

Life Wednesday

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I can't share space with crushes

There I was, standing in the middle of hundreds of other people in Centennial Olympic Park, and I couldn't think of a single thing to say.

It seems like I would have had a built-in topic of conversation — we were watching Big Star, after all — but all I could muster was, “Hey.”

“Oh, hey! How's it going?” he replied. “I'm kind of excited,” I said. “I



Cari Gerwin
Single in
Chattanooga

love Alex Chilton.”

“Me too,” he said. That should have been the start of a great conversation — he was standing in front of me, I used to have a crush on him, and we both loved Alex Chilton.

Alas, it was not. For a full hour, I tried to find something to say to the cute boy whom I used to know in Athens, Ga. I failed.

Our fragments of chitchat went like this: I can't believe Alex Chilton is wearing white jeans *and* a white polo shirt with the collar flipped up. (I know!) Wow, Jody Stephens looks

good. (He looked hot, but I didn't say that.) Isn't it cool that they covered a T. Rex song? (Yes.)

After the set, I said goodbye, wandered off to await the Flaming Lips performance, and that was the end of that.

Sadly, I find this utter incapability to hold a conversation happening with alarming frequency — i.e., every time I run into a potential crush.

It happened at the 4 Bridges Art Festival. It happened at a friend's birthday party. It happened last fall *after* I had already smooched the boy

See GERWIN, Page E4



KNIGHT RIDDER NEWSPAPERS

Gervin

• Continued from Page E1

in question.

All of a sudden, it's like I'm 13 again, nervous and awkward and unsure of myself. And unlike Alex Chilton, I can't even write a sweet song about it.

I keep telling myself that if I cannot manage to hold a conversation with a crush object, then there's no way he could ever be the perfect man of my dreams.

Of course, maybe I can't come up with anything to say because I'm trying to prevent myself from falling in love and possibly getting hurt again.

A few weeks ago, a copy of "Dating For Dummies" crossed my desk at work. I laughed at passages in the book — is anyone actually stupid enough to not realize that you should bathe before going on a date?

Yet as I scanned the pages further, I found myself identifying with the clueless, gun-shy audience at which the book is aimed.

Not counting the occasional e-mails I get from readers of this column, only one person has asked me out since things officially ended with "Ben" in February. That date, of course, never happened.

(Seriously, why do guys do that? I mean, why bother setting a specific day and time to go out if you aren't going to call?)

Even though I have been staying home more often and going to Atlanta every few weeks for a seemingly never-ending stream of wedding-related affairs and going-away parties, I still feel like I am putting myself out there, so to speak.

I try to flirt, I really do. I just don't have anything to say.

When did this get so hard?

I think I used to be good at flirting — at least, I never had a problem attracting interest from the opposite sex.

Now, when I see that cute guy who is friends with some of my friends' friends that I am completely convinced is totally perfect for me solely on the basis of his MySpace profile, I don't even have the guts to say much more than hello.

I decided that maybe I do need to read some self-help dating books. I mean, even my few attempts at flirting via MySpace have fallen flat.

So from here on out, my summer project (besides going to as many baseball games and cookouts and weddings as humanly possible) is to work my way through "Dating For Dummies."

Basically, I'm going use myself as a guinea pig in the great experiment of trying to find love. I know that is kind of what I'm doing anyway with this column, but soon I will know if having an instruction manual along will help.

Maybe when I run into that cute boy from Athens in a few months, I'll actually have something to say. If not, I suppose I can always bring up Alex Chilton.

*E-mail Cari Gervin at
cgervin@timesfreepress.com*