Sexually adventurous = More likely to cheat? [1]

Dear Alice,

If my wife is sexually adventurous, does it mean she's more likely to cheat? My wife is slowly opening up to me about how sexually adventurous she wants to be (I'm talking bondage-type stuff), and I'm afraid that maybe she might cheat in the future if her "appetite" isn't met. I haven't voiced any of these concerns, I've been completely supportive of it and actually would be completely ok with doing all of it. I just worry that maybe the adventure-ness might be a sign of promiscuity?

Answer

Dear Reader,

The concept of sexual adventurousness has different meanings depending on whom you ask. For some, keeping the lights on during sex is adventurous, while others might consider role-playing [2], threesomes [3], or bringing sex toys into the bedroom [4] all as potential sexy adventures. For this reason, clear communication is a key characteristic for sexual relationships. Fortunately, your wife is open about her sexual tastes and desires, and better yet, you're also interested in exploring her interests. Worry not? sexual adventurousness is not necessarily linked with promiscuity or infidelity, especially when both or all partners' sexual needs are being met, and when partners make an effort to be honest, nonjudgmental, supportive, and highly communicative.

Although the percentage of relationships that are affected by infidelity is a difficult figure to measure (data compiled from several different studies hover around the 20 to 30 percent mark), infidelity is the single most cited reason for divorce. In an attempt to determine why so many relationships are affected by infidelity, the Department of Psychology at the University of Colorado Denver conducted a study that aimed to isolate risk factors for infidelity in married, heterosexual, monogamous couples. Among those couples where the female engaged in infidelity, there were several predictors: lower levels of positive communication, higher levels of invalidation (or lack of support), higher male and female negative communications, and higher levels of premarital sexual satisfaction. In couples where the male engaged in infidelity, predictors included lower premarital male relationship satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, and positive communications. Sexual compatibility, age, gender, religiosity, frequency of one-night stands, attitudes toward infidelity, income, personality, marital status, level of performance
anxiety, susceptibility to sexual excitation, and mental health may also play a role in predicting whether an individual will cheat, but research is still developing.

Many marriages are affected by the “disillusionment model,” in which partners overlook each other’s shortcomings during courtship that arise later during the early years of marriage. To prevent any possible issues from taking their toll overtime, make sure to check in with your sweetheart regularly. This goes for sexual satisfaction too. The University of Colorado study suggests that higher premarital interest in sex for women could be a risk factor for infidelity if a woman’s level of sexual satisfaction decreases during marriage. However, infidelity is not likely to become an issue if you remain open to exploring your wife’s sexual desires. It is crucial to be validating and supportive of her interests as well; the more validating your relationship is, the less likely it is that infidelity will become a problem.

Research regarding predictive factors for sexual infidelity remains a developing field, but what is largely regarded as the most important indicator for extramarital affairs is poor communication at the beginning of and throughout the duration of a relationship. Effective communication is proven to have a protective effect on monogamy, especially when openness is supplemented with support and validation, so keep it up!

To obtain further emotional support and advice, you can talk to a counselor. Kudos to you for being receptive and supportive of your partner’s sexual interests!

Alice!
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Resources

Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) (Morningside) [15]
Safer Sex Map (Morningside / Barnard) [16]
Mental Health Service (CUMC) [17]
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