Dear Alice,

I want to know if there's a surefire way of determining whether my girlfriend had sex with other partners while I was away. We've been separated for four months and I really want to know if she's been good or bad.

Doubting T

Answer

Dear Doubting T,

You're in luck! There is a sure-fire way of finding out whether or not your girlfriend was faithful during your time away: ask her. However, before you engage in this conversation with her, it is important to have faith that your girlfriend's response will be true. Above all, strong relationships are built on honesty, communication, trust, and respect.

Before you approach your girlfriend armed with accusatory questions, you may want to take a step back and think about your feelings regarding the situation. Perhaps you should begin by considering the level of mutual trust in your relationship. Asking yourself the following questions may help you get a better sense of your feelings:

- How would you rate your level of trust with your partner?
- Do you feel comfortable and relaxed with your partner?
- Are you and your partner honest with each other?
- Do you and your partner encourage each other to socialize with others?
- Do you and your partner allow each other to grow?

Once you get down to the bottom of your suspicions, then you may be ready to have an open and honest conversation with your girlfriend. Have you imagined what this conversation would be like? She might be more understanding if you bring up your worries when you're both relaxed instead of during an argument. Be careful not to make accusations, and focus on your own feelings (using "I" statements is a good start).
If your suspicion continues to get in the way, it might be helpful to talk with a friend, a spiritual advisor, or a counselor. A counselor or therapist can help you learn more about the origins of your feelings. If you do not already have a counselor, you can get a counseling referral from your health care provider.

Alice!
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