Dear Alice,

I have a fiancée who likes to masturbate in secret, even though we have sex five or six times a week and sometimes twice a day. Is she sexually dissatisfied with me or is it a compulsion to masturbate?... Should I dig deeper into this or leave it alone?

Answer

Dear Reader,

It’s great that you’re reaching out about this personal but key relationship topic! A good first step may be to share your concerns with her and try to learn more about her sexual preferences. Every person’s masturbation habit is as unique as their personality. Some masturbate less when they have a partner, some do it more, and still others go on masturbating at the same rate they did when they were single. People masturbate for a variety of reasons. While it’s possible that she’s sexually dissatisfied or has a compulsion to masturbate, it’s also possible that she has her own reasons for frequent masturbation. The reasons people engage in solo sex can be separate from their sex lives with their partner. In other words, if your fiancée is satisfied with the quality and quantity of the sex she has with you, her masturbation may have nothing to do with you.

Masturbation has a variety of benefits including being an aspect of self-care. It could be that your fiancée uses masturbation for stress relief, pre-menstrual syndrome symptom relief, or to better understand her own body. Asking her some of these questions may help you get started with your conversation: Does she feel empowered being able to pleasure herself? Maybe she wants to better understand her own orgasm to improve your sex life together? Perhaps there’s a certain fantasy she has that she hasn’t brought up to you? These questions could help you find some of the reasons she chooses to masturbate. Having open communication about each of your sexual preferences (regarding both solo and partner sex) may alleviate your concerns about her not-so-secret habit and make you more confident in your relationship.

To start the conversation, it's helpful to approach the situation with an open mind and a willingness to listen. Additionally, be sure to share your feelings and thoughts as well so that you can grow your relationship together. You can also ask more questions about your sex life together, asking if she is currently satisfied with your sex life and what can be done to make
improvements to it as a whole. If she simply finds masturbation to be a pleasurable activity, perhaps you could discuss how masturbation could be incorporated into a partnered activity. While she may be interested in incorporating it into your sex lives together, she may want to keep her masturbation separate. Keep in mind that in healthy, loving relationships, there is space for partners to have their solo time to enjoy masturbation and other activities alone.

If you’re having issues with communication in your relationship, you may want to consider couples counseling with a mental health professional. Sexual compatibility and openness are key factors for a healthy, happy partnership. Working through this particular issue may improve your communication skills moving forward in married life as well! In the meantime, you may also want to check out related Q&As and the Masturbation category the Go Ask Alice! Sexual & Reproductive Health archives to learn more about the benefits of solo sex and how it can be incorporated into a partnership.

Always a pleasure,

Alice!

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