you told him earlier or a secret about your past, or to be able to tell him you don't like it when he does something and why it hurts you.

Any little-picture experiences that hurt your feelings must be discussed and then taken off your Hurt List. Only then can you meet your need to forgive your boyfriend. Time to set your bar. Ask yourself, "Can I forgive him when his actions make

me really angry?” Positive experiences don’t cancel out negative ones, even when there are lots of great experiences. You’ll know you haven’t forgiven him if you can’t get past a hurtful experience, if you remain really angry at him for that Hurt List item. If you can’t forgive and forget his nasty deeds — the cheating he’s done, for example — you must exit.

If your boyfriend wrongs you, you may find it hard to act respectfully toward him. When we get hurt we often act like Frogs ourselves and try to hurt back. Don’t. You know the difference between right and wrong because you have character. Anyway, even Frogs deserve respect. You can’t have a boyfriend you can’t treat with respect. If you’re with such a guy now, make a graceful exit.

♥ **HEART-SAVING SHORTCUT:** Why do boyfriends cheat? First, if a guy is a cheater then the relationship is all about him: his views, his needs, his ways. It follows that he’s a guy who makes choices with no concern for your feelings and needs. His cheating choice is a hurtful example of the choices he’s been making in your relationship all along! Second, if he does cheat, he’s not getting what he needs in the relationship, whether it’s because he’s a bad shopper, he makes bad choices, or you don’t stock what he needs. It’s simply about him — not you!

i like myself when i'm with him

Do you feel comfortable with yourself and your choices? If you can’t answer yes, you’ve probably stopped meeting your own needs first. Let’s set your bar: ask yourself, “Are lots of my needs still met by me, my friends and family? Or would I feel empty and lost without my boyfriend?” If the latter applies, you’re not taking responsibility for meeting your own needs and you’re disconnected from other important relationships in your life. You’re expecting your boyfriend to make your life complete.

Mistake! Will you still like yourself if you cancel plans with girlfriends every time he calls to ask you out, then lie about why you can't go out with them? Will you still like yourself if you stop getting your needs met with character — no longer saying what you mean or being dependable to others (girlfriends, parents, workmates, schoolmates)? If you start lying to your girlfriends so they won't leave you out of their future plans, will you still like yourself then? Your lying will have consequences: your girlfriends will eventually stop valuing you, stop understanding your situation and stop calling you.

You may find yourself feeling jealous — not wanting to share your boyfriend's attention with another girl or his friends. These are twinges of jealousy — feelings of doubt about how much he likes you. To stop jealousy in its tracks, your thinking voice should say to you over and over, "I'm a great person and any guy would be lucky to have me." After all, you know yourself, so you know that any guy really *would* be lucky to have you. If you become jealous because of something he does, like taking another girl to a movie, talk to him. Ask him his reasons for making that choice. If you're comfortable with his reasons, then talking to him was a great way to stop jealousy in its tracks. If you find yourself trying to change his actions because you're jealous, it has to do not just with his actions but also with how you feel about yourself — your own self-worth. In fact, it may have nothing to do with your boyfriend at all; that is, unless he's a flirting, cheating Frog.

Let's set your bar. Ask yourself: "Can I tell my best friend the good, the bad, and the ugly experiences I've shared with my boyfriend without her asking, 'Why do you put up with that?'" If your answer is no, the message is clear: you don't respect yourself, so you cannot meet your need to accept yourself.

If you're comfortable with your choices and you believe you should respect yourself but also accept your boyfriend's

Frog words or actions, there's a gap between your words and your actions. What does this gap tell you? That your bar is set to accept Frogs. That you don't believe you deserve a Prince! If you don't reset your bar — your standard for how you expect to be treated — you'll probably remain stuck in this relationship, or continue to date Frogs even if you do escape. And what really sucks is that until you respect yourself, Frogs will continue to track you down and ask you out. Frogs have radar for detecting girls who don't respect themselves.


i like him as a person

The first step in determining whether you're with a Frog or not is to become familiar with who he is as a person, independent of you. Learning who he is will help you understand what he needs from you and whether you're prepared to provide it. Likewise, knowing who he is independent of you will help you see whether you can expect him to meet your needs.

Some classic examples of Frog warts will help you identify the experience of life with a Frog. Let's give your boyfriend the same test you gave yourself in Chapter One. Fill in the table on the next page by putting a ✓ beside the traits you think best describe him.

See which traits you identified and then choose his two best and two worst. Did you put a ✓ beside "Jealous," for example?

Our bar is often mistakenly set to this standard: when we see our boyfriend become jealous, we use his jealousy as a "slam-dunk" answer to the daisy question. It's not. Jealousy and mistrust are not signs that he loves you; they're warning signs. Remember the life-is-a-mirror idea? Well, your boyfriend's feelings of jealousy, especially *strong* ones, are like the mirror hitting you over the head and saying "Danger! Frog alert! Head for nearest exit!"

 he's...

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|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Moody | <input type="radio"/> Even-tempered | <input type="radio"/> Daring |
| <input type="radio"/> Outgoing | <input type="radio"/> Shy | <input type="radio"/> Easygoing |
| <input type="radio"/> Critical | <input type="radio"/> Demanding | <input type="radio"/> Outspoken |
| <input type="radio"/> Patient | <input type="radio"/> Excitable | <input type="radio"/> Sociable |
| <input type="radio"/> Funny | <input type="radio"/> Enthusiastic | <input type="radio"/> Affectionate |
| <input type="radio"/> Selfish | <input type="radio"/> Unselfish | <input type="radio"/> Thoughtful |
| <input type="radio"/> Stubborn | <input type="radio"/> Confident | <input type="radio"/> Opinionated |
| <input type="radio"/> Generous | <input type="radio"/> Quiet | <input type="radio"/> Open-minded |
| <input type="radio"/> Organized | <input type="radio"/> Controlling | <input type="radio"/> Focused |
| <input type="radio"/> Popular | <input type="radio"/> Honest | <input type="radio"/> Assertive |
| <input type="radio"/> Energetic | <input type="radio"/> Lazy | <input type="radio"/> Jealous |
| <input type="radio"/> Creative | <input type="radio"/> Passionate | <input type="radio"/> Courageous |
| <input type="radio"/> Sweet/Nice | <input type="radio"/> Kind/Warm | <input type="radio"/> Sensitive |
| <input type="radio"/> Aggressive | <input type="radio"/> Frustrated | <input type="radio"/> Angry |

A boyfriend who's *always* jealous and controlling and *never* trusting is showing you he feels he's not worth your trust. His lack of self-worth makes him afraid of anything that might take you away from him — your friends, family, a job, other guys. He may even try to manipulate you away from friends and family to tie you more tightly to him.

If you believe your boyfriend's jealousy means he really loves you, you'd better hold up the mirror and look at the two of you. You'll see a jealous guy who, deep down, believes the only way you'll be with him is if he controls you. Worse, you'll see yourself standing beside someone who doesn't believe he's worth much. So what does that make you — his booby prize?

Think about it. This guy doesn't respect himself, so how could he respect you? If deep down he thinks he's not worth much, yet you've chosen to date him, what does that tell you about your choice? If you let him control you, your willingness to be controlled confirms what he already believes: that you don't respect yourself enough to stand up to him and leave. So don't let a jealous Frog manipulate you. If your boyfriend shows extremely jealous or controlling behavior, leave — no, *run away*.

Did you put a ✓ beside “Stubborn”? Or beside “Open-minded”? If you and your boyfriend can have a respectful conversation, you'll be able to get what you want and need from him. Most transactions in a relationship take place during conversations. Conversations are where you bargain for your needs, ending up either with a great deal or getting ripped off.

Like a lawyer, you're in charge of putting together your own defense case for any of your needs. This is your set of good-point sticks for why you think your need is reasonable. Yet talking about your point of view with your boyfriend will be harder than with anyone else. Because you're extra-sensitive around him, just his respectful disagreeing with your points and stating his own point of view can hurt your feelings. If he

has Frog warts — like stubbornness — these conversations will be even more hurtful. Work hard at listening to what he's saying and controlling your reactions. You might feel like interrupting him to defend yourself, but don't push the panic button. Just listen. Ask questions to understand his point of view, then present your needs case to him.

Natalie's just made plans to help Meghan move on the last day of the month. She's giving Sean a heads-up that she's going to be busy that evening.

NATALIE: I'm helping Meghan move Thursday.

SEAN: Well I'm not. I just moved Jim.

NATALIE: No one's asking you to.

SEAN: Anyway, you can't help her.

NATALIE: I wasn't asking — just letting you know.

SEAN: No way, I've planned a surprise for you.

NATALIE: Why didn't you mention it before?

SEAN: It was a surprise. You don't believe me?

NATALIE: You always say that — when you don't want me to do something.

SEAN: What favors does Meghan do for you?

NATALIE: It's weird you never notice all the things she does for me. But I'm —

SEAN: (Butts in) You know what? I need help that night. Aren't I important to you?

NATALIE: Yes, you're important to me. Why do you care if I help Meghan move?

SEAN: Which one of us is more important to you?

NATALIE: Why don't you answer my question?

SEAN: Why don't you answer my question?

NATALIE: Ribbet!

Open and respectful communication isn't possible because Sean refuses to listen to Natalie's point of view or to

the information she gives him. In the learning loop, such a boyfriend won't meet your need to be heard, so you can't expect him to adjust his self-knowledge to include your point of view. His consequence? He won't learn and grow to make better choices next time. Your consequence? You won't be able to work through your Hurt List items. So your hurt feelings will fester and make you feel frustrated and sad.

You'll become an expert, like Natalie, at recognizing Frog-speak, since you'll be fighting over and over for the right to get any one of your needs met. At the same time you'll sink under the weight of a huge, hard-to-manage Hurt List instead of hanging out and having fun. A big part of building value inside ourselves is teaching our friends and boyfriends how to treat us well. If your boyfriend is stubborn, he won't change his opinion or choice when given new information (such as your point of view). Since we negotiate needs fulfillment in conversations, you'll notice a pattern in your Hurt List: conflict and rerun arguments.

Let's look at the Frog wart experience called invalidation. This kind of Frog wart is easier to spot if you already understand what invalidation looks and feels like, perhaps from having hurt someone else. It's Valentine's Day, for instance, and you're full of happy thoughts for what treats await you from your boyfriend. You get a call in the afternoon, and he tells you he has appendicitis and might need an operation. Boo hoo! When you hang up, what do you do? A) Call your girlfriend and say, "Why do things like this always happen to me?" B) Call your boyfriend back to quiz him on how he's feeling to make absolutely sure he still can't take you out as he promised. C) Call your boyfriend back to see if there's something you can do for him.

If you picked B), you've invalidated someone else's feelings. Elizabeth did! Finding yourself comes with a big, sweet reward: once you understand more about how you get your

needs met, you can sit back and *observe* and *recognize* how others do it. Let's put the wart on the other Frog; when a guy doesn't include your feelings or needs in his choices, he's invalidating you.

Here's an example. Sean has just picked up Natalie. They're going for dinner, but they haven't picked the restaurant yet.

SEAN: What do you feel like?

NATALIE: I'm starving, anything. What do you feel like?

SEAN: Chinese. (Heads for the freeway)

NATALIE: Where we going?

SEAN: A new place I heard about. The food's supposed to be fantastic.

NATALIE: (Thirty minutes later) Sean, can't we just pull off so I can grab something quick — at McDonald's?

SEAN: Why?

NATALIE: I told you, I'm starving. I'm getting a headache. My blood sugar's crazy. I haven't eaten today.

SEAN: C'mon, relax. It's not my fault you didn't eat today.

NATALIE: I just need something to tide me over.

SEAN: Hang in, will you? We're almost there...

What seems like hours later, they finally pull into the parking lot. Natalie's *really* angry with Sean. As soon as they sit down, she calls the server over, says she's starving, and orders three yummy dishes. The waitress brings one quickly. Natalie wolfs some food down, still not speaking to Sean. Finally, she turns to him.

NATALIE: Sean, I told you I was starving. Why did you choose a place an hour away?

SEAN: I thought it would be fun to take you to a new restaurant.

NATALIE: You wanted to come here for yourself — not for me.

SEAN: Come on, I said I thought it would be fun! Can you just get off my case? with this?

NATALIE: The waitress got that I was starving — why didn't you?

The discussion goes round and round until he drops her off and she says bye bye, which probably gets drowned out by the door-slam! He never apologizes for not including her needs in his choice of restaurant. Driving away, he thinks, “How ungrateful was that?” This guy can only see his own point of view.

Let's look at the Frog wart “dishonesty.” After spending time with your boyfriend, have you discovered a gap between who you thought he was and who he really is? An important part of getting to know a guy is finding out whether you can trust what he says. It's common to trust him right off the bat, but you need to start asking if his words are matching his actions. Your boyfriend's words set up the storyline for what you expect to happen in your relationship. Pay attention to the gap between words and actions, between his storyline and how he treats you. Here's a hint: if other people don't trust your boyfriend, you'll probably find out that you can't trust him either.

Let's look at how Elizabeth's Jordan sets up a storyline, and then how Elizabeth muddles through it. For example, when Jordan told Elizabeth “I love you,” she expected that Jordan was saying what he meant. Her expectations were set: she'd be important to him; he'd treat her differently from others; he wouldn't flirt with other girls; he'd call her just to see how she was doing or what was up. Then Elizabeth got busy, so at Meghan's party Jordan flirted with another girl. When she asked him about it, he said, “Maybe if you paid more

attention to me, I wouldn't flirt." So she thought, "Huh? I'm not the draw for him He loves me not?." She thought back to how he had treated her on Valentine's Day, with treats and trimmings. "He loves me!" Then there was that humongous crazy argument they had last Friday. "He loves me not?" What's Elizabeth to think?

There are gaps between what some guys say and what they do. As you're getting to know a guy, you have to take what he tells you as the truth, but take it with a heaping spoonful of skepticism. Imagine being surrounded by an invisible shield that protects you until you know your boyfriend has character; only then can you give him the benefit of the doubt. It's up to *him* to remove your shield, which he does by being honest and following through on what he says. If your boyfriend's words or actions don't reach your bar, your hurt feelings will end up on your Hurt List. If he acts like a Prince, he has character. He knows himself. You can trust him. You can forgive him for honest mistakes because they will be just that. If he acts like a Frog, he has little or no character. You can't trust him. You should exit.

Frog warts — like jealousy, disrespect and lack of character — should send you to the nearest exit. But you can't make choices based on little-picture experiences — situations that leave you feeling either happy or confused and sad. These statements seem contradictory. But they're not! Boyfriends aren't perfect, and each guy, like each of us, will have a little part of him that's tricky or confused. So, let's clear up the gray area. If once in a while your boyfriend says "brainless" stuff he doesn't mean, like Jordan's "...I wouldn't flirt," you're not experiencing life with a Frog. If once in a blue moon you experience arguments best described as two Frogs in a battle, where you both behave badly and you both wish you could erase your *own* Frog warts from memory, you're not experiencing life with a Frog.

If, on the other hand, classic Frog warts appear frequently, your boyfriend is using disrespect to get his needs met by you. Let's reset your bar for your emotional need to be able to accept your boyfriend, warts and all. Ask yourself, "Does my boyfriend have Frog warts that I can predict?" You can answer yes if there are Frog things he says or does again and again. We all have good and bad things about us that others will like or not like. So the question is whether you can accept his permanent Frog warts (not whether his good things outweigh the bad). If not, the guy you thought might be your Prince has turned out to be a Frog.

Should Elizabeth trust Jordan? She believes she can't predict Jordan's Frog warts; his confusing actions appear to be isolated incidents. He's not dishonest. He's usually "in her face" saying what he means; afterwards he follows up by doing what he says. Yet she's not sure what all of her Jordan experiences add up to. For example, Jordan can be *very* Prince-like. But last week she found herself forgiving Jordan over and over again for not calling her when he said he would; that is, until he started looking to score some sexy-kitty time. He loves me? Not? Argh!

If your boyfriend often promises to do something but doesn't, he either forgot (an honest mistake) or lied to get what he wanted or misled you because he doesn't know himself well. Whatever the reason, he promised something he couldn't deliver. There's really no difference between a guy lying and a guy changing his mind without a damn good reason. Frogs set up a storyline for you that just won't happen.

A guy's motives — the intention behind any of his tricky or confused warts — don't matter. You don't have a crystal ball, and without one you won't be able to find the truth — as you certainly won't find it by asking your Frog boyfriend. What matter are his actions. When they're telling you that you're not in a safe, respectful, comfortable, fun relationship — that you can't trust him — it's time to exit.

We all have beliefs about how people should treat us (although we might not fully realize what those beliefs are). And we all have the power to change those beliefs. If you've accepted Frog behavior, you can choose not to do so anymore. Do you believe you know and like who your boyfriend is as a person, independent of you? You should believe that you do; if not, you're experiencing life with a Frog.

You deserve to go out with a guy you trust. You deserve to be treated with kindness and respect. If your boyfriend invalidates your feelings, punishes you when you don't do what he wants, says negative things about your body, your intelligence, your friends, or your family, if he gets angry and calls you names like "bitch" or "slut," hit the eject button. Some Frog warts are deadly serious and shouldn't clear any woman's bar. If your boyfriend hits or pushes you or is physically rough in any way, call 911, and then do whatever it takes to find a way to EXIT!

i am the draw for him

For a guy to meet your need to be loved, he must earn your love with his actions, meeting your needs one at a time. Whenever you make an investment, it's okay to want something back. In relationships you're supposed to invest your time and energy to get your needs met. Like you, your boyfriend should invest his time and energy meeting your needs simply to add to your happiness. If you're investing in your boyfriend and he isn't investing in you, a fundamental problem exists. You may love him, but he doesn't love you. Hard as it may be, it's time to exit.

If your boyfriend doesn't want to become familiar with you, accept you, talk to you about his feelings or forgive you, that's his choice. If he chooses not to invest his energy in the relationship, he obviously knows himself and he doesn't love

you. If you use information from this dating belief, you can erase your blind spots and — poof! — turn yourself into one smart cookie.

Ask yourself, “Do I know what his two favorite and two least favorite things about me are?” If you don’t know, how can you believe he knows and likes you? In any relationship we gather and give information about who we are and what we think about the other person. If your boyfriend doesn’t know you well enough to tell you what he likes or doesn’t like about you, he isn’t becoming familiar with you. Back to the Frog pond he goes.

Let’s set your bar. Does your boyfriend try to change you in many ways? If your answer is yes, slap yourself silly! For a guy to meet your need to be accepted, he should mostly accept you as you are. Relationships can help you change and grow, but you don’t want to become someone else’s pet project, or worse, date someone who thinks you need to be rescued. Guys who want you to change are teaching you how to dislike yourself.

Some guys set up their own little Dream Girl Boot Camp for their girlfriends. A girl in a guy’s Dream Girl Boot Camp can feel as if the relationship is all about being molded into his dream girl. Daily life starts to feel like military training: lose weight, dress differently, cut your hair a certain way, wear more makeup, less makeup — you get the picture. Even if you do as he demands, nothing seems good enough. The more you try to please him, the more orders he gives you and the more critical he becomes. He may even say that if it weren’t for him telling you what to do, you wouldn’t survive a single day!

These commands can be shouted or whispered, given blatantly or merely suggested. Either way, your Frog general creates a gap between who you are and the ideal he expects you to become — and naturally puts himself in charge of clos-

ing that gap. And guess what? He'll *never* close it. Dream Girl Boot Camp is about control, not change. There are few things as soul-destroying for a girl.

If you feel your boyfriend is critical of every little thing you do, use your bar to help you to tell the difference between useful criticism, which is offered by someone who respects you, and hurtful criticism, which comes from someone who doesn't. While you're still trying to become familiar with who you are, making this distinction may be hard. The more you know yourself, though, the easier it becomes to take criticism from others, select what is true and useful, and disregard what is not.

If you don't feel your boyfriend knows and likes you as you are, you won't get your need to be accepted met at his boutique! In the next chapter, the question "Do I feel my boyfriend accepts me for who I am?" changes to "Am I sure that I'm not living in his Dream Girl Boot Camp?" You need to be sure, because it's impossible to graduate from Dream Girl Boot Camp.

How do you meet your need to be valued? Your boyfriend tells you what he feels, answers your questions and asks you for what he needs. Let's say he doesn't want to meet your need to be valued, to talk to you about how he feels, or even to answer your questions. Can you accept that your need to be valued is unmet and still maintain your self-respect and grow happy in your relationship? Is it one of those pet wants that is really an extra goodie for you? If it is, you can give it up and still respect yourself and grow happy. But that's unlikely. If your boyfriend won't talk about what he feels and thinks — especially about you and your relationship — he doesn't value you. He's emotionally unavailable. You won't meet your need to be valued at this guy's boutique.

Does he talk to you like your best friend does? Your best friend tells you what she thinks and feels and answers you

questions honestly. Having a conversation with your boyfriend should feel as good as having a heart-to-heart conversation with your best friend. Think of how good it feels to talk to her; these conversations make you feel valued, don't they? They probably make you feel as though almost all your emotional needs are being fulfilled, even though just one of your needs — to be valued — is being met with a gold medal.

For a guy to meet your need to be forgiven, he must avoid using your mistakes to get his needs met from you. Let's set your bar. Does he avoid using your mistakes to get you to satisfy his pet wants? Often Frogs gather up hurt feelings caused by our mistakes and hoard them in a savings account, taking them out whenever they feel like getting one of their wants satisfied. There's a difference between using a bulleted list to make great points and using another's past mistakes and the guilt that *sticks* to those mistakes to get anybody to do anything for you.

Your best friend is just that because of who she is and because the two of you help meet each other's needs. She's not perfect — she doesn't do everything you ask, doesn't always give you what you wanted on your birthday, and so on. But she meets your emotional needs, and perhaps other needs as well. Her friendship helps you feel valued and accepted. You can tell her what you feel and think, and she can do the same with you. When you can, you try to meet one another's needs. Any pet wants that don't reflect the fulfillment of a genuine need will be secondary. For instance, you wouldn't choose a best friend just because she satisfied your succulent pet want for her to drive a really fancy car instead of an ordinary one. If you choose a best friend who meets your needs and whose needs you meet, why would your standard for choosing a boyfriend be any lower?

Boyfriends come and go. There is a beginning, a middle and an end to dating. (The end could be happily-ever-after, or an exit from the relationship.) So there's no reason for you to get lost in love and settle for a Frog. Yes, there's the odd girl whose high-school sweetheart later becomes her husband, who early on finds someone she can learn and grow with. But those cases are rare. If you think the guy you're with now is the man of your dreams, yet you often feel hurt or disappointed in the relationship, it's unlikely he's really your Prince.

Any relationship that doesn't meet your needs is a bad relationship. If your relationship doesn't meet both your emotional needs and your boyfriend's, it will never be compatible. A relationship may or may not have the potential to be compatible, but a boyfriend can never have the potential to be a Prince. He's either a Prince at the time you start going out with him or he's a Frog. If you're in a relationship that doesn't meet your emotional needs, you're with a Frog. And like Ella, the best choice you can make is to leave.

Every boot camp has a motto. Here's yours: "I am a strong, smart, beautiful, resilient woman who knows that in my relationship there are two sets of needs to be understood, respected and fulfilled: mine and his. I'm responsible for meeting my own needs; he has to meet his. I have to help him meet his needs; he's responsible for helping me meet mine. If my boyfriend is tricky, confused, or nasty, is deceptive, or hides his feelings, I'll kick him to the curb where he belongs."

Every boyfriend has both Prince and Frog traits. No wonder it can sometimes feel like you're in love with a guy with a split personality (Dr. Prince and Mr. Frog). While Ella's ready to make the call — Ethan's a Frog! — Elizabeth needs more proof to decide if Jordan's a Prince or a Frog. Now that Frog Boot Camp is over and you've fine-tuned your bar, you're

more than ready to tackle the big-picture question: “Is my boyfriend a Prince or a Frog?” The Prince/Frog List in the next chapter will help Elizabeth to see, feel and think clearly enough to tell the difference. Remember Meghan? The Prince/Frog List will also help her.

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