



CAROLYN HAX

## Girlfriend's 'wig-outs' have him at loose ends

Adapted from a recent online discussion.

Dear Carolyn:

When is it time to let a relationship go, especially if it requires a cold, hard push?

My girlfriend and I have the best of times and the worst. Most of the time, she is fun to be around, attentive and provides a depth in thinking that I don't have. But sometimes she completely spazzes out. She gets vulgar and confrontational.

She sees a counselor and the wig-outs have lessened, but I'm never quite sure when it will happen again. I'm a little ashamed of myself around friends and family who have been there for me after a wig-out session.

D.C.

Um. Do you have any idea what the underlying cause of the wig-outs might be? Is it illness, impulsiveness, a learned behavior . . . ? It does matter, since it tells you whether it's a character issue or not, whether treatment can eradicate the problem or not, and whether you've represented her fairly to these friends and family.

If anyone's wondering where I say, "This is who she is, she's not going to change," or mention, "She's being abusive and he needs to get out," it's here, but with an asterisk: She's getting help. That means the capacity for improvement is part of who she is, too, and is worth factoring in (even if the decision is ultimately to break up).

So, when you weigh a breakup, you need to figure out under what circumstances you can live with her potential to wig. If you decide you can accept it only if it's something she can't entirely control, then I would advise you to ask her to explain to you what's going on, and even ask to see her counselor with her, to help you understand and also respond productively when these outbursts happen.

You're also going to have to figure out how you're going to bring your friends and family into your decision. For example, "The cause of these outbursts is X, and she's fighting it hard, and I'm going to stand by her."

If on the other hand you decide you can't live with the suspense of wondering when she's going to explode next, regardless of the cause, then this thing's done. The best way to let go would be directly but kindly: "I'm glad you've gotten help, and I want the best for you, but I don't feel prepared to handle the extreme highs and lows of our relationship. I'm sorry."

Dear Carolyn:

You said it's "so important with a villain, to take a complicated [and compassionate] view." Why should I show compassion to someone who has taken every opportunity to be manipulative, thoughtless and mean? Gets mad if I respond, gets mad if I don't respond. Your advice still applies?

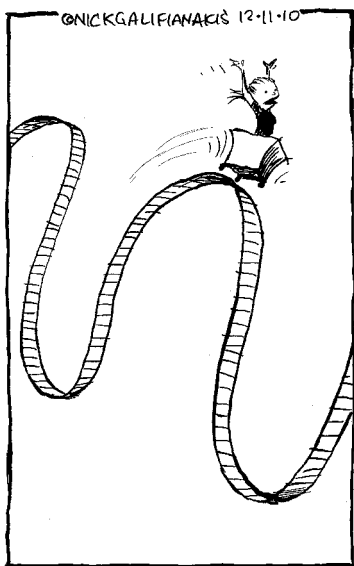
Anonymous

You don't have to stay close, or give this person anything, or keep offering yourself up as a victim; you can even be like David Kaczynski, who felt compassion for his brother, the Unabomber, while turning him in.

But you can still allow for a villain's humanity and frailty. Dehumanizing others dehumanizes us.

Read the whole transcript or join the discussion live at noon Fridays at [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).



ONICK GALIFIANAKIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

# THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

## REPORT FROM WEEK 894

in which we invited you to enter (or reenter) almost any of the year's previous contests, using the current newspaper in contests that asked for plays on that week's headlines. It's amazing how many contests were just perfect for humor about airport pat-downs and money in bras. Given the space limitations of the print page, most of the long-form Losing entries, such as song parodies and Venn diagrams, appear at [washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational](http://washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational).



Week 855, poems on the news:

**A Double Tactile Gribbly grabbby, Airport security Fondles my stuff in an Intimate way. Many object to this Microanalysis; Sadly for me it's the Height of my day.** (Craig Dykstra, Centreville)

**2** winner of the Valerie Flame Hot Sauce plus the Splat brand Russian toothpaste: Week 872, combine the beginnings of someone's first and last name: **Ruslim: A worshiper of an intolerant, hateful deity.** (John Holder, Charlotte)

**3** Week 847, a question that a sentence in that week's Post might answer:

**A. I could see if I had done something wrong. Q. So, how would you know if your plan to punish yourself succeeded, Oedipus?** (Russell Beland, Fairfax)

**4** Week 885, a bank headline under an actual Post headline:

**Head: Panel calls for federal workers' sacrifice Bank: Tickets go on sale tomorrow** (Mike Braton, Alexandria, a First Offender)

## ONCE MORE WITH FAILING: HONORABLE MENTIONS

Week 843, the line preceding a famous line of literature:

**ZIIIIIIIIIP. Whose woods these are I think I know. His house is in the village, though . . .** (Barbara Turner, Takoma Park)

Week 847, questions for Post sentences:

**A. She sighs and drops her head.**

**Q. I hear you're playing Marie Antoinette in the school play — what does your character do?** (Russell Beland)

Week 848, rhopalic sentences, in which each successive word is one letter longer:

**So Joe, only you're having trouble spelling Murkowski.** (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

Week 849, homonym neologisms: **Midnight: Where the joust's lance stopped.** (Erik Wennstrom, Bloomington, Ind.)

Week 852, reverse rhopalic sentences:

**Fundraiser announced;**

**Johnsons mistype invite, offer "cash bra."** (Craig Dykstra)

Week 860 Define someone or something in exactly 10 words:

**Benjamin Netanyahu: In any conflict, depend on him to make a settlement.** (Howard Walderman, Columbia)

Week 870, Ask Backward: questions to match phrases we supplied:

**A. Avoid these potty training missteps.**

**Q. What is the subtitle of the parents' guide "Turn the Other Cheek"?** (Bernhard Saxe, Springfield)

Week 871, slightly altered movie titles:

**Center the Dragon: Bruce Lee takes up yoga.** (Drew Bennett, West Plains, Mo.)

**Snakes on a Panel: Executives from Lehman Brothers, BP and Halliburton testify before Congress on the need for easing government restrictions.** (Nancy Schwalb, Washington, a First Offender)

**Three Men Sand a Baby: A home improvement project goes horribly wrong.** (Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase)

**Up in the Hair: Lice in Wonderland.** (Craig Dykstra)

Week 885, bank headlines:

**Post headline: Democratic strategists ready to take page from GOP playbook**

**Bank head: Pelosi, Hoyer call Obama a foreign-born socialist traitor** (Ira Allen, Bethesda)

**Wizards fade in follow-up 'Deathly Hallows Part 2' deemed anticlimactic** (Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn)

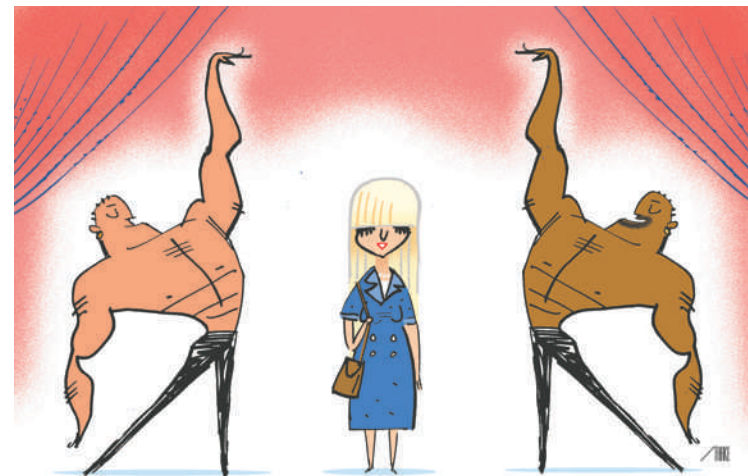
Week 886, palindrome neologisms: **Junknuj: The TSA's first line of defense.** (Edmund Conti, Raleigh, N.C.)

**See more online at [washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational](http://washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational)**

**Next week: Picture this, or Dada mining**

**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://washingtonpost.com/styleconversational).

## THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

## Week 898: Pre-current events

Feb. 13: **Lady Gaga shocks the Grammy Awards audience by appearing in a knee-length navy blue coattress from Sears.**

There will undoubtedly be no shortage of ridiculous news items that will help the Greater Loser Community satiate the gaping maw of Style Invitational contests throughout next year. But why wait for them? Let's just make our own, ahead of time. **This week: Predict some humorous news event that would happen in 2011**, as in the example above. Which is by 41-time Loser Malcolm Fleschner, who writes his own weekly humor column, Culture Shock, which appears in several California newspapers and online. And every January, Malcolm offers up his predictions for the coming year, none of which, yet, has come true.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives the fabulous Pointless Calendar, a big wall-hung thing featuring, for each month, a large photo of something boring, like a piece of asphalt, as well as the "calendar" part that includes a handy 40 days per month (but no days of the week). We guarantee that this this calendar will never ever go out of date. Donated by the similarly dateless Loser Brendan Beary.

**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, Dec. 20. Put "Week 898" 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 Jan. 8. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, or their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonymous entries will be disqualified. The revised title for next week's results was submitted by Kevin Dopart. The honorable-mentions subhead is by Tom Witte.

# 'Taliban': Witnessing insurgent life, from the inside

TV REVIEW FROM CI

convoy appears to continue on its way. "Are they good fighters?" Cooper asks Refsdal.

"They aren't very accurate," Refsdal says. But, as we know all too well, they're accurate enough.

We travel on to yurtsville to meet Dawran's family. Watching him cuddle with his children is unnerving. Cooper wonders if Refsdal has crossed a line here, given the increasing loss of American lives in the war. "Some people will think you're trying to humanize" the Taliban, he says.

But Refsdal rightly counters that his work "is an important piece of the war," allowing us to see, in an up-close way, the people who vex us so. If "Taliban" strikes some viewers as a pointless piece of propaganda, Refsdal tells Cooper that the Taliban fighters themselves might agree, as they saw little purpose in his determination to film them relaxing,

**According to the observer, the insurgents like to gossip on their walkie-talkies and sing songs: "We have decided to make them cry / We have put on the belt of holy war."**

praying, eating and huddling fearfully in a bunker at the sound of a bomber making a day's worth of circles in the sky. They'd prefer more battle footage, too.

Weeks later, Refsdal is lured to another location by Omar, one of Dawran's lieutenants, who promises the journalist more opportunities to film the Taliban at work. "You never know if you're going to be a guest or a hostage," Refsdal says.

The answer this time is "hostage," as the Taliban become convinced that Refsdal is a spy. Here, "Taliban" recounts Refsdal's harrowing story of how he negotiated his release. It's no small task, explaining the documentary concept of being a fly on the wall to people polishing old Soviet assault rifles.

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## TALIBAN

(one hour) airs Saturday at 8 p.m. on CNN

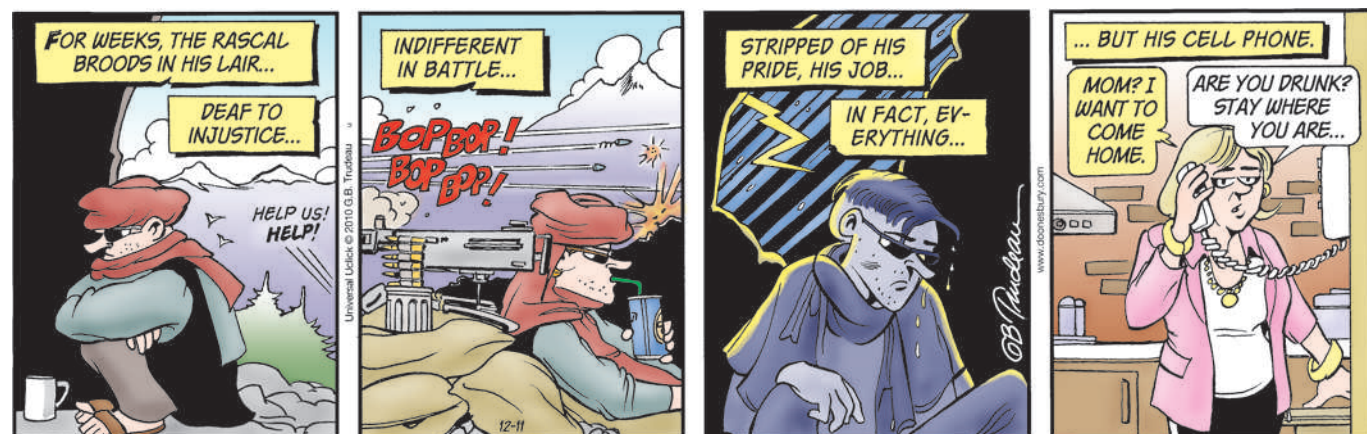
**MORE COVERAGE ONLINE** To see a sneak peek of CNN's "Taliban," go to [washingtonpost.com/style](http://washingtonpost.com/style).



LORENZO BEVILACQUA/CNN

**UNUSUAL ASSIGNMENT:** Norwegian journalist Paul Refsdal, right, tells CNN's Anderson Cooper that the documentary of his time with Taliban fighters affords viewers up-close access — and a glimpse of how boring the life can sometimes be.

## DOONESBURY BY GARRY TRUDEAU



## CUL DE SAC BY RICHARD THOMPSON

