



CAROLYN HAX

## Husband starts smoking again, and his wife is fuming

Adapted from a recent online discussion:

**Hi, Carolyn:**  
My husband quit smoking before I met him. The whole time we dated, he never mentioned a smoking habit, even though I mentioned several times that I did not enjoy being around smokers. We have now been married six years and he recently told me about his former smoking habit (which he played down as a "lifestyle"), and also announced that he has taken it back up to manage his stress.

I hate it. He does not smoke in the house, but he constantly smells like an ashtray and we have two small kids with asthma. I feel very deceived but do not know what to do about it.

North Carolina

While you arguably were deceived, focusing on that will push aside a very important element of this problem: that your husband feels significant stress. You're a parent, so your kids' health has to be paramount, but you're also this man's partner, and so his well-being can't be relegated to a distant second place. It's a close second, tied with yours.

Accordingly, it's fair to say you want to help alleviate his stress, both for his sake and because his outlet of choice is creating stress for his family. Approaching it as an issue both of you need to work on together will be more conducive to your husband's cooperation than opening with "You lied to me, and you stink."

**Re: "Arguably deceived":**  
I'm having trouble figuring out when the omission of information becomes deception and outright lying. North Carolina says she (spontaneously? cruelly? good-naturedly?) complained that she hated being around smokers. If I was that guy, I'm not sure I would have mentioned anything either. I've done plenty of things in the past that I'm not proud of (and that I don't continue to engage in), but I'm not particularly fond of the notion that my potential life partner needs to know about all of it.

Anonymous

I don't think every skeleton has to be trotted out for a date's inspection; it's a judgment call. However, if we replaced "I used to smoke" with "I had and kicked an addiction," you'd probably see more value in sharing.

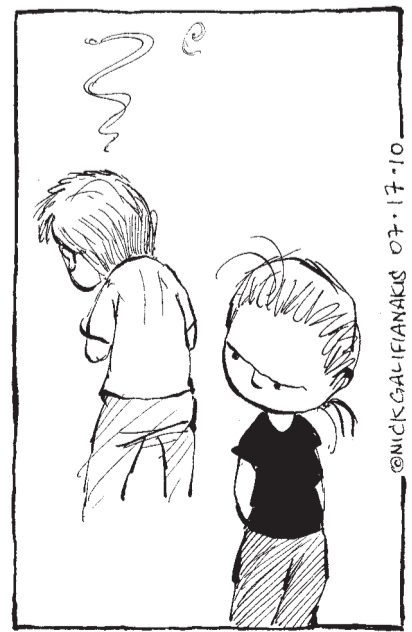
It's not just about the odds of recurrence. Acting like a goofball in college, for example, might not be something you want to trot out for potential life partners. Yet I could also argue that the mark of a promising candidate is that you find yourself sharing your stories of goofball college behavior — not because you feel obligated, but because you suddenly find that the stuff you aren't proud of is stuff you feel safe sharing.

But I digress. Recurrence is big here. Smoking is a habit, which points to disclosure. Maybe it wasn't that big a habit and he legitimately couldn't foresee its coming back to bite him. But his "lifestyle" laughter says there's denial involved.

There's also this: He apparently said nothing about quitting. If he had expressed a desire to stop, then I don't think she'd be as angry about when he chose to disclose.

Read the whole transcript or join the discussion live at noon Fridays on [www.washingtonpost.com/discussions](http://www.washingtonpost.com/discussions).

Write to Tell Me About It, Style, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071, or [tellme@washpost.com](mailto:tellme@washpost.com).



NICK GALIFIANAKIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

## THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

### REPORT FROM WEEK 874

In which we asked to compose Facebook "status lines" that included at least seven words and phrases from a list of 50 we supplied. You'll notice that some entries have as much to do with anyone's "status" as most of the lines do on the actual Facebook.

The words: *glop; rash; Lady Gaga; swerve; tapas; BP; ginormous; museum; dental; frisky; wireless; infomercial; asparagus; tuba; goalie; hyperventilate; pineapple; squishy; projectile; dinner; tea bag; harpsichord; Cuisinart; New Yorker cartoon; Metro; muskrat; vacation; Lindsay; strewn; ziti; zit; Secretariat; Tupperware; apple; escalator; trophy; Slurpee; effete; acid-free; parental control; venison; fastball; martini; status; otter; bicuspid; Fenty; anagram; chronic; Santa.*



**Stopping to hyperventilate on my climb up the "escalator" — Metro-speak for "metal stair museum" — now in its chronic status: on vacation.** (Dudley Thompson, Cary, N.C., formerly of Rockville)

**2 the winner of "Prez BaRock," basically a rock sitting at a little Oval Office desk: D.C. has more chronic problems than a Metro escalator, but as long as Congress exerts parental control on the District, Mayor Fenty is less likely to succeed than a hockey goalie trying to get dental insurance.** (Ward Kay, Vienna)

**3 WOOT! Got Bluetooth wireless implanted in my bicuspid today. No more effete "Lt. Uhura" museum pieces or chronic ear infections for me! Weird — a call came in and my mouth just went all squishy. The batteries in this thing are acid-free, right?** (Jeff Contompassis, Ashburn)

**4 Which one of the following is NOT a euphemism? (1) "bacon-wrapped asparagus"; (2) "burped her Tupperware"; (3) "bottomless slurpee"; (4) "the goalie's out of the crease"; (5) "made a tuba player hyperventilate"; or (6) "bypassed her parental controls"?** (Kevin Dopart, Washington)



BOB STAAQUE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

### WEAKENED UPDATES: HONORABLE MENTIONS

**At dinner, my date showed me her New Yorker cartoon contest entry: Her effete punch line was that the anagram of "a pineapple" is "an apple pie." My Facebook status remains "single and looking."** (Ward Kay)

**Contracted a ginormous case of "BP rash" on vacation. "Down south" is strewn with oily, squishy zits.** (Jeff Contompassis)

**Mayor Fenty (when he's not on vacation) wants us to believe he's a chronic Santa, with his largess strewn all over the metro area. What a bunch of asparagus.** (Mae Scanlan, Washington)

**My teenager is on vacation at the beach, out of parental control. Am I worried that, like a zit-covered fastball, he'll make a beeline to some wild party serving martini slurpees to 14-year-olds? Nah. The beach house has wireless — he'll spend the whole time IM'ing his friends how he knows we're at home hyperventilating over him.** (Russ Taylor, Vienna)

**I hear that Rep. Joe Barton plans a dinner to present BP with a**

**ginormous conservation trophy for its success in protecting otters and muskrats from the oily glop it spilled into the Gulf of Mexico.** (Pam Sweeney, St. Paul, Minn.)

**Hey, this morning I'm 10 years acid-free! And I feel great. Except for a little hyperventilating when the ginormous harpsichord-playing otter comes over for martinis. And I wouldn't even mind that, if he could play something other than Lady Gaga.** (Russ Taylor)

**You can put the "apple" in "pineapple," you can put the "zit" in "ziti," you can even put the "BP" in "bicuspid" — but try to put the "F" in "way" and they'll tell you there's no "F" in "way." And when I saw this status contest, I said that too.** (Craig Dykstra, Centerville)

**Can anyone help a zit-faced tuba player with a chronic body rash get a trophy wife who looks like Lindsay Lohan? The case of "Hung Like Secretariat" lotion I bought didn't work out.** (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)

**An idea for a New Yorker cartoon: It's Christmas vacation, and an effete pair are out to dinner, stirring their martinis with asparagus stalks. One says, "By the way, I've been seeing Santa." The other asks wryly, "Oh? Claus or Barbara?"** (Dudley Thompson)

**There are ways to improve your manly status during your beach vacation. You could put a squishy apple or a relatively calm otter down the front of your Speedo, but even better would be strewing a BP executive trophy head or two along the shore.** (Kevin Dopart)

**Health status update: Just back from doctor: Had to remove a projectile from my mouth; extensive dental work needed. Note to self: Do not trash-talk Strasburg's fastball — missing two bicuspids, lookin' like the Caps' goalie! Santa, all I want for Christmas is two front teeth.** (Stephen Dudzik, Olney)

**Next week: Fail us, or Duh things we do**

### THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

## Week 878: Safety in blunders

Require all suitcases to be see-through.

Indeed, there are lots of bad people out there who want to get us. And indeed, there are lots of bad ideas about how to prevent them from doing it. **This week: Tell us a way to make the nation more secure**, as in the sensible suggestion above by Loser Peter Metrino, who proposed this contest. Note: While we love pointed political humor, we are looking for jokes, not screedy rants, and especially not racist rants. They are not funny and we like funny.

Winner gets the Inker, the Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives this handsome 12-by-15-inch sign that will designate your home, office, latrine, etc., as a Loser-friendly site. Donated by Occasional Loser Thad Humphries of Way Out There in Rural Virginia.

**Other runners-up** win their choice of a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or yearned-for Loser Mug. Honorable Mentions get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Loser Magnets. First Offenders get a smelly, tree-shaped air "freshener" (Fir Stink for their First Ink). One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to [losers@washpost.com](mailto:losers@washpost.com) or by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, July 26. Put "Week 878" in the subject line of your e-mail, or it risks being ignored as spam. Include your name, postal address and phone number with your entry. Contests are judged on the basis of humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post. Entries may be edited for taste or content. Results to be published Aug. 14. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonym entries will be disqualified. The revised title for next week's results is by Dave Prevar; this week's honorable-mentions subhead is by Jeff Contompassis.



**That's your sign: This week's second prize, an L of an identity.**

**Online discussion** Have a question for the Empress or want to talk to some real Losers? Join the Style Conversational at [washingtonpost.com/styleconversational](http://www.washingtonpost.com/styleconversational).

## WD-40 redux: Fanfare for the uncommon can

WD-40 FROM C1

since the early 1960s, when it grew from a locally marketed San Diego product to nationwide availability. And serious mechanics still use it. But for generations it has also been the reliable helpmeet of the home klutz. WD-40 is to bad handymen what cream of mushroom soup is to bad cooks. You start with a little, applied close to the problem. Then you apply more. You swear like a stevedore and bash the offending mechanical object with something heavy. By the time you give up and take it to someone who actually knows how to fix it, whatever you've been working on is covered in a light glaze of oily ooze.

A glaze that smells sweet, sickly sweet, like the nectar that robotic bees would suck from mechanical flowers. If lawnmowers wore cologne, it would smell like WD-40, the Old Spice of the two-stroke engine.

The product's original purpose was to be part of "a line of rust-prevention solvents and degreasers for use in the aerospace industry," according to company lore. The formula, originally used on the



**THEN AND NOW: WD-40, once known as the Rocket Chemical Co., is offering twin pack that pairs a 1950s collector's can with a current model.**

Atlas missile and supposedly discovered on the 40th attempt, is still proprietary.

"The secret sauce is *secret*," Edwards says. But she confirms it's definitely petroleum-based, which makes some of its

kitchen applications, included on the company's "List of 2000+ Uses" Web page, a bit dubious: "Lubricates meat slicer knob ... lubricates tomato slicer handle ... lubricates antique waffle iron ... frees frozen parts on electric coffee grinder ..."

The old can, in grim black and yellow that screams better living through chemistry, was based on material found in the company's "original can archives." The new can, with the more familiar red, blue and yellow colors, comes with an innovation the company introduced in 2005, a permanently attached straw meant to prevent the annoying loss of the old thin red straw. Before this, the straw was forever errant, lost in the back of the pickup or the recesses of the tool box.

The return of the old, detachable straw, side by side with the new permanent straw, only emphasizes the obvious: that this is a product for people who don't know how to manage real things in the real world. It is, literally, a panacea for losers. Like duct tape and baling wire and Liquid-Plumr.

It bridged two eras, the age of terrestrial machines that ran on gasoline or die-

sel, and the fantasy world of rocket science. In the palm of your hand was something made for missiles, but oh so helpful in the garage, too. In her new book, "Another Science Fiction: Advertising the Space Race 1957-1962," Megan Prelinger looks at the iconography of American commerce during this heady age. One recurring image — the hand reaching out to the moon and beyond — gets to the heart of the American dream of big science and easy fixes. It links the idea of being "handy" with the ambition to slip the old bonds of Earth.

Robert Browning, in a great ode to ambition and failure, once wrote: "A man's reach should exceed his grasp." It's a fine sentiment for a painter, or a poet. The "exceeding his grasp" has proved much more problematic in the world of machines, missiles and miles-deep oil wells. WD-40, that wonder of rocket science, was the fantasy of reach marketed to the loser world of no grasp. Its return, this month, in the nostalgic colors of the 1950s, reminds us of that most basic definition of our species: man, the mediocre mechanic.

[kennicott@washpost.com](mailto:kennicott@washpost.com)

## Justin Bieber video bests Gaga's YouTube record

FROM NEWS SERVICES AND STAFF REPORTS

NEW YORK — Justin Bieber's music video for "Baby" is the most-watched video ever on YouTube.

The 16-year-old pop star's video passed Lady Gaga's "Bad Romance" video. More than 246 million have watched Bieber's video on the Google Inc.-owned Web site.

Bieber tweeted a thank-you to "Be-liebers" and said the video's success was "crazy." The singer wrote: "I started on youtube so ... WOW!" Bieber's video and Lady Gaga's switched positions briefly Friday, but as of late afternoon, Bieber was ahead by more than 600,000 views.

The most-watched clip on YouTube that isn't a music video is the popular "Charlie bit me" viral video, with 210 million views.

Elsewhere, Bieber is getting his own biography comic book, courtesy of Bluewater Productions.

The 32-page "Fame: Justin Bieber" comic, due in October, will chronicle the 16-year-old singer's climb to heart-throb status.

Vancouver, British Columbia-based Bluewater last month released a similar biography comic of Robert Pattinson, "Fame: Robert Pattinson," timed to coincide with the latest theatrical release of the "Twilight" movie franchise.

## DOONESBURY BY GARRY TRUDEAU



## CUL DE SAC BY RICHARD THOMPSON

