A famous (still) open problem in the theory of cardinal invariants of the continuum asks whether $d = \aleph_1$ implies $a = \aleph_1$. A variation of this question is "does $b = s = \aleph_1$ already imply that $a = \aleph_1$?". We will shed some light on this question by examining when it is possible to destroy a MAD family without increasing either $b$ or $s$. This is joint work with J. Brendle.