

Dear Dr. Mark -

"I recently received a great job offer in San Francisco but it means that my boyfriend and I will be living 3000 miles apart after graduation. I'm afraid our relationship will be hurt. What should I do?

He hasn't found a good job in San Francisco, whereas I've received an offer in Boston so that we could be together. It's a good job, but not what I really want to do. I don't know if I'll ever get something that seems so right for me as this job in San Francisco, but I also don't know what to lose him.

Please advise!"

Dear SF or Boston -

The best student I ever had ditched a great job in New York to take an inferior opportunity in Dallas, where her boyfriend (now husband) was going. It broke my heart, as I saw her as the first woman minority *Fortune 50* CEO. It still seems that more women than men are asked to make this difficult trade-off.

There have been several surveys and a recent *Harvard Business Review* article on this career/family issue. In short, they found that female business school graduates had three career tracks: a great career with either no husband or children or just no children; a great family with not much of a career; or, a mediocre career with lots of family strain. And the situation is becoming more of an issue for men, too.

However, I've seen many successful combinations. Two roommates, who were my students in college and business school, each took a different tact successfully. One put her career "on hold" to move with her would-be husband to New York and start a family, returning to a career 15 years later. The other built a public company and hired her would-be husband as CFO while he handled much of the family needs.

There is no one answer. It is up to you to assess the risk and make that choice -- assuming there is no middle ground that two of you can negotiate either with each other or with the prospective employers. Often you can make some "deal" that works for you two, and some employers will try to help.

If it remains an either/or decision, ask yourself which is the bigger risk for you as you see it? Or ask yourself, what would be my bigger regret: If you didn't do everything you could to make the relationship work [and it fell apart] or if you pass on the job you really want [and don't find one as good ever again]?

Whatever you do, remember that you are setting a precedent for your career and your relationships. While many couples agree to alternate who "wins," unless there is already a deep understanding and mutual respect, this rarely works. Remember that an important part of a good life is ending up with the right regrets.

**"Don't compromise yourself. You're all you've got."
-- Janis Joplin, rock star**