

Ask Connie... *“Hunting for my Husband!”*

Dear Connie,

Hunting season is almost here, and already I'm feeling angry and resentful. When I add up the days in bow season, rifle season, upland bird season, and all the other hunting seasons my husband Judd is interested in, it's about four months a year. He won't actually be away all that time, but he might as well be. He's already stopped shaving and every night he's either poring through the Cabela's catalogue or practicing with his bow in the field behind our house. He says he hunts so we'll have elk and deer meat all winter, and a Christmas goose, but the freezer still has packages of meat from 2004 in it. I think hunting is just an excuse to be out in the woods with his buddies drinking beer and acting like overgrown adolescents. I don't like to hunt, and I don't want all the responsibility for the house and kids from September through January again. It's been like this for ten years, and I've had it!

Sincerely, Julia

Dear Julia,

Hunting season is a common source of relationship stress in Montana, particularly for women who don't hunt themselves. For several weeks or months every year, the focus for men who hunt is on hunting, not their wives or girlfriends. Many women feel neglected and



resent having to assume what they feel is more than their share of responsibility at home for an extended period of time. This is very understandable.

For many Montana men, hunting is an important part of life and has been since they were children. It may be a way to fill the freezer with meat, but from their perspective there is much more to it: being out in the wild, alone or with buddies; growing a beard and turning feral; allowing their more primitive side to express itself in dress and hygiene; eating nutrient-free processed food and drinking beer and Yukon Jack; and the hunt itself—the finding and stalking an elk or deer or moose, the ritual of the kill, the cleaning and packing of the carcass, sometimes the trophy rack—and for some, the deep

sacredness of the experience. There is a lot of ritual in hunting, a lot of adrenaline, and usually some very strenuous exercise. For many boys, it is a rite of passage into manhood, and each year the hunt becomes a re-enactment of the original experience with their fathers or other adult men. Is it an escape from the usual responsibilities of work and home? And, often, women? Most likely. But to men it's an escape with meaning and purpose.

So what can you do to make hunting season less difficult for you? Assuming that your marriage is good most of the time, communicating how you feel is the first step. If you can avoid criticizing the idea of hunting, and speak from the heart about how you feel when

your husband is gone so many days, he will most likely be able to hear you without defense. Tell him you miss him; that you get lonely; that you get tired taking care of everything when he's away. Express gratitude if you can for all he does when he IS home, and for the elk or whatever he contributes to the freezer (and consider taking extra meat to the Food Bank). Then, think about any special occasions that are coming up during hunting season (or seasons) when you especially would like him to be with you. Ask him to commit to being home those days. You may both get most of your needs met by being considerate of one another's needs and desires. Then it may be easier to accept this separate part of his life.

Some women actually look forward to hunting season, as this gives them time to do things they don't when their partner is around. It can be a time to share activities with women friends, to read, to watch movies or TV programs your partner doesn't like, turn your favorite music—the kind he hates—up loud, eat sprouts instead of antelope sausage, etc.

Think of it as a time of relative freedom for you even if you do have additional responsibilities.

In every relationship, there are mutual needs and individual needs. Learning to respect and accept that one's partner has some needs that are different from yours is an important part of developing a harmonious, satisfying relationship.

*Good luck, Julia!
Blessings, Connie*

Do you have a relationship question?

Write to Connie at conniem@mcn.net or call 406-582-7450 —and ask!

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Connie Myslik-McFadden, MSS, LCSW, is a psychotherapist in Bozeman with 25 years of experience working with individuals, couples and groups. She leads work-



shops, retreats and teaches Dreamwork and Pathwork. Connie devoted 9 years to Jungian analysis, training, and supervision, after graduating from the Bryn Mawr School of Social Work. She went on to graduate from the Barbara Brennan School of Healing, and Society of Souls, a kabbalistic school of healing. She is the author of *Gathering the Soul, a True Story of Spiritual Healing*. Pathwork (Pathwork.org) and Imago Relationship Therapy (Gettingtheloveyouwant.org) are two easily accessible sources for the theories upon which much of this column is based.

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