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SAVAGE LOVE

INANIMATE
 OBJECTIONS
 BY DAN SAVAGE

My son is 15 going on 16, and he's been experimenting with masturbation. At the moment, I pretty much just think fine, whatever, he's a teenager, there's very little I can do about it. So long as he doesn't get porn-obsessed and start letting his grades slip, it's fine. The issue is that, a few months ago, his younger sister found one of her tampons in the garbage, and it was covered with poop. She brought it up to me and my wife, and we didn't think much of it—until a couple of months ago, when my wife discovered, again, a used, shitty tampon in the garbage. We had a talk with our son and told him that we understand he is maturing sexually and we don't care how he explores his sexuality. However, we also don't want to find shitty tampons or whatever else in the garbage. Then, a couple of days ago, we were going to bed and we heard a noise coming from his bathroom. We checked it out and found his toothbrush in the sink, butt-end being rinsed with the water running full blast for who knows how long (he was downstairs). We asked him why he was doing that, and he said the cat had pissed on his toothbrush. We think his story is bullshit, as although the cat does piss on the floor, the cat has never peed on a counter before. We are fine with him exploring his sexuality, but at the same time, we don't want to find tidbits of what he's doing out in the open. As I've explained to him, he needs to do a better job of hiding it, because if a friend had come over and found a shitty tampon in the garbage can, what would they think? However, it looks like shaming him to hide it better might be the only way. What are your thoughts on this? Are we in the wrong here?

Perplexed Over Progeny's Sexuality

You haven't found any more shit-covered tampons in the trash since you spoke to your son about it months ago, POPS, so either he's doing a better job of hiding those shit-covered tampons—he's honoring his father and mother—or he's not putting his sister's tampons up his ass anymore. And your concern for the delicate sensibilities of your friends is a bit of a reach. A true friend wouldn't paw through the trash in your bathroom, and anyone who did dig through the trash in your bathroom deserves to find not just one shit-smeared tampon, but a handful. As for the toothbrush, POPS, it wasn't left "out in the open." You found it in the sink in *his bathroom*. You discovered it because he stupidly left the water running full blast, it's true, but it wasn't out in the open in a shared communal space. If you had texted me the moment you found the toothbrush, I would've immediately texted you back and advised you to turn the water off and refrain from asking your son about the toothbrush. If you had to say something to him about it, POPS, I would've advised you to go with this: "Don't leave the water running in your sink." Your son would've figured that you saw the toothbrush, figured that you figured it had been in his ass, and never made that mistake again. (Just as he's never made the tampon mistake again.) But you made the mistake of asking your son for an explanation ("Why are you doing that?") in a context where (1) your son isn't going to tell you the truth ("The cat pissed on it, Pops!"), and (2) you can't handle the truth ("I was fucking myself in the ass with it, Pops!"). Zooming out for a second: A boy who's almost 16 isn't "experimenting with masturbation." He's perfecting his technique. And we can deduce from the tampons and toothbrushes that your son likes assplay. That's not a problem. Inconsideration used to be a problem (disposing of shitty tampons where his family members might find them), but he's knocked that off, right? So the only remaining problem is that he's putting things in his ass that aren't designed for assplay. If you don't want your son abusing any cucumbers or mixing spoons or Oscar statuettes that might be lying around your house—and if you don't want to have to rush him to an emergency room in a few months to retrieve something that gets stuck in his ass—consider purchasing a few ass-appropriate toys for him, i.e., one or two small silicone butt plugs with flared bases. He'll be mortified when you give them to him, POPS, but no more mortified than you were when you found those shitty tampons. Buying sex toys for kids is a hurdle most parents can't clear. If it's not something you can do, then you'll have to turn a blind eye to any toothbrushes you might find in sinks over the next few years. You'll also want to thoroughly wash cucumbers before consuming them.

Say your boyfriend has a spanking fetish, and he spansk other women with one particular belt—but not you, because you don't like it, but you're okay with him making dates to spank others—and he wears that particular belt all the time, even though you've asked him not to. What's going on here?

Ass Spared, Feelings Hurt

Equal parts inconsideration (on his part) and insecurity (on your part) are combining to create unnecessary drama. If spanking is so central to his identity that he has to wear his spanking belt every day, you may be the wrong girlfriend for him. If seeing an easy-to-overlook reminder of his fetish leaves this hurt, you're less okay with those spanking dates than you pretend to be, ASFH, and he may be the wrong boyfriend for you.

I recently came across a pair of my ex-girlfriend's lacy panties in an old pair of shorts I haven't worn in years. I love wearing women's panties, and I almost hit the floor when I found them. I was a mess after this girl dumped me. I was devastated. To this day, I have not found closure. This is where it gets tricky. A part of me wants to keep them because it's so hot that they're hers. I'm happy with my current girlfriend—I love her—but these panties really turn me on. The other part tells me to "show some respect" and get rid of them. Is this an ethical or moral issue? By keeping them, am I driving a wedge between me and my girlfriend? Any advice?

Old Panties Protocol

You're entitled to your memories and your keepsakes. And if a pair of panties can drive a wedge between you and your current girlfriend, OPP, then your relationship is made of pretty flimsy stuff. If an old pair of panties doesn't destroy it, the next strong breeze will. Keep the panties, I say, but put them away somewhere that isn't easily accessed—in a box in your storage space, on a high shelf in a closet—so you aren't tempted to haul them out every time you want to have a wank. But now and then, maybe when the girlfriend is out of town, I don't see the harm in retrieving your ex-girlfriend's panties and enjoying a nice, long, leisurely wank down memory lane. And finally, OPP, closure isn't something you find. It's something you do.

On this week's *Savage Lovecast*, Dan chats with writer Katha Pollitt about reframing attitudes about abortion: savagelovecast.com.