

Opinion

I really hate the Blue Jays

I hate the Toronto Blue Jays. Despite all the attention they get in the local press, despite the hype, the bandwagon loads of frenzied fans and the fact they are the home team, I still don't like them.

Since I began to follow the grand old game I have been a fan of the Los Angeles Dodgers in the National League and, dare I say, the Boston Red Sox in the American League. The Jays are upstarts, having been around only since 1977, and they have a funny name.

I own replica jerseys, caps and other knick-knacks of my two favourite teams, including Dodger shoelaces and a Red Sox Christmas tree ball. These relics are treated gently, displayed rather than worn, like sacred heirlooms. I was given a Blue Jays T-shirt as a prize once. It makes a great duster.

It's time for the top 10 reasons why I dislike the Blue Jays.

10. Management does crazy things. For example general manager Pat Gillick trades for John Candelaria, field manager Cito Gaston pinch hits Kenny 'No Hit' Williams for Rob Ducey, third base coach John McLaren holds runners when opponents are out cold.

9. The hype. You can't get a ticket because of the hype. On television all you ever see is the bloody Blue Jays. What about the other teams? What about the west coast, where interesting teams like the Dodgers, Giants, A's, Padres and Angels play?

8. They're chronic underachievers. Remember 1985 and a weak-kneed Kansas City winning the playoff? Remember 1987 and seven straight losses to hand the division to Detroit? Remember the playoff collapse to Oakland last year? Don't forget this season, when they came down the stretch 2-6 and Boston clinched a tie with two games to go. All this from a team with the deepest talent base in the majors.

7. They have a dumb name. Why would Toronto be associated with blue jays? Towers, traffic jams and maple leaves maybe, but blue jays, no. Philadelphia Phillies were going to adopt Blue Jays as a nickname in the 1960s but they decided to retain Phillies. Pretty scary, eh?



Reaume With a View
with BRAD REAUME

6. You have to fight for a ticket. Part of the charm of baseball is strolling down to the ballpark, picking up a ticket and watching the game. In Toronto every game is a virtual sell-out. The Maple Leafs have the same ticket pressure and because of that most fans have been to very few games. It's hard to become attached to a team when you can't see them.

5. SkyDome is hell. I have been to a half dozen major league parks and SkyDome is... is... the newest. It is quite simply a horrible place to see a ball game. It's tight, small, overpriced and has poor sightlines. Period.

4. There's no tradition. There's no tradition, except for losing. Except for not being better than the sum of the parts. Except for those people who remember Exhibition Stadium.

3. Blue Jay ushers stop fans from heckling. A fan was asked to cease and desist from loudly complaining that Gaston was making incorrect moves. He paid his money, didn't he? As long as the taunts are not racial, or obscene, the Jays should have nothing to say.

2. Nobody in the stands understands the game. When fans think a pinch hitter has to stay in the game, when they think a fielder's choice is a hit, and when they can't keep score at all, then you know it's not the most intelligent of crowds.

1. Broadcasters on Jays games sound like used car salesmen. Tom Cheek's mind wanders, playing peck-a-boo with reality. All too often he's in the boo mode. Right Tom? Jerry Howarth never gives enough information. I think he thinks he's doing television. Of course, Fergie Olver is legendary, but the sad fact is Don Chevrier looks good in this company.

If you don't love it, then don't own it

The more I hear people say they don't want the responsibility (translation — the trouble) of keeping a pet, the better I feel.

Now don't get excited, hear me out. While I feel there is something basically wrong with a society that does not love and revere animals (and many psychologists and behaviourists will back me up on this), I have to feel comforted by the knowledge that some people are being honest enough to admit they can't be bothered looking after pets.

How much better it is to simply forego the pleasures (and, admittedly, the problems) of pet ownership, than to acquire a pet under pressure from family members, and then ignore it. Or care for it inadequately. Or, unconscionably, abuse it.

If you know at this point in your life you do not have the necessary time or energy to give to an animal companion, don't waste any more of your time feeling guilty. You'll be saving an unfortunate animal the misery of neglect.

However, people who own and love pets shouldn't be patting themselves on the back just yet. Are you sure you're being the most conscientious pet owner possible? Let's run a list of duties a good owner should perform:

- 1) Fresh water available at all times;
- 2) High quality food, always fresh, in the required amounts;
- 3) Proper veterinary care, including shots, worming and heartworm testing;
- 4) A crate (for dogs) for supervision, comfort and safety;
- 5) Grooming — brushing or combing for cats, regular brushing and periodic bathing for dogs. Nail clipping and teeth cleaning should be done regularly as well. (We're mostly talking dogs here. Although I clip my cats' nails weekly, I've never been able to convince them



Pets & You
with ANNE NORMAN

of the need for oral hygiene);

6) Regular exercise and a safe outside area. This means a fenced yard for dogs and an enclosed run from the house for cats (warm weather only);

7) Training and socializing for dogs, so that they can live long and happy lives and be trustworthy companions.

The above are the basic requirements for responsible care. Remember that the colder weather is approaching and that no animals should be left outside for extended periods in frigid temperatures. (Northern breeds such as Huskies and Malamutes are possible exceptions but even they must have insulated secure dog houses in their fenced yards.)

When walking your dog in the winter, remember salt inflicts great pain on the sensitive pads of his feet. Avoid obviously salted areas of road and pavement, and make sure to wash the feet thoroughly when you get home.

The application of petroleum jelly to the paws prior to walking will offer a level of protection against salt burn.

Most of all, your pet needs your love and respect. An unhappy, unwanted pet is an unwell pet.

Contribute to an animal's good health; look after it with affection. If you don't feel that inclination, forget having a pet. Give someone else a chance.



Playing the dating game — properly

Many people will tell you to "be yourself" when it comes to dating. It's not always good advice.

If you're socially skillful, there is no problem in being yourself, but if you're not, then being yourself can mean being alone. In the latter case, it's better to change and learn new skills.

Complimenting a person, for example, is one of the most attractive and powerful things we can learn to do. Everyone likes to be complimented — in fact, you can get a person to like you more by complimenting them.

Moreover, compliments beget compliments — the more you give, the more you will get (as long as your compliments are sincere, not gratuitous or trivial).

Unfortunately, some people are too shy, inhibited, or else fear they are yielding control in the relationship if they give compliments freely. On the contrary, giving compliments demonstrates inner strength and security, and it actually increases your dominance in the relationship.

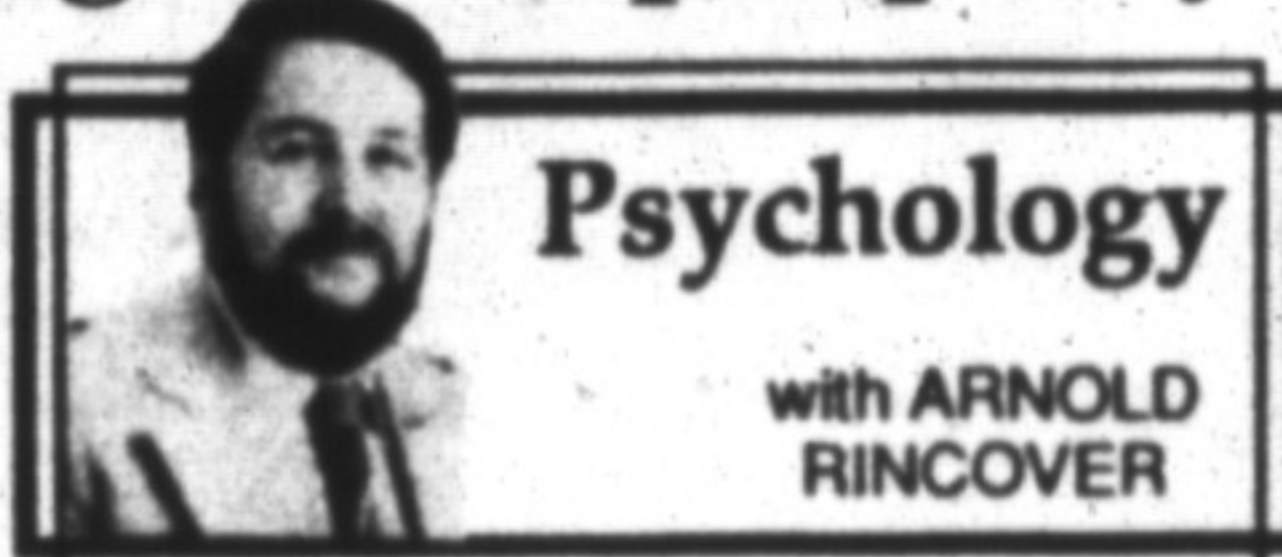
Your partner turns to you as the "provider" or support. Your judgment becomes highly esteemed (after all, you're so perceptive). Any suggestions you make for change will be more readily accepted.

Despite its importance in making a person feel good (and in making yourself more attractive), many people need some help in order to get the compliment out, or to even notice things to compliment.

A growing body of literature suggests it is crucial to use the word "you" in a conversation. One of the most obnoxious, though unintended, things a person can do is talk solely about him or herself. A friend or date will think you aren't interested in their feelings. Or worse, he or she may think you're an egotistical jerk.

The word "you" shows you are interested ("What do you think?"), approval ("I agree with you") or that you're following the conversation and enjoying it ("You mean that...").

While there are many more social skills to be considered and assessed in a treatment pro-



Psychology
with ARNOLD RINCOVER

gram designed to improve personal attractiveness or dating skills, sometimes a therapist must also get rid of some unattractive interpersonal styles.

A person may do something as simple as standing too close to other people, making them uncomfortable; he may be prone to exaggeration; she may come across as insincere, aloof or uninterested; he may use "lines" or phrases (such as "hey, baby") or create images (the 'macho man') that turn many people off.

Whether we're trying to establish new skills or get rid of old habits, the same steps will apply.

First, we have to decide on our targets. There are a number of checklists available, to be filled out either by you or the therapist. It appears most effective to set up simulated situations (conversations or dates) to observe your style, with an experienced therapist watching and scoring your strengths and weaknesses.

Once deficiencies are identified, you would typically be shown videotapes on how to do each behaviour better. Then you would practise (with a "confederate" chosen by the therapist).

Afterward, the therapist would go over your tape, give you feedback and try the experiment again. One study showed success in eight 90-minute sessions, which was fairly typical of the time needed. Sometimes booster sessions are needed down the road.

Dozens of studies have now been published, strongly supporting the usefulness of this approach. Not only do general social skills improve significantly, but people get more dates, feel less anxious about dating, and the gains appear to last after the treatment is finished.

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