

Okay, darling.

I like to date my coworkers (that's not the problem) and always struggle with gauging when it's a good time to bring them to community events. You know the kind – when everyone you know is tabling for something, and the whole event is spent seeing your friends give speeches and tagging homies out to table for various projects. It feels like the heteronormative “meet the family trope”, with all of the same stressors: *what if they don't get along? What if they take the wrong zines? What if their chosen alias is something cringe?*

But in all seriousness, I'm curious if you have advice for how to best navigate and build up to those moments. I usually date people who I'm politically aligned with (and are not new to anarchism despite not organizing locally)

should I do an opsec check?

Should I quiz them on their familiarity with local struggles and issues?

And how do I make sure that they're not dating me because of all of the cool hot people doing cool hot shit that I happen to know?

Boy howdy, this sounds like quite the quandary you're in, you Untitled Cool Hot Person, you.

It sounds to me like you've gotten yourself all amped up and excited (and maybe even a little scared or overwhelmed) by all of these possibilities. Introducing your new boo-thing to your community can be a really intimidating thing, and you may be feeling a ton of pressure from both inside and out. It might be worthwhile to start by parsing out what all of the things you're feeling are, and where each of those feelings are coming from. For example, are you feeling urgency around this? And if so, is that because somebody else is encouraging (or pressuring) you to feel that urgency, or is the call coming

from inside the house? And then, if it is an internal thing, what's lying underneath that? What part of you is crying out for things to move along and what sort of action or attention is that part of you really asking for? You could even start a spreadsheet to track all of these things, if you're an autistic Virgo like myself, but I digress. The point is, organize your thoughts and your feelings, and figure out which of these are actually your responsibility to tackle (hint, it's the internal ones). Also, don't be surprised if things don't all fit into neat little boxes. You may find that you're feeling urgency (again, as an example) and that the source of that feeling is both internal and external. That's okay, none of us were meant to fit into neat little boxes anyways, burn all the prisons, etc. etc. I believe that this exercise can still be helpful, even if it gets messy.

"OK Darling, I have a neat little color-coded cryptpad spreadsheet, but now what? How does that get me any closer to introducing my sweetie to all my Cool Hot friends?" Great question. Now that you've figured out which of these feelings are yours to have and to hold and to *be accountable for*, it's time to dig in. Essentially, the key to your success will be your ability to find security in both your new exciting situationship AND in your long-standing community relationships with your Cool Hot friends. The short answer to all of the stressors you asked about in your inquiry, and I really truly mean this with love, is: "So what?" So what if your sweetie doesn't get along with all of your friends? So what if they take the wrong zines? Are your relationships with all of your people truly contingent on these things? Do all of your friends get along with all of your other friends and nobody disagrees ever (and if the answer to that is yes, let's talk about how you've managed to discover a social utopia)? My point here is, it's okay if the universe doesn't align perfectly and your sweetie doesn't turn out to be the missing puzzle piece that fits perfectly into the puzzle of relationships you've built for yourself. They probably won't and that says more about the universe than it does about your boo, your friends, or yourself.

If you're still really worried about how your sweetie is going to be received, the last piece of advice I'd offer is to try adjusting your expectations. Universal appeal is a big thing

to ask and expect, but what would it look like if you introduced your flame to just a few of your friends? Or if your goal was to do a surface-level introduction and create intentional space for a more intimate getting-to-know-each-other hangout after the big cool event is over? There's so many ways to adjust expectations, I encourage you to get creative! Bottom line is, we want to set ourselves up for success. Aiming too high and being too ambitious in our goals from the get-go frequently leads to disappointment and frustration, and the expectations we set on our social relationships are no different. That's not to say that you can't get to that point of universal appeal farther down the road (and if you do, again, please let me know!), but in the meantime, it can be helpful to focus on cultivating one or two relationships at a time among your networks.

Anyways, I hope this was all helpful. From my very-professional and not-at-all-amateur perspective, I think that you, your sugar pie honey bunch, and your friends all sound really really cool, and I wish each of you all the best in thinking each other are really really cool too.

Stay frosty,
Darling Tonia

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