



LONG-DISTANCE LOVE

"Hi, Mom," Michelle said. "What's up?"

"Michelle," her mother replied, "I simply will not stand for another phone bill this high! This month alone you spent over \$200 calling Joe up at Frozen State University. It has to stop."

"But Mom, I miss Joe so much. Calling him helps," whined Michelle

At this, her mother retorted, "Try writing him a letter or sending him email. Stamps are only 33 cents and email is free!" and said goodbye.

Does this scenario sound familiar? Long-distance relationships are not so unusual. They often occur when a couple decides to attend universities in different states or when one partner leaves the other at home to go off to school. Unfortunately, many parents are not too sympathetic towards the triple-digit telephone bills that sustaining the relationship requires.

One of the first problems entailed in a long-distance romance is the issue of dating others. It is usually best not to evade discussing the issue. Then you'll stay awake at night wondering if Joe is not answering his phone because he is snowed-in at the library or if he is actually dating the hot blonde who he casually mentioned sits next to him in chemistry lab.

Once you have decided whether or not to date other people, you have to decide if you truly trust Joe to keep his end of the bargain. Since trust is an essential element in a long-distance romance, the lack of it might signal that the relationship needs some deeper examination. This, of course, leads directly to the difficulties of communication involved in not seeing our loved one for an extended period of time. Whereas previously you may have known exactly what Joe had for breakfast, this probably isn't feasible now. Unless, of course, your parents do allow three-digit phone bills!

What can you do about this? Try writing short notes to Joe so that he realizes you don't spend all your time at the beach. Or, set aside certain times each week for special phone calls. It may be best to schedule the calls so you know you can

reach each other with a minimum hassle if you choose this solution. Or, send things through the mail that will recall special occasions or give suggestions for new ones. Some creative couples even exchange audio or videotapes of themselves through the mail.

"Michelle," said Renee, Michelle's roommate, "you cannot spend your entire college career sitting around moping over Joe's pictures and waiting for him to call. You are going to turn into a boring dorm rat even Joe will get tired of."

"But what can I do?" said Michelle. "We decided not to date anyone else and I feel totally committed to that. Besides, whenever you and I go out, millions of men assume we're on the prowl and that we're open to the most disgusting propositions."

"I'll tell you what," said Renee. "A bunch of guys and girls I met at orientation are going out to a movie. If you come along, chances are you won't be molested and you'll meet some new people. I'm sure Joe is meeting new people and learning new things. After all, that's what college is for. Get changed and come along."

Renee has some valid points. Chances are Joe will not be exactly the same person at Christmas break he was in high school. For some relationships, this will be an exciting time for rediscovery and renewal. For others, being apart may have caused growing apart that cannot be bridged, nor should it always be. Joe may have been the perfect man before his sojourn at Frozen State U., but perhaps Michele will decide she truly prefers a Miami man instead.

Despite the many problems a long-distance relationship may bring, it may also have some advantages. To begin with, Michelle need not worry that her social life with Joe will interfere with her studies. In addition, the short times they spend together can be packed with fun and excitement.

It is a lot easier to plan a week of interesting activities than to plan an entire year's worth. However, Michelle will have to decide if the pluses outweigh the minuses of a long-distance romance. Coping with a long-distance relationship takes work from both ends.