Dear Alice,

Lately, my boyfriend has been sleepwalking. I'll wake up, and he will be sleeping elsewhere ? downstairs on the couch, his roommate's room, etc. At first, we thought it was funny. However, now that it has reoccurred (more than once or twice), he is very upset about it. He thinks it is from drinking too much. Could this be the case?

?sleepwalker concerned with drinking

Answer

Dear sleepwalker concerned with drinking,

Waking up and finding that your partner has left the bed must be troubling, especially if he's upset about it too. If you've never been caught sleepwalking, it can be difficult to understand how someone can wake up somewhere else. Sleepwalking, also called somnambulism, is not just about walking ? it is a series of behaviors that occur when someone is sleeping including sitting up in bed, walking around, even driving a car. In some cases, sleepwalking can be very dangerous (i.e. driving a car), so it's usually a good idea to wake up someone who is sleepwalking. Sleepwalking is relatively common, occurring in as many as 15 percent of people (estimates vary between 1 and 15 percent).

There isn't just one cause of sleepwalking, and the exact process isn't understood. Sleepwalking can be triggered by sleep deprivation, certain medications, chaotic sleep schedules, and alcohol, among other factors. Since you mention that your boyfriend thinks he might be drinking too much, he may want to consider cutting back on alcohol to see if this prevents him from snoozing-on-the-go. However, this may not prevent him from sleep walking and he may want to see a health care provider to see if there are other potential causes.

Your boyfriend is lucky to have someone like you who cares about his health. Your support will help him as he begins to deal with this issue.

Alice!

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