

Relationships

35 years after prom date goes bad, a reconnection

METRO DETROIT COUPLE SHARES A LESSON IN FORGIVING OLD HURTS

By PATRICIA MONTEMURRI
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Carolyn Krieger's prom date stood her up.

He backed out of escorting her to the 1974 Southfield Lathrup High School prom. He said his parents told him he'd already spent too much money for two other proms. Krieger spent prom night with her cousin, eating a Whopper and crying into her fries at Burger King.

Now married and known as Carolyn Krieger-Cohen, the public relations executive contemplated the upcoming prom of her 17-year-old daughter and wondered anew whatever happened to Larry Gelfund, the Berkley High senior who jilted her.

She found him on the social networking Web site Facebook and, after 3½ decades of no contact, sent him an e-mail: "So

Tell us about your prom

Do you have a prom horror story? Or did prom help you learn a valuable relationship lesson?



Let us know. Send your prom story to features@freepress.com; put "Prom" in the subject line. Be sure to include your name, address and day and evening phone numbers.

I was just thinking — my 17-year-old daughter just got asked to her prom. Maybe we should double date with them." This time, Gelfund didn't back out.

He asked her to dinner. She

bought him a boutonniere. He bought her a corsage. They dined — absent from but with the blessings of their spouses — and healed long-ago bruised egos.

It was a lovely night out and a lesson in confronting old hurts, big and small, and learning to laugh and forgive, says Krieger-Cohen, 52, of West Bloomfield.

"We received some quizzical looks because of the corsage on my wrist, and when several people in the restaurant heard our story, their reactions were beyond priceless," said Krieger-Cohen. Both women and men "thought it was the sweetest, most special, most amazing story."

"We realized we could inspire, even challenge everyone ... to reconnect with and forgive and/or apologize to someone in their past for something big or small that they've been holding inside and need to release."

Because of the reaction their story has generated, the two bought a Web site name,



ANDRE J. JACKSON/Detroit Free Press

Larry Gelfund, who stood up Carolyn Krieger-Cohen for their prom in 1974, makes amends. The two reconnected through Facebook and met again over dinner. "Everyone has a do-over story they'd like," Gelfund says.

www.right-a-wrong.com, which, for now, links to her PR company's site. They eventually hope that the site will be a place for folks to address long-suppressed hurts.

Gelfund, of South Lyon, an assistant vice president and training manager at Comerica, said the 35-years-late prom date lifted how guilty he felt about bailing on Krieger-Cohen.

"You can talk to anyone, and everyone has a do-over story they'd like," he says.

"Broken friendships and broken relationships over people not talking to one another."

He and his wife of 27 years, Diane, raised three children. Their oldest son, Noel, was born with a disfiguring birthmark and a condition that resulted in debilitating seizures. Noel overcame many hurdles to accomplish everyday goals and had just started college when he was killed in a car accident in 2004.

"Never be afraid to tell people how you feel because

that opportunity may be taken from you in a heartbeat," says Gelfund.

Krieger-Cohen and her husband, Jason Cohen, will be taking photos May 26, when daughter, Alanna, 17, attends the West Bloomfield High prom. Larry and Diane Gelfund will watch their 17-year-old daughter, McKenzie, go to the South Lyon High prom on May 29.

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HELLO, CAROLYN: I've been with "John" for two years. For the most part, our relationship is everything I wanted. Every now and then, though, I pick up on things that really irritate me. For example, he really



enjoys a comedian whose act is completely awful (in my opinion), with all the racist, blue humor you can pack into it. I really don't like anything that

comes out of this comedian's mouth, and when I try to explain why, my boyfriend just says, "Yeah, but it's funny and no one else says it." I completely judge him for liking this humor. Then I argue with myself that I'm too sensitive or trying to sabotage my relationship. John is otherwise a very nice person and treats me very well. I admit I lack self-confidence. In some ways I don't feel "good enough" for him. Do you think it's possible for someone like me to want to subconsciously end this relationship to "get it over with"? — C.

Dear C.: It's possible. We subconsciously talk ourselves into and out of things all the time — a process usually set in motion by a truth we wish would just go away, something we prefer to banish from conscious thought.

In your case, it sounds as if you're talking yourself both into and out of John. That would make sense, though, since it sounds as if you have two truths you wish would go away: that you don't trust John, and you don't trust yourself.

As for trusting John: You say he appreciates the comedy because "no one else says it." Some people wouldn't say "it" because they don't believe "it" — assuming "it" is some politically incorrect line of thinking. Others are quiet because they believe "it" completely, but have learned there's big trouble in saying so out loud.

You already know from John's behavior in other situations which is true about him. It's human nature to want to share what we believe and why, and why we're right.

If you've seen hatred in John, his treating you "very well" doesn't supersede that; people are rarely one clear thing or another. The trick is to identify things that do matter, to you, so you aren't side-tracked by small things that don't.

Conveniently, this is also the

path to trusting your judgment. You, like John, are emitting your true feelings in spite of yourself.

When those feelings don't fit the narrative you had in mind — say, you've envisioned marrying someone, while your feelings are telling you you're unhappy — then your mind starts searching for explanations that will keep your vision intact.

To be more confident in your choices, make a conscious effort to work from your raw feelings, the ones that haven't been processed yet by the rationalization factory. Train your attention on your everyday life, at home, at work, at play, at rest, alone, with John, with friends. Start naming your feelings and connecting cause to effect.

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Good attitude key to potty training

By JOHN ROSEMOND
MCCLATCHY NEWSPAPERS

In almost every case, parents miss the boat when it comes to potty training, meaning they don't start until well after their kids' second birthdays. Since prevention is the better part of cure, let's now take up the issue of how to toilet train a child between 18 and 24 months, which history confirms is the ideal window of opportunity.

First, your attitude is the most important ingredient in this toilet-training recipe. Approach toilet training with the same casual, matter-of-fact attitude with which you approached teaching your child to eat with a spoon.

Second, put a potty or two in that area of the home where your toddler spends most of his time. Keep it in the bathroom and you inadvertently invoke the Out of Sight, Out of Mind Principle.

If the layout of your house and your child's range of movement require it, put out two potties. They should be simple, Spartan contraptions, not ones that do silly, superfluous things like play Barney songs when sat upon.

Third, set aside a week during which you can spend most of your time at home. Your ability to maintain a calm focus during this teaching time will help your toddler remember what you are expecting of him.

Fourth, if you're working with a girl, she should spend her day naked from the waist down. Don't even use diapers for naps. Dress a boy in nothing but the thinnest cotton un-

derwear you can find. The point, in either case, is for the "mess" to travel unimpeded down the child's legs, which they do not like. Just take a deep breath and clean it up.

Fifth, as soon as your child wakes up in the morning, take him or her to the potty. When he/she is seated, walk away, saying, "Call me when you've done something and I'll clean you up." Do not hover or otherwise act nervous. If your child refuses to sit, so be it. Make this into a power struggle and you're done for.

Sixth, whether or not your child produces at the first sitting of the day, set a timer to ring every 60 minutes or so (different kids, different intervals). Call it the "potty bell." When it rings, simply announce that it's time to sit on the potty. Remember, don't hang around acting like a high school girl waiting for her prom date.

Seventh, clean up messes without drama. Nonetheless, don't tell your child that making a mess is OK. It's not! When he/she has an accident, tell him, "Make sure you sit on the potty next time." Be firm and resolute, but don't be angry.

Eighth, respond to successes positively, but not overly enthusiastically. Do not, under any circumstances, give rewards or use them as enticements.

Last, when the process is complete, hire a carpet cleaner to erase the evidence. The typical cost of said removal is why I call this method "Naked and \$75."

FAMILY PSYCHOLOGIST JOHN ROSEMOND ANSWERS PARENTS' QUESTIONS ON HIS WEB SITE AT WWW.ROSEMOND.COM.



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