Dear Alice,

So my problem is that recently (about 6 months ago) I discovered that my boyfriend keeps pornographic magazines. We have been going out for 6 years. Much of that has been long-distance, but we have lived together for the last year. This discovery blew me away in part because until then my only complaint about our relationship was the fact that he didn't want sex nearly as often as I did?so now I'm angry that while I was feeling less than satisfied, physically, he was masturbating, and leaving me out in the cold. Since then, I've also noticed that he only wants to have sex after he's spent some time with his mags.

Given that I am horrified by the mere existence of this kind of material?I'm not going to get into a debate about its legality, but I truly believe it is exploitation worse than slavery. Given this, is there any way to work things out with him? In short, how far am I supposed to stretch my ethics, just because part of me believes that sexually, each of us is free to do what we want??

Girlie queen??

Answer

Dear Girlie queen??,

It sounds like these X-rated images are really making their mark on your relationship. Fortunately, there is a way to work things out?as long as both you and your boyfriend are willing to work on a solution. The initial shock of finding these magazines may make you hesitant to bring the topic up. However, once your anger has subsided, you can begin a conversation with him.

Regardless of your strong feelings, it is important to approach the concept of his porn usage in a non-judgmental tone. Try to have an open and honest discussion. For example, do you feel disappointed that he has enjoyed these mags while you've felt deprived of sex? Do you feel upset that he?s kept this a secret? For what purpose was he browsing the X-rated pages? Perhaps he used these magazines as a way to cope with the separation and not having regular sex. Either way, it is important to communicate exactly how you feel.

If you can't live with his wandering eyes, then you may want to ask him to give up the pornographic magazines altogether. However, it will be tough if you automatically expect your partner to change. If giving up his fantasies proves too difficult, perhaps you can ask him to separate those fantasies from the reality of your sex life. For example, a possible compromise
would be that you both masturbate whenever and however you want by yourselves, but you'll also have sex together "x" number of times each week and really concentrate on each other to up the intimacy level. That means no magazines or outside props, only telling and teaching each other what turns you both on.

Remember, everyone has the capability to change. With a little communication and honesty, the two of you can get back to getting down (without any explicit images if that?s what you decide). After all, you're in the same town now!

Alice!
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