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**SEXLESS MARRIAGES:
THE LAST WORD**
 BY DAN SAVAGE



DEAR READERS: Two weeks ago, I announced I would be taking a nice long break from questions about miserable sexless marriages. [I don't get questions about happily sexless marriages.] I tossed out my standard line of advice to those who've exhausted medical, psychological, and situational fixes ("Do what you need to do to stay married and stay sane"), and I moved on to other relationship problems. Readers impacted by sexless marriages—men and women on "both sides of the bed"—wrote in to share their experiences and insights. I've decided to let them have the last word on the subject.

Since you don't want to give any more advice to readers stuck in sexually unfulfilling marriages they can't or don't want to end, will you allow me to give a little advice from the perspective of the other woman, i.e., the person who makes it possible for them to "stay married and stay sane"? I contacted an old flame when my marriage ended. He was married. His wife refused to have sex with him but also expected him to stay faithful to her. Their kids were still in school. He honestly believed that staying together was the best thing for the kids. I went into it thinking it was going to be a fling, a temporary thing to get me over my husband and back in the game. But the sex was mind-blowingly good. And here's the thing about amazing sex: It bonds people. We fell in love all over again. He told me our affair made his sexless marriage bearable. He was happier and a more patient father, he bickered less with his wife. He made me feel beautiful, desirable, known, and accepted—all feelings that had been lacking in my marriage. But I was in the shadows. Every assignation was a risk. I couldn't introduce him to my friends, my son, or my family. After four years, I couldn't take it anymore. My ego was shredded. So I ended it. I was tired of the fear, lying and hiding, and being secondary. My advice to readers stuck in sexless marriages who cheat to "stay sane": Beware of unintended consequences. You can have an affair with the most discreet, careful partner who accepts your circumstances, who makes no demands, who provides you with both a warm body to fuck and the passion that has drained out of your marriage. You can be careful not to get caught. It might be incredible for a while. But the chances of nothing going wrong and of everyone remaining happy over the long term are vanishingly small. It's a matter of time before someone gets hurt.

Ruby Tuesday

Your advice to people whose partners have checked out of their sex lives is on target. But would you be willing to share a voice from the other side of the bed? Until a year ago, I was always appalled when I would read letters like these. Who would stop having sex?! Who would stay with someone who didn't want to have sex?! Then I got sick. My illness came on slowly, but the first noticeable symptom was my sex drive vanishing. My lady parts were drier than a desert. No amount of lube helped. Sex hurt, and I didn't want it. My journey through the medical system was a battle. Trained medical professionals poo-poo'd me. They told me this is what all perimenopausal women experience and I should just deal with it. I was told to "get started" and then maybe I would enjoy it. I was given lists of supplements to try. Finally, in response to other health problems, my doctor diagnosed me with diabetes. Within weeks of taking medication and changing my diet, my engine started running again. It's not what it was, but I don't feel dead below the belly button anymore. During this time, my husband was supportive. I did my best to make him happy. I'd like to think that if I had continued to suffer a loss of libido for years, I would be brave enough to give him permission to find satisfaction elsewhere, but it would break my heart. My points, briefly: Legitimate things happen to people that make them lose their sex drive. Medical support for people brave enough to say "I've lost my mojo and need help to get it back" is not always there, and the solutions aren't always easy or fast. Too often, people (especially women) are told that losing their sex drive is normal and they should just get used to it. No one should be forced to accept a sexless relationship if that's not what they want. And if you've lost interest in sex and don't really care to get it back, you don't have the right to impose celibacy on another person. But in a long relationship, each partner is going to face challenges—and one of those challenges might be helping your partner fight to regain their libido.

Bed Death Survivor

I'm the "other man" to a woman whose husband won't fuck her. The guy must be gay or asexual, because his wife is beautiful, smart, and great in bed. I've never wanted marriage or kids, so this arrangement works well for me. The only time it got awkward was when my girlfriend—this other guy's wife—broached the subject of monogamy. Asking for a monogamous commitment when you're married to someone else? Seemed nuts. But I hadn't slept with anyone else for three years, or even wanted to, so I was already monogamous in practice.

Monogamous In Theory Now Too

If my ex-husband wrote to you, he'd say I didn't want to have sex with him anymore and he was going crazy. The truth is, I wanted to have sex—but I didn't want it to be in one of the same three positions we'd been doing it for seven years. I was bored and asked for some variety, and he refused to do it. My boredom turned into frustration, and frustration turned into anger. At a certain point, the idea of having sex with him made me want to beat the living shit out of something. Was I supposed to continue satisfying him when my needs weren't being met? Our mistake was waiting until I hit the angry point to get into therapy. We should have gone when I was bored. He wound up having an affair and blamed me because I didn't want to have sex with him. But there was a good reason why I didn't want to have sex with him. Maybe before you advise people in "sexless" marriages to have affairs, you could tell them to do some self-examination first?

Husband's Always Right

You wrote that you're sick of telling people trapped in sexless marriages to do what they need to do "to stay married and stay sane." I want to thank you for all that repetition. I needed it. But leaving my sexless marriage was what I needed to do to stay sane. My husband of 10 years berated me publicly, telling anyone who would listen that I was a whore. Had I not had your corpus of work on the matter of marital partners who have zero interest in sex but still demand enthusiastic monogamy, the journey through this would have been longer. Four years later, I still get excited that I actually get to have sex—awesome, giving, experimental, fun sex.

Gleeful Escapee

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