Dear Alice,

I have been dating the same person (exclusively) for over three years now. We have never had sexual intercourse, but, we have been intimate in every other way (physically). We haven't had sex simply because I haven't been ready. I am extremely attracted to this person, (and I have verbalized my strong attraction countless times) but I have had personal issues which have prevented me from feeling comfortable with the idea of losing my virginity.

After careful consideration, I feel that I am now ready for sexual intercourse with this person. The problem lies in the fact that he no longer seems interested in a physical relationship. We haven't even been intimate for three weeks! In short, I am wondering if I have "missed my chance," or if I have "messed him up" by not wanting to have sex. I haven't told him that I am ready, since he barely even wants to kiss! We are both athletic, slim, attractive, intelligent individuals. I don't feel that he is not attracted to me, he just seems uninterested in the physical side of our relationship. Aside from that, our relationship is absolutely healthy and happy, just very...PLATONIC.

One thing you should know: one year ago I kissed someone other than my boyfriend. It may not seem like a big deal, but I think it really devastated my boyfriend, and I think some element of trust was lost in the process. Do you think this other "affair" could have some effect on the lack of interest in intimacy now? I would never, ever cheat on him again, but what is done is done...my question is, since we used to be hopelessly passionately in love, do you have any advice on how to re-kindle the old flame?

Signed,
Wanting It

Answer

Dear Wanting it,

Have you discussed this lack of physical intimacy with your boyfriend yet? Rather than jumping in with the new issue of intercourse, why not start talking to him about the current changes you've noticed in your relationship? How about telling him exactly what you've written (you can even show him this Q&A), that once you both seemed passionately in love and that there was lots of physical affection, but that the relationship seems purely platonic at this point, and that it doesn't make you happy. See what his understanding of the situation is, and what he would like out of the relationship right now. It may be that his focus is elsewhere this
semester (like on his studies, athletics, etc.), or it may be that the nature of your relationship has changed for him. Perhaps he is doing his best to respect your previous wish not to have intercourse, and that he finds it easier not to pressure you if he doesn't get physical with you at all. Maybe your kissing the other guy, your breach of trust, still hurts in some way and that his feelings about it prevent him from being physically closer to you. Whatever the case, the key to any good, long-standing relationship is to take the risk and talk honestly with him about how you feel, as well as to be open to hearing what he says in return. It's possible to hear things you may not like, that might make you feel uncomfortable, or that seem hurtful. He may also say nothing. Some people deal with certain situations like yours in these ways.

Using intercourse as your "lure" to get your boyfriend back into the relationship may be an inauthentic way of reconnecting. Rather, try to focus on understanding what's happening emotionally inside of you, what you are feeling, and what you want. The next step may be to focus on your relationship and then on hearing how he feels without making assumptions. Before restoring physical intimacy, you might want to consider tackling these steps first. A future discussion about your desire to have intercourse may evolve as you both become more emotionally close by sharing your feelings, or it may become clear that this possibility is no longer a goal of his, and you may need to reconsider what this means for your relationship.

Either way, talking together to figure out what is possible and what isn't might be a good place to start. And then, with this additional information from him, you can decide how to move forward.

Alice!
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