



OUTTAKES

By Luisa Perez

Taming Your Inner Chimp

As promised in my last column, I'm going to share a few pointers on having a human-to-human conversation that leaves both parties feeling okay, not bloody and mauled, as in a chimp attack.

I've been practicing this method for weeks now, and I won't lie: it's hard work. But we didn't spend thousands of years escaping the rain forest to revert now. That two per cent of DNA we *don't* share with chimpanzees is what drives us forward.

So, imagine you're about to confront your boyfriend about a difficult issue. Maybe you saw him flirting with someone and you are NOT going to put up with that. So you swing down from the trees, ready to attack.

You: "I saw you flirting with that girl."

Him: "I was not flirting. I was talking. There's a difference."

You: "Yeah, the difference is you were groping her. That makes it flirting."

Him: "I patted her shoulder. In a brotherly way. Why are you always so insecure?"

You: "I wouldn't be so insecure if you didn't flirt. You're an... animal."

It's a chimp attack, people. And things will only get worse unless

you take the following steps:

Shut up and Listen

You think you know exactly what motivated your guy to behave the way he did. You don't. And you won't find out if you're screeching and gnashing monkey molars.

So dial it back and listen. You can still attack later if you find out that your suspicions were justified. The chimp inside is always coiled and ready to spring. Just wait before you turn it loose.

Start with Curiosity

Fight the temptation to throw canned messages back and forth: "You were flirting/No I wasn't." It's a circular argument and it will either go nowhere or escalate.

Instead, try an open-ended question, where you might actually learn something. With the situation above, you could say, "What's new with Amy?" Your guy might say, "She's bummed about her parents' splitting."

Watch your Delivery

So you say, "It's great that Amy feels she can confide in you." Looks nice on paper, right? But if your tone is sarcastic, it says exactly the opposite. Even if you manage to sound sweet, if your eyebrows have collapsed into your chin, it

contradicts your message and comes out meaning, "Why is she whining to *my* boyfriend?"

Result ≠ Intent

If you see your guy's hand on a girl's shoulder, your first thought might be that he's trying to make you jealous because that's how you feel. Jealousy probably came in handy in the rain forest but not so much at Dunfield.

Your feelings may be hurt, but that might not have been his intention at all. Maybe his worst crime was not thinking about how you might see things.

Shift your focus from how you feel to finding out what he intended.

Explain without Blame

You: "Wow, I'm glad you told me about Amy's family. I have to admit I was worried when I saw your hand on her shoulder."

Him: "Babe, I could never think about Amy that way."

And it's another happy ending in the concrete jungle.

Effective communication isn't easy and it's made me realize that despite all that body hair, chimps have it pretty good in some ways. For starters, they don't have to worry about all this stuff because they don't mate for life. But no one ever said evolution was easy!