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# SAVAGE LOVE



DICKS DELUXE

BY DAN SAVAGE

*I am a 35-year-old straight guy. I met a nice lady through the normal methods, and we hit it off and have grown closer. I think we are both considering "taking it to the next level." We are on the same intellectual wavelength, enjoy the same social experiences, and have a lot of fun together. So what could be the problem? My friend decided it was the time to inform me that she is transgender, pre-op, and will not be having gender-reassignment surgery. This was quite a shock to me. I'm not homophobic, though I've never had a gay experience. I'm open-minded, yet there is a mental block. I like this person, I like our relationship thus far, and I want to continue this relationship. But I'm in a state of confusion.*

**Confused Over Complicating Knowledge**

Lemme get this out of way first, COCK: The nice lady isn't a man, so sex with her wouldn't be a "gay experience" and homophobia isn't the relevant term.

Moving on...

You're a straight guy, you're attracted to women, and some women — as you now know — have dicks. Are you into dick? Could you develop a taste for dick? Could you see yourself making an exception for her dick? It's fine if "no" is the answer to one or all of these questions, COCK, and not being into dick doesn't make you transphobic. Evan Urquhart, who writes about trans issues for *Slate*, argues that in addition to being gay, straight, bi, pan, demi, etc., some people are phallophiles and some are vaginophiles — that is, some people (perhaps most) have a strong preference for either partners with dicks or partners with vaginas. And some people — most people — want their dicks on men and their labia on/vaginas in women.

"There's no shame in it, as long as it doesn't come from a place of ignorance or hate," Urquhart writes. "Mature adults should be able to talk plainly about their sexuality, particularly with prospective partners, in a way that doesn't objectify or shame anyone who happens to be packing the non-preferred equipment."

Some straight guys are really into dick (trans women with male partners usually aren't partnered with gay men, and trans women who do sex work typically don't have any gay male clients), some straight guys are willing to make an exception for a particular dick (after falling in love with a woman who has one), but most straight guys aren't into dick (other than their own).

Since you're confused about what to do, COCK, I would encourage you to continue dating this woman, keep an open mind, and keep taking things slow. You've got new information to process, and some things — or one thing — to think about before taking this relationship to the next level. But don't drag it out. If you conclude that the dick is a deal breaker, end this relationship with compassion and alacrity. You don't want to keep seeing her "to be nice" if you know a relationship isn't possible. Because letting someone live in false hope is always a dick move.

*A few months ago, I started dating someone. I made it clear early on that I didn't feel comfortable being in a nonmonogamous relationship. They said that's not usually what they're into but they weren't interested in seeing anyone else and they had no problem being monogamous. It's not that I don't trust them, and they've never given any indication that they're unhappy with our arrangement, but I can't shake the fears that, though they won't admit it (maybe even to themselves), they'd prefer it if our relationship were more open and I'm taking something important away from them. Can someone who usually doesn't "do" monogamy feel fulfilled in a "closed" relationship? Can it work out, or will they just slowly grow to resent me for this?*

**Deliriously Anxious Monogamist Nervously Inquires Today**

If you stay together forever — what most people mean by "work out" — your partner will definitely grow to resent you. It could be for this reason, DAMNIT, or for some other reason, but all people in long-term relationships resent their partners for *something*. So if monogamy is the price of admission this person is willing to pay, let them pay it. There are a lot of people out there in closed relationships who would rather be in open ones and vice versa. And remember: What works for you as a couple — and what you want as an individual — can change over time.

*My relationship with my husband is bad. We have been together for twelve years, and we were married for eight years before getting divorced last year. We have small kids. We reconciled four months after the divorce, despite the affair I had. I have a history of self-sabotage, but in my relationship with him, it has become near constant. Everyone thinks I'm a smart and kind person that occasionally makes mistakes, but I'm not that person with him. With him, I'm awful. I make promises I don't keep and I don't do the right things to make him feel loved even though I do loving things. We have been in couples therapy a number of times, but I always derail the process. I have been in therapy solo a number of times with similar results. I always get the therapists on my side and no real change happens. I want to change but I haven't. I want to stop hurting him but I keep doing it. He doesn't feel like I have ever really fought for him or the relationship. Why can't I change?*

**My Enraging Self-Sabotaging Yearnings**

It's unlikely I'll be able to do for you in print what three couples counselors and all those therapists couldn't do for you in person, i.e., help you change your ways — if, indeed, it's your ways that require changing. Have you ever entertained the thought that maybe there's a reason every counselor or therapist you see winds up taking your side? Is it possible that you're not the problem? Are you truly awful, MESSY, or has your husband convinced you that you're awful in order to have the upper hand in your relationship? (Yeah, yeah, you had an affair. Lots of people do and lots of marriages survive them.)

If you're not being manipulated — if you're not the victim of an expert gaslighter — and you're awful and all your efforts to change have been in vain, MESSY, perhaps you should stop trying. You are who you are, your husband knows who you are, and if he wants to be with you, as awful as you are (or as awful as he's managed to convince you that you are), that's his choice and he needs to take some responsibility for it. By "stop trying" I don't mean you should stop making an effort to be a better person or a more loving partner — we should all constantly strive to be better people and more loving partners — but you can't spend the rest of your life on a therapist's couch. Or the rack.

If you truly make your husband miserable, he should leave you. If your marriage makes you miserable (or if he does), you should leave him. But if neither of you is going anywhere, MESSY, then you'll both just have to make the best of your messy selves and your messy marriage.

On the *Lovecast*, Dan chats with *Slate* writer Mark Joseph Stern about left-wing anti-Semitism: [savage-lovecast.com](http://savage-lovecast.com).

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