I think she is worried that her husband will get upset if we spend time together. And when they have come over for dinner with me and my husband, he says things that are very mean and embarrassing to her in front of us. Sometimes I even feel scared of him. I don’t know what is happening or what to do to help her?

Answer:

I know you have only given me a little bit of detail about what is happening with your friend and your relationship, but it sounds like she may be in an emotionally and verbally abusive relationship and your relationship with her is being impacted by it. This is hard for you and no doubt hard for her. It is an unfortunate fact that about one-third of all women in relationships are dealing with a partner who is emotionally and verbally abusive.

I think what might help you is to give you a very basic understanding of the dynamics of relationship abuse. This will help you understand the difficulty your friend faces in keeping a close relationship with you. Relationship abuse is really about one person (your friend’s husband) needing to have power and control over another person (your friend) in order to feel good about himself. It’s as if he is saying to his wife, “Well at least I am better than you.” Typically, an abusive person will use the tactics of isolation, minimization, blaming, put-downs, threats, humiliation, mind games, and control of family income in order to maintain control over his partner. In thinking about your question, I would imagine that your friend is hearing things like, “If you cared about me, you wouldn’t want to spend time with her” or “She doesn’t like me, and I know she wants us to break up.” This puts a lot of pressure on her to side with him and distance herself from you. If she didn’t, he might get very angry, withdrawn, and threaten to leave her. He makes her pay a price to maintain a relationship with you. The other basic concept that might help you is that she is likely repeatedly experiencing something we call the cycle of violence. This is a pattern where his controlling behaviors escalate over time, culminating in what we call the explosion phase, which often involves very intense emotional and verbal abuse, and potentially physical violence. It is usually after this explosion phase that a woman contemplates leaving the relationship. This is when your friend might reach out to you and tell you how terrible it all is for her. It is at this point that an abusive person realizes that he might actually lose his partner and tends to become exceedingly agreeable, will consent to couples counselling, and may even apologize for his bad behavior. This is a very effective tactic we call the honeymoon phase. Unfortunately,

**QUESTION:** I am losing my best friend. She has been married for about a year and ever since she got married she doesn’t call me very often.

I think she is worried that my husband will get upset if I spend time with her. And when they have come over for dinner with me and my husband, he says things that are very mean and embarrassing to her in front of us. Sometimes I even feel scared of him. I don’t know what is happening or what to do to help her?

**Answer:**

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**RUN the North Shore**

**KHATSAHLANO**

**MONDAY, NOV. 12, 2007**

**7:50 AM**

The Khahtsahlano is a spectacularly challenging 17km road race that starts from Gleneagles Community Center in West Vancouver and winds its way east to a gratifying finish at Park Royal Village.

The route, which features not one, but two tough climbs, each gaining nearly 600 feet in elevation, is one tough course.

Entry into the Khahtsahlano includes an awesome cotton hoody (perfect for the post-race chill), transportation to the start, Delaney’s coffee, chip timing (Race Headquarters), and one tough, but safe course.

**Join us in celebrating our 14th anniversary at our Park Royal North location (BESIDE THE BAY)**

**Thoughtful gifts and everyday luxuries**

You’re invited for afternoon tea and cakes from 1:00 to 5:00pm, Monday, November 12, 2007

Door Prize will be drawn.

As part of our Customer Appreciation Day all merchandise in the store will be 20% off on Friday, Nov. 9 to Sunday, Nov. 11
Former pair reconnects

Deborah Alden
Contributing Writer

WHEN 21-year-old Rigel Shaw moved back to the Lower Mainland from Penticton, he couldn’t wait to get back into the familiar groove of West Coast life.

While playing volleyball at Ambleside Beach one weekend, he noticed a man skipping rocks with his son. Shaw says, “I was so distracted by this familiar face that I got hit in the head with the ball.”

Shaw realized it was Brian Bergot, his former Big Brother, whom he hadn’t seen in eight years.

In honour of its 50th Anniversary, Big Brothers of Greater Vancouver is profiling stories of former Big and Little Brother pairs who matched through its program. Bergot, a North Vancouver resident, contacted Big Brothers to share his story.

Bergot was a single 22-year-old in the early stages of a career with Meilicen when he volunteered to spend a few hours a week as Big Brother to then 12-year-old Shaw. He decided to volunteer out of a desire to give back to the community and hoped he could make a difference in a young boy’s life. He recalls his role in Shaw’s life as “Kind of a sounding board; a buddy with more life experience and someone he could go out and do ‘guy’ stuff with. We played just about any sport involving a ball or a puck.” He jokingly adds, “I was a means of escape for him from an all-female environment.”

Shaw says, “Brian was never there to fix me or tell me what to do. Just having him there, spending time with me made all the difference in the world. It let me know that I was going to be OK.”

Recounting some of the more memorable moments with his Little Brother, Bergot remembers they attended a community sports day, for which the teenager sported a mohawk hairstyle and an outfitting a restaurant for Shaw’s 13th birthday, during which Shaw “sewed” the waitresses by downsizing pounds of hot chicken wings, followed by a monster mud pie dessert.

Shaw’s mother, Sabine Shaw, says she applied for a Big Brother for him because his dad wasn’t a big part of his life. Although Shaw had lots of positive male role models in his life through his involvement with hockey, she says, “They had their own families and time dedicated just to Rigel took time away from that. Rigel needed some guy time with someone who was into Rigel as a person, not Rigel the hockey player.” She adds, “Rigel and I are very close, but sometimes a guy just needs to be around guys.”

After spending only two years together, Shaw moved to Saskatchewan to accept a hockey scholarship at an academy renowned for its sports program, later moving to Penticton to play Junior A hockey. They lost touch and, says Bergot, “I never thought I would see him again, until we ran into each other that day on the beach.”

It was a pretty special moment when Rigel walked over to me, my wife Dawn and son Max and said hello.” The friends scheduled a day to go out for a bite to eat and ended up talking for hours. Shaw laughingly remembers that, “They kept wanting to bring us the cheque, but we were so caught up in talking to each other, we went through three different servers. The first two ended their shifts and went home.”

Fifteen years after becoming a Big Brother, Bergot realizes what a tremendous impact the program had on him. “The idea of being someone’s Big Brother grounded me and gave me a sense of responsibility. I learned a lot from Rigel and it helped me to appreciate how lucky I was to grow up with both my parents.”

Shaw agrees that now he is able to fully appreciate the positive influence Bergot had on him as a teenager. “The benefits of our time together are showing up in my life more and more,” he says.

It’s been six years since the men resumed their friendship and much has changed for both. Bergot manages the investor relations department for Methanex when he volunteered to spend a few hours a week as Big Brother over the age of 19 to spend a few hours a week with youth on the North Shore.

Shaw feels that he and Bergot are like brothers and says, “I couldn’t imagine my life without Brian. Getting to see him now as a husband and father with a successful career and having him welcome me into his family is a gift I don’t know if I will ever be able to repay.”

Big Brothers of Greater Vancouver is looking for more Big Brothers over the age of 19 to spend a few hours a week with youth on the North Shore. For more information, call 604-876-2447, ext. 246 or visit bigbrothervancouver.com.