**Thesis:** I used to believe that not sharing details of my relationship with my boyfriend with my mother, rather than exclusively with my aunt, was justified, now I do not.

**Support:** Two individuals must both participate actively for a relationship to be successful and mutually beneficial. By not sharing details of my relationship with my mother, I am creating distance between her and myself. This distance will make it more difficult for her to understand me, which will in turn create even more distance in the future. Furthermore, I will be riddled with feelings of guilt knowing I am sharing personal information with my aunt that I am not sharing with my mother as this often makes my mother feel excluded.

**Opposition:** When I share details of my relationship with my aunt, I receive helpful advice and feel understood and heard. My aunt also feels good, as she is able to build a stronger bond with me. My mother married the first man she ever dated. When I have spoken about my boyfriend with my mother in the past, I have found that the amount of work necessary for her to extend her experience to mine was too much to take on for her. For example, she asks questions like where does your boyfriend sleep when he sleeps over? Obviously he sleeps in the same bed with me but apparently this is not so obvious to my mother. And the very fact that she asks where my boyfriend sleeps suggests that she does not approve. So if I do not talk to her about my boyfriend, we can both just pretend that it is not happening. The result is that she does not have to know what she does not have to know, and I do not have to feel embarrassed in front of my mother. The mother-daughter relationship is complex, diverse, and important. In any healthy relationship, communication is key: one of the key pillars of communication is the mutually beneficial sharing of information. If I do not benefit from communicating a particular topic with my mother, by continuing to engage in a conversation that does not help me, I am not fostering a healthy relationship. Just because I feel guilty, it does not mean what I am doing is wrong.

**Response:** If I was to only share details of my relationship with my aunt, and learned this made my mother feel excluded, I would feel guilty. So much so that I might not even benefit from my conversation with my aunt and be preoccupied with my negative feelings. The awkward moments and inappropriate questions I have to endure while talking to my mother, do not outweigh the benefit I get from talking to my aunt. Besides, topics like where my boyfriend sleeps can be passed over quickly as the more important issues, such as the fact that sometimes he seems to take me for granted, are issues that might very well benefit from my mother’s wisdom. Furthermore, the current problems in communication with my mother may be resolved over time if instead of not communicating with her I adjust the way I communicate with my mother. My mother has not had any boyfriend experiences, got married very young, and her context of learning about other people’s relationships, drama, and gossip is from another country. Despite this, it is possible for her to understand my circumstance, however this would require a real effort on her part. Although my mother has not had many boyfriends, she has been married to the same man for over 30 years and likely has advice to share that is transferable to my relationship with my boyfriend. When communicating, it is not fair for me to expect her to only extend her experience to mine; it is important that I also do the same and meet her halfway.

**Conclusion:** Sharing details of my relationship with my mother as well as my aunt may be at times unpleasant and awkward. However, I may gain insight from my mother that I may not have gained from my aunt alone. Also, knowing I am not making my mother feel left out will lessen my feelings of guilt when I spend time with my aunt and strengthen my relationship with my mother as well as my aunt. And by refusing to worry about the elephant in the room, i.e., where my boyfriend sleeps, it can shrink down to mouse size, so that other more important topics can be the focus.