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SAVAGE LOVE

MATING GAMES
BY DAN SAVAGE

Straight male, 48, married 14 years, three kids under age 10. Needless to say, life is busy at our house. My wife and I have stopped having sex. It was my decision. I get the obligation vibe combined with a vanilla sex life, and it just turns me off. We've had many conversations about it and we want to find a balance. But it always defaults back to infrequent and dull, making me frustrated and cranky. For the past two months, I've tried to just push sex out of my mind. We live mostly as parenting roommates. We used to be pretty kinky—dirty talk, foursomes, toys, porn, etc.—but all those things wear her out now, and her interest has disappeared. My guess is that she was just playing along with my kinks to keep me happy and is now over it. Is this just life as a 48-year-old married father of three? Am I being selfish for wanting more in my sex life than my wife is willing to offer?

Hard Up Husband

Is sex wearing your wife out, HUH, or is raising three kids wearing your wife out? I suspect it's the latter. But in answer to your question: Infrequent and underwhelming sex, sometimes with an obligatory vibe, is not only the sex life a 48-year-old married father of three can expect, it's the sex life he signed up for. There's nothing selfish about wanting more sex or wanting it to be more like it was. Kids, however, are a logistical impediment—but a temporarily one, provided you don't go nuclear. A couple's sex life can come roaring back so long as they don't succumb to bitterness, recrimination, and sexlessness. To avoid all three, HUH, it might help to ask yourself which is the likelier scenario: for years your wife *faked* an interest in dirty talk, foursomes, toys, porn, etc., in order to trap you, or your wife is currently too exhausted to take an interest in dirty talk, foursomes, toys, porn, etc. Again, I suspect it's the latter. My advice: masturbate more, masturbate together more, lower your expectations so you'll be pleasantly surprised when a joint masturbation session blows up into something bigger and better, carve out enough time for quality sex (weekends away, if possible, with pot and wine and Viagra), discuss other accommodations/contingencies as needed, and take turns reminding each other that small kids aren't small forever.

I'm one of those bi guys. I had trouble dating girls in high school and at 18 found guys so much darn easier. And as sexual promiscuity in the gay world goes, I got around there easily. Fast-forward a few years. I'm in college now and desiring women and stability more. But women find me weird and awkward—I admit I am—something I was never judged for in the gay world. This has been going on for a few years now, and it just gets worse when I'm supposed to be parading around presenting as a horny straight guy. I'd love to find a bisexual woman to start a family with who is up for mutually agreed upon swing-and-fun sessions with others. But from what I've experienced with girls so far—always on the watch for a “player,” zero understanding of male bisexuality—that seems far from possible. Lately I've just been sitting on my hands in social situations, afraid to even interact with women. Is this therapy worthy?

Upset Pittsburgher In Troubling Times

Therapy couldn't hurt... unless you get a terrible therapist... in which case it could. Start your therapist hunt at the American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors, and Therapists (aasect.org), and you're likelier to find a good/sex-positive one.

As for why your “weird and awkward” first impression seemed to be less of an impediment when you were sleeping with men: Men aren't subjected to male sexual violence at the same rates that women are. Women have a lot more to fear than men do, UPITT, and a weird-and-awkward first impression is far likelier to turn off a woman into dudes than it is to turn off a man into dudes. The man you flirt with at a party might think, “Dude's weird and awkward but he's hot,” and jump into bed with you. But the woman you flirt with at a party is likely to think, “Dude's weird and awkward and he's hot, but he's just too weird to risk it.” Something else that couldn't hurt: getting on a site like OkCupid and approaching bisexual women there. You may have better luck with women if your initial interactions are over e-mail. And finally, UPITT, there are gay and bi men out there who desire stability, too—and stability and “promiscuity” aren't mutually exclusive.

About your answer to WHAT, the lady whose boyfriend “accidentally” ass-fucked her. I am a queer lady with a number of men in my sexual history, and I have many straight women friends who get around. “I didn't mean to stick my dick in your ass” is a lie that men tell—men who are embarrassed to ask for anal, men who want it so bad they're prepared to hurt their partner, or men who think their partner will say no if asked and just don't care. In all cases, these are men who do not even begin to understand how anal sex works. As you say, it's not an accident. But what you don't say is that these men are telling lies in order to get out of taking responsibility for their desires and the fact that they've hurt their partners. Men who want to have anal sex need to talk that through with their partners and then either figure out how to do it safely and pleasurably, accept that it's not happening, or break up if it's a deal breaker. I have had way too many conversations with women friends about the pain and anger and sometimes shame that they've felt when male partners have just stuck it in abruptly, unlubricated, and without permission. It makes me really angry that this is something that men can describe as an “accident” without any pushback, and honestly it was kind of gross and disappointing when your answer was just jokes about butt plugs.

Whatever Acronym Strongly Stresses Underlying Point

I'm with you, WASSUP. I don't think anal happens by accident. Anal has always, in my vast experience, required lube, focus, precision, and deep breathing. But on the two occasions when I've urged straight female callers on the *Savage Lovecast* to dump boyfriends who “accidentally” penetrated them anally—the push-back from male and female listeners was overwhelming. Scores of people called in to insist that anal can and does happen by accident.

WHAT's boyfriend has accidentally penetrated her anally, *four times* in a year. That raises a red flag. But WHAT was convinced it was an accident (*all four times*) and seemed to think her boyfriend felt genuinely terrible about it (*all four times*), and I deferred to a reader's POV (*just one time*). And here's a detail that was cut from WHAT's letter for space: “People have suggested going slow, but I like it a little rough.” Perhaps I should've come down harder on WHAT's boyfriend—okay, I should've come down harder—but it seemed possible, at least in WHAT's case, that anal might've been an accident (*all four times*?!). I still believe “accidental anal” is much more likely to be “intentional, nonconsensual anal,” aka not an accident at all.

On the *Lovecast*, Dan chats with writer Anna Pulley about all things lesbian: savagelovecast.com.

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