

Ask Amy: Wife may seek answers elsewhere for sexual drought in a marriage (10/7/2013)

By Amy Dickinson Tribune Media Services The Denver Post

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Dear Amy: I love my husband of 20 years. He's a good man. He is intelligent, well-read, a good husband (for the most part) and a good father.

I know for certain my husband isn't gay, but for the better part of our marriage, we've not had sex on a regular basis. This pattern began within the first two years of our marriage (until then we were totally hot for each other).

I don't know why he has experienced this early loss of libido; I know I am still eager to have a sexual relationship with him. Though we're both older than when we first got together, I am still attractive — and so is he.

I've been living without sex for many years and have never been unfaithful.

I see myself as an ethical person. I don't want to end my marriage, but self-gratification isn't the same as a one-on-one sexual relationship.

Over these many years, we've discussed this problem but nothing has changed, so would it be unethical for me to seek sexual gratification elsewhere? — *Wondering (but not Wandering) Wife*

Dear Wife: Discussing the extreme sexual drought in your marriage is one thing. Doing something — anything — about it is another.

Does your husband want to try to recover his libido and sexual function? Has he had a conversation with his doctor about it? Are you two willing to speak to a marriage counselor or seek sex therapy together?

It seems you two have many opportunities to at least try to recover from this challenge, aside from hoping that things will somehow miraculously change.

If you took traditional marriage vows then you will recall the phrase "for better or for worse." In a loving marriage you each have a duty to try your hardest to maximize the experience for yourself and your partner. This does not mean that you are both guaranteed a wonderful sex life — or any sex life. Intimacy comes in many forms; as painful as this is for both of you, facing this challenge together could deepen your marriage.

If your husband agrees for you to seek sexual gratification outside of your marriage, then your choice is on the ethical end of the spectrum (though it would place additional challenges on your relationship). If you decide to pursue this and keep it a secret from him, then it is decidedly unethical.

Dear Amy: My best friend is in her mid-40s. She has a serious alcohol addiction and it is ruining her life. She is unable to keep a job or friends, or maintain a romantic relationship due to this terrible disease.

I love my friend dearly and I have told her that I'm there to support her when she decides to attempt recovery, and I do not enable her in her addiction.

Now my friend has developed memory issues that I believe are due to her addiction, but she blames that and everything else going wrong in her life on other causes.

A recovering addict told me that my friend has developed brain problems related to her addiction and is literally killing herself. I'm desperate; what can I do to help my friend? — *Heartbroken*

Dear Heartbroken: Addicts are sometimes forced into treatment because of a crisis related to their drug or alcohol use — an automobile or other accident, a suicide attempt, a crime committed, or a workplace non-negotiable. If you are "rescuing" your friend in times of crisis, you may need to stop. Police or hospital personnel may be able to force her into rehab.

Otherwise, you can research treatment options in your area and meet with a professional to see if you and other loved ones can stage an intervention. Interventions should be guided by an addiction specialist — otherwise even the most dedicated attempt may backfire and have serious (unintended) consequences.

Dear Amy: "Shocked Daughter" witnessed her mother shoplifting an item from a local store. Your advice was fine, but why didn't you suggest that the daughter visit the store and pay for this item? — *Also Shocked*

Dear Also: Your suggestion to pay for the item is a great one, but the mother — not the daughter — should make this right.

Send questions via e-mail to askamy@tribune.com or write to Ask Amy, Chicago Tribune, TT500, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60611.