

# Teresa's Story



Teresa always worried about what other people felt. She had been a “people pleaser” since she was a little girl. Now that she was older, she often thought about becoming a nurse.

Teresa first met Sam in the guidance office at school. He had just moved with his family from New York and he and the counselor were arranging his class schedule. Teresa and Sam finished working on their schedules at the same time. She asked him what he thought of the town and if he had any sisters or brothers. They made small talk for awhile. As it turned out, they were in two of the same classes. Sam was talkative and asked questions all the time. They started eating lunch and studying for tests together. He talked about what it was like growing up in NYC and his screwed-up family and the times he saw his dad beat up his mom. This disturbed Teresa and she felt so sorry for him that she almost cried.

After the first few weeks at school, Sam started passing notes to Teresa. Soon the notes started to bother her. They were too personal and she noticed that Sam was becoming a little too friendly when they were talking. She had made it clear that she only wanted to be friends and she didn't want to date Sam. But that didn't stop him from continuing to ask personal questions, like ‘what did she wear to bed’ or what ‘turned her on’.

Teresa was in a bind. She didn't want to hurt Sam's feelings because she knew that he was really sensitive, but she hated the questions he was asking her. She tried to tell Sam in a nice way to stop it but he didn't get the hint. Finally she had to tell him to stop asking her such personal questions.

The next day when they were eating lunch, Sam started again. Teresa said “You know, we've done a lot of stuff together...” He interrupted her and said “You're gonna dump me aren't you?” He had a hurt look on his face that upset her. She took a deep breath and said “No, not really. Just some of the things that you have been talking about lately are making me uncomfortable.”

Whew. She had said it. Teresa always had trouble saying things that she thought might hurt someone. Sam wrinkled his face and said “Like what?” She told him some examples and that she didn't like talking about sexual things and what she wore to bed.

He answered “You know you like it Teresa. I will give you whatever you want. Come on, trust me.”

Teresa was shocked. She realized she needed to work on setting limits with Sam and maybe others too and letting people know what those limits were. And it was clear that Sam knew exactly what he was doing. He had grown up in a family where such language was the way a man controlled a woman. Embarrassing a girl gave him a sense of power; his dad did it all the time.

Teresa stopped spending time with Sam that day. And she is happy that she did. It was hard, but she felt proud that she stood up for herself. She also gained respect from some classmates.

**What would you do if you were in Teresa’s situation?**

**What could Teresa have done if Sam didn’t leave her alone after she told him to in the end?**

**Have you ever been in a situation where someone was not respecting your boundaries? What about a situation where you were afraid to set boundaries? What did you do? What happened?**

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