Husband into porn and masturbation, but not me

Dear Alice,

I have been married for 4 years now and my husband is very heavy into pornography. He masturbates on a daily basis and doesn't care to have sex with me. I have talked to him about it and he said that it's an addiction. I told him that it hurts me deeply and I have been tempted to cheat on him. In other words, find someone else. Anyway, what do you suggest? I have tried to interest him more by using sex toys, sexy clothing, oral sex, etc. I am an attractive person and a lot of men flirt with me but I just ignore them. I work out at the gym. I asked my husband if he was interested in someone else and he told me no. He works a lot but when he is at home he just wants to watch TV and sleep.

?Attractive but confused

Answer

Dear Attractive but confused,

Your confusion is understandable as there appear to be a few issues going on here. However, it?s not clear which one is causing you the most concern. Is it his porn use and his daily masturbation? Perhaps you would be okay with his daily masturbation if he included you in on the fun. Or perhaps the porn would be fine except it appears that he desires the pages in a magazine more than he desires you. It may be helpful to spend some time thinking about his behaviors and how each one is affecting you. It also may be helpful to answer this question: What would the ideal intimate relationship with your husband look like?

First, masturbation, for many people, is intensely private and independent of whether or not they are having partner sex. For example, some people masturbate less when they are having partner sex, some masturbate exactly the same amount, and others masturbate more, as if to prime the pump.

Second, you mentioned that your husband said he had an addiction. Was he referring to his use of porn or to the daily masturbation? This point is worth exploring. Is your husband troubled by his addiction? Are his behaviors interfering with his personal life? Depending on his answer to this question, you could use this opportunity to express to your husband that his habits are hurting you, regardless of whether he thinks they are interfering with his personal life.

Third, it is clear that you feel deprived, frustrated, and angry that you are not having your intimacy needs met. This may be a harder issue. One of the most common disagreements
between couples is their differing desires concerning frequency of sex. So try to figure out what would be acceptable to you, and to him, and see where you can find common ground, or areas of agreement.

Here are some additional questions to explore (perhaps on your own and then with your husband, if he is willing):

- Were your sex life, his masturbation habits, and porn use ever any different?
- If not, what do you think changed?
- What, if anything, changed for him?
- What would you like your intimate life with you husband to look like?

In addition, it might help to think about expanding your definition of sex. Is intercourse what you want? An orgasm with him? Touching? Being wanted and desired? Kissing? Tenderness? Perhaps you need to be more clear on exactly what your needs are, or what needs the behaviors might be fulfilling, or possible other ways to get to the same goal.

It might be helpful to speak with someone about your concerns. Couples counseling is one option, but you could also try individual counseling if he will not go, for whatever reason. A counselor can help you figure out your next move. Columbia students can speak with a professional counselor at Counseling and Psychological Services [2]. Appointments are available online or by calling (212) 854-2878. Keep in mind that couples counseling is an option, even if your significant other isn?t a Columbia student.

Alice!

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