

Not Firing on All Cylinders: Why is her gun-hating friend heading to the shooting range?

Dear C and Dr. B;

My friend Cynthia just shocked the hell out of me by announcing that she was going to a shooting range to learn how to fire both a pistol and a rifle. She has always told me that she totally against guns and she has also posted many remarks on her blog about how women end up committing suicide with the guns they bought to protect themselves, and how domestic violence becomes fatal whenever there's a gun involved. She has shared my horror over the number of mass shootings there have been in the US this year.

I can't believe she is going to go to a shooting range and I'm so upset I can't even talk to her about it. Why would she do that?

Annie Oakley

Dr. B says: Have you shot a gun? It's a rush, it is fun - like driving a go cart fast instead of being on the highway. It's a safe controlled environment to do something that could otherwise be dangerous.

Nothing wrong with a range - NO animals hurt at a range. I say, good for her. It feels empowering too. There is a huge difference between taking a gun class at a range, and standing with a semi-automatic at a QAnon rally.

Lighten up and take the class with her! I'll bet you would enjoy it. Just remember to have good ear protection.

C says: Lighten up? No questions asked? I'm not so sure that's a good idea, Annie. Yes, shooting is a rush, and ever so much fun, but that is scarcely the only reason that an anti-guns advocate would suddenly want to take up arms. Sure, your friend could just be looking for a new thrill; or something else entirely could have happened to prompt her sudden turn-about. Here's some other possibilities to consider:

- Your friend may have recently experienced something that made her feel unsafe. I used to teach self defense to women and before I took anyone into the classes, I asked them the reason for their interest. Their motives ranged from self-empowerment to a healthy awareness of the very real dangers any of us could face. The women that raised a red flag were those told me: "this f__ker broke into my house/ attacked me/ hurt me really bad, and I want to be ready next time." The motive here is a pent-up, waiting rage that could explode in any direction if triggered by the wrong move. When I came across women like this, I told them they needed not just self-defense techniques, but also therapy to process the trauma in a healthy way. I wouldn't sell such a woman a gun either.

- Your friend may be infiltrating the ranks of gun advocates in order to learn everything she can about the people who thrive on them, and about the mechanisms of the guns themselves. Quite honestly, I think that anyone who rallies against a cause without knowing anything about it is standing on very shaky ground. She could actually still be pursuing her anti-gun mission and gathering information in

order to further arm herself in a debate.

- Have you noticed the sheer number of public mass shootings there have been in this country in recent months? People are unexpectedly going nuts out of nowhere and shooting each other. It's unprecedented, which means unpredictable. You said that you never would have anticipated your friend would get into guns, so...just sayin'.

Of course, there's also the possibility that your friend has a crush on a guy who goes to a shooting range, and is simply looking for any opportunity she can get to hang out with him. The route to a gun enthusiast's heart is through his rifle - nothing more ego boosting than teaching the little lady how to shoot.

These are just a few of the other reasons I can think of other than fun, fun, fun, that a woman would suddenly buy a gun. My point is, any sudden change in behavior is something that warrants a conversation as to why. You haven't asked, Annie, so you don't know. I suggest you ask.

You can visit Dr. B's blog at drbrilliantcliche.wordpress.com